



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 21, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Here's what we know about the Hurricanes 20 games into the new regime

By Chip Alexander

Raleigh

Twenty games into the Carolina Hurricanes' season, what do we know?

The Canes, in Rod Brind'Amour's first year as head coach, are 9-8-3. They're not in playoff position with Thanksgiving two days away. Scoring remains problematic. The goaltending situation still is unsettled.

The good news: parity reigns in the NHL. Listen to any coach or general manager and they'll mention how evenly matched the league is and the standings bear that out. In the Eastern Conference, 13 teams had 20 or more points after Monday's games.

Brind'Amour has called the Canes a "work in progress." The work continues. Progress remains incremental.

Remember, the Canes were 9-7-4 and had 22 points after 20 games last season and had played one more road game.

Here's what we know:

Can anyone score goals?

Sebastian Aho had the early season tear -- four goals in his first five games -- and then went 12 games without one. The assists were there for Aho and some records set, but not goals.

Micheal Ferland has a team-high 10 goals, then it drops off quickly to Aho's six and five for Jordan Staal. The defensemen have nine goals, total. The Canes have scored two or fewer goals in 10 games.

Canes general manager Don Waddell said the team is looking for scoring help. They traded away a proven scorer in Jeff Skinner, who now has 14 goals for the Buffalo Sabres.

Quantity but enough quality?

Much has been made of the Canes' proliferation of shots -- an NHL-best 40.3 a game. They have big leads in the analytical measurables: scoring chances, high-danger scoring chances, Corsi, Fenwick. They're also fourth in missed shots (297) and tied for second in posts hit (18).

"There aren't too many games where it didn't feel like we created enough offense," Brind'Amour said. "The numbers back that up. They show us the high-danger chances and the Grade-A chances. We don't really look at shot totals. We're look at ones we give up. We don't care if we give up 30 shots if they're not high-quality. If they're high-quality that's a

problem and vice versa on the offensive end. We're looking for the high-quality ones."

Natural Stat Trick, an analytics website, has the Canes first in the NHL by big margins in scoring chances and high-danger chances but outscored in both. That has to change for the Canes.

Special teams moving up

Remember when the Canes were last in the power play and penalty killing? No longer.

The Canes, showing better puck movement and decision-making, recently had power-play goals in four straight games -- scoring five times -- and have moved to 25th in the NHL at 15.5 percent. They've killed off 18 of the last 20 penalties and are 28th at 73.8 percent. That's progress, yes?

"Every team in this league, once they get in their (power-play) set, are going to get opportunities and you want to limit those opportunities as much as possible," Brind'Amour said.

Impact player?

The Hurricanes expected a lot out of Andrei Svechnikov this season as the No. 2 pick of the 2018 NHL Draft. They expected the Russian forward to have an immediate impact, even at 18.

After 20 games, Svechnikov has four goals and four assists and a minus-4 rating. His talent is evident. His line, with center Lucas Wallmark and winger Jordan Martinook, has been the steadiest. But the Canes need more from him and Brind'Amour might soon look for another line fit.

Who's in net?

First Scott Darling was injured. Then, Petr Mrazek. So much for establishing a goaltender rotation.

Curtis McElhinney, making his second start since Oct. 20, had 33 saves Sunday in beating the New Jersey Devils 2-1. The team that waived him this season, the Toronto Maple Leafs, are at PNC Arena on Wednesday and it would seem logical to give him a shot against them.

The Canes want and need Darling to be a No. 1 goalie, but Darling missed practice Tuesday as Brind'Amour gave him an extra day off. The flip side: Mrazek did get in a full practice Tuesday. "We gave him a full workload," Brind'Amour said.

The Nylander thing won't go away

With William Nylander still unsigned by the Maple Leafs and a Dec. 1 deadline approaching, the guessing continues. Will



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Nylander be traded -- you know, to someone like the Hurricanes? Will the forward sit out a season? Or will the two sides grudgingly decide on a salary number and term they can both accept?

The Leafs will be in town and general manager Kyle Dubas could be with them. Dubas already has made one visit to

PNC Arena to scout (and snack on Gummy Bears on the fifth level.) Chances are, he could be talking to Waddell, again.

The whole thing has the feel and smell of typical posturing between team and agent/player when contract talks turn contentious. It's hard to imagine the Leafs losing Nylander. But we'll see.

THE ATHLETIC

Down Goes Brown: Weighing the pros and cons of various William Nylander trade destinations

By Sean McIndoe

The Maple Leafs' standoff with winger William Nylander continues this week, with less than two weeks to go until the Dec. 1 deadline to strike a deal. And with the two sides still reportedly far apart on terms and dollars, talk has increasingly turned to the possibility of a trade.

If the Leafs decided to swing a deal, there'd be no shortage of potential landing spots for the talented winger. Our Pierre LeBrun recently looked at nine of the most likely destinations. But that list was only a starting point, and this sort of scenario often results in a mystery team or two lurking in the background. There's no doubt that plenty of teams around the league are wondering if they'd be the right fit.

So today, let's look around the league and see if we can help. This is a brainstorming session, so nothing's off the table. We'll look at a variety of teams, covering the spectrum from likely destinations for Nylander to teams which seem like much longer shots. And we'll help everyone involved weigh the pros and cons of pulling off a Nylander blockbuster.

Buffalo Sabres

Pro: Joining the organization would mean that Nylander is reunited with his brother Alexander, which would be great because it would give his dad someone else to go bother for a while.

Con: Dubas once absented-mindedly mentioned that the winger could probably develop into a decent quarterback for the Sabres' second power-play unit, and as soon as he said "decent quarterback" Buffalo bylaws kicked in and barred Nylander from the city limits.

Anaheim Ducks

Pro: Nylander hasn't played a single minute of competitive hockey all season long, so he'd immediately fit right in with all of their defensemen.

Con: As with any trade they make this year, departing Ducks players would be slowed down at the airport while trying to drag equipment bags that are unusually heavy and vaguely sound like John Gibson whispering "Take me with you."

Edmonton Oilers

Pro: As a dynamic offensive winger with a proven track record of producing next to an elite center, Nylander would

fill a longstanding team need for a guy they could trade for a mediocre defenseman.

Con: NHL trades are complicated and can take weeks or even months to put together, which probably doesn't leave enough time for whoever the Oilers' GM is going to be by the weekend.

Carolina Hurricanes

Pro: Wouldn't have to send their best player to Toronto in the deal since the entire city is already overflowing with Aho's, according to everyone else in Canada if I'm hearing them correctly.

Con: Nylander would be joining the team with only four months left in the season which isn't really enough time to get up to speed on detailed positioning and responsibilities outlined in the playbook, which is what Justin Williams insists on calling the postgame choreography.

Vancouver Canucks

Pro: Checks every box on the Canucks' list of criteria for acquiring a star player, although in fairness for the last 20 years those boxes have just been "Not Mark Messier" and "No seriously, make damn sure he's not Mark Messier."

Con: The roster already includes Elias Pettersson, so they don't actually need any other NHL players.

Boston Bruins

Pro: They already have David Pastrnak and seem to be enjoying him, so they would probably love to have a guy who's apparently over \$1 million better.

Con: No way to know for sure, but may have had some scouts watching the Leafs in last year's playoffs.

Montreal Canadiens

Pro: According to rumors, Nylander already has a handshake deal for a new contract with Marc Bergevin.

Con: Due to that handshake, Nylander is now on the season-ending LTIR because the bones in his hand have all turned to powder.

Florida Panthers

Pro: The team realizes that the Maple Leafs probably wouldn't want to trade a star player within the division but don't think that will be a problem, says Dale Tallon while laughing maniacally and high-fiving Doug Wilson.



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Con: Are reportedly refusing to include Mike Matheson in any deal, which will no doubt come as a major disappointment to Maple Leaf fans once they're done Googling "Who is Michael Matheson?"

Los Angeles Kings

Pro: Nylander being in L.A. would make it a lot easier to film the full-length movie version of that "hippy dippy kale smoothie" commercial, once I can get one of those big-shot Hollywood directors to actually look at my script.

Con: Talks could be complicated by Leafs insistence on getting back a capable young player.

Nashville Predators

Pro: Acquiring ridiculously good Swedish wingers just entering their prime for next-to-nothing is kind of their thing.

Con: Sort of hard to keep trade talks under wraps given the Predators just raised a "Made one phone call about William Nylander" banner.

Arizona Coyotes

Pro: Any trade between Kyle Dubas and John Chayka would be the first known example of millennials achieving anything ever, according to your parents.

Con: Nylander has only ever put up elite numbers while playing on a line with Auston Matthews, and a trade to the Coyotes would mean he wouldn't get to do that again for another 10 months.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Pro: Might be a good fit because they need to get younger and could offer the Leafs a package that included a returning Phil Kessel with a chunk of his salary retained and everything else in this column is meant as a joke but I'm honestly starting to talk myself into this one.

Con: Nylander would probably turn around the Penguins season and lead them back into the playoffs, which would make it awkward when the NHL forgets to un-rig the Jack Hughes draft lottery and Pittsburgh wins anyway.

Philadelphia Flyers

Pro: Dubas has been told that "Gritty is not untouchable."

Con: Dubas was told this by Gritty while Gritty was shaking his belly seductively and maintaining unblinking eye contact and the Leafs GM hasn't been able to think about hockey ever since.

Ottawa Senators

Pro: Would fit right in with the franchise's long and storied tradition of building the roster around players who disappear in playoff series involving the Maple Leafs.

Con: GMs around the league say that whenever they ask about acquiring the Senators' first-round pick, Pierre Dorion tells them he can't trade it, and when they ask if that means it's untouchable he says "Yeah something like that" and then just cries softly into the phone for 15 minutes.



Preview: Maple Leafs vs. Hurricanes

Canes host Eastern Conference's top team

by Michael Smith

On the eve of Thanksgiving, the Carolina Hurricanes host the Toronto Maple Leafs in the fifth game of their season-long, six-game homestand.

The Hurricanes held off the New Jersey Devils, 2-1, on Sunday evening to improve to 3-1-1 in their last five games. The Canes will now square off against the Eastern Conference's top team in the first of three meetings this season.

Back in the Win Column

After what was described in the locker room as a "dud" of a loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Hurricanes returned

to action less than 24 hours later and grinded out a win against the Devils.

Justin Williams and Micheal Ferland scored just eight seconds apart in the opening half-minute of the game, all the offense the Canes would ultimately need. Curtis McElhinney made 33 saves on 34 shots in his fourth win of the season.

"Who would have thought that would have been all the scoring?" Williams said. "Every game is a surprise, and not all are the same. That was a battle and a grind."

"They did a great job coming back into the game, grinding and making it a tough game. I thought we responded well," said Jordan Staal, who recorded the primary assist on Williams' goal. "It wasn't our best game, but I thought we worked hard and found a way to get the points."



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The Hurricanes were out-shot for just the second time in 20 games this season, but they've won both of those games.

"We didn't give up a ton, but we certainly didn't create than much," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We got the win. It was an ugly win, but you have to have those."

Mac Attack

The Maple Leafs are McElhinney's latest former team, as the Canes claimed the veteran goaltender on waivers on Oct. 2 and have held on to him since. Now, the Canes will likely turn to the 35-year-old to make his second consecutive start against a group of familiar faces.

McElhinney played 32 games over two seasons with the Leafs from 2017-18, registering a 17-12-1 record with a 2.45 goals-against average, a .925 save percentage and four shutouts.

Getting Healthy

Tuesday's practice at Raleigh Center Ice saw a trio of injured players take steps in returning from injury. Most notable among them is center Victor Rask, who has missed the Canes' first 20 games of the season with a right-hand injury. Tuesday marked his first full practice with the team, and his return to the lineup is nearing.

"He got cleared, so that's a good sign. Now, we're just kind of figuring out the plan of when to get him in," Brind'Amour said. "We've got to be fair to him. I know he wants to play right away. We've got to make the right decision on that

Victor Rask Cleared, Nearing Return

Swedish center practiced with Canes on Tuesday

by Michael Smith

It was early September at PNC Arena. The occasion was the Carolina Hurricanes' annual Media Day, the unofficial beginning of a new season in which the media and players convene for on- and off-camera chats just a couple of weeks out from the start of training camp.

Victor Rask was brimming - at least, as much as the typically non-emotive Swede can conceivably brim - with excitement as he prepared for his fifth NHL season.

"I've had a couple not my best years. I've just got to get back to my game and just keep working hard," he said in a CanesCast interview. "I want to come out strong at the beginning of the season and prove myself."

Then, a freak kitchen accident involving a knife, some sweet potatoes and a pair of fingers happened.

Had the knife just nicked the left-shooting Rask's right pinkie finger, surgery might not have been required. But, because his right ring finger - an important top-hand digit - was also cut, Rask had to go under the knife for surgery.

This, a frustrating development for someone who underwent shoulder surgery earlier in the calendar year.

"It definitely sucked," Rask said. "I had shoulder surgery at the end of last year and did rehab all summer. Then to do

because he's been out so long. At some point, you've just got to throw him to the wolves."

"It's been pretty long, but it's healed up very good," Rask said. "I'm just excited to start playing again."

Goaltender Petr Mrazek (lower body) got a full practice's worth of work in opposite McElhinney.

"He's been out for so long, and we wanted to give him a good workload today," Brind'Amour said.

Defenseman Brett Pesce (lower body) practiced with the team for 15-20 minutes but left the ice early.

"I don't think he's quite as ready as we'd hope," Brind'Amour said. "He didn't finish practice, so that tells me all I need to know about that."

The Opposition

The Maple Leafs are coming off a 4-2 home win over the Columbus Blue Jackets in which they scored four unanswered goals in the second and third periods after falling behind in the first. The win was Toronto's fourth in a row and seventh in their last eight games. The Leafs are a league-best 9-1-0 on the road.

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Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes app, Hurricanes.com/Listen

this sucked, but I've been through it now, and I'm ready to play."

While sidelined, Rask continued to skate and work out off-ice with Bill Burniston, the team's head of strength and conditioning. The on-ice aspect of rehab was challenging for a bit, since Rask couldn't hold a stick for a period of time following surgery.

"It was pretty boring not being able to hold a stick. It's good that I could at least skate," he said. "It was tough, but once I got to hold a stick and a puck, I felt way better."

Rask then re-incorporated a stick and puck in his on-ice work, and at Raleigh Center Ice on Tuesday, he participated in his first full team practice Raleigh Center Ice, another significant progress point in his return from injury.

All that's left is to play in his first game of the 2018-19 season.

"It's been pretty long, but it's healed up very good," Rask said. "I'm just excited to start playing again."

That will happen sooner rather than later, but a date hasn't been set.

"As soon as possible," Rask said.

"He got cleared, so that's a good sign. Now, we're just kind of figuring out the plan of when to get him in," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We've got to be fair to him. I know he wants to play right away. We've got to make the right



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decision on that because he's been out so long. At some point, you've just got to throw him to the wolves."

Rask's return will certainly be a boost to the Canes, both in terms of their center depth and offensive contributors. As training camp opened in mid-September, Brind'Amour was already looking forward to getting the 25-year-old Swedish center back in the lineup, likening that inevitability to a quality roster addition via trade.

Fast forward 20 games over two months, and Rask's return is imminent and much-anticipated.

"Everything feels good with my hand," he said. "I feel pretty good. I haven't played a game yet, so we'll see after my first game, but right now I feel pretty good."

Where Rask fits in remains to be seen - he wasn't specifically involved in line rushes on Tuesday - but he figures to be a key piece down the middle for this team in the very near future.

"We'll manage his minutes a little bit, maybe, but I know from being in that situation before, usually the more you play, the better you play," Brind'Amour said. "He's a player we need to get going right away."



NHL Power Rankings: Report Cards for all 31 Teams Edition

Luke Fox

Quality coaches getting fired from recent champions six weeks deep, the Sabres and Canadiens playing good hockey, the Rangers grinding into playoff position, the Penguins and Blues on the road to disaster, dogs and cats living together, mass hysteria!

It's our NHL Power Rankings: Quarterly Report Card Edition, in which we give each of the league's 31 franchises a letter grade at the 20-game mark.

As usual, the clubs are ranked in order of current strength. The write-ups sum up the first quarter of this wildly unpredictable 2018-19 season.

1. Nashville Predators

The Predators are on track for back-to-back Presidents' trophies. They just beat one of their closest competitors, the Lightning, in a thriller. They've cruised through a P.K. Subban injury like it was barely a speed bump, and smartly re-signed Vezina champ Pekka Rinne (NHL-leading .942 save percentage) to a reasonable contract extension well in advance of deadline. Let's pre-order another bulk shipment of regular-season banners, shall we? Grade: A+

2. Toronto Maple Leafs

The top team in the Eastern Conference couldn't possibly be sucking more leverage away from William Nylander. John Tavares and Mitch Marner are on track for career years. Auston Matthews was gunning for the Rocket prior to his injury. Morgan Rielly and Frederik Andersen are among the best at their respective positions. And the road record is ridiculous. Grade: A+

3. Tampa Bay Lightning

No team has scored more goals than the Lightning (75), who remain the team to beat in the exciting (and surprisingly very competitive) Atlantic. Jon Cooper, the longest-tenured coach in the NHL, has kept his squad afloat despite an injury to Andrei Vasilevskiy, and next-wave studs Brayden Point and Yanni Gourde are outscoring Steven Stamkos. Grade: A+

4. Winnipeg Jets

No team has been more effective on the power play (32.1 per cent) or allowed fewer goals than the Jets (47), whose excellent start feels even scarier when you realize that young Patrik Laine is finally warming up. Grade: A

5. Buffalo Sabres

The trade for Jeff Skinner (14 goals) looks like a stickup. Jack Eichel is a beast. Jason Pominville has rediscovered his game at the 1,000 mark. Rasmus Dahlin should be on the Calder ballot. And Carter Hutton is proving (so far) that, yes, he can be a No. 1 goaltender. The Sabres are relevant again, and it feels good. Grade: A+

6. Calgary Flames

Some growing pains were to be expected with so many tweaks on the ice and behind the bench, but Calgary seems to have found its heart (thanks to Matthew Tkachuk), some secondary scoring, and a reasonable level of goaltending — even if the source of those last two qualities isn't what Brad Treliving expected. Grade: B

7. Minnesota Wild

On paper, we predicted a fall-off in Minnesota, a franchise that looked too old at first glance. Yet the core of Zach Parise, Mikko Koivu, Mikael Granlund, Ryan Suter, Eric Staal, Matt Dumba and Devan Dubnyk have all been healthy and effective. One of several nice surprises at the 20-game plateau. Grade: A-

8. Columbus Blue Jackets

The Blue Jackets dropped the puck under a dark cloud of uncertainty: Artemi Panarin and Sergei Bobrovsky are leaving, right? But armed with a contract extension, John Tortorella has his bunch churning through the noise, playing a heavy cycle game, and pushing for that top seed in the Metro. Meanwhile, Panarin, Pierre-Luc Dubois and Cam Atkinson have formed the best line in hockey no one talks about. Grade: B+



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9. Boston Bruins

The best line we do talk about resides in Boston, and it just took a severe hit with news that injured centre Patrice Bergeron will be out four weeks minimum. The Bruins have done well to keep their head above water in the wake of constant injuries, the rise of some unexpected divisional threats, and an uncharacteristically average Tuukka Rask. Grade: B-

10. Montreal Canadiens

Max Domi and Tomas Tatar serve as exhibits A and B in the case that Marc Bergevin can win trades. Jesperi Kotkaniemi was drafted NHL-ready. And, look here, Carey Price's save percentage is back in the .900s. Claude Julien deserves full marks for getting more out of this roster than the most optimistic among us believed. Captain Shea Weber is coming back soon. Grade: A

11. Colorado Avalanche

The Avs were a trendy pick to fall back to the pack after their incredible 2017-18 uprising, but the top two scorers league-wide — Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen — call Denver home, and support players like Carl Soderberg and Alex Kerfoot are quietly providing unsung depth. Grade: B

12. San Jose Sharks

Admit it: You kinda thought the Sharks would run away with the divisional crown and Erik Karlsson and Brent Burns would have to take a chainsaw to the Norris Trophy. Sure, there have been some great performances in San Jose — Timo Meier is breaking out, Logan Couture is healthy (knock wood), Joe Pavelski is having himself a nice contract year — but there is room for improvement. Grade: B-

13. New York Islanders

The Islanders lost John Tavares, gained Leo Komarov and are firmly in the playoff hunt. As great a start as anyone could've hoped. Grade: B+

14. Dallas Stars

Injuries to John Klingberg and now Ben Bishop are concerning, and Valeri Nichushkin has been less than a difference-maker. But young D-man Miro Heiskanen is proving Jim Nill wise for not trading him to Ottawa, and the Stars' most handsomely paid stars — Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn, Alexander Radulov and Jason Spezza — are their best players. Grade: C+

15. Washington Capitals

Who knew they'd miss Tom Wilson this much? The champs' big boys are delivering the goods, save for Braden Holtby, who has been just OK (.906 save percentage). Once Holtby finds his groove and T.J. Oshie is healthy, we'd expect these ho-hum Caps to go on a little run and get back into form. Grade: C+

16. New York Rangers

The Blueshirts looked like "Lose for Hughes" candidates, but no-nonsense coach David Quinn, who's already scratched Brady Skjei and Kevin Shattenkirk, is milking the most out of

this roster. At 8-1-1, the Rangers have the NHL's best record over their past 10 outings. Grade: B+

17. Detroit Red Wings

Things could've been much worse in the aftermath of Henrik Zetterberg's retirement, but Jimmy Howard has kept the Wings in most games, Dylan Larkin has taken another step towards face-of-the-franchise status, and Mike Green and Dennis Cholowski are contributing from the back end. Depth, however, remains a serious issue. Grade: C+

18. Florida Panthers

When Roberto Luongo went down in Game 1, the Panthers proceeded to dig themselves a tremendous hole. Now, just as they're about to claw back to the surface — Mike Hoffman is going streaking! — Vincent Trocheck suffers a sickening long-term injury. Snake bit. Grade: C-

19. Arizona Coyotes

The Coyotes are one of just three Pacific squads with a positive goal differential, and with games in hand over all their divisional rivals, there's serious potential for a playoff push. Grade: B-

20. Carolina Hurricanes

Those gif-ready victory celebrations kinda obscure from the fact that Carolina has scored the fewest goals of any Eastern Conference team (53). Man, the Hurricanes sure could use Jeff Skinner. Or William Nylander. Decent possession metrics, though. Grade: D+

21. Ottawa Senators

Well, apart from the P.R. tire fire to which a tanker of premium unleaded arrives weekly, the Sens have much to get excited about. Brady Tkachuk is the real deal. Thomas Chabot is putting up EK65 numbers. Chris Tierney is a better player than you imagined. Their more aggressive style of play has created some actual on-ice entertainment value. And impending UFAs Mark Stone and Matt Duchene are full value. Grade: C

22. Philadelphia Flyers

If the Flyers ever got a steady dose of solid, healthy netminding, we'd be happy to take them seriously. Instead, they remain one of the league's streakiest teams, front-loaded with high-end talent but forever one injury away from coach-on-the-hot-seat rumours. Gritty's cool, though. Grade: C-

23. Chicago Blackhawks

Joel Quenneville's firing signals the end of a wonderful modern dynasty. But seeing Corey Crawford return healthy and playing does provide a glimmer of hope. We can drink to that. Grade: A+

24. Vancouver Canucks

The Canucks' five-game losing string is the worst slump in the league. Sure, injuries are mounting, but this is the pull back to reality many have been waiting for. We give Vancouver bonus points for, somehow, still being in playoff



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position and for holding the rights to Elias Pettersson. Grade: C+

25. Edmonton Oilers

Todd McLellan takes the blame for not building a real team around the most gifted hockey player in the world or saving an average amount of shots. The Ken Hitchcock experiment inspires us to fire up a batch of Jiffy Pop. Grade: D

26. Vegas Golden Knights

The team that could do no wrong can no longer catch a break. The Knights' offence has taken hit after hit: Nate Schmidt's (disputed) suspension, Paul Stastny's long-term injury, Max Pacioretty's underwhelming play, Erik Haula's month-to-month injury. Again, Vegas proves how quickly fate can turn. Grade: C-

27. Anaheim Ducks

In John Gibson, Anaheim dresses one of the greatest goaltenders and is still a minus-17 team ravaged with injuries and spotted with declining stars on hefty contracts. Grade: D

28. New Jersey Devils

The magic of 2017-18 has been difficult to recapture since Ray Shero subtracted instead of added over the summer. Kyle Palmieri, Taylor Hall, Travis Zajac, Keith Kinkaid and

Damon Severson have each delivered. But depth is a massive concern here. Bottom line: When it's late November and Cory Schneider still hasn't won a game, you're in trouble. Grade: C-

29. Pittsburgh Penguins

We're not prepared to write off the winners of two of the past three Cups by U.S. Thanksgiving, but this better be rock bottom. Jim Rutherford already made one trade, but he looks like a poker player about to go on tilt. Sidney Crosby is sidelined, Matt Murray can't locate his mojo, and the Pens have won just once in their past 10. Grade: D

30. St. Louis Blues

Despite the excellence of new guy Ryan O'Reilly, the Blues are in a funk. St. Louis has lost too many close ones, failing to get that key save or big goal. The result? Mike Yeo loses his job at midnight, and Craig Berube still has plenty of runway (63 games) to turn around a group that should be better than its 7-9-3 record. Grade: D

31. Los Angeles Kings

John Stevens is the fall guy for a rash of goaltending injuries and the faulty belief that the once-mighty Kings could compete in this increasingly fast and increasingly young NHL. Tall task, Willie Desjardins. Godspeed. Grade: F

Maple Leafs, Flames favourites on Wednesday NHL odds

OddsShark Staff

The Toronto Maple Leafs will be looking to extend their lead atop the Eastern Conference standings when they visit the Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday as narrow -115 favourites on the NHL odds at sportsbooks monitored by OddsShark.com.

Toronto is riding high after improving to 7-1-0 over its past eight outings with Wednesday's 4-2 victory over the visiting Columbus Blue Jackets as -140 chalk, and now sits one point up on the second-place Tampa Bay Lightning going into Wednesday night's matchup at PNC Arena.

The Maple Leafs have been particularly dominant on the road, racking up a league-leading 9-1-0 record away from Scotiabank Arena. The club has potted an average of 4.5 goals per game in those contests while holding opponents to two or fewer goals on five occasions. That has produced mixed results in totals betting, with the OVER holding a slight 5-4-1 edge according to the OddsShark NHL Database.

The Hurricanes return to action looking to tally consecutive wins for the first time since Oct. 26 after topping the visiting New Jersey Devils by a 2-1 score on Sunday. Carolina has struggled with consistency since opening the season with four wins in five games, going 5-8-2 in 15 games since then.

Goal production has been a real concern for the Hurricanes, who have potted two or fewer goals in nine of their past 15 games, dumping the squad to 29th in the league with just 53 goals scored through 20 contests. The Hurricanes have also tallied just three wins in nine meetings with the Maple Leafs, including four straight losses to Toronto on home ice.

Elsewhere on the Wednesday NHL odds, the Calgary Flames try to close out a four-game home stand with a third straight win as they host the Winnipeg Jets as -120 chalk.

The Montreal Canadiens look to make it three in a row on the road as they visit New Jersey as +115 underdogs, and the Ottawa Senators try to maintain their high-scoring ways in their trip to Minnesota as +200 underdogs, while the Vancouver Canucks try to put the brakes on a six-game slide as they visit the Anaheim Ducks as a +120 wager.

The Flames have buried a shaky 1-3-0 run during which they scored just six total goals with a pair of decisive victories over Edmonton and Vegas, but face a stingy Jets squad that has limited them to just two total goals over their past two meetings.

The Canucks' slide is complicated by a 1-4-2 run on the road. Vancouver has also potted just eight total goals while going 1-4-0 in its past five games against the Ducks.



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NHL Power Rankings: All 31 teams as a Thanksgiving dish

Greg Wyshynski/ESPN

It's Thanksgiving week. Oh, sorry, forgot these were NHL power rankings: It's American Thanksgiving week.

Fill up your plate with these 31 Thanksgiving food things that perfectly describe all 31 NHL teams, as we get decadent and delicious in this week's Power Rankings. Keep in mind these are voted on by a panel of hockey experts here at ESPN.

Bon appetite!

1. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 1 ↔

The Predators are the kings of the Thanksgiving plate: perfectly crafted stuffing. All the ingredients work because the foundation of the recipe is so solid. Toss in some sausage. Hit it with some green stuff. Heck, add a catfish. Preferably one wearing one of those tiny cowboy hats. It's all good.

2. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 3 ▲

The Leafs are that Thanksgiving dinner you had catered by a Michelin star restaurant. Like, the meals have been pretty good already, and steadily getting better. But then your rich friend is like, "I ordered six courses from Chez Tavares" and every course is like a small explosion of joy most likely covered in truffle oil.

3. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 2 ▼

The Lightning are apple pie a la mode. Oh man, just think about it: Flavorful apples, gooey filling, delectable crust, warmed up to the right temperature to marry itself to that scoop of vanilla ice cream that tops it. On paper, it's perfection ... but what if the apples are overripe? What if the crust falls apart at the last minute? What happens if Andrei Vasilevskiy breaks his foot again in May?! WHAT THEN?!

4. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 5 ▲

The Sharks are a Turducken. They are just going to keep forcing in spectacularly ostentatious pieces of meat until this meal is a winner. Also, we're rather certain Brent Burns has a living Turducken in his menagerie of fantastic beasts.

5. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 7 ▲

The Jets are veriohukainen, or blood pancakes, a delicacy in which 400 ml of pork blood are mixed with milk, flour, molasses, a small onion and butter to create crimson discs that are rich in iron and pair well with reindeer meat. And this is absolutely the last time we let Patrik Laine design the Thanksgiving menu.

6. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 6 ↔

The Wild are green bean casserole. It's got a bunch of old, weird stuff in it and it's not exactly the most attractive dish on the table, but yet its inexplicably delicious every season. Just don't expect to reach for a second round.

7. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 4 ▼

The Bruins are sweet potatoes covered in marshmallows, a dish so divisive that the innocuous USA Today once asked, "Why is it a thing?" Loved by some for its fun. Loathed by others for its alleged blasphemy. Truly, the Brad Marchand of side dishes.

8. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 9 ▲

The Blue Jackets are flaky crescent rolls. They're super tasty but also super popular. What a bummer it is when the meal is going so well and then you reach over and realize there's no more Bread, Man.

9. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 10 ▲

The Sabres are that turkey that has been sitting in a smoker for like 10 hours. You can see it. You can smell it. You're pretty sure good things are happening. Then it's finally ready after a long, painful wait that consumed multiple coaches and at least one general manager. (It's then served on a table that has been set on fire, per Buffalo sports fan rules.)

10. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 11 ▲

The Avs are crispy turkey skin. Decadent, potently flavorful, portends greatness in the rest of the meal ... but it just lack the depth to satiate your hunger.

11. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 12 ▲

The Flames are pigs in a blanket in honor of Johnny Gaudreau, the living embodiment of great things coming in



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small portions, especially when paired with flaky goodness. The flaky goodness in Gaudreau's case being Sean Monahan.

12. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 8▼

The Capitals are all the wine that everyone brought to Thanksgiving dinner, mixed with all the beer that everyone brought to Thanksgiving dinner, mixed with a nice brandy. Oh no ... Alex Ovechkin's trying to do snow angels in the gravy boat again, gotta run ...

13. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 17▲

The Canadiens are giblets. What's a giblet? Like, we know they're mentioned with turkey and hence a long-standing tradition. Are they good? Are they bad? Is Carey Price just making them look good? Is Max Domi more the heart or the gizzard? Who can say at this point?

14. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 20▲

The Rangers are the Thanksgiving leftovers sandwich. Oh, so you thought the meal was done? Time to prep for the next holiday? Well, this tasty mix of holdovers from the big meal with a splash of new condiments and new seasoning has come together quite nicely.

15. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 16▲

While it might seem like sacrilege not to make some kind of BBQ reference here, the reality is that the Stars are mashed potatoes. Sometimes smooth and wonderful. Sometimes chunky and dry. Consistency issues abound.

16. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 14▼

The Islanders are an apple cider donut: Clearly missing something in the middle, but determined to show they can be delectable without him, errrr, it.

17. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 19▲

The Flyers are cranberry sauce. No matter how great it can be, it's always being held back by the same thing. In the Flyers' case, it's mediocre goaltending. In the case of cranberry sauce, it's being a gelatinous slab that takes the shape of the can that contains it.

18. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 18↔

The Hurricanes are some kind of side dish created with molecular gastronomy. You're sitting there with a plate of traditional food, and then someone puts a freeze-dried, sage-infused exploding gravy orb next to your potatoes. And you're like, "Hey, this is an exciting new approach to

something. Maybe it'll work. Or maybe it'll be an abject failure. In any case, points for trying something different."

19. Arizona Coyotes

Previous ranking: 21▲

The Coyotes are the kids' table. They're staring longingly at where the parents are sitting, full of fancy glasses and high-end cutlery and a porcelain serving platter ... until their attention is hijacked by their infant cousin putting their crayons in the candied yams. Again.

20. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 13▼

The Canucks are pumpkin pie. For one month every year, pretty much the best pie imaginable. And then it just, like, disappears from shelves. Poof. Gone.

21. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 15▼

The Penguins are white meat turkey. A Thanksgiving staple. Something you just expect to be there every time you're building your plate. But what if one year everyone decided to have dark meat instead, and the white meat was summarily ignored, despite still looking delicious? What if indeed. Maybe the Penguins can get Matt Murray to save some of the meat for next Thanksgiving, considering he's not saving anything else at the moment ...

22. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 24▲

The Panthers are a honey-baked ham. Every year, we wonder if a honey-baked ham could break through and become the main dish at Thanksgiving. And every year, it ends up being chopped up for salads and omelets instead.

23. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 22▼

The Oilers are the dining room table, or more specifically, Connor McDavid is. The dining room table provides the foundation on which everything is placed. Without the dining room table, the entire meal would plummet to the floor in a heaping mass of shattered glass and splattered food. Now, you might be saying, "This table is so beautiful, why not add things to take advantage of this sturdy table. Maybe some flowers, or a full table-scape. Maybe some fine china, or some lovely linens?" Oh, wait, sorry ... we're actually at Peter Chiarelli's for Thanksgiving this year, and he just sawed off one of the table's legs and sold it for a bag of magic beans. Whoops.

24. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 26▲

The Blackhawks are Brussels sprouts. They were off the plate for so many years, and then they came roaring back with a delicious new spin on an old dish we didn't even know we wanted. But then we couldn't get rid of them. "Here, have some more Brussels sprouts, drenched in that sweet-salty vinaigrette. And then some more. And still more after that.



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And now eat them outside every year." Like, respect and all, but maybe give something else on the plate a chance.

25. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 28▲

The Devils are baked ziti, mainly because many of my Italian friends growing up in Jersey would have baked ziti at Thanksgiving, which always struck me as confusing as to whether it belonged there. See also: Playoff contender, Devils as.

26. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 25▼

The Red Wings are creamed corn. "Hey, check out this rather unappetizing variation of something you've always loved." But hey, maybe you'll learn to like creamed corn. You never know.

27. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 23▼

The Ducks are not duck, which would have been way too easy. No, the Ducks are Thanksgiving Day television. The day could be terrible. The food could be shockingly bad. You know who makes it all better, who saves the day? John Gibson ... er, we mean "Thanksgiving Day Television," and its binge-able marathons and NFL games and strangely ever-present dog show competitions that save you from awkward conversions with your relatives.

28. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 30▲

While steadfastly avoiding the obvious Eugene Melynk-adjacent "liver" joke, we'll go with a parfait created by some

sort of sadist, where each new layer is more horrific than the last, like fried ants followed by battery acid. ("Hey, you wanna see something that will make the Uber video thing seem quaint? How about a fake news Twitter propaganda scandal, in which the team seemed to be using sock-puppet accounts to praise its own owner?")

29. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 29↔

The Golden Knights are those incredible hors d'oeuvres that your sister-in-law made last year that, for whatever reason, taste like hot death this Thanksgiving. Not enough salt? Too much salt? Maybe Nate Schmidt spilled whatever Nate Schmidt was imbibing in the mix? Whatever the difference is, it's about as appetizing as that mystery gelatin at a Vegas all-you-can-eat buffet.

30. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 27▼

The Blues are corn. Corn, in theory, should be great. Because it's corn. But here's the thing about corn at Thanksgiving: It's not time for corn anymore. What was great in theory just never tastes as good as it should taste in reality. And that friends, are the St. Louis Blues.

31. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 31↔

The Kings are that giant pile of plate scrapings that you find atop the trash, a lump of things that were really delicious at one time but now just congeal into an inert mush.



NHL Power Rankings: Reasons for fans of every team to be thankful this Thanksgiving

This exercise is going to be a whole lot easier for people in Nashville than in Los Angeles

by Cody Benjamin

Believe it or not, we've officially hit Holiday Season.

The 2018-19 NHL campaign is almost two months old, and that means Thanksgiving is right around the corner. Football may be the sport of choice in homes across America this fine Turkey Day, but hockey's heating up even as some of the NHL's top contenders deal with significant injuries. It's heating up so much, in fact, that several coaches' seats have burned up entirely -- the Blues firing Mike Yeo and the Oilers replacing Todd McLellan with Ken Hitchcock just this week.

On the other end of the spectrum, we've got two powerhouses in the Nashville Predators and Tampa Bay Lightning fighting to lay claim to the No. 1 spot in the standings, while preseason afterthoughts like the Buffalo

Sabres and Montreal Canadiens remain in the hunt not only for relevance but for early playoff consideration. (Check back with us in a few months on the Habs.)

There's lots going on, you see, and thus there's also plenty to be thankful for if you're an NHL fan.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving (and in lieu of trying to equate all 31 teams with a Thanksgiving side dish), we've used this week's edition of NHL Power Rankings to offer reasons you and your favorite team can be thankful this season:

Rk

Teams

Chg

1

Rcld



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Predators

The front office. It's hard not to come back to this every time, but their depth is outstanding. What Preds management has assembled is a lineup that can go deep with or without some of its biggest names.

-- 15-5
2

Maple Leafs

Mitch Marner. If you're a Leafs fan, you're already plenty thankful for Auston Matthews and the John Tavares deal. But Double-M is like the cherry on top.

4 15-6
3

Lightning

Offense. Some teams are happy to even get a goal on the board. Tampa has 76 in 21 games.

1 14-6
4

Jets

Patrik Laine. Let's not overthink it. A superstar scorer goes a long way in this league, and they have just that.

1 12-5
5

Wild

Bruce Boudreau's regular-season prowess. Don't get us started about playoffs, but if there's one thing you can count on, it's that the Wild will be in the hunt throughout the year.

2 12-7
6

Sabres

The rebuild. The last five-ish years are finally paying off, and this team is now fun to watch. Look at Jeff Skinner go!

2 13-6
7

Flames

Balance. Johnny Gaudreau is still the man, but the burden hasn't been solely on him to produce. Even with James Neal MIA, this group is playing like a team.

6 12-8
8

Bruins

David Pastrnak. This has been an awfully rough start for Boston in terms of injuries, but at least they've got a breakout on offense.

4 11-6
9

Avalanche

Mikko Rantanen's next step.

-- 10-6
10

Blue Jackets

November. Sergei Bobrovsky is starting to return to form, and they've quietly regained steam with a 6-2-2 stretch.

2 12-7
11

Sharks

Joe Pavelski picking up slack.

-- 11-7
12

Stars

American Airlines Center. They've lost just one game in regulation at home thus far.

2 11-8
13

Canadiens

The first month and a half of the season. Why? Because, in all likelihood, this club is headed back to Earth.

6 11-6
14



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Islanders

Barry Trotz. Easy. Most of the Isles aren't even playing up to par, yet this man has them far above the NHL cellar.

1 10-7
15

Capitals

The Metropolitan Division. Typically outrageously competitive, the Metro is weak. Really weak. The Caps have lots of time to turn it on.

5 10-7
16

Rangers

Shootouts. Somehow this group is 4-0 in games decided as such.

-- 11-8
17

Flyers

Gritty, Ivan Provorov and whichever other young guy suits your fancy. This team seems destined for enigmatic highs and lows, but at least there are some building blocks?

-- 9-9
18

Penguins

Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin still exist. It may not seem like it, but the best thing the Pens have going for them is that they've got guys who've come through in the clutch before. Time is a'wasting, however.

-- 7-8
19

Panthers

Mike Hoffman finding a streak. (This should also tell you how this season has gone.)

4 8-7
20

Coyotes

The Canucks' and Ducks' simultaneous free-fall. At least then they've got a chance to stay relevant in the Pacific.

1 9-9
21

Devils

Nico Hischier is back at practice.

6 8-9
22

Hurricanes

Micheal Ferland. Go watch that guy play.

1 9-8
23

Red Wings

Dylan Larkin on offense and Jimmy Howard in goal. These two have sparked a stretch so impressive that it's hard to fathom just how awful they started.

2 9-9
24

Oilers

Ken Hitchcock's arrival. If anyone can milk results out of this team, it's probably him. Something had to be done.

2 10-10
25

Golden Knights

Nate Schmidt is on the way back.

4 9-12
26

Blues

A new coach awaits. Craig Berube will handle things for now, but this team definitely needed the shakeup.

2 7-9
27

Senators



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Matt Duchene's explosion. (Now will they pay him?)

1
28

9-9

1
30

8-8

Canucks

Elias Pettersson will still be good when this team figures things out.

18
29

10-11

Ducks

Such a drastic fall might lead to bigger changes that wouldn't have come otherwise.

2
31

8-9

Blackhawks

The trade deadline will be here before you know it. There's no denying the rebuild is in effect, so it's time to embrace it.

Kings

You can't really get much slower, older and banged-up than this.

--

7-12



Quick Whistles: Micheal Ferland is a perfect fit for the Hurricanes

The Canes took a tough loss on Saturday, but they rectified it on Sunday.

By Brett Finger

About Last Week

Two games, two very different stories for the Carolina Hurricanes over the last seven days.

After a four-day layoff, Carolina's dramatic overtime victory over Cam Ward and the Chicago Blackhawks was ancient history when the division-leading Columbus Blue Jackets came to town on Saturday.

And it showed.

"It was a dud," Justin Williams said of his team's performance after their 4-1 loss. "Let's just call it what it was. It was a dud and it was certainly unacceptable."

No one can disagree with that assessment. From start to finish, the Canes' effort always felt lacking. It felt lacking to the point that Rod Brind'Amour's patience finally ran out.

"I haven't been upset all year, because the effort has been there," the rookie head coach said. "You can be upset about things not working or not getting the breaks, but we haven't had to get upset because we've been doing what we need to do. Tonight was not that way. That's why I wasn't too happy."

When Brind'Amour called his timeout just moments after Blue Jackets forward Cam Atkinson completed his hat trick,

he didn't do so to draw up a play or talk strategy. He did it to give his team a wakeup call. He spoke with intensity and anger. It was the first time he had been legitimately upset with his hockey team. The effort just wasn't there.

The next night was noticeably different.

If you were 30 seconds late to the game, you missed the entirety of Carolina's offense against the Devils. 22 seconds in, Williams backed up his talk with the game's first goal. Eight seconds later, Micheal Ferland kept his hot scoring start rolling.

"Well, that's the game," Brind'Amour explained. "We talk about all the time how you can have a good game, but it's that one shift or you take a breath and it costs you. I think it was the other way tonight. We got lucky. I think they had their two worst shifts of the game to start the game and it benefited us, obviously."

From there, the Canes put up a goose egg, but the Devils managed to do just one better - a goal from Pavel Zacha later in the first period.

It was an ugly win and a good win for this young hockey team. Brind'Amour said you need to have those ugly wins. Williams said that a win like that will help them down the line.

Two points are two points, and the Hurricanes will gladly take them. It was far from a perfect performance, though. The final 59:30 of the game featured very few grade-a chances



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for the Hurricanes. The goal-scoring is still a concern as is the power play.

The big positive that I took away from the game was the Hurricanes' ability to lock it down in the third period. One-goal leads in the final 20 minutes can be an adventure for this team but, for the first time all season, the game never felt like it was in danger. It never felt like the Canes were about to give the game away.

The Devils aren't the Predators. They aren't playing as well as they should be right now, but you have to take the positive from that if you're the Hurricanes. They didn't give New Jersey anything in the third period.

The next two games are big for the Hurricanes. The Toronto Maple Leafs will be a serious challenge on the eve of Thanksgiving and the Florida Panthers won't be giving the Hurricanes any discounts on Black Friday.

"We need to get something rolling here," Williams said on Sunday. "We need to get it going soon."

A Perfect Fit

The numbers behind Micheal Ferland's hot start are pretty impressive.

Through 20 games, Ferland has scored ten goals. Only four players in Carolina Hurricanes franchise history have scored more than ten goals in the first 20 games of a season: Eric Staal, Cory Stillman, Jeff O'Neill, and Sami Kapanen. Ferland is also the first Hurricane to reach ten goals in 20 games since the 2013 lockout-shortened season.

Those are impressive numbers for a guy who was an afterthought in the package Carolina acquired from Calgary.

While he won't score 40 goals and he likely won't continue being this dominant offensively through the final 62 games of the season, Micheal Ferland brings a skill set to the Hurricanes that they haven't had in a long time.

He goes to the net and he puts the puck in the net.

Ferland isn't the only player on the Hurricanes who goes to the net consistently. Jordan Staal does it, Warren Foegele does it, Brock McGinn does it, and the list goes on. He is, however, the only player who goes to the net and consistently is able to find holes in the goalie and get the puck in the net.

Right now, he has a team-high 15.4% shooting percentage which is nearly six points higher than the league average of 9.6%. Normally, you'd expect that number to come down, but this is pretty much par for the course for Ferland. He shot 14.2% and 14.6% in his final two seasons in Calgary.

The skill set that Ferland brings isn't an overly rare one but, for a team that has been dwelling in PDO purgatory for so long, it's a huge boost. They haven't had a player like this in a very long time. You probably have to go back to 2013 Jiri Tlustý, Erik Cole, Cory Stillman, and Tuomo Ruutu to find guys who compare well to Ferland.

To boot, he is 6'1", 217 pounds, he stands up for his teammates, he creates space for his highly skilled linemates, and he doesn't just have to score dirty goals. He can let some shots loose and just flat-out beat goalies.

His hands aren't too bad either...

The Hurricanes are going to have to commit a lot of money to Ferland but, if he keeps producing and performing the way he has so far, he's more than worth keeping around. His game is exactly what this team needs moving forward.

Canes on the Verge of Getting Healthy

We got some clarity on the Hurricanes' injury situation after Tuesday's practice.

The good: Victor Rask was a full participant in practice on Tuesday. It looks like he is still way ahead of schedule and will be ready to get back into the lineup before the end of the month, which could be a big deal for the Hurricanes, as I wrote in-depth about on Friday.

The bad: Brett Pesce's leg injury is still a problem. What appeared to be a day-to-day thing has turned into a week-to-week thing. Obviously, he is an important piece on the blue line and they'll eagerly await his return.

Health has been a concern for Pesce lately. His 2017-18 season was cut short due to a shoulder injury, he had a viral illness over the offseason, and now he's dealing with the leg injury.

The Hurricanes will need all hands on deck as the calendar flips to December. It's about time for them to get on a roll if they want to make this season interesting.

Charlotte Checkers vs. Belleville Senators Recap: Sloppy Checkers Fall To Sens

Charlotte was sloppy in all three zones as they suffer their 4th regulation loss of the season.

By Justin Lape

CHARLOTTE — The Charlotte Checkers winning streak ended at two games and their point streaks ended at three after suffering a 5-1 loss to the Belleville Senators on Tuesday. Rudolf Bachers and Jack Rodewald each scored a pair of goals to lead the way for the Senators.

The Checkers began the first period with sloppy play. Aleksis Saarela turned the puck over early but hunted down a

Senators forward on a breakaway to keep the game scoreless. Alex Nedeljkovic looked sharp early, stopping rebound chances and thwarting a breakaway attempt. Fortunately, the Checkers power play is adequate. Valentin Zykov forced a shot in from the slot past Senators goalie Filip Gustavsson on assists from Janne Kuokkanen and Jake Bean.

But Belleville tied the game after sustained pressure in the Checkers offensive zone. A flurry of shots caught Nedeljkovic off balance and Bachers beat Nedeljkovic while he was sliding on his glove side. Defenseman Christian



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Wolanin added an assist on the play to add to his impressive start. The Checkers were outshot 15-6 in the period.

Charlotte was heavily outskated and outworked in the first ten minutes of the second period. They were able to kill off two early penalties mostly in part to the Senators not generating high danger chances. Most of Belleville's shot attempts early in the period were from outside the circles.

Later in the period, a defensive error by the Checkers along the left circle let Senators forward Jack Rodewald walk in uncontested and lift the puck over Nedeljkovic's outstretched glove to put Belleville up 2-1. With less than a minute remaining in the period, Rodewald finished off tic-tac-toe passing in front of the net to put Belleville up 3-1 heading into the third period.

Belleville didn't let up there. Balcers scored his second of the game on breakaway after a Checkers turnover to put the Senators up 4-1. Francois Beauchemin put Belleville up 5-1 on an unassisted wrist shot and Checkers head coach Mike Vellucci determined he had enough and yanked Nedeljkovic in place for Callum Booth. Belleville's defense played a strong third period by forcing Charlotte to shot from alongside the side boards. Charlotte couldn't must much on a late power play and they suffered their biggest loss of the season so far.

Vellucci minced no words in excoriating his team's performance:

The Checkers and the Senators will face off again tomorrow in Charlotte at 7 p.m. Charlotte is off Thursday and Friday for the Thanksgiving holiday.



COMMENTARY: Don't sleep on Jaccob Slavin as an elite NHL defenseman

Aditi Dholakia, Staff Writer

Jaccob Slavin was drafted by the Carolina Hurricanes in 2012 as the 29th pick in the fourth round — 120th overall — as a defenseman. In the 247 games he's played since 2015, the 24-year-old has risen to become one of the key members of the Hurricanes' defense, and consistently tallies some of the highest ice time on the team.

And yet, people only seem to be focusing on Slavin's plus/minus stats and scoring percentage, both of which I'll concede are on the lower end of the spectrum. However, as a defenseman, Slavin's primary focus should be making sure the other team scores less, which is what he seems to be doing. A defenseman does not have to be flashy to be considered one of the league's elite — a concept that seems to escape a lot of people, but that describes Slavin perfectly.

The Hurricanes are coming off of a busy weekend, playing back-to-back games against the Columbus Blue Jackets and the New Jersey Devils. Saturday night's game against Columbus was a blowout, with the Canes losing 4-1 in regulation after a four-day break from playing altogether.

In his post-game interview, head coach Rod Brind'Amour expressed seldom-seen frustration with the way the team was playing, going so far as to say that the Canes lacked the desperation needed to bring home a win. In all of this, though, Slavin quietly tallied 23 minutes on ice, keeping up a solid line of defense and contributing significantly to 4 of the Canes' 5 penalty kills record during the game.

Carolina rallied on Sunday to beat the New Jersey Devils by scoring two goals in the first 30 seconds of the game, before

tightening up on defense and stopping all but one goal from the Devils for the rest of regulation. We'll forget that Carolina didn't score any more goals itself, either, and instead focus on the two full periods of stalwart defense played by the Canes, who were (for once) outnumbered in shots on goal by the Devils 34-25.

Lest we forget what this is all about, it's important to note that Slavin again played almost 23 minutes during Sunday night's game. In fact, overall, Slavin is ranked in the Eastern Conference's top 10 for total time on ice, and in the top 30 overall for the NHL. He's ranked number one on the Hurricanes.

What's interesting to note is that for a defenseman, Slavin isn't a particularly physical player. He's ranked all the way at 84th in the Eastern Conference for overall hits so far this season, having delivered just 13. He's only had one minor penalty and no majors in the 20 games played so far this season, which is relatively low for a defenseman — a position which implies some physicality to keep opposition players off the puck.

Statistics and rankings aside, Slavin is exactly the kind of quiet but sturdy defenseman needed on the Hurricanes. His stamina and ability to know and be right where he needs to be defensively is not only impressive, but also the markings of an elite defenseman in the NHL overall.

Slavin's playing style is far from flashy, but his presence on the team as an anchor on the defensive line is key to improving the Canes' penalty kill rankings and overall win percentage. It's time people take note of his contributions to



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this team, and pay attention to what he will no doubt achieve moving forward.



Checkers Slump to 5-1 Loss Against Belleville

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

The Checkers' return to Bojangles' Coliseum wasn't pretty, with Charlotte falling to the Belleville Senators by a 5-1 score.

The home side got on the board first thanks to a familiar sight – Valentin Zykov popping home a power-play goal from right in front of the crease. That lead was erased minutes later by a Senators' power-play strike, however, and that would turn the tide of the contest.

Jack Rodewald struck twice inside the final five minutes of the second for Belleville to push the visitors ahead, then Rudolf Balcers took advantage of a costly turnover early in the third to blow the game open and set the stage for the Senators 5-1 victory.

QUOTES

Coach Mike Vellucci on giving up five goals
That wasn't on Ned. They had 15 chances in the first period, Grade A scoring chances, and only had one goal. I didn't pull Ned because he was bad, I pulled Ned because the team was terrible in front of him and he didn't deserve to be left in the net playing like he was. He played fine. It has nothing to do with him. Our team was horrible tonight. We didn't show up, we didn't compete. We gave them an extra day off because of the long road trip and told them to be ready to start, and we were not ready. I'm very disappointed in our leadership because no one said a word on the bench. It has nothing to do with Ned. That game could have been 10-0 in the first period.

Vellucci on conveying that message to the team
They already know. I told them after the first period. It was embarrassing in front of our home crowd. Absolutely no excuses. Not one guy was good tonight. Not one guy communicated on the bench. I think we thought we're better than we really are. We had a good record on the road, good road trip, but we can't show up and think things are going to

happen without any work. Give them credit, they played hard, they played smart, we turned it over and gave them chance after chance.

Vellucci on bouncing back for tomorrow's rematch
The whole room better or they're going to get embarrassed again. It's on them. It was absolutely embarrassing. It's on them and if they don't figure it out then we're going to have to figure it out for them.

Greg McKegg on the game
I just think we got off to a tough start and weren't getting pucks deep. WE turned the puck over early on, they capitalized on their chances and we were just playing catch up after that.

McKegg on if fatigue from the six-game road trip was a factor
For sure the schedule is tough but I think it's tough for everyone. It's definitely not an excuse. We've just got to get back at it tomorrow and find our legs.

McKegg on bouncing back
It's one game, and we've got to look at the big picture here. We're on a pretty good roll. There's going to be ups and downs in the season and you've just got to maintain that level of consistency, play through the downs and everything's going to be alright.

NOTES

Prior to tonight, the Checkers had not lost by more than two goals ... They have allowed a season high goals in consecutive games ... Their 20 shots on goal tied their lowest total of the season ... This was the sixth time the Checkers gave up at least seven power-play opportunities ... Zykov's goal was his first of the season at any level (13 NHL games and three AHL games) ... Alex Nedeljkovic was pulled for the second consecutive game ... Forwards Patrick Brown and Spencer Smallman and defenseman Josiah Didier missed the game due to injury ... Forwards Steven Lorentz and Zack Stortini were healthy extras.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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'Canes hope to start streak vs. Leafs

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The Carolina Hurricanes are in what seems like a rare position this week.

They're coming off a victory.

It needs to become a habit.

"Winning is a lot more fun, isn't it?" Hurricanes captain Justin Williams said. "We need to start something rolling here. We need to get it going soon."

The next opportunity for that comes against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday night at PNC Arena.

The Maple Leafs have developed that winning feeling with a four-game winning streak that includes Monday night's 4-2 comeback victory against the St. Louis Blues.

"It was a four-line win and those are important," Maple Leafs left winger Zach Hyman said.

The Hurricanes haven't been as consistent during the past few weeks, winning three of their last 10 games (3-5-2).

Yet in an uneven performance Sunday against the New Jersey Devils, they came out on top. That was largely due to two goals in the opening 30 seconds.

Carolina is 6-2-0 when scoring first.

"We haven't gotten the first goal as much as we would like this season," center Jordan Staal said, noting the difference in that outing. "It wasn't our best game, but I felt like we worked hard."

What the Hurricanes are counting on is that 2-1 result being a springboard to a stretch of better outcomes.

"It's good for us to play some close games like that to have some confidence later in the season," Williams said.

That's something that Maple Leafs have latched on to.

They've learned that that persistence can pay off.

"Our team never gives up and that's something special," said Toronto right winger Mitch Marner. "This team shows no quit. That's something that we need to keep going forward."

This marks the first meeting of the season between the Maple Leafs and Hurricanes.

It could involve Carolina goalie Curtis McElhinney against his former team. McElhinney had gone through a long stretch of inactivity until posting his team-leading fourth victory Sunday.

"You want to get back in there and feel the rhythm," McElhinney said. "When you get an opportunity, you want to show you're more than capable to help this team get wins."

The Hurricanes claimed McElhinney off waivers from the Maple Leafs right before the start of the regular season.

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said the matchup with Toronto comes with an obvious connection.

"He wants to play every night," Brind'Amour said while being cautious in committing to giving McElhinney this assignment.

McElhinney has been used just twice since Oct. 20.

Meanwhile, the Maple Leafs count on goalie Frederik Andersen.

"He has been the MVP of this team," said Marner, who has a team-high 28 points. "He expects himself to be the best every night. ... He hasn't been anything short of that." Toronto center John Tavares has four of his team-best 13 goals in the last five games.

The Hurricanes are led by Micheal Ferland's 10 goals.

This marks the fifth game in a six-game homestand for Carolina. The Maple Leafs will return to Raleigh on Dec. 11.



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SportScan

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

1116668 Carolina Hurricanes

Here's what we know about the Hurricanes 20 games into the new regime

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH—Twenty games into the Carolina Hurricanes' season, what do we know?

The Canes, in Rod Brind'Amour's first year as head coach, are 9-8-3. They're not in playoff position with Thanksgiving two days away. Scoring remains problematic. The goaltending situation still is unsettled.

The good news: parity reigns in the NHL. Listen to any coach or general manager and they'll mention how evenly matched the league is and the standings bear that out. In the Eastern Conference, 13 teams had 20 or more points after Monday's games.

Brind'Amour has called the Canes a "work in progress." The work continues. Progress remains incremental.

Remember, the Canes were 9-7-4 and had 22 points after 20 games last season and had played one more road game.

Here's what we know:

Can anyone score goals?

Sebastian Aho had the early season tear -- four goals in his first five games -- and then went 12 games without one. The assists were there for Aho and some records set, but not goals.

Micheal Ferland has a team-high 10 goals, then it drops off quickly to Aho's six and five for Jordan Staal. The defensemen have nine goals, total. The Canes have scored two or fewer goals in 10 games.

Canes general manager Don Waddell said the team is looking for scoring help. They traded away a proven scorer in Jeff Skinner, who now has 14 goals for the Buffalo Sabres.

Quantity but enough quality?

Much has been made of the Canes' proliferation of shots -- an NHL-best 40.3 a game. They have big leads in the analytical measurables: scoring chances, high-danger scoring chances, Corsi, Fenwick. They're also fourth in missed shots (297) and tied for second in posts hit (18).

"There aren't too many games where it didn't feel like we created enough offense," Brind'Amour said. "The numbers back that up. They show us the high-danger chances and the Grade-A chances. We don't really look at shot totals. We're look at ones we give up. We don't care if we give up 30 shots if they're not high-quality. If they're high-quality that's a problem and vice versa on the offensive end. We're looking for the high-quality ones."

Natural Stat Trick, an analytics website, has the Canes first in the NHL by big margins in scoring chances and high-danger chances but outscored in both. That has to change for the Canes.

Special teams moving up

Remember when the Canes were last in the power play and penalty killing? No longer.

The Canes, showing better puck movement and decision-making, recently had power-play goals in four straight games -- scoring five times -- and have moved to 25th in the NHL at 15.5 percent. They've killed off 18 of the last 20 penalties and are 28th at 73.8 percent. That's progress, yes?

"Every team in this league, once they get in their (power-play) set, are going to get opportunities and you want to limit those opportunities as much as possible," Brind'Amour said.

Impact player?

The Hurricanes expected a lot out of Andrei Svechnikov this season as the No. 2 pick of the 2018 NHL Draft. They expected the Russian forward to have an immediate impact, even at 18.

After 20 games, Svechnikov has four goals and four assists and a minus-4 rating. His talent is evident. His line, with center Lucas Wallmark and winger Jordan Martinook, has been the steadiest. But the Canes need more from him and Brind'Amour might soon look for another line fit.

Who's in net?

First Scott Darling was injured. Then, Petr Mrazek. So much for establishing a goaltender rotation.

Curtis McElhinney, making his second start since Oct. 20, had 33 saves Sunday in beating the New Jersey Devils 2-1. The team that waived him this season, the Toronto Maple Leafs, are at PNC Arena on Wednesday and it would seem logical to give him a shot against them.

The Canes want and need Darling to be a No. 1 goalie, but Darling missed practice Tuesday as Brind'Amour gave him an extra day off. The flip side: Mrazek did get in a full practice Tuesday. "We gave him a full workload," Brind'Amour said.

The Nylander thing won't go away

With William Nylander still unsigned by the Maple Leafs and a Dec. 1 deadline approaching, the guessing continues. Will Nylander be traded -- you know, to someone like the Hurricanes? Will the forward sit out a season? Or will the two sides grudgingly decide on a salary number and term they can both accept?

The Leafs will be in town and general manager Kyle Dubas could be with them. Dubas already has made one visit to PNC Arena to scout (and snack on Gummy Bears on the fifth level.) Chances are, he could be talking to Waddell, again.

The whole thing has the feel and smell of typical posturing between team and agent/player when contract talks turn contentious. It's hard to imagine the Leafs losing Nylander. But we'll see.

News Observer LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116777 Toronto Maple Leafs

Bottom six top rate for Maple Leafs of late | The Star



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 21, 2018

By Mark Zwolinski

Six players set the stage for the Maple Leafs' 4-2 win over Columbus on Tuesday night, but only one of them got much attention for it.

Tyler Ennis, the fourth-line winger, was greeted by cameras and notepads in the aftermath of the come-from-behind win at Scotiabank Arena. The spotlight was well deserved: he fired a nifty goal and had one of his best nights as a Leaf.

Linemates Frederik Gauthier and Josh Leivo also provided a spark with their offensive zone pressure, especially in the second period when the Leafs were searching for a boost after a stagnant first.

The third line — Par Lindholm, Andreas Johnsson and Connor Brown — also did thankless but vital work. In the end, those bottom six forwards were the reason why the Leafs were able to turn it around.

"It was a four-line win tonight," said winger Mitch Marner, who combined with linemates John Tavares and Zach Hyman for three of the Leafs' four goals after the momentum shifted.

In the first period, the Nazem Kadri line had struggled to contain Columbus' top unit of Pierre-Luc Dubois between Cam Atkinson and Artemi Panarin. Atkinson and Dubois both scored and the Blue Jackets controlled just a tick under 60 per cent of the offensive zone possession. They outshot Toronto 14-6, with Dubois dominating Tavares and Kadri on faceoffs and scoring his goal with just 50 seconds remaining in the opening period.

Before Sunday's practice, the team discussed its mediocre 5-5-0 home record and the need to start strong against the Blue Jackets after a 3-0-0 streak in California. Leafs coach Mike Babcock rotated Tavares and Kadri against the Dubois line, with little effect.

Then he sent out Lindholm, Johnsson and Brown against them and something worked. That line began to take charge and the Leafs rebounded with 59 per cent of the possession in the second period — turning the tide before the top line started to find the net.

Babcock gave the Lindholm line the opening faceoff to start the second and third periods. The Gauthier line followed, and for a stretch in the second period the two units put together a series of shifts that took the steam out of the Blue Jackets.

"Yeah, no question. We struggled in the first period. I think (Ennis, Gauthier and Leivo had a) few good shifts in a row ... Hell of a play by Tyler to create some space, used his edges and just really silky with the play he made to put it in. It definitely got us going, and they were huge for us."

Lindholm also won 10 of 15 faceoffs, prompting Babcock to agree that the line "did a real good job for us."

The Gauthier unit was the only one with no offensive zone starts and finished with a collective 43 per cent of the offensive zone possession. While 50 per cent is average, much of their work came against the Blue Jackets' best players and started in the defensive or neutral zone.

On another note, the Leafs and Blue Jackets played the entire game without taking a penalty — a first for the Leafs since February 2013. In addition to their solid checking work, Ennis and Leivo have been excellent with the man advantage in the past two weeks.

"I think we've been playing well," Ennis said. "I think we've been trying to keep it simple, be good in our own end, get it in their end and go to work. Freddie and Josh, they're really talented guys. They're making plays and getting confidence, and I think we've been getting better every night."

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116778 Toronto Maple Leafs

Slavin emerging faith of the franchise in Carolina | The Star

By Kevin McGran

When the Maple Leafs play the Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday night it will be a chance for fans to size up the one team that has what Toronto needs: defencemen.

The Canes come up a lot whenever the possibility of trading William Nylander arises. Nylander remains without a contract and would fit in with any team, but especially offensively starved Carolina.

Carolina defenceman Jaccob Slavin, chasing Leaf Nikita Zaitsev when the teams met in Raleigh last season, is a popular trade target.

The one Carolina defenceman the Leafs might covet more than any other is Jaccob Slavin, a rising star and student of the game. Slavin is 24 and a left-handed shot. The 2012 fourth-round pick from Erie, Colo. has two goals and five assists in 20 games while leading the team in average time on ice (23:17). He's starting a seven-year deal with a cap hit of \$5.3 million U.S.

There's no way he wants to leave Carolina, his home for the last three years — and it's not just for the golf courses, great weather and reasonable cost of living.

"For us, and for how me and my wife and are, there are a lot of really great churches out there, so we're connected there," said Slavin. "There's lots of really good, genuine people. Not that there's not in other states or other areas, but being in the Bible Belt, it's part of the culture there."

Slavin is a member of one of hockey's smallest communities: the God Squad, a term used derisively in some corners to label athletes who place their faith above all, including their sport.

"I'm just Christian," Slavin told the Star in a pre-season interview. "Out of the four major team sports, hockey is probably the least popular to be a Christian (in) or to having any religious ties."

"I enjoy it. It's the most important thing in my life, the most important thing in my wife's life. It's what we try to base every decision off of. I believe God has given me this platform of hockey as a way to spread the Gospel. That's what I want to use it for."

Few in hockey display their faith. In the 1980s, then-Leafs owner Harold Ballard publicly derided Laurie Boschman as "too soft" and then traded him because he was born again. Things aren't that harsh these days. Mike Fisher, Shane Doan and Jarome Iginla were all captains who spoke openly about their faith.

Slavin says faith makes him a better player by putting things like slumps or mistakes in perspective.

"For me, hockey is not my world," said Slavin. "I think you get a lot of guys whom hockey is their world, the main thing in their life. For me, I know hockey is going to end one day. And I know my identity isn't found in the game of hockey. So I know if there is a bad game, or a bad play I make, it's very easy to get over it for myself because I know that's not what's going to identify me, that's not what's God is looking for. He just cares where my heart is at in the game and why I'm doing it."

He's emerging as a leader, something he also attributes to his faith.

"I try to reflect Jesus in the locker room. I try to be a light in the locker room," said Slavin. "I've had good conversations with guys. Guys know if there are serious issues in their life, they know they can come to me and talk to me about anything that they're dealing with, and I'm not going to be coming from a place of judgment to them. Just want to come from a



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place of love and hopefully point them in the direction of something they can (find) hope in and cling to.”

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116779 Toronto Maple Leafs

Ex-Leafs coach and player Dan Maloney dead at 68 | The Star

By The Canadian Press

Former Maple Leafs player and coach Dan Maloney died at age 68. The NHL Alumni Association announced Maloney's death on its Twitter account. No cause of death was given.

Selected by the Blackhawks in the first round, 14th overall, in the 1970 NHL draft, Maloney went on to play 11 seasons in the NHL with Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit and Toronto. He was part of the trade that sent Marcel Dionne from the Red Wings to Los Angeles.

He had 192 goals and 259 assists over 737 games. A feared pugilist, he also piled up 1,489 penalty minutes.

Maloney went into coaching after his playing career ended following the 1981-82 season, spending two seasons as an assistant coach with the Maple Leafs before being promoted to head coach. He coached the Leafs for the 1984-85 and 1985-86 seasons, then spent the following three seasons as head coach of the Winnipeg Jets before being fired 52 games into the 1988-89 season. He also served as an assistant with the New York Rangers in 1992-93.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116780 Toronto Maple Leafs

Dryden targets hockey head hits for the good of the game | The Star

By Bruce Arthur

Ray Ferraro was in Anaheim last week, about to do a game, and a video was playing full of the hits of his hockey era. Ferraro almost laughed.

“I said, how the hell did I survive that? They're crazy hits, vicious, and I can see why some people love that,” says Ferraro, a 400-goal scorer who played from 1984 to 2002 and now TSN's ace hockey analyst. “But every one of those hits were penalties. The game has evolved.”

On Wednesday, Ken Dryden will sit down and he will read a prepared statement to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health's subcommittee, which has been formed to examine sport-related concussions. The hall of fame goaltender and former Liberal cabinet minister has decided to push hockey toward banning hits to the head for no other reason than he thinks it's the right thing to do.

“This isn't about hitting,” says Dryden. “That's a distraction and that's a confusion. This isn't about hitting at all. You think Sidney Crosby and Alexander Ovechkin don't hit? Of course they do. They play tough, hard games, that's what they do. That's what virtually every player does.

“It is a false argument and it's actually a dishonest argument to talk in terms of taking hitting out. Give me a break. That's not what this is. That's not what I've ever said. Not even close. This is about hits to the head.”

There hasn't been much traction within the game. Nobody in the league has deigned to meet with him in any capacity. The argument within the NHL against banning head hits is this: Fighting is being bred out of the game — though, as Dryden puts it, not because of enlightenment. The apex predator hits, the Scott Stevens hits and the Matt Cooke hits, are all but gone. The league introduced Rule 48 for blindside hits to the head, took out the blindside aspect, and has crept toward putting more responsibility being placed on the hitter. There has been improvement.

And after a fallow period under Stephane Quintal, the league has a reinforced suspension office under former enforcer George Parros. (Parros had to divest himself from his Violent Gentlemen line of merchandise, which can still be seen on fans with the slogan: Make Hockey Violent Again. This was a Very Hockey Thing.)

And hockey's same old worries run under all of it. The NHL disagrees with Dryden, and worries banning head hits will breed out hitting. The fear of unintended consequences abounds. They didn't eliminate the red line to help eliminate enforcers. It just happened.

Dryden tilts against these windmills, because he thinks he should. He points to how much the game has changed over the past century: the forward pass, the introduction of an elbowing penalty, the red line, change. Evolution.

“Think of the best players, then go to the next 10, then go to the next 20, then go to the next 100, then go to the next 400,” says Dryden, who wrote the book *Game Change* centred on the late Steve Montador, the NHL tough guy who died at age 35. “How do they play? They don't play the way players did 40 years ago ... they play in a way where they don't put at real risk, and serious risk of head injury, the other guy or themselves. So the choice doesn't have to be, this is the game and the game that I played is the game now and forever. No, the game is different anyway. And the game is already starting to leave it behind.”

It's a lonely position in hockey, where the sport's culture so often overrides its brotherhood. Dryden has gotten supportive calls from Scotty Bowman, from former head of officiating Terry Gregson — whom Dryden quoted as saying: look up Rule 48.1, Illegal Check to the Head, and delete Illegal — and from Ferraro, TSN's lead hockey analyst and one of the sharpest voices in the game. There are pockets.

“I support what Ken's doing because I think, with no skin in the game, he's just trying to find a way to a better path,” says Ferraro. “It's not a perfect path; there is no perfect path. Just better. If you step onto this path and you don't like it in a year, change it. You know how many times they changed the offside rule? When I played, half the time guys would yell from the bench at the linesman and the linesman would say: ‘Guys, they changed that rule in the summer.’ And we'd say: ‘Oh, missed that one.’

“I don't think much would change if you went to an international standard, which is every hit to the head is penalized with (two minutes and a 10-minute misconduct). Maybe you give referees the latitude to say, that's clearly an accidental hit to the head, and there's no 10.

“I'm for anything that would lower the number of hits to the head: intentional, unintentional, doesn't matter to me. The game is terrific. I don't want to come off like a grumpy old, ‘Oh, I hate everything the NHL does.’ I think the game is awesome. There are amazing parts to it, but what's wrong with trying to be a little better? What's wrong with trying to be a little safer?

“Say there's 100 (head hits) in a year and we take out 10. Isn't that better?”

The subcommittee will listen Wednesday to Dryden and others: athletes, coaches, administrators. Maybe nothing will result. Maybe things will continue to get better.

Will hockey ever move that little bit more, further into a different game? Will it ever find the confidence to make every hit to the head illegal, and value the brains of those who get hit over anything else? It seems



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doubtful, doesn't it? But so would a lot of changes, if you asked about them 20 years ago.

"Life goes on," says Dryden. "The game goes on." He will tilt against the old windmills Wednesday. They seem eternal, but maybe they aren't.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116781 Toronto Maple Leafs

Over The Boards: Carving up NHL award races at U.S. turkey time | The Star

By Kevin McGran

Is it too early to decide who's going to win the Hart Trophy, or the Norris? Can't be.

U.S. Thanksgiving is this week, a time when NHL general managers traditionally assess whether their team will make the playoffs — and part of the reason why we've hit coach-firing season.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116782 Toronto Maple Leafs

Game Day: Maple Leafs at Hurricanes

Terry Koshan

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS at CAROLINA HURRICANES

Wednesday, 7 p.m., PNC Arena

TV: Sportsnet, Radio: The Fan 590

THE BIG MATCHUP

Mitch Marner vs. Sebastian Aho

A couple of whiz kids from the 2015 draft — the Hurricanes chose Sebastian Aho 35th overall, 31 picks after the Maple Leafs selected Mitch Marner — have been prolific for their clubs. Each has the potential to make a play happen out of nothing; Marner's 22 assists are second-most in the NHL, and Aho is not far off with 17. Aho, who was taken one pick after the Leafs drafted Travis Dermott, has 137 NHL points, the fifth-most among 2015 picks. Marner is third with 158, behind only Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel.

FIVE KEYS TO THE GAME

1. At home on the road

The Maple Leafs will put their 9-1-0 road record, the best in the NHL, on the line against a Hurricanes team that has a home record of 5-4-2. The Leafs showed their mettle in a comeback win at home against Columbus on Monday, this after sweeping California. Toronto has proven to be a club that doesn't become fraught with worry in the rare times a game has got away from them, and that approach against a Carolina club that likes to play in the offensive zone will be crucial.

2. Be careful

The Hurricanes' record through 20 games — 9-8-3 — is middling and has them four points out of a wildcard playoff spot in the Eastern

Conference. This is a club, however, that is not easily cast aside.

Carolina was leading the NHL with an average of 40.3 shots on goal a game including an NHL-best 612 shots on goal during five-on-five play. Carolina also was leading the league with 253 high-danger scoring chances, though the Leafs were fifth with 206. Goalie Frederik Andersen, not that he wouldn't be anyway, will have to be on his toes.

3. Glut of just okay goaltending

One major factor in the Hurricanes' inability to win with consistency: Their goaltending has not been great, whether it has been Scott Darling, ex-Leaf Curtis McElhinney or Petr Mrazek, who has not played since Nov. 2 but practised on Tuesday as Darling had a day off. It's possible the Leafs see McElhinney, who was claimed by Carolina on waivers on Oct. 2. McElhinney had his best game of the season on Sunday with a 33-save performance in a win against New Jersey, but overall has just a .903 save percentage, the same mark being carried by Darling.

4. Johnny in the spots

John Tavares ultimately could not lead the New York Islanders to much playoff success during his nine seasons with the team, but he always was able to beat up on Carolina. Tavares always as been a headache for the Hurricanes, recording more points (41) and more goals (22) against the 'Canes than any other NHL team. Tavares gets it done honestly, as his 19 even-strength points this season are fourth in the NHL. Whether he gets Sebastian Aho or Jordan Staal as a matchup, he will be a handful.

5. Rielly rising

How special has Morgan Rielly's ascent to the top the NHL scoring heap (among defencemen) been through the first quarter? There are several ways to get perspective, and here's one: Rielly has nine goals, the same amount racked up by all of the Hurricanes defencemen combined, through 21 games. Not often do clubs have to worry about shutting down a blueliner, but Rielly is an exception. It shouldn't matter that in 15 career games versus Carolina, Rielly has just one goal.

MAPLE LEAFS LINES

LW-C-RW

Zach Hyman-John Tavares-Mitch Marner

Patrick Marleau-Nazem Kadri-Kasperii Kapanen

Andreas Johnsson-Par Lindholm-Connor Brown

Tyler Ennis-Frederik Gauthier-Josh Leivo

Defence pairs

Morgan Rielly-Ron Hainsey

Jake Gardiner-Nikita Zaitsev

Travis Dermott-Igor Ozhiganov

Goaltenders

Frederik Andersen

Garret Sparks

HURRICANES LINES

LW-C-RW

Micheal Ferland-Sebastian Aho-Teuvo Teravainen

Brock McGinn-Jordan Staal-Justin Williams

Jordan Martinook-Lucas Wallmark-Andrei Svechnikov

Warren Foegele-Clark Bishop-Phil Di Giuseppe

Defence pairs

Jacob Slavin-Doug Hamilton



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Calvin de Haan-Justin Faulk

Haydn Fleury-Trevor van Riemsdyk

Goaltenders

Scott Darling

Curtis McElhinney

INJURIES

Maple Leafs — C Auston Matthews (shoulder).

Hurricanes — D Brett Pesce (lower body), G Petr Mrazek (lower body), C Victor Rask (hand).

SPECIAL TEAMS

Power play

Maple Leafs: 25.9% (6th)

Hurricanes: 15.5% (25th)

Penalty kill

Maple Leafs: 82.1% (7th)

Hurricanes: 73.8% (28th)

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116783 Toronto Maple Leafs

Dan Maloney, former Maple Leafs player and coach, dies at 68

Lance Hornby

Dan Maloney, one of the toughest hombres to wear a Maple Leafs sweater and later coach Toronto in a major playoff upset, died early Monday.

The 68-year-old had not been in good health in later years, according to friends, and did not venture far from his home in the Barrie/Orillia area for many team functions. His death was announced by the Leafs' Alumni Association.

"It's a sad day," said his London Knights and Leafs teammate Darryl Sittler. "Danny and I were the same age, our birthdays are a month apart. A lot of people admired him as a player."

He and Sittler were first round picks in the 1970 draft, Sittler by the Leafs at fourth overall, Maloney 14th by Chicago. Maloney spent a brief time with the Blackhawks, but the left winger was subsequently was a big part of the Los Angeles Kings and Detroit Red Wings. Nicknamed 'Satch' and 'Snowshoes', he had 27-goal years with both teams, but was just as respected for his hard right punch which contributed to the 368 total penalty minutes in those back-to-back productive seasons.

"He wasn't just a fighter, not at all, which is why he was picked so high," said Sittler. "We got to know each other again (when Maloney was acquired by the Leafs at the 1978 trade deadline)."

In a major deal with Detroit that included two first-round picks, Maloney was acquired to give Roger Neilson's Leafs intimidation and goals in the playoff wars. The Leafs did get two rounds in and past the New York Islanders before running into the Montreal Canadiens dynasty.

"He was a fierce competitor who stuck up for his teammates," Sittler said.

On the road, Maloney would always keep an eye on players and staff, such as young assistant general manager Gord Stellick. Maloney knew

Stellick often carried a lot of cash for per diems and team expenses and might be a robbery target. Or Maloney would quietly pay Stellick if trainers or lesser players owed the team money for game tickets or other small expenditures.

As assistant coach and later head coach of the Leafs starting in 1984-85, he brought some order to a dysfunctional team under Harold Ballard, melding veterans and an impressionable group of first-round picks. In 1986, with Chicago finishing almost 30 points ahead in the Norris Division, Maloney's Leafs swept the Hawks in a best-of-five and took St. Louis to seven games in the division final.

"I loved him," said Chris Kotsopoulos, a defenceman on that team. "I struggled the first few weeks after getting traded from Hartford because of lack of conditioning. He saw that I wasn't ready and worked with me. He believed in me, he trusted me, and I eventually had one of my best years."

"He was a players' coach who was just starting to blossom. A big mistake by Harold (Ballard) and everyone knows the rest of the story."

Ballard wouldn't offer much of a raise after Maloney's feat, with his heart set on hiring farm team rogue John Brophy for a cheaper price. An angry Maloney took a job with the Winnipeg Jets. After 73 wins over two seasons and two playoff appearances, he was fired.

"He died way too soon," Sittler said. "Having lost another teammate in Kurt Walker recently, this really hits home."

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116784 Toronto Maple Leafs

Andersen, Leafs should shut out trophy talk

Lance Hornby

Awaiting the press box elevator at SBA after Monday's game, the chant began in the back rows at Scotiabank Arena as Frederik Andersen was announced as the first star.

"M-V-P! M-V-P!"

No doubt a few fans had their pretend Hart ballots already filled, had defenceman Morgan Rielly as the sure-fire Norris winner or think Mike Babcock should start working on his Jack Adams speech.

Thankfully, by the time the dressing room doors opened, the Maple Leafs themselves were still down-to-earth about their early — and the emphasis is on early — success this season.

The last thing they need is trophy talk before American Thanksgiving from within or beyond. Such past premature adulation has made for longer winters when fortunes inevitably take a dip. Past disappointments, whether in December or not until April, have been absorbed and steeled this version of the Leafs not to get ahead of themselves.

Battling for first-place overall is great, scoring without Auston Matthews and William Nylander is duly noted and the play of Andersen, Rielly, Mitch Marner and John Tavares supports strong pre-season prognostications. But last we looked, they hadn't won a Presidents Trophy, scoring title or a playoff series since 2004, never mind four to win a Cup.

That's the kind of message Babcock keeps reinforcing. Though some players might chafe when he pulls their collar, they know this is not the finished product. So Marner was careful to say "team MVP" when discussing Andersen after his 37 saves in the 4-2 win over Columbus.



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"Still pushing to get better," said the goalie himself, playing down a question of whether his .935 save percentage means he's as confident now as any time in his Toronto career.

The Leafs have won the past four straight, including the rare sweep of California and a stirring comeback on Monday, but all they have to do is look around to realize it's a modest run. Their record of 15-6 — their best start in three decades — still has not pulled them away from the divisional pack, with Tampa Bay and Boston right on their heels. Montreal did not fade quickly as everyone thought and Buffalo can't wait to kick-start the geo-rivalry in the New Year when it meets the Leafs three times. Everyone plays 82 games and a high seed and home ice still doesn't guarantee a favourable opening round match.

In the West, Nashville is slightly ahead of them in overall standings and the dynamic Jets and their following see themselves as Canada's next Cup champion.

So Marner will take more results such as Monday's when the Leafs got contributions across the board.

"No one stood out, our whole team came to play," he said. "That's something special and something we'll need going forward."

SMALL LEAFS STAND TALL

Is there room for two Marners on the Leafs?

Tyler Ennis has been doing his own water bug routine for almost a decade now and while not blessed with the hockey vision of Marner, he can operate in tight quarters. Monday's dance behind the Columbus net and his subsequent goal to begin the rally had everyone praising the fourth line winger, whose puck luck has not been great so far.

"It'll start going in for him," predicted Babcock, who has made him part of the second power-play unit this year. "He hit the post earlier (Monday) and the other night he was home free and missed the net. As his confidence comes back, he'll start to score a bit."

Ennis had three 20-goal seasons with Buffalo.

"It all starts with Enzo tonight," Marner said. "He's very good at making time and space for himself and making plays. He's an unbelievable guy in this room and outside the rink as well."

LOOSE LEAFS

It's now down to 10 days until William Nylander must sign with the Leafs, be traded or sit out 2018-19 ... As mentioned, Babcock passed both Pat Burns and Red Kelly in Leafs coaching wins on Monday with 134. Babcock did it in 267 games, Burns reached 133 in 281 and Kelly in 318, though there were no chances for overtime games in Kelly's day in the mid-1970s ... Andersen has tied Bruce Gamble for 11th in wins by a Toronto franchise goaltender with 83 and his next start will make him the 16th to have played in at least 150 ... The Leafs used Tuesday as a travel day to Carolina.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116785 Toronto Maple Leafs

Former Leaf Dan Maloney dead at 68

Canadian Press

Former NHL player and coach Dan Maloney has died at age 68.

The NHL Alumni Association announced Maloney's death on its Twitter account. No cause of death was given.

Selected by the Blackhawks in the first round, 14th overall, in the 1970 NHL draft, Maloney went on to play 11 seasons in the NHL with Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit and Toronto. He was part of the trade that sent Marcel Dionne from the Red Wings to Los Angeles.

He had 192 goals and 259 assists over 737 games. A feared pugilist, he also piled up 1,489 penalty minutes.

He went into coaching after his playing career ended following the 1981-82 season, spending two seasons as an assistant coach with the Maple Leafs before being promoted to head coach.

He coached the Leafs for the 1984-85 and 1985-86 seasons, then spent the following three seasons as head coach of the Winnipeg Jets before being fired 52 games into the 1988-89 season.

He also served as an assistant with the New York Rangers in 1992-93.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116786 Toronto Maple Leafs

Nikita Kucherov on William Nylander's contract dispute: 'I would have done the same thing'

By Joe Smith Nov 20, 2018

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Three years ago, Lightning wing Nikita Kucherov was in William Nylander's shoes.

Kucherov, 25, was a restricted free agent (with no leverage of arbitration rights), coming off 29- and 30-goal seasons. He missed the entire training camp and preseason, staying back home in Russia awaiting a contract resolution.

Kucherov wasn't overly thrilled by Tampa Bay's contract offers, but with little recourse, he accepted a three-year bridge deal worth \$4.76 million annually.

"I just wanted to play," Kucherov said. "I didn't want to stay at home."

But after watching Nylander, the 22-year-old Leafs star, sit out the first month of the regular season during a contract dispute, Kucherov understands that approach. Nylander faces a Dec. 1 deadline to sign or he's not eligible to play the rest of the season.

Kucherov doesn't blame Nylander. He supports him. If Kucherov had to go through this situation again, he sees the merit in the fight.

"I would have done the same thing," Kucherov told The Athletic Monday before the Lightning's game against the Predators. "I don't know what's happening right now there (in Toronto), but to have a guy like him on any team, every team wants him."

"He's still going to be a great player. Great playmaker. Great goal scorer. Everybody has their opinion on him, but as soon as he gets to play, he's going to prove to everyone — they'll just be talking about hockey. If he thinks he's right. Good for him."

The rest is history

Of course, everything worked out well for Kucherov. Kucherov bet on himself in his bridge deal, and after two All-Star seasons, he cashed in with an eight-year extension in July worth \$9.5 million annually.

But Kucherov can see where Nylander is coming from. His situation was a bit different from the Leafs winger. Back in the Lightning's summer spending spree of 2016, they were cap-strapped, having given out hefty deals to captain Steven Stamkos, Victor Hedman and Alex Killorn. By the time it got to Kucherov, Tampa Bay had between \$5-\$5.5 million left. So



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Kucherov wasn't going to get the long-term deal he wanted, like the one Johnny Gaudreau signed a few days before him (six years, \$6.75 million annual average). It was hard for Kucherov's camp, which didn't have many good comparables.

Kucherov could have played in Russia (he didn't want to) or held out (like Nylander). But would Kucherov want to wait until the Lightning traded a teammate to clear cap space for him? What if the Lightning got off to a hot start?

Kucherov signed, and the rest is history. He's happy, having settled into a Tampa home with his wife, Anastasyia, and dog Bella. But Kucherov understands why players would want to fight for their best deal, even if it means sitting out a season. The Leafs have \$12.2 million in current cap space, per CapFriendly, but also have to pay fellow stars Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner next summer, when both are RFAs. So Nylander has to wonder how much money will be left for him.

The Leafs could either try to compromise and sign Nylander to a bridge deal before Dec. 1, trade him to one of many potential suitors, or let him sit the rest of the season.

"If (Nylander) is not playing this year, everybody next year will want him on their team," Kucherov said. "You go around the league and look at the contracts. It's not just for him. He's an unbelievable player. I'm sure he's going to get paid a lot."

Interesting Point

There's no doubt the Brayden Point camp is going to watch this Nylander saga with interest.

Point will be in Nylander's position next summer, a restricted free agent with no arbitration rights. And after his first All-Star appearance last season (with 32 goals), Point is on pace for 50 this year (14 in his first 21 games).

It'll be curious to see what comparables are used by Point during negotiations. It's likely Oilers wing Leon Draisaitl's blockbuster, eight-year, \$68 million deal from 2017 come up. Draisaitl was a restricted free agent then, coming off a 29-goal year.

The Lightning could counter with Kucherov, who had two star-in-the-making seasons under his belt, but no leverage in his talks. Tampa Bay has traditionally gone the bridge deal route with their restricted free agents under former GM Steve Yzerman and current GM Julien BriseBois (Ondrej Palat, Tyler Johnson, Kucherov and goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, who signed a three-year bridge worth \$3.5 million annually a year ahead of his restricted free agency summer).

BriseBois met with Point's agent Gerry Johansson early this season and the two sides agreed to table talks until the offseason, allowing the star center to focus on the season. And even with Point's hot start, that strategy hasn't changed.

"We mutually agreed that it's best to focus on hockey right now," BriseBois said. "It's easier for him to make the appropriate decision for him, and us to make an appropriate decision. It's not a matter of us wanting him to play for the Lightning, it's a matter of having a good understanding of what the proper compensation should be. And both will have a read on it after the season."

The Lightning doesn't appear to be concerned Point will turn into another Nylander, who is likely an outlier in this type of holdout. And, for what it's worth, Point isn't worried about it either. Point said Monday he hasn't thought about his contract at all and is merely focused on having a strong season.

"We have a good team here," Point said. "My focus is on the regular season, hope we'll be in the playoffs. That's all the focus is on. There's going to be time to (talk contract) later on."

Point will get paid, there's no doubt. Just don't expect him to miss any games next season in the process.

"That's not his frickin' goal, I'll tell you that," said Point's father, Grant, who was in town for the Lightning's annual Father's Trip over the weekend. "He just wants to play hockey. ... I'm sure they'll work something out."

Heavyweight showdown

Holy moly, what a game. This one lived up to the hype of two of the league's top teams — Nashville and Tampa Bay — going at it. Bridgestone Arena was electric, and both heavyweights traded blows, with the Predators dominating the first half of the game and the Lightning the second.

"It was two different games," coach Jon Cooper said.

It ended with the Lightning losing 3-2, but they nearly forced overtime several times, including Tyler Johnson just missing wide on an open net in the final minute of a 6-on-5. Point had clanked one off the post earlier.

At one point in the second period, the Predators were whipping Tampa Bay, up 28-12 in shots and winning 80 percent of the draws. The Lightning were down two goals but didn't give up, flipping the script late in the second and controlling play the rest of the way. Shots ended up 34-30 Nashville.

"It would have been easy with the momentum they had and the fans that were really involved in the game to just fold and sit back but we really pushed," said goalie Louis Domingue. "It was a playoff-type game and we were right in it and I thought we deserved to either tie or win."

Considering how well the Lightning play when they turn it on, wouldn't it be fun to see what they could do by playing a complete game? "We can't spot them two goals and expect to win," Victor Hedman said.

"We have to have better starts," wing Alex Killorn said. "We've been fortunate for a lot of the starts, we haven't played well but they haven't scored a ton of goals against us."

A scary sight

With the Lightning having already lost No. 1 goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy for 4 to 6 weeks because of a broken left foot, you couldn't blame the team for holding their breath when Domingue went down in the second period after taking a shot off his neck.

Domingue was tended to by Lightning trainers but stayed in the game. He just had to catch his breath, the puck hitting him just above the chest protector and under his mask.

"I don't know if you ever got hit in the neck like that, but it's like you have a hole almost — you can't really breathe," Domingue said. "It takes a second, and you're good."

Domingue has been more than good since taking over for injured Vasilevskiy.

"He's been phenomenal," Hedman said.

Domingue has started four straight games for the first time since his time in Arizona and won two of them. He made 31 saves Monday against the Predators, including a big-time breakaway stop with four minutes to go to keep it a one-goal game. Domingue made a similar timely breakaway save late in regulation Saturday, preserving the tie and leading to a 6-5 OT win. This is an example of why the Lightning feel Domingue has what it takes to hold down the fort until Vasilevskiy returns. Tampa Bay isn't shopping for another goalie, not even a No. 3 to replace Eddie Pasquale, who is the current backup.

"I feel great," Domingue said. "It's fun playing again, a couple games in a row. It's a lot easier. It's crazy what a difference it is to be playing. You get in a rhythm. You don't think, you play. It's a lot of fun. Just confidence building on my game and it's feeling comfortable."

Moment of the game



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Cooper said he felt like both teams scored three goals tonight. The only difference was that all three by the Predators counted.

The Lightning had a goal taken away late in the second period when Killorn was called for tripping Ryan Ellis just before he put in a shot from the crease area. Instead of being a 3-2 game, it was still 3-1.

It looked like Killorn was trying to get his stick untangled from Ellis so he could accept a cross-crease pass from Tyler Johnson.

"It was one of those things where we were battling for position," Killorn said. "I don't know if my stick caught him. Most of the time their guy goes down to try to lay out for the pass. I'm not sure what he was doing or if I tripped him. But I haven't seen (the replay)."

Back to Kucherov

Kucherov had a beauty of a goal Monday, finishing a 2-on-1 with Point to cut the Predators lead to 3-2 three minutes into the third. He nearly tied it on a backhand later in the period, robbed by a glove save from Vezina Trophy winner Pekka Rinne. Kucherov's slick cross-zone pass enabled Johnson to have an open net in the final minute. Maybe this game, where Kucherov had seven shot attempts, could help spark him from what he considers a subpar start to the season.

Kucherov has eight goals and 24 points in 21 games. But it's not up to his standards, his overall game.

"I'm not really happy with my game," Kucherov said before Monday's game. "It's been a tough season so far."

What doesn't he like?

"I don't like anything. Nope. It's not fun."

How does he snap out of it?

"I don't know," he said. "It doesn't seem like things are working right now. It's a lot of frustration, lot of one-and-dones. I guess I've got to work through it. But it's a long season."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116707 Florida Panthers

Preview: Panthers at Lightning, 7:30 p.m., Wednesday

Wells Dusenbury

Panthers at Lightning

When/where: 7:30 p.m./Amalie Arena, Tampa

TV: Fox Sports Florida; Radio: 560-AM; 640-AM (Palm Beach)

Scouting report: Florida (8-7-3) is coming off a 7-5 win over the Ottawa Senators. ... Panthers forward Vincent Trocheck was carted off the ice on a stretcher after suffering a lower leg injury in the contest. ... Mike Hoffman extended his point streak to 16 games, scoring late to seal Florida's victory. ... Hoffman and Evgenii Dadonov are tied for the team lead with 19 points each. ... The Panthers dropped the season opener to Tampa Bay, 2-1, in overtime. ... The Lightning (14-6-1) are second in the Eastern Conference with 29 points. ... Tampa Bay is coming off a 3-2 loss to the Nashville Predators. ... Brayden Point leads the team with 26 points, while Nikita Kucherov has 24.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116708 Florida Panthers

Sweet! Florida Panthers forward Jonathan Huberdeau featured on 'Sweeties Box'

Johnny Diaz

Candy retailer It'Sugar has a new cover boy.

The chain is featuring Florida Panthers forward Jonathan Huberdeau on the cover of its "Sweeties Box" which carries a mix of the hockey player's favorite sweets.

That includes Gummi Peach Rings, Gummi Sour Watermelon, Gummi Sour Twin Cherries, and Strawberry Licorice Wheels.

"Huberdeau is a great addition to our Sweeties line up and we think the fans will love his candy selection," said Jeff Rubin, chief executive officer and founder of the Deerfield Beach-based It'Sugar.

The 20-ounce box, which went on sale Tuesday, costs \$14.99 and can be found at It'Sugar outlets in South Florida and at the BB&T Center in Sunrise where the Panthers play.

Net proceeds from the box's sales will benefit La Fondation des Cougars, which helps student programs at Cap-Jeunesse High School, Huberdeau's alma matter, in Quebec. Huberdeau was drafted by the Panthers in 2011.

"La Fondation des Cougars helped me a lot while playing hockey and going to school at the same time," Huberdeau said. "I wanted to give back to them so that other students can do the same and have the materials they need."

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116709 Florida Panthers

After Vincent Trocheck's horrific injury, should Panthers call up Henrik Borgstrom?

By George Richards Nov 20, 2018

TAMPA, Fla. — The Florida Panthers have no choice but to move on.

On Monday night in Ottawa, budding star center Vincent Trocheck was lost for perhaps the rest of the season after he crashed awkwardly into the boards and suffered a gruesome-looking lower-leg injury.

Trocheck, 25, went straight to the ice after his right leg got mangled as he and Ryan Dzingel went into the end boards chasing down a puck during an Ottawa power play.

Dave DiNapoli, Florida's athletic trainer, rushed out to the felled center with the aid of an Ottawa player.

Trocheck was treated on the ice by medical staff as emergency crews came out, lifted him onto a stretcher and took him off the ice where he underwent preliminary evaluation.

HERE'S A LOOK AT THE VINCENT TROCHECK INJURY GOING INTO THE END BOARDS CHASING DOWN A PUCK ON A PK...WAS TAKEN OFF THE ICE ON A STRETCHER [HTTPS://T.CO/JKTHGG3ECG](https://t.co/JKTHGG3ECG)

— GEORGE RICHARDS (@GEORGERICHARDS) NOVEMBER 20, 2018



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The Panthers have not said how long they expect Trocheck to be out. But it's not going to be a quick return.

Trocheck did fly south with the team to Tampa following Monday's game.

Darren Dreger of TSN reported Tuesday morning that Trocheck had surgery. General manager Dale Tallon has yet to respond to confirm the report.

The Panthers canceled their scheduled practice in Tampa on Tuesday and will next be on the ice Wednesday morning before playing the Lightning.

"We don't know the extent of the injury," coach Bob Boughner said postgame. "We know it's not going to be a short-term thing."

Trocheck was off to a slow start for the Panthers this season, scoring just three goals with 11 assists in 18 games. But the Panthers did not seem concerned, as Boughner kept him on Florida's second line — largely because of his promise after scoring a career-high 31 goals with 75 points last season.

With Trocheck out, Boughner's job gets a bit harder.

Not only was Trocheck the center of Florida's second forward set, but he was also a top penalty-killer, not to mention part of the Panthers' strong top power-play unit.

Replacing him will not be easy — if it's possible at all.

"Losing Vinnie ... he's not replaceable," Micheal Haley said. "We all have to do our part to chip in where we can. ... When you see (the injury), he's not only one of our best players, but he's also a good friend to all of us. It's not something you want to see."

The Panthers had to do some adjusting on the fly Monday night as Trocheck went out at the end of an already strange opening period.

Rookie Juho Lammikko, Florida's last cut of training camp and the first call-back, recorded his first NHL point on Nov. 11 but rolled with the extra work Monday by tying a franchise record with four assists in the 7-5 win over the Sens.

The Panthers like Lammikko, for sure, but the youngster probably isn't a fit on a top-six line because of his style of play.

Lammikko has been centering the fourth line since Derek MacKenzie went out with a shoulder injury in the opener and has been doing an excellent job there.

Denis Malgin, officially sent back to the AHL on Monday, is probably going to meet the team in Tampa.

Malgin could return to centering the third line or even take over the fourth if Lammikko moves up. Jared McCann, who has been doing a good job with the third line and scored his second goal of the season Monday, could be the No. 2 guy for now.

For now.

The Panthers' future at the position is in Springfield, and it doesn't appear that the team is ready to pull the cord and call up rookie Henrik Borgstrom just yet.

Borgstrom, 21, lit it up at the University of Denver the past three seasons and is a dynamic player who projects to be a top-six center.

The Panthers, right now, have a need for a player like Borgstrom.

In 14 games at the AHL level in his first professional season, Borgstrom has four goals and 14 points.

Borgstrom is playing well, but that is not the Panthers' main concern. Tallon sent him to the minors after an uneven training camp to allow him to get stronger and more NHL ready. The Panthers do not want to rush Borgstrom and jeopardize his development.

Things happen, however.

Losing Trocheck on Monday is a game-changer for the Panthers and may force Tallon's hand, if not now then perhaps earlier than he wanted.

The Panthers, if they do bring back Malgin, could just be putting a bandage on things as they try and finish this six-game road trip strong.

Borgstrom is the long-term solution to a problem the Panthers hoped they wouldn't have to deal with for a few more years.

With Sasha Barkov and Trocheck, Florida has a potent 1-2 punch at center locked down for the next few years.

But with Trocheck out, the Panthers may have to bite down, make the call and give Borgstrom his shot.

Hoffman caps wild one

The Panthers watched the host Senators erase several big deficits Monday, but Mike Hoffman kept his franchise-record scoring streak rolling as he clinched the win by scoring with 1:40 left in the third. He now has a point in 16 consecutive games.

Hoffman, who spent parts of seven seasons with the Sens, was playing his first game in Ottawa since being traded this past offseason.

"It was tough getting down for my nap because I was so excited to come back and play at this arena," Hoffman said afterward.

The Panthers initially trailed 1-0 but led 4-1 at the end of the first period as Evgenii Dadonov swept a loose puck home at the buzzer.

Ottawa cut Florida's lead to 4-3 in the second, only to see Haley score to make it 5-3 midway through the period.

The Sens trailed 6-5 in the final minutes when Hoffman drove in on Mike McKenna and buried a Lammikko feed to all but end things.

Haley's impact

Haley made his season debut for the Panthers on Monday and certainly made his presence known.

Not only did he score in the second period to give Florida a 5-3 lead, but his crushing check of Christian Jaros behind the net early on freed up the puck and led to Troy Brouwer's goal, which tied things at 1.

"It has been a long month and a half here, but I'm excited," Haley said before the game. "It's great to be around the boys, and I'm hoping to jump right in and have some fun."

Haley left the team at the tail end of training camp to be part of the NHL/NHLPA player assistance program. He returned to the Florida roster last week and went to AHL Springfield on a conditioning stint before being recalled officially on Monday.

Also on Monday, Florida called up Dryden Hunt — who assisted on McCann's first-period goal — while sending down Malgin and Maxim Mamin.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116729 New York Islanders

Rangers looking to break through against Islanders

By Brian Heyman Special to Newsday

Updated November 20, 2018 8:35 PM

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — One of the hottest teams in the NHL was on the ice Tuesday at MSG Training Center, prepping to play Wednesday night



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at the Garden against their hottest rival — the one the Rangers have so much trouble beating.

The rebuilding Rangers are surprisingly sitting in second in the Metropolitan Division with 24 points, two behind Columbus. They own a six-game winning streak at home and an 8-1-1 record overall in their last 10 games. The eight wins and 17 points date to Oct. 30 and are both the most in the league in this span.

But the lone regulation defeat came against the Islanders, a 7-5 decision Thursday at Barclays Center in their first get-together of the season. The Islanders are riding a franchise-best eight-game winning streak against them. The Rangers are 1-10-2 in the last 13 meetings stretching back to the 2015-16 season.

Who will win in the second meeting of the season between the Islanders and Rangers on Wednesday?

They rebounded nicely from the last loss, beating Florida and Dallas. So they may be hot, but the question is: Can they beat the Islanders?

The Rangers are hungry to pass this test.

"A hundred percent," defenseman Brendan Smith said. "We have a little bit of a chip on our shoulder because of how it's gone as of late."

They allowed four goals on deflections the last time.

"We've been much better the last two games in our net-front [play]," coach David Quinn said.

Ryan Strome joined the cause for the last two games after coming over from Edmonton. Now the former Islanders forward gets to experience life on the other side of the rivalry.

"I just remember looking up in the crowd during the games, seeing some fights in the crowd," Strome said. "The people yelling in the anthem. ... It's a great rivalry, and one that I definitely miss. So it'll be fun to kind of get back on the other side of it. It's a big game."

The Islanders are 10-7-2, good for fourth in the division. They're two points behind the Rangers, who have gone from 3-7-1 to 11-8-2.

"I think we've got a good confidence level, but we're not trying to get ahead of ourselves," Smith said. "... I know a lot of people wrote us off early, but we think we're better than what people said, and we're trying to show it."

Notes & quotes: Alexandar Georgiev will start in goal . . . Right wing Mats Zuccarello (groin) remains sidelined, but Quinn said he's "getting better." ... Defenseman Brady Skjei was scratched the last two games, but Quinn said there's "a good chance" he'll play. "He knows there's a lot more in his game," Quinn said, "and he knows he's got to do better."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116730 New York Islanders

Isles hope to clean up sloppy play before Rangers game

Staff Report

The seeds of sloppiness seeped into the Islanders' effort the last time they faced the Rangers, though they managed to survive those issues to extend their recent dominance over their rival.

But when the teams meet again in a Thanksgiving appetizer on Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden, the Islanders will be

coming off their worst effort of the season, a 6-2 loss to the Stars on Sunday afternoon at Barclays Center.

"Mental errors," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "I didn't like the mental errors. [We needed] a little bit of resolve when we did make a couple of mistakes. We've been pretty good at that all year. We sort of flat-lined a little bit. I didn't think we responded the way we have been."

The Islanders did not practice on Tuesday. Wednesday starts a stretch of four games in six days for the Islanders, who also face the Devils on Friday afternoon at Prudential Center and host the Hurricanes and the Capitals — Trotz's first meeting against the team he led to the Stanley Cup last season — on Saturday and Monday nights, respectively.

The Islanders extended their winning streak over the Rangers to eight games with a 7-5 victory in Brooklyn last Thursday as left wing Anthony Beauvillier, 21, notched his first career hat trick. But the Rangers made it tense late in the third period after falling behind 6-3 and the Islanders needed Cal Clutterbuck's empty-netter to ice the win.

After that game, Trotz acknowledged that while it was entertaining for the fans after the Islanders rallied from an early 2-0 deficit, he considered it a "sloppy" effort. He also added, with more than a hint of disdain, that it was a "gentle" game after the first period.

That is not typical of the historically-heated Islanders-Rangers' rivalry, though it has been decidedly one-sided the past few seasons.

The Islanders hold a 12-1-0 edge in the series since Dec. 2, 2015 — the lone Rangers' win coming in a 5-3 victory at the Garden on Oct. 13, 2016 — and are 15-3-0 since the start of 2014-15. The Islanders are also 9-2-0 at the Garden since the start of 2013-14.

However, the Rangers are 8-1-1 overall since Oct. 30 — their lone regulation loss coming to the Islanders — and have won their last six home games, including a 2-1 win over the Stars on Monday night, by an aggregate 21-10.

"It'll be a different sort of environment," Trotz said. "It's a New York turf war, if you will. Madison Square Garden is a big building no matter if you're an Islander, a Capital or a Predator. But I think with the New York rivalry, it's special. I'm looking forward to it."

Who will win in the second meeting of the season between the Islanders and Rangers on Wednesday?

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1116731 New York Islanders

Weighing Jordan Eberle's value as the Islanders look to solidify their top-6 forwards

By Arthur Staple

Nov 20, 2018

Jordan Eberle is not the Islanders' star. He's not going to lead them in points. What he is, what he's been for just about all of his nine NHL seasons, is a top-six forward. That may sound dull, but really, how many bona fide top-sixers do most teams have?

"He's had a little of a slow start but I'm not too worried about it," Barry Trotz said of Eberle. "He'll get his points because he's such a skilled playmaker. No matter where you plug him in, at the end of the day when you look at the totals, he'll be right there every year."



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He's sitting with 10 points through 19 games, well off the pace of his 59-point total last year, after he came to the Isles from Edmonton for Ryan Strome. The same Strome who will face the Islanders on Wednesday in the Garden as a Ranger, having been swapped for Ryan Spooner after a disappointing 100 games in an Oilers uniform.

Eberle's first 100 games as an Islander have been solid at 30-39-69. Very similar to what he posted in Edmonton. What's missing is the same thing that's been missing from Eberle's entire NHL career: team success. And, as one of the four key Islanders in the final season of their deals, he represents an interesting conundrum for Lou Lamoriello.

Where do Lamoriello and Trotz see the Islanders top six going forward? Mathew Barzal needs a new deal after the 2019-20 season and he's sure to get something sizable. Josh Bailey is signed for a pretty reasonable \$5 million per for the next five years. Outside of those two, it's Eberle, Brock Nelson and Anders Lee as certain top-six Islanders. All three of those players are on expiring deals.

Lee is now captain and leader of the club and it's clear from the free-agent additions that Lamoriello brought in and Trotz relies upon heavily (Valtteri Filppula, Leo Komarov, Tom Kuhnhackl) that the Isles' brain trust values character and "doing things the right way." Lee embodies that; perhaps the likely eight-year deal his agent is seeking is not the answer, but it's hard to believe Lee will be wearing another sweater next season.

Nelson, on a one-year, \$4.25 million deal and on pace for 37 goals, has certainly been up and down in his six Islander seasons, but he has proven that he can handle a top-two center role. Trotz has used the Kuhnhackl-Nelson-Eberle line against opposing teams' top lines to mixed results of late — Dallas' Alex Radulov-Tyler Seguin-Jamie Benn line took everyone's lunch money on Sunday — but Nelson has shown himself to be adaptable and reliable for Trotz, which must count for something.

The other factor in assessing Nelson's long-term worth to the Isles is the complete lack of center depth in the organization. Connor Jones is Bridgeport's top-line center. Stephen Gionta was the clear choice for a recall when Casey Cizikas went down and, no knock on Gionta, but a 35-year-old depth guy should never be that clearcut of a recall option.

So Nelson's value to the Isles' top six is pretty high.

That leaves Eberle. He's still only 28 and coming off a decent-sized contract that's paying him \$6 million and has for six years. He won't command much more than that on the open market, so term would likely be the biggest sticking point.

"I like where I'm at," Eberle said. "It's a lot of fun and we just want to continue to move up. I've been on teams where we've been good structurally but we didn't have the talent and vice-versa. It's having the confidence that you're a good team and you can win. And then having confidence in the structure and not getting outside of that."

The decision on Eberle cuts both ways — whether Lamoriello sees him as a better option than a top-six right winger who might be available in a trade and whether Eberle sees himself fitting in with this group as they grow. If the Islanders fade out of the playoff hunt — something that starts to look less likely with each passing game, not only for the Isles but for the middling teams around them in the Metro — Eberle might be the most attractive trade chip Lamoriello has approaching the deadline in February.

"Guys are certainly finding out these days the grass is rarely greener," one Western Conference exec said. "With a guy like him, reliable, you know what you're getting almost every night, that seems like a fit to stay where he is."

Trotz hasn't loved Eberle's game the past two, sitting him out of the forward rotation in the closing minutes of the wild win over the Rangers and the opening minutes of the third after Dallas toyed with the Isles on Sunday. Eberle has played over two minutes fewer at even strength in those games than his season average, but again, Trotz is not too concerned.

In theory, there are players in the Isles pipeline who could push Eberle for a role in the coming seasons. Oliver Wahlstrom plays the right side; so does Josh Ho-Sang and, at least so far this season, so does big Finn Otto Koivu, who has impressed scouts of late.

Artemi Panarin may end up being the big free-agency fish and he's a right wing. But the high-profile guys putting the Isles at the top of their FA wish list is a big stretch, something Lamoriello found out last July 1. Perhaps a good season with Trotz and the fading-from-view John Tavares decision will allow the Isles to be more attractive to top-six FAs, but that's a big risk to take if they let Eberle walk and can't replace him.

At practice on Saturday there was a little guy roaming the stands with an Eberle sweater and a mini-stick and puck — Jordan's nephew, aged 2. In the locker room later Eberle relayed that, if you ask his nephew who his favorite player is, he doesn't hesitate.

"Joe Sakic." Puzzled looks around. "I think I had a Sakic figurine when I was a kid and he's got it now."

He's not a star, sometimes not even in his own family. But Eberle is as reliable as they come. The decision for the Islanders is whether that's worth keeping him around or gambling for an upgrade.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116804 Websites

The Athletic / Pronman: Standout U20 prospects from 4 Nations and Canada-Russia Series

By Corey Pronman Nov 20, 2018

November is one of the busiest months on the calendar in the world of hockey prospects. There are a ton of international tournaments in the span of a few weeks. Below are some of the standout players from two of those tournaments: the U20 four nations, which featured top drafted prospects from the Czech Republic, Finland, Russia and Sweden; and the U20 Canada-Russia Series, which spanned six games across Canada.

Other than one OHL game, I watched all of these players by video as I was at the World Under-17 Challenge while most of these games were going on.

U20 4 Nations

Jakub Galvas, D, Czech Republic (Chicago): Galvas was the top defenseman for the Czech Republic and projects to be one of their top defenders at the big tournament in what could be a very thin blueline for that team (Toronto prospect Filip Kral is likely their No. 1, but Galvas is not far behind). I don't think he's a top prospect by any means, but he showed good mobility and vision, as well as the ability to get shots through.

Oskari Laaksonen, D, Finland (Buffalo): Laaksonen is one of the most interesting draft picks of the past few years. When drafted in the third round, he was a low producing defenseman in Finland junior with tools who was going through a growth spurt. His stock has gone straight up in the year and a half since. He projects to be Finland's go-to defenseman at the tournament unless a top guy gets loaned out by an NHL team. He's not a perfect player and can clean up some of his decision-making, but at this tournament, I saw a very mobile, skilled puck mover who can impact a shift. He projects as a legit NHL player from everything I've seen in the past year between pro and international play.



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Niklas Nordgren, RW, Finland (Chicago): Nordgren has had a very good season so far and continued his strong play at the 4 Nations. He ran the second power play unit for Finland and showed great playmaking ability. Scouts were slightly worried about his foot speed for his size, which is why he ended up as a mid-third-round pick. I don't think he's a blazer but I thought at this tournament he showed he skates at a fair level and hustles. I really like his game, and given his success in Liiga so far, it seems to be translating to the pro level.

Jesse Ylonen, RW, Finland (Montreal): Ylonen's Liiga season has given me slight hesitation about how much I liked him going into the draft. The production hasn't been there so far. However, when I see him play against his peers and I start to think I got the evaluation right. He's such a good skater, has skill and can make plays. He showed great ability to gain the zone with control and be the starting point of offense. He does need bulk, though, as he lost too many battles and was pushed off pucks. He's one of the most intriguing players going into the world juniors.

Rasmus Kupari, C, Finland (Los Angeles): Kupari was Finland's top line center at the 4 Nations and projects to play that role at the main tournament. He showed excellent ability coming through the neutral zone with high-end speed and skill, being a guy who can get the offense started for Finland. He's noticeable whenever he has the puck, which is what you like to see with a first-round pick. He needs to get stronger and be better off the puck, but he'll be a guy to watch at the world juniors for entertainment purposes.

Grigori Denisenko, LW, Russia (Florida): I was a big fan of Denisenko last season. I rated him very high going into the draft even though he didn't have great numbers in junior. After seeing him in this tournament, I might have marginally underrated him. Denisenko looked fantastic and was the best player on the ice at even strength on a line with high-end Rangers prospect Vitali Kravtsov. Denisenko is so skilled and smart, but what really impressed me was his pace and elusiveness. He was skating so well and creating space with his feet. For my money, he was the best player at the 4 Nations.

Russia's top line of Denisenko, Vitali Kravtsov (NYR) and Nikolai Kovalenko (COL): This was the best line at the tournament, with the line exploding for five goals in one game. Kravtsov wasn't as dominant as he was at the August tournament but he was still good, playing with pace and skill. Interestingly to me, Russia deployed him as the center, which I've never seen him play before. Russia is deep on wings but thin down the middle this season for the WJC, so this could carry over to the real tournament. Kovalenko was no slouch, either. He made plays, competed hard and seemed to have an extra jump in his step from last season.

Lucas Elvenes, RW, Sweden (Vegas): Elvenes didn't get a ton of points at this tournament, but I liked the process and the plays he made. He was the team's best playmaker, showing high-end skill and vision. He was often asked to carry pucks in with control and moved the puck around very well. He needs to get stronger and be better in battles, but I expect he'll be asked to QB Sweden's power play and make plays like the one shown here:

Olle Eriksson Ek, G, Sweden (Anaheim): This wasn't the strongest Sweden U20 group I've ever seen, and thus their goalie Eriksson Ek was tested often. I liked his play as much as I've seen him before. He read the play well, squared up a lot of pucks and showed a tad more athleticism than I've given him credit for in the past. He is actually suspended due to that bizarre medal ceremony discipline the IIHF handed down following last year's tournament, but when reinstated I expect he'll be Sweden's No. 1 goalie.

Pontus Holmberg, C, Sweden (Toronto): This was a bad showing for Sweden as their forward group is as weak as I've seen in years. One bright spot was Holmberg. I do wish for NHL purposes he was a tad quicker for a small forward, but he showed very good playmaking and got more responsibility as the tournament went along. Scouts at the tournament singled him out for his showing. Depending on if Anaheim

loans Isac Lundestrom, Holmberg could be a top two line center for Sweden at the world juniors after not being a summer camp invite.

Filip Westerlund, D, Sweden (Arizona): I liked Westerlund two seasons ago as a draft-eligible, but came down when I watched him last season. I saw a small defenseman with average feet and not a ton of offense, and I wasn't that excited about that package. At this tournament, I saw more of the old Westerlund. He showed great hockey IQ making plays. He was hitting passes through seams, playing with poise and showed some creativity. I don't know if he's an NHL player, but I see more of an argument now.

Canada-Russia Series

Barrett Hayton, C, OHL (Arizona): Hayton has been very impressive all season, from the WJC summer camp and Coyotes camp to the OHL and this series. He thinks the game at a very high level, and whenever the puck was on his stick, you noticed the skill and vision he showed. He also had the most memorable play of the Canada-Russia series with this highlight reel play:

AMAZING GOAL BY @BARRETTTHAYTON □

SECOND PERIOD HIGHLIGHTS BELONG TO THE @OHLHOUNDPOWER CAPTAIN AND @ARIZONACOYOTES PROSPECT WHO GIVES @OHLHOCKEY A 3-1 LEAD IN @CIBC #CANVSRUS ACTION.

LIVE STATS □: [HTTPS://T.CO/JKWEQRNPCZ](https://t.co/jkweqrnpcz)
PIC.TWITTER.COM/WLXLWSPBLH

— CANADIANHOCKEYLEAGUE (@CHLHOCKEY) NOVEMBER 9, 2018

Nick Suzuki, C, OHL (Montreal): Suzuki played at the Sarnia game and I thought he was very solid. He's small and not fast, but I still thought he was one of the OHL's best defensive forwards. On top of his own-end plays, he created some offense and showed he can run a power play. I saw a competition between Suzuki and Morgan Frost (PHI) for the WJC given they are similar players as small, low pace forwards who are great playmakers. Between the summer camp and this series, it looks like Suzuki has an edge on that role on the team.

Noah Dobson, D, QMJHL (New York Islanders): Dobson wasn't perfect in the two games for the QMJHL, but he was very noticeable for positive reasons. He's an excellent skater who often used his skating ability to jump into rushes, activate off the blueline and evade pressure with the puck. He made smart plays with the puck and was a big part of the QMJHL's offense. His defense was fine, not amazing, as he was beat a few more times than he usually lets happen.

Benoit-Olivier Groulx, C, QMJHL (Anaheim): I was not a huge fan of Groulx leading into his draft season due to concerns about his offensive upside. I still don't think there's a ton of offense there, but he played well in the two games against Russia and made plays. There was his typical hustle he showed, pressuring defenders and creating turnovers, but he also showed good vision moving it to teammates in scoring positions and even flashed some impressive skill. It's forcing me to give him another close look as the season progresses.

Josh Brook, D, WHL (Montreal): I was a skeptic of the Brook pick in the second round by Montreal two seasons ago, but he keeps growing on me. I see a player with excellent skating ability whose skill and vision continue to impress. He was on the top power play unit for the WHL and did well in a major role, creating a fair amount of offense and not being a liability in his own end. Canada's coach Tim Hunter knows Brook well. He's having a great season and I expect he'll be a candidate for the big team.

Alexander Khovanov, C, Russia Selects (Minnesota): I saw Khovanov live a few times this season at Wild camp and in the QMJHL, and was underwhelmed, but he looked much different in this series. He had a jump in his step I haven't seen before, to couple with his typical high skill level and great vision. He was consistently dangerous for Russia. I also



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see mild improvements in his skating that could be critical for his prospect stock.

Dmitry Zavgorodniy, RW, Russia Selects (Calgary): Zavgorodniy is having a great season in the QMJHL and he showed why in the two games in the Canada-Russia series. He displayed fantastic vision, a good skill level and seems a tad quicker than last season. He also showed a great shot in the dying seconds of the final game to clinch the series for Russia. He needs to bulk up and be better in battles, but overall I like the way his game is trending.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116805 Websites

The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: Weighing the pros and cons of various William Nylander trade destinations

By Sean McIndoe Nov 20, 2018

The Maple Leafs' standoff with winger William Nylander continues this week, with less than two weeks to go until the Dec. 1 deadline to strike a deal. And with the two sides still reportedly far apart on terms and dollars, talk has increasingly turned to the possibility of a trade.

If the Leafs decided to swing a deal, there'd be no shortage of potential landing spots for the talented winger. Our Pierre LeBrun recently looked at nine of the most likely destinations. But that list was only a starting point, and this sort of scenario often results in a mystery team or two lurking in the background. There's no doubt that plenty of teams around the league are wondering if they'd be the right fit.

So today, let's look around the league and see if we can help. This is a brainstorming session, so nothing's off the table. We'll look at a variety of teams, covering the spectrum from likely destinations for Nylander to teams which seem like much longer shots. And we'll help everyone involved weigh the pros and cons of pulling off a Nylander blockbuster.

Buffalo Sabres

Pro: Joining the organization would mean that Nylander is reunited with his brother Alexander, which would be great because it would give his dad someone else to go bother for a while.

Con: Dubas once absented-mindedly mentioned that the winger could probably develop into a decent quarterback for the Sabres' second power-play unit, and as soon as he said "decent quarterback" Buffalo bylaws kicked in and barred Nylander from the city limits.

Anaheim Ducks

Pro: Nylander hasn't played a single minute of competitive hockey all season long, so he'd immediately fit right in with all of their defensemen.

Con: As with any trade they make this year, departing Ducks players would be slowed down at the airport while trying to drag equipment bags that are unusually heavy and vaguely sound like John Gibson whispering "Take me with you."

Edmonton Oilers

Pro: As a dynamic offensive winger with a proven track record of producing next to an elite center, Nylander would fill a longstanding team need for a guy they could trade for a mediocre defenseman.

Con: NHL trades are complicated and can take weeks or even months to put together, which probably doesn't leave enough time for whoever the Oilers' GM is going to be by the weekend.

Carolina Hurricanes

Pro: Wouldn't have to send their best player to Toronto in the deal since the entire city is already overflowing with Aho's, according to everyone else in Canada if I'm hearing them correctly.

Con: Nylander would be joining the team with only four months left in the season which isn't really enough time to get up to speed on detailed positioning and responsibilities outlined in the playbook, which is what Justin Williams insists on calling the postgame choreography.

Vancouver Canucks

Pro: Checks every box on the Canucks' list of criteria for acquiring a star player, although in fairness for the last 20 years those boxes have just been "Not Mark Messier" and "No seriously, make damn sure he's not Mark Messier."

Con: The roster already includes Elias Pettersson, so they don't actually need any other NHL players.

Boston Bruins

Pro: They already have David Pastrnak and seem to be enjoying him, so they would probably love to have a guy who's apparently over \$1 million better.

Con: No way to know for sure, but may have had some scouts watching the Leafs in last year's playoffs.

Montreal Canadiens

Pro: According to rumors, Nylander already has a handshake deal for a new contract with Marc Bergevin.

Con: Due to that handshake, Nylander is now on the season-ending LTIR because the bones in his hand have all turned to powder.

Florida Panthers

Pro: The team realizes that the Maple Leafs probably wouldn't want to trade a star player within the division but don't think that will be a problem, says Dale Tallon while laughing maniacally and high-fiving Doug Wilson.

Con: Are reportedly refusing to include Mike Matheson in any deal, which will no doubt come as a major disappointment to Maple Leaf fans once they're done Googling "Who is Michael Matheson?"

Los Angeles Kings

Pro: Nylander being in L.A. would make it a lot easier to film the full-length movie version of that "hippy dippy kale smoothie" commercial, once I can get one of those big-shot Hollywood directors to actually look at my script.

Con: Talks could be complicated by Leafs insistence on getting back a capable young player.

Nashville Predators

Pro: Acquiring ridiculously good Swedish wingers just entering their prime for next-to-nothing is kind of their thing.

Con: Sort of hard to keep trade talks under wraps given the Predators just raised a "Made one phone call about William Nylander" banner.

Arizona Coyotes

Pro: Any trade between Kyle Dubas and John Chayka would be the first known example of millennials achieving anything ever, according to your parents.

Con: Nylander has only ever put up elite numbers while playing on a line with Auston Matthews, and a trade to the Coyotes would mean he wouldn't get to do that again for another 10 months.

Pittsburgh Penguins



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Pro: Might be a good fit because they need to get younger and could offer the Leafs a package that included a returning Phil Kessel with a chunk of his salary retained and everything else in this column is meant as a joke but I'm honestly starting to talk myself into this one.

Con: Nylander would probably turn around the Penguins season and lead them back into the playoffs, which would make it awkward when the NHL forgets to un-rig the Jack Hughes draft lottery and Pittsburgh wins anyway.

Philadelphia Flyers

Pro: Dubas has been told that "Gritty is not untouchable."

Con: Dubas was told this by Gritty while Gritty was shaking his belly seductively and maintaining unblinking eye contact and the Leafs GM hasn't been able to think about hockey ever since.

Ottawa Senators

Pro: Would fit right in with the franchise's long and storied tradition of building the roster around players who disappear in playoff series involving the Maple Leafs.

Con: GMs around the league say that whenever they ask about acquiring the Senators' first-round pick, Pierre Dorion tells them he can't trade it, and when they ask if that means it's untouchable he says "Yeah something like that" and then just cries softly into the phone for 15 minutes.

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1116806 Websites

The Athletic / The team from Finland is taking over the NHL (and they're not done)

Craig Custance Nov 20, 2018

It was an early season game in the Finnish men's league in 2015 featuring two of its rising stars – Patrik Laine and Jesse Puljujarvi. On a bit of a whim, a sports writer in Finland called up the general manager of Laine's team in Tappara to see if there were any NHL scouts attending. There were. At that point, 40 scouts had put in ticket requests and the number was growing.

Juha Hiitela, the writer, composed a story for his outlet and then hopped in his car to attend the game to see just how much interest there would be in these kids. About halfway there, he pulled over to a truck stop for gas.

"I saw 15 NHL scouts getting coffee," Hiitela said.

In a random truck stop. In Finland.

The game didn't end up being all that captivating. Laine got hurt in the first period and the showdown wasn't a showdown. But it marked the official start of the hype that hit a crescendo a few months later when the rest of the amateur hockey world arrived in Helsinki for the World Junior Championships and witnessed them win gold on home soil.

Turns out, they were just getting started.

"It was unreal," Puljujarvi said.

Puljujarvi and Laine were the stars of that team, but hindsight is starting to shed light on to just how loaded the Finns were that year.

The captain was Mikko Rantanen. He currently leads the NHL with 32 points. He was on the third line for Finland.

The center between Laine and Puljujarvi was Sebastian Aho. He currently leads the Carolina Hurricanes with 23 points in 20 games.

The second line featured Kasperii Kapanen, who has taken advantage of William Nylander's extended contract negotiation to put up 14 points in 20 games with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The goalie, Kaapo Kahkonen, was just named AHL player of the week for the Iowa Wild after stopping all 58 shots he faced last week.

This is all happening one year after Laine lit up the NHL for 44 goals, making him the first breakout star from a roster that will have several.

"We knew we had a really good team," Laine told The Athletic. "Every player played in the men's league already. Some of the guys played in the American Hockey League. We knew right away we had a really good team. We had a lot of skilled guys and a lot of high-end picks."

With that group of Finns taking over the league now, it's a fascinating one to dissect because it's clear, in some cases, they're just scratching the surface and, in others, it's going to be a bit of a grind to get there.

Let's dive in:

The Superstar – Winnipeg Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff was in Finland watching this team, in large part because he wanted a closer look at defenseman Sami Niku, picked in the seventh round the previous June by the Jets. He noticed Laine terrorizing goalies with his big shot and started to realize an NHL team was in for a treat when they added him to their system.

"I remember thinking, 'Someone is going to be lucky to get a very special player,'" Cheveldayoff told The Athletic. "At that point in time, you don't know what may or may not transpire."

As it turned out, that team was Cheveldayoff's Jets. It was in that tournament Cheveldayoff got an appreciation for Laine's ability to step up in the big moments. He also noticed the winger's quick shot, just how quickly it was off his stick when the puck was sent his direction.

The scouts loved him too, for obvious reasons.

"He was the guy with the bomb," said an Eastern Conference scouting director. "He knew how to make himself available to the puck. He knows how to get into those holes and seams. He's a big, strong guy. If he has to take it to the net, he can. He can play it whatever way you want. He still does those things at the NHL level."

The Late Bloomer – Puljujarvi led the tournament with 17 points, no small consideration on a team that was loaded, and in a tournament that also featured guys like Auston Matthews, Matthew Tkachuk and Mitch Marner. This is when he established himself as a top of the draft pick and eventually went to Edmonton at No. 4.

"He was similar to Laine in a way but with a little more of a finesse game. He relied less on the power than Laine did," said an amateur scout. "He's a pretty creative guy with the puck on his stick. A tough guy to defend because he was quick and shifty for his size. He had the good shot. He could get to the net. When he attacked with speed, he always knew where his teammates were."

It's been a bit of a struggle for Puljujarvi since being drafted. He had one goal in 11 games for the Oilers before being sent to the AHL for further development. There are a few theories on that. One scout wondered about his hockey sense and whether or not he could think and play at a pace that matched his skating ability. It was also suggested that he was rushed to the NHL and the pressure to match his draft status is weighing him down.

"He has a lot of circle in his game," said a talent evaluator. "He has great physical tools. He has to learn to skate in a straight line and get to the net. He can still score but the game looks hard for him right now. He still has time to figure it out."

The challenge for him is going to be maintaining perspective while his former teammates enjoy great success in the NHL.



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"That's not an easy task," said Oilers coach Todd McLellan. "He looks at his peer group from his hometown and from the national team that was very successful and sees them putting up points and having success with their teams. ... Jesse will get it and he'll be a very effective player when he gets it."

Count his former teammates among those who still believe he'll figure it out.

"He has everything," Carolina's Sebastian Aho said. "He's probably in the best shape in the whole league. He's such a great athlete. I'm sure when he gets some confidence, he'll be fine. Sometimes with some guys, it takes a little more time."

The Emerging Star – If you watched that Finnish team play for a gold medal in 2016 you might have needed a few guesses before landing on who would be leading the NHL in scoring from that roster a couple years later. Colorado's Rantanen has been one of the best stories in hockey this season, forming one of hockey's best lines with Gabriel Landeskog and Nathan MacKinnon.

"For draft eligible guys to do what they did in that tournament, they had a great team, but they also had great leadership," said Finland native and Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen. "Rantanen was the captain of that team."

Rantanen didn't get the hype of some of the other players in part because he didn't necessarily light things up offensively early on in his career.

"He played in Turku, they were a bad team. He didn't have that many points," said a scout. "He worked so hard and he was so responsible defensively playing with men. I think his scoring was down a little bit because."

It's taken a while for Rantanen to get the attention he deserves, but those who played with him aren't surprised he's found a way to be very successful in the NHL.

"He's a true leader," said Finland teammate defenseman Vili Saarijarvi. "He's probably one of the strongest players I have played with. He really wants to become a better player every day. He's a big body, a big boy, and he's a smart hockey player. He knows what it takes to be up there."

The Engine – There were flashier stars on the roster but ask anyone who played for Finland and they'll tell you that the guy who made it all work was Aho. He slipped to the second round and the Carolina Hurricanes are benefitting in a big way right now.

"He was smart," Puljujarvi said of playing with Aho. "He always makes a good pass."

"He's one of the smartest players I've ever played with," Laine said. "Just playing with him, it's so easy. He's so good of a player. He's always in the right spots. He doesn't waste too much energy. He always knows what he's doing. He already knows – even when he doesn't have the puck – where he's going to put it next. That's the way he plays."

Aho finished that tournament with 14 points in seven games and, if we're redrafting that 2015 draft, he's is a top-10 pick. Scouts who watched Aho distribute the puck on the Finland power play must have been extremely envious of the Hurricanes.

"I had a pretty perfect job," Aho said. "I was the playmaker ... there was Puljujarvi, who has an unbelievable shot, and on the other wing is Laine, who is an unreal shot too."

The Future – If there were any concerns about Finland's chances heading into that tournament, it was centered around the ability to prevent scoring. This wasn't your typical Finland team, a country that typically features a star goalie and a defensive system. These kids weren't afraid to try and outscore other teams.

But it may be the defense and goaltending that make the next impact in the NHL.

Kahkonen and Veini Vehvilainen each played four games in goal for Finland in that tournament and Kahkonen is emerging as a legitimate prospect for the Minnesota Wild. The Wild selected him with a fourth-round pick in 2014 and he's now worked his way to the AHL where's he's off to a strong start for the Iowa Wild with a 4-1 record and .972 save percentage. Last season in Finland he posted a .920 save percentage in 56 games.

The Wild knew he was a project when they drafted him but were attracted to his competitiveness, even if he needed some work technically. Now, they see a goalie who is positionally sound, still ultra-competitive, a good puck handler and doing a nice job controlling rebounds.

The Blue Jackets drafted Vehvilainen in the sixth round last year after he was passed over in the previous two drafts, and he's having a great season for Karpas, with a .940 save percentage in 16 games.

The young defenseman Cheveldayoff was going to see, Niku, has become a top prospect for the Jets. He was named the top defenseman in the AHL and has the kind of skating and explosiveness necessary to make an impact in the NHL.

The Canucks selected defenseman Olli Juolevi with the No. 5 overall pick in 2016 after Finland won gold and he's working his way up the Vancouver system. As a 20-year-old AHL rookie, Juolevi has put up 13 points in 18 games for the Utica Comets. The Athletic's Corey Pronman saw him play recently.

"I like Juolevi," Pronman said of his viewing. "He's mobile, smart, moved the puck well. He doesn't wow you, though, and not sold the upside with him is super high."

The Red Wings have high hopes for the talented Vili Saarijarvi, now in his second AHL season. Saarijarvi said he's playing with much more confidence this season with more regular ice time this year compared to his rookie year in the AHL.

Now, he sees the success in the NHL of guys he grew up playing with in Finland and that helps fuel the idea he can do the same thing.

"It's pretty cool to see, too," Saarijarvi said. "They're your friends, your good buddies. To see them doing well in the NHL – you know you have played with those guys and you know you can play with those guys. It's really good to see those guys doing really well in the NHL and it definitely gives me the confidence to keep working hard and to see that I can believe I can be up there too."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116807 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Hitchcock puts stamp on Oilers in winning debut

Mark Spector | November 21, 2018, 2:50 AM

SAN JOSE, Calif. — As the minutes whittled down to seconds, and then overtime in San Jose against a veteran Sharks club, a wave of concern washed over new coach Ken Hitchcock.

"I was worried," he admitted, "that it was past my bedtime and I wouldn't be able to stay up. I don't think I've seen a third period all year out West."

This third period, and the ensuing overtime, was worth saying up for, as the Oilers erased a 3-2 deficit after 40 minutes then won on Leon Draisaitl's overtime goal for a 4-3 win.

In Game 1 of the Ken Hitchcock era in Edmonton, Draisaitl and Connor McDavid had three points apiece and the Oilers won in a building that



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has not been kind to them over the years. The Oilers never held the lead until a puck bounced off of Draisaitl's foot and into the goal in overtime, but scraped and battled to come from behind three times on the night.

"A new voice, and there's lots going on," said Draisaitl. "A lot of meetings, getting to know the new coach. It's my first time..."

"It's a new experience for me," echoed McDavid, who had played under the fired Todd McLellan his entire career. "I've only ever heard one voice back there, as the head guy. He's a different style of coach, and just a new voice."

Hitchcock, 66, had a long day, flying in to San Jose to replace McLellan, pouring over the game plan with his assistants, and meeting 22 new players. Then they dropped the puck, and it was go time for grandpa.

"I was grinding hard," he admitted. "I needed about four shifts to make some judgments and then I started coachin'. I struggled with names. I had one player, I called him four different names and he never got off the bench. Never went anywhere. Finally, we got to a nickname and that worked in the third period."

He put his stamp on the lines immediately, buttressing big centreman Kyle Brodziak with hefty wingers Milan Lucic and Zack Kassian, the kind of heavy unit that Hitchcock has always tried to have on his teams.

"There is a lot of weight and size in this group — a lot more than I can remember. And we started to lean pretty hard in the third period. It was very effective," Hitchcock said.

At 6 a.m. on Tuesday, general manager Peter Chiarelli informed McLellan that his tenure had come to an end after three seasons and 20 games behind the Oilers bench. He went to the bullpen for Hitchcock, who Chiarelli worked alongside on Canada's Olympic team, in hopes that the veteran hockey mechanic could lift the Oilers' hood and turn the right wrenches.

What Hitchcock's teams do — that Edmonton has always struggled with — is win games when they aren't at their absolute best. Hitchcock's teams collect points on nights like this, hanging around, hanging around, then kicking one home in overtime.

The Oilers left two Sharks wide open in front of goalie Mikko Koskinen on two goals, then the top pairing of Oscar Klefbom and Adam Larsson each made colossal mistakes on San Jose's third goal. All those mistakes are fixable, and Hitchcock knew before the game was over what needed to be addressed.

"He knows what to do and what to say. He came in and said exactly what we needed to hear," said McDavid, who knows that this coaching change needs to be the trigger to find some consistency. "That's what it's got to be. Any time you bring in a new coach, it's the last option before shipping everyone out. This is a chance for us to come together and try to make something of this."

Koskinen gave his team a chance here, making four or five huge saves — the kind Cam Talbot has been unable to come up with in his starts.

And the old coach took his new, young team to a win, leaving them right in the playoff hunt heading into that hockey milepost that is American Thanksgiving.

"They feel young to me, which is fun," Hitchcock said of his new roster. "And they're excited to play. The part I like is, I told them I would coach them hard and they really embraced that."

"When I said to a person, 'You need to change. This is what we want to see.' They just went out and did it."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.21.2018

Sportsnet.ca / Promising Canucks must be patient on long path to Jets-like ascension

Iain MacIntyre | November 20, 2018, 7:51 PM

VANCOUVER — The Vancouver Canucks weren't missing six players on Monday when they lost to the Winnipeg Jets. They were missing 12: their six injured guys, plus the six they don't yet have on their roster in order to compete against the best teams in the National Hockey League.

The Jets, a Stanley Cup favourite who are Exhibit A among the draft-and-development route's finished products, showed that the Canucks are on the right path, but also how much heavy lifting — and patience — is still required in Vancouver.

Ask around the league about the Canucks' excellent young players and everyone mentions Elias Pettersson, Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser, who is among the injured and did not travel Tuesday for the struggling team's three-game California road trip that starts Wednesday against the Anaheim Ducks.

Optimists paying attention to the Canucks this season might also mention young wingers Nikolay Goldobin and Sven Baertschi.

But look at the Jets' roster and it's not four or five superior forwards they have, but eight or nine. Of the six defencemen the Canucks dressed in their 6-3 loss, it's possible only Chris Tanev would be good enough right now to dislodge anyone from the Jets' blue line. And in goal, Canuck Jacob Markstrom isn't at the Jets' Connor Hellebuyck's level.

Quinn Hughes, when he graduates to the Canucks from the University of Michigan next spring or fall, could quickly become Vancouver's top defenceman. The organization also has Olli Juolevi in the American League and Jet Woo in junior. There are also another handful of forwards with the Utica Comets — Jonathan Dahlen, Kole Lind, Jonah Gadjovich, Zack MacEwen — who could become Canucks regulars.

Despite his poor pre-season and a concussion that has kept him from playing until this week, Thatcher Demko is still the Canucks' goalie-of-the-future.

But best-case scenario, the Canucks are probably at least another season away from being more than a playoff long-shot, and three or four years from being good enough to challenge for a championship. Minimum.

For now, they're on a six-game losing streak (0-5-1) that has seen them fall to 30th in the NHL in goals-against (3.57 per game). Their injuries and their road-heavy schedule have caught up to them, and they're just trying to survive until healthy bodies start returning to the lineup.

Top defenceman Alex Edler (sprained knee) and backup goalie Anders Nilsson (broken finger) are on the California trip.

"Even last night in the third period, we had chances to tie that game up, and Winnipeg is one of the best teams in the league," general manager Jim Benning told Sportsnet after the Canucks cancelled their Tuesday practice. "We've been competitive. But we want to win games, too. We're disappointed we're in this losing streak, but our guys are working hard every night and we've been competitive."

"Our objective when we started the year is we wanted to be competitive in the games and we wanted our young players to be playing and developing. Hopefully here, this next week or 10 days, we start getting some guys back."

The Canucks can't really control their injuries. But they have input on their schedule, which looks even worse now than when it came out last summer.



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No NHL team has ever reacted to the NHL's schedule release with: 'We love it. We can't wait for those four games in six nights over three time zones in February.' Everybody is unhappy.

But even with three road games in four nights looming, Vancouver already leads the NHL with 14 road games. They've endured two — two — six-game road trips, which were followed by homestands too brief to provide any benefit except clean laundry.

When the Canucks face the Ducks on Wednesday, they'll have travelled before 17 of their 23 games this season. That's absurd.

"We tried to push back on a few things, but this is just the way the schedule is," Benning said. "What happened is Edmonton was going over to Europe (to start the season), and the league wasn't going to bring teams out here just to play us and Calgary, then make them come back another time to play Edmonton. There's only so much you can do. You give them the dates to your rink and they have a tough job to create the schedule.

"The problem is it seems when you play as many road games as we've played so far, with the travel and stuff, sometimes injuries come with it. (But) everybody has injuries, everybody has a tough schedule. We just have to figure out a way to be better."

The Jets, who have played half the road games the Canucks have, and have one injury: depth defenceman Dmitry Kulikov. As of Tuesday morning, the Calgary Flames had played 10 road games, the Edmonton Oilers 11.

The most troubling Canucks injury is to Boeser, who has made little progress since being sent home from the last trip to rest his sore groin. The absence of last season's Calder Trophy finalist nearly mirrors the Canucks' six-game nosedive.

"If he's playing these last six games, we probably have more wins," Benning said. "With every injury, there's concern. We want to do the right thing for Brock long-term, so we're going to wait until he's 100 per cent. Do we miss him? Yeah, we miss him a lot. In that game last night, you saw the way (Winnipeg's Patrik) Laine shoots the puck. Brock does that for us."

Benning is encouraged that the Canucks and their young forwards appear to be the development stage the Jets were about three years ago.

"To see the young players we have in the lineup now, and some of these young guys we have developing in Utica and our draft picks, we're on that same path (as the Jets)," he said. "Like I've said all along, we just have to be patient. That's ultimately where we want to get to — where we're one of the best teams every night."

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1116809 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why Ken Hitchcock is the perfect hire for the Oilers right now

Mark Spector

Ken Hitchcock is old Edmonton, getting his start coaching midget hockey there while sharpening skates at an iconic local sporting goods store called United Cycle.

He learned to coach watching the legend Clare Drake run practices at the University of Alberta, and even when coaching teams across the National Hockey League, "Hitch" always kept in touch on what the Oilers were doing. Or more often, not doing.

On Tuesday, the 66-year-old took on another rite of passage in his old stomping grounds, joining the legions who have called themselves the head coach of this struggling NHL team, a club that has employed eight coaches over the past 11 seasons.

Head coach Todd McLellan was fired Tuesday, on the morning of the Edmonton Oilers' game at San Jose, having made it 20 games into Year 4 of a five-year deal. He was unable to make chicken salad out of a roster that has been clinically mishandled by general manager Peter Chiarelli, and paid the ultimate price. (McLellan has this year and next left on his contract, at \$3 million per season.)

As the old saying goes, another woeful Oilers season might not be McLellan's fault, but it is his problem. Or, rather, was his problem.

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Frankly, it was time for a change here, where even one of the league's top coaches had run out of answers. Somehow, McLellan could not win with one of the weaker defensive corps in the NHL, a crippling lack of depth scoring up front, and an .888 save percentage from starter Cam Talbot.

The talk of Joel Quenneville taking over was comedic, especially with Chiarelli's tenure in Edmonton now in grave danger, having made the final move a GM can make before the sights get trained on him.

Which brings us to Hitchcock, the perfect candidate for this particular hire. Here is why:

- Experience. Only four coaches have worked more than Hitchcock's 1,536 games behind an NHL bench. He's seen every problem and fixed them all, and on a team whose problems always come back to allowing goals against. Hitchcock may make things a little bit less "fire wagon," but you win in today's NHL by allowing two or less goals per night. Period.

- Commitment. Hitchcock's contract goes through the end of this season, then both sides will re-evaluate. With the GM in limbo, there isn't another established coach out there who would sign a three-or five-year deal, not knowing who their boss might be next year. And there is only one coach of this pedigree who does one-year deals — and that's Hitchcock. It behooves the organization not to be tied to a coach long term if the possibility exists that a playoff miss could cost Chiarelli his job.

- Discipline: Hitchcock isn't in this thing for the long term, so he has nothing to lose, and no friends to make. He'll walk in and identify which players are lacking in which qualities, and make that very clear — likely by end of day Thursday. It will be, many times, exactly what McLellan told those players, but Hitchcock's mandate will be to get a top-heavy group of forwards to defend better, and a struggling D-corps to play simpler, quicker hockey, if it's able.

Hitchcock is not what you'd call a players' coach. In fact, Ty Rattie — who could never make Hitchcock's roster in St. Louis — will not be pleased with this move, we're guessing.

But the answer in Edmonton, as far as the players are concerned, is simple: Play better.

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Play better.

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But he'll ask for the same commitment, and I know one of his favourite terms is "dig in." As in, "Don't tell me you're trying as hard as you can. There's more."

There is always more, and Hitchcock always asks for more.

Now we'll see if this roster has more to give.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116810 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / How Ken Hitchcock could change the Oilers, and which players will benefit

Andrew Berkshire November 20, 2018, 4:45 PM

After dropping two in a row and seven of their past 10 in a season where they're facing immense pressure to make the playoffs, the Edmonton Oilers made a move that didn't involve trading a high-quality winger for magic beans.

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Whether or not McLellan was the problem with the Oilers remains to be seen, but looking at how they play and the type of roster they have, it doesn't appear McLellan was the solution either. Making little to no linear progress in your fourth year at the helm makes your job security disappear.

So, in steps Ken Hitchcock, who just can't seem to retire despite saying he was going to last April. On a one-year contract, he will be expected to turn this boat around and send the Oilers back into the playoffs.

Hitchcock is known for essentially two things: playing tight, defensive hockey, and being an amazing quote. I'm sure Oilers media will enjoy the second part, but there are questions about whether Hitchcock's approach to hockey works in the modern game.

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His tenure didn't end well in St. Louis. Though he made the playoffs each season with them, they were considered underachievers in three of his five full seasons there. And in Dallas Hitchcock took over a high-powered offensive team and attempted to make them into a defensive juggernaut.

The Stars certainly weren't as entertaining last season as they were under Lindy Ruff in the few years before, but how much did their tactics change? That can be difficult to see because coaches only have so much influence, but let's look at a cross-section of tendencies between the Dallas Stars under Lindy Ruff in 2016-17, and under Ken Hitchcock in 2017-18 to see what kind of changes the Oilers could expect.

Hitchcock is seen as a coach who favours a dump-and-chase game, but while that's true for when his teams enter the zone, his Stars actually exited the zone with possession more often than Ruff's. This could

benefit players such as Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl who like to have the puck on their stick in the neutral zone.

Hitchcock does have his teams dump the puck in more when they're entering the offensive zone, likely because of his risk-averse nature. Players who generate chances on the forecheck, such as Ty Rattie, Ryan Spooner, and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, could benefit from that, as could active forecheckers such as Drake Caggiula and Jujhar Khaira.

Hitchcock's breakouts are very old school, focusing more on short outlet passes instead of long-bomb stretch passes and carry outs, which means his teams usually generate fewer odd-man rushes. But they also break out more cleanly on their attempts and move up the ice as a unit more often than not.

Another artifact of Hitchcock's less risky coaching style is that the Stars were able to cut down on the percentage of plays they made that ended in a turnover in every zone. Though, unfortunately, the biggest dent was made in the offensive zone, and one thing I've noticed anecdotally is that players and teams with very low offensive zone turnover rates are sometimes teams that don't take the necessary risks to score goals often enough. There are obviously exceptions to that, and any team with McDavid could be one of them.

One surprising thing about Hitchcock's Stars is they shot from closer to the net than did Ruff's Stars, with fewer perimeter shots and more high danger scoring chances.

It's important to note that the league as a whole has increased its shot quality each of the past couple years, but while you could write off Dallas' improvement under Hitchcock here as a league-wide trend, that would ignore the idea he, traditionally, suppresses offence. On some base level Hitchcock is embracing the changing NHL game.

That doesn't mean he won't focus on defence. When you look at the Stars, you can clearly see the changes he implemented.

Remember: offensive statistics on a per minute basis are up across the league year over year three straight seasons. Now, look at Dallas' defensive performance changes under Hitchcock.

Say what you will about the quality of hockey, Hitchcock took a very average to slightly below average defensive team in Dallas and made them into one of the best defensive teams in the NHL last season. They allowed the fewest high danger chances, fewest chances off the rush, fewest rebound chances, fewest chances against overall, and second-fewest chances that were preceded by a cycle pass.

The turnaround was incredible. And though it didn't land the Stars in the playoffs that was due more to poor luck than poor play.

Without the benefits of training camp, I doubt Hitchcock can achieve the same sort of results with this Oilers team that is about the 20th-best defensive team in the NHL right now, but it will be an area to watch.

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1116811 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why Ken Hitchcock is the perfect hire for the Oilers right now

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1116812 Websites

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Andrew Berkshire November 20, 2018, 4:45 PM

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Another artifact of Hitchcock's less risky coaching style is that the Stars were able to cut down on the percentage of plays they made that ended in a turnover in every zone. Though, unfortunately, the biggest dent was made in the offensive zone, and one thing I've noticed anecdotally is that players and teams with very low offensive zone turnover rates are sometimes teams that don't take the necessary risks to score goals often enough. There are obviously exceptions to that, and any team with McDavid could be one of them.

One surprising thing about Hitchcock's Stars is they shot from closer to the net than did Ruff's Stars, with fewer perimeter shots and more high danger scoring chances.

It's important to note that the league as a whole has increased its shot quality each of the past couple years, but while you could write off Dallas' improvement under Hitchcock here as a league-wide trend, that would ignore the idea he, traditionally, suppresses offence. On some base level Hitchcock is embracing the changing NHL game.

That doesn't mean he won't focus on defence. When you look at the Stars, you can clearly see the changes he implemented.

Remember: offensive statistics on a per minute basis are up across the league year over year three straight seasons. Now, look at Dallas' defensive performance changes under Hitchcock.

Say what you will about the quality of hockey, Hitchcock took a very average to slightly below average defensive team in Dallas and made them into one of the best defensive teams in the NHL last season. They allowed the fewest high danger chances, fewest chances off the rush, fewest rebound chances, fewest chances against overall, and second-fewest chances that were preceded by a cycle pass.

The turnaround was incredible. And though it didn't land the Stars in the playoffs that was due more to poor luck than poor play.

Without the benefits of training camp, I doubt Hitchcock can achieve the same sort of results with this Oilers team that is about the 20th-best defensive team in the NHL right now, but it will be an area to watch.

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Sportsnet.ca / Ken Hitchcock's immediate impact in five other NHL head coaching jobs

Rory Boylen

Ken Hitchcock is back in the NHL as a head coach, just seven months after retiring. Hitchcock was behind Dallas' bench just last season, leading them to a 42-32-8 record and missing the playoffs.

"I have contemplated this since our last game, and I came to the conclusion that now is the right time to step away and let the younger generation of coaches take over," Hitchcock said after stepping down on April 13.

It's unlikely that Hitchcock is a long-term solution behind Edmonton's bench. He will turn 67 next month and is third in coaching wins all-time with 823, just 67 wins behind the unemployed Joel Quenneville. But if this hire is just to fill the position for the rest of this season and try to salvage a playoff push, why not just promote assistant Glen Gulutzan to the head job? He is coming off two seasons as the head coach in Calgary.

"Because Glen Gulutzan doesn't give the fan base enough to say that this is a significant change," Nick Kypreos suggested on Hockey Central at Noon. "It doesn't have the bite or the effect that Ken Hitchcock has. And yet, it's not a long-term commitment. You don't stamp an interim on Ken Hitchcock, but he is. It's a real short-term basis, you may as well have said interim."

Hitchcock's job is to turn this year's team around and give the Oilers' front office (or those above them) a chance to figure out other considerations at a later date. Given this, GM Peter Chiarelli can't be safe considering a new coach could come in to guide next year's team, but he expects Hitchcock to give the Oilers a jolt.

"He's a very good tactician. He knows how to inject system structure execution in a short period of time," Chiarelli told the media. "He can instill something in short order and execute it and direct it."

"He's going to be here for the year and then we'll evaluate at the end of the year."

"I think you're going to see more of that [defensive] structure," the GM continued. "But we talked about the forecheck being aggressive."

Looking back at Hitchcock's other NHL stops, we can draw attention to the immediate impacts he's had along the way.

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.

1995-96 Dallas Stars: 15-23-5

Hitchcock's first head coaching job at the NHL level followed three years of him guiding the Kalamazoo/Michigan Wings, Dallas' IHL affiliate at the time. In the mid-to-late-'80s, Hitchcock coached the WHL's Kamloops Blazers.

In 1995-96, Hitchcock replaced Bob Gainey — who stayed as the team's GM — on the bench in January and though Dallas went 15-23-5 down the stretch with Hitchcock and missed the playoffs, they elevated to contender status the very next season. In his first full season with the Stars, Dallas finished first in their division, second in the conference, but were upset in Round 1 by the Edmonton Oilers. Two years later, Dallas won a Cup.

The biggest change Hitchcock brought to Dallas was, of course, how much better they got on defence. In 1995-96 the Stars were middle of the pack in shots against per game, but became the second-best team in this stat in 1996-97, behind only the powerhouse Detroit Red Wings.

2002-03 Philadelphia Flyers: 45-20-13

Fifty games into the 2001-02 season — and just three years after winning the Stanley Cup — Hitchcock was dismissed by Dallas following a 23-17-6-4 start. He didn't join another team until Philadelphia came calling and hired him in May.

Here, Hitchcock was walking into a pretty good situation. The Flyers had won their division in 2001-02, but had suffered two straight first round



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exits in the playoffs, winning a total of just three games. This was actually Hitchcock's second tour of duty with the Flyers, as he served in an assistant's role from 1990 to 1993.

The biggest noticeable change right away under Hitchcock was, you guessed it, on the defensive side of the puck. The season before he arrived the Flyers allowed 26.1 shots against per game on average, which was 12th-best in the league, but under Hitchcock they became the second-stingiest defensive team, allowing just 24.6 shots against per game. Only the trap-happy Devils fared better.

This came at the expense of some offence, though. Again prior to Hitchcock the Flyers had the eighth-best offence in the league scoring at a 2.85 rate per game, but that fell to 2.57 under Hitchcock as Philadelphia's offence dipped to 17th in the NHL. But the results were undeniably positive — although the Flyers finished second in their division, they won three more games than the previous season and reached the second round of the playoffs, falling to Ottawa for the second year in a row.

In 2003-04 the Flyers reached the Eastern Conference final, their best finish under Hitchcock.

2006-07 Columbus Blue Jackets: 28-29-5

Just a month after the Flyers fired Hitchcock following a 1-6-1 start to their season, Columbus hired him with the idea his structure would help get the team to their first playoff appearance. Here he was hired on Nov. 22.

"He's a winner. He's a guy that pushes people to the limit. And we have a lot of guys that need to be pushed," then-Columbus GM Doug MacLean said at the time.

This was the second season of the post-lockout era and the game had radically changed from the time Hitchcock got his first two NHL gigs. But Hitchcock's primary impact on the lineup can again be seen in how much better the team defence got. In 2005-06 the Blue Jackets allowed 33.7 shots against per game, which ranked 28th in the NHL. In 2006-07, though, the Jackets surrendered just 28.6 shots against per game, making them a top 10 team in the statistic.

They remained the 28th-ranked offence year over year, but under Hitchcock Columbus scored nearly .3 fewer goals per game.

Columbus missed the playoffs for the first two years under Hitchcock, but finally broke through for the first time in his third season behind their bench. He didn't even make it through the season after that before being fired once again.

2011-12 St. Louis Blues: 43-15-11

For the third time in his coaching career, Hitchcock was brought in as a mid-season replacement on a struggling team and for the second time in a row he was a November hire. The Blues started this season 6-7-0 after missing the playoffs in both of the previous two seasons so, again, Hitchcock was tasked with turning on a team that had greater expectations than what they had achieved.

"I think my job is to get the best players here to play their best and get everybody to follow that suit. I think I can do that," Hitchcock said at the time. "I think I can provide the game plan and the structure and the discipline that allows the top players to set the direction here. I've had great success in working with top guys and getting them to play and I think there's potential for a lot of players to be top guys here."

The Blues were already one of the better defensive teams in the league when Hitchcock arrived, allowing 27.7 shots per game in 2010-11 and ranking second to the Devils in the stat. But Hitchcock still managed to find ways to improve the Blues here, and they finished with a league-low 26.6 shots against per game in his first year behind the bench.

The Blues averaged just 1.89 goals-against per game with Hitchcock behind the bench in 2011-12, which remains the lowest GAA (and only sub-2.00 rate) of the post-2004-05 lockout era.

Again it came at the expense of some offence, though. The Blues went from a top-10 scoring team in Davis Payne's last year behind the bench to 21st with a 2.51 goals per game rate. Their power play also got about two percentage points worse, and they dipped from the 10th-best power play in 2010-11 to 20th in 2011-12.

But, again, the results were positive. St. Louis returned to the playoffs and won their first round since 2002. Hitchcock never missed the playoffs with St. Louis.

2017-18 Dallas Stars: 42-32-8

Two years removed from winning the Central Division with an all-out offence, the Stars were coming off a playoff miss and hired Hitchcock to add some more structure to their game and get them back on track.

"To me, Dallas Stars hockey is reckless energy with proper positional play, and I'll bring that forward," Hitchcock said when he was hired. "But I don't ever want to lose that reckless energy that they had last year. When you played Dallas, you never felt that you were in control of anything."

Dallas, somewhat surprisingly, was one of 12 teams to allow less than 30 shots a game (29.7) before Hitchcock was hired, but I bet you can guess the kind of impact he had on their team defence.

With offences continuing to rise around the league, 2017-18 was the first season since 1970-71 in which NHL teams averaged allowing 31.8 shots against per game. But Dallas was one of five to stay under 30 in Hitchcock's return to the bench and ranked fourth-best in the NHL. His effect on offence here was actually negligible as the Stars dropped from the 16th-ranked offence to 18th.

But even with much better goaltending as Ben Bishop took over from the failed Kari Lehtonen-Antti Niemi project, Dallas finished just three points short of the playoffs and improved by 13 points year over year. Days after their season ended, Hitchcock retired.

Or so we thought.

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TSN.CA / Hitchcock's notorious 'grind' evident on Day 1 with Oilers

Frank Seravalli

SAN JOSE, Calif. — When Ken Hitchcock introduced himself to the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday afternoon, his message was clear and concise.

Be prepared to be pushed. Be prepared to be uncomfortable. Don't take it personal.

"I thought he said exactly what we needed to hear," Connor McDavid said.

Just 211 days after announcing his retirement, Hitchcock said he was quiet on the Oilers' bench for all of about four shifts before he started barking.

"I needed about four shifts to make judgments and I just started coaching," Hitchcock said. "I was grinding hard. I told them I was going to do it and I was pushing hard."

The Oilers responded by grinding out a 4-3 overtime win, the 824th of his career, in his debut with his hometown team. Edmonton didn't lead for any stretch of the night.



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For Hitchcock, there was no warm and fuzzy get-to-know-you warmup, no friendly introduction. Just Hitchcock being unapologetically himself.

"I struggled with names," Hitchcock said, joking that Tuesday night was the first time he stayed awake for a third period in the Pacific. "I had one player I called four different names. Finally we got to a nickname there and that worked in the third period."

He might not know every Oiler's name, but it was like riding a bike.

"The more I coached, the more comfortable it was for me," Hitchcock said. "But I was grinding hard today."

Hitchcock's grind is both his blessing and his curse. Striking the right tone will also be his greatest challenge in a most unique scenario - with likely the youngest team he's ever coached and also no contract to guarantee his job for next season that would usually put some extra weight behind the hammer he wields. Hitchcock has 61 games. That's it.

He was affectionately described as a cold glass of water on Tuesday. GM Peter Chiarelli, who also conducted his own team meeting earlier in the day, described Hitchcock as a "taskmaster."

He captured the Oilers' attention.

"It was such a weird day," said McDavid, who scored once and setup two of the other three goals. "I'd only ever heard one voice back there. He's a different style of voice."

The question is whether Hitchcock can keep the Oilers engaged long enough to unlock the potential that he and Chiarelli both say exists. Coaching millennials is just different. It's a fact. Hitchcock turns 67 next month. No one ever stops learning or evolving, but to think that an old dog will learn new tricks and completely change his style in his 23rd season is dreaming.

"They feel young to me," Hitchcock said. "It's a young group. They're excited to play. The part I like is they have really embraced it. I told them I would coach them hard and they embraced that. When I told a player they needed to change something, they went out and did that."

Hitchcock made subtle changes in Game 1. He double-shifted McDavid for stretches, even in a three games in four nights scenario. He cut ice time for Ty Rattie. He moved Milan Lucic to a heavy third line with Kyle Brodziak and Zack Kassian.

Hitchcock addressed Lucic head-on postgame. He was blunt and did not pull any punches, even bold in saying that a \$6 million player does not need to score. At least not right now. Lucic has just two goals in his last 66 games. His damaging contract aside, Lucic's lack of production has eroded the Oilers' scoring depth, the team's biggest problem.

"To me, he spent way too much time talking about not scoring goals," Hitchcock said of Lucic. "That's not going to help. He needs to do what he did today - he knocked two guys out of the [game] today. He was physical on the puck. He protected the puck. He was great down low, a very, very effective player."

"He'll score goals and chip in, but he needs to be a really solid third line player that can play on the power play for us to be effective. He needs to get back to what he was as a junior player, nevermind what he's not doing."

Consider it a message sent to Lucic, from a coach who says he is true to himself. Hitchcock said he doesn't care if he is liked by the players.

"I am part that," Hitchcock said. "My reputation is not really who I am. But I think the thing that works for me, and why I've been able to hang on late, is I tell them exactly who I am and how it's going to be, what my strengths and weaknesses are. I kind of throw myself out there and then I stay true to that. I think the players appreciate that."

Only time will tell.

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1116815 Websites

TSN.CA / McLellan takes the fall for Oilers' woes

Frank Seravalli

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Ken Hitchcock has never been confused with Mother Teresa, but Peter Chiarelli is counting on him to be a miracle worker.

That is what hometown Hitchcock will be if he can turn around the Edmonton Oilers and steer them into the Stanley Cup playoffs in April: the Saint of Sherwood Park.

Hitchcock would be the runaway Jack Adams Award winner, with Chiarelli forever indebted for saving his job; that is how daunting the task is ahead of him.

Because rare is the coach, not even a soon-to-be 67-year-old hockey lifer who has coaching coursing through his veins, that can harnesses enough power to overcome such a flawed roster.

The Oilers look like the best team in the NHL when Connor McDavid is on the ice and the worst team in the NHL when he is on the bench.

Todd McLellan was not perfect. Like any coach, McLellan had his biases and shortfalls.

But McLellan did not trade away a future Hart Trophy winner in Taylor Hall and 20-goal lock Jordan Eberle, two pieces who would have given the Oilers a fighting chance in the 38 minutes per game McDavid is on the bench. He did not trade for Griffin Reinhart. He did not sign Milan Lucic to a cap-crippling \$42 million deal. He did not assemble the defence that his GM acknowledged is poor at passing.

McLellan was merely Chiarelli's sacrificial lamb when he was fired on Tuesday, the fourth NHL coach canned in 18 days. He was the fall guy, the last card for Chiarelli to play to save himself after a dismal quarter, the start that team brass made clear after last year's disaster would not be tolerated.

Chiarelli acknowledged some of that blame.

"I'm certainly not absolving myself of any responsibility on player personnel," Chiarelli told reporters. "This isn't just an indictment on Todd or the players. This is a collective thing. It's our job to get to the playoffs. We owe it to our fans. We felt this is the right move for it."

But when pressed on exactly what pushed him to make the change, Chiarelli was vague.

"I saw some things that were resurfacing," Chiarelli said. "Again, this is not an indictment on Todd. He's a good man and a very good coach."

"I just saw some things. We had a weak start, we had a real good stretch, and I don't think we overachieved. I just saw some reversion back."

Chiarelli said he spoke with Hitchcock about two significant areas of the game that contributed to McLellan's downfall: integration of young players and defensive structure that did not do goaltender Cam Talbot any favours.

There was clear friction there between coach and GM when it came to young players. It appeared Chiarelli and management were keen on giving No. 10 overall pick Evan Bouchard, already the Oilers' best puck mover at 18, a longer look than 10 games.

McLellan sitting Bouchard for four straight games as a healthy scratch left Chiarelli little option. Ditto the demotions for first-round picks Jesse



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Puljujarvi and Kailer Yamamoto after they bounced in and out of the lineup and saw limited minutes.

"That was a point of discussion," Chiarelli said. "We talked about a number of things including integrating some youth."

Chiarelli mentioned the fact that the Oilers had dropped six of the last seven as a tipping point. He did not mention roster construction or the lack of depth that continually pushed McLellan to lean on the crutch of moving Leon Draisaitl to McDavid's line because it was often times their best (or only?) chance to win.

"It was just time," Chiarelli said. "I can't tell you. This isn't scientific. It's a sense, a feel. There were levels of flatness, levels of non-response, and when that happens, the radar goes up. We decided to act."

When the Oilers reeled off wins against Nashville, Boston, Winnipeg and Washington this year, Chiarelli said he didn't think they "overachieved." The truth is the Oilers are likely exactly the team they appear to be – one probably somewhere in the middle of this low and the earlier high.

Through 20 games, they are on-pace for the exact 78-point campaign of a year ago (they were 7-11-2 at the one-quarter mark in 2017-18). Through 100-plus games without Hall and Eberle, the sample size is large enough to confidently say the Oilers are a team capable of being carried by McDavid and Draisaitl, but only so far.

It's just that Chiarelli, the man who shaped the Oilers to play heavier in a league going the opposite direction, said he doesn't see it that way at all.

"We might look at some moves, but I think [we are] good enough," Chiarelli said. "I think we can be better. There's still a lot of runway left this year. We felt a new voice would be helpful."

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TSN.CA / Red-hot Duchene reportedly making progress on extension with Sens

Frank Seravalli

Maybe John Tortorella was right.

There really may be nothing like playing guilty in the NHL, a hot streak the product of getting caught on camera badmouthing your coach.

Or maybe it has simply coincided with the fact that his agent engaged in meaningful contract extension talks.

Regardless the reason, no player in the NHL has more points than Matt Duchene since the Uber video story broke on Nov. 5. He has six goals and nine assists for 15 points in just seven games.

Duchene has nearly double the amount of points (15) as league leaders Mikko Rantanen (eight) and Nathan MacKinnon (eight) over the last two weeks.

That run has Duchene nipping at the Avs stars' heels now. It has catapulted Duchene into a tie for fifth in the league's scoring race with 27 points, just one back of Connor McDavid and five behind Rantanen for the lead.

It's hard to tell what's been more impressive: that Duchene is coming off back-to-back three-point games and has four in this two-week streak, or that the bulk of his production has directly benefitted the Sens' scoresheet. Of Duchene's 17 assists this season, 15 of them are primary, making him second only to Toronto's Mitch Marner in first assists in the NHL this season.

Matt Duchene out here doing Matt Duchene things.
pic.twitter.com/6ep9unliq0

— Ottawa Senators (@Senators) November 20, 2018

What does all of this mean?

Duchene, 27, is going to become an uber-wealthy man soon, pardon the pun. TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie reported on Tuesday that extension talks have been progressing between Duchene's camp, agent Pat Brisson of CAA Sports, and Senators GM Pierre Dorion. The two sides met face-to-face last week in Toronto.

Duchene is in the final year of a five-year, \$30 million deal signed with the Avalanche. He has been eligible to sign an extension since July 1.

McKenzie reported it's premature to say a deal will get done, but his best guess was Duchene could land somewhere north of \$64 million on an eight-year contract.

Mark Stone is still the Senators' No. 1 priority, though he isn't eligible for a new deal until after Jan. 1, but Duchene is a close second. Duchene's play and a long-term contract would allow Dorion to save face from a trade that saw the Sens send a non-lottery protected first-round pick to the Avalanche, along with Kyle Turris to Nashville, in a three-team trade last November.

Duchene has played well for almost the entire calendar 2018. He closed last season with 20 goals and 23 assists for 43 points in the final 44 games of last season. He said in September he was "actually happy playing hockey again."

He said he was comfortable in Ottawa, three hours from his Haliburton, Ont., home, but wanted to take his time making a decision. The Senators' start, Duchene said, would dictate his decision.

"These are big years of my career," Duchene said in September. "When you come into that unrestricted year, it's the first time you have that ultimate power as a player and I think you have to do what's best for yourself. At that point, that's hard to do because we're taught to be team guys. We're taught to be that way as hockey players, everyone's really humble. But, you know, you have to respect yourself and your career."

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1116817 Websites

TSN.CA / Insider Trading: Impact of the Uber video on the Sens

5-7 minutes

TSN Hockey Insiders Darren Dreger, Pierre LeBrun and Bob McKenzie joined host James Duthie to discuss what impact the Uber video has on the Ottawa Senators and what might be next for both Joel Quenneville and the Chicago Blackhawks in the wake of Tuesday's firing.

What's the impact of the Uber video on the Sens?

How does Ottawa deal with the fallout of Monday's night's video?

McKenzie: The video obviously went viral on Monday night and Tuesday morning, but for the Ottawa Senators, this first went viral for them on Sunday in the immediate hours before their game against the Tampa Bay Lightning. That's when they discovered the video and saw what was on it and what was happening. So they pulled the players that were involved in the video together with the coaching staff and all the amends that were needed to be made were made prior to the Lightning game and the Sens had thought they put it behind them. Obviously now they have to live through that public cycle of everything. The other interesting aspect is



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that one of the players – one of the most prominent players in the van – talking was Matt Duchene, the veteran. And right now, it's currently a situation where his agent Pat Brisson and general manager Pierre Dorion of the Senators are actually engaged in substantive contract talks for an extension. Now I can't sit here and tell you that Duchene's going to resign in Ottawa, but I can tell you there appears to be good faith bargaining going on on both sides. The Senators want him back and he has interest in staying if it's the right deal. We'll see how it goes from here.

Dreger: Well, everyone involved in this would like it to fade away in terms of the viral video. But the reality is that there is an ongoing investigation here. The players involved, their representatives and the Ottawa Senators as an organization are all going through this investigation and they're looking at the legal implications here. They haven't decided yet because of the ongoing investigation as to whether or not they're going to act on it. But they're trying to determine the implications of a pretty significant breach in privacy.

LeBrun: And listen it's fair to ask the question how does the coaching staff and the players move on from this in terms of the trust they have on each side and I think they've made amends in that regard. But, it's worth remembering where this year started. Guy Boucher, Marc Crawford and Marty Raymond began this season in the final year of their contracts and that's where they still stand. So they started this year essentially on a short leash. So if there is a coaching change at the end of the season, I think we all need to remember it's unrelated to anything that happened in an Uber, but really, in the big picture, this was something that Pierre Dorion was thinking about at the end of last season which is do I have the right people in place? He obviously does believe he has the right people in the right place right now, but it's something to keep in mind moving forward.

What's next for Quenneville?

The news of Joel Quenneville's firing shocked the hockey world Tuesday. How likely is it that he takes another job any time soon?

LeBrun: Well, most interesting to me is that this is the most expensive unemployed coach in NHL history. We know that he makes \$6 million a year this year and next and there is an offset provision in the NHL rules where when a coach gets hired by another team, they have to figure out the difference with his former team. This is pretty important when it comes to this situation. The Chicago Blackhawks aren't going to pay the majority of his salary for him to go find a job somewhere else. It has to be the right fit. But also it has to be a team that can afford to pay a big part of that salary that remains on that contract.

McKenzie: So what now for Joel Quenneville? Those who know him best think that he'd like to take a step back, be patient, not rush back into anything too soon but he's also an A-type personality that's going to get awfully antsy sitting on the sidelines and he's bound to get some offers before this season is out. But all things being equal, maybe go to the off-season, he'll have a job in as short a time or as long a time as he really wants to. The other question is what happens around him? Who else is on thin ice around the National Hockey League? It's not related to Quenneville, but keep an eye on St. Louis. They're not happy at all with the way their season has gone. Mike Yeo himself said he's under the gun and that whole organization is under the gun to play a lot better than they have been.

What's next for the Blackhawks?

If the move to fire Quenneville doesn't pan out, what might happen next?

Dreger: And what's next for the Chicago Blackhawks? Again, senior management is declaring that it is very important that this team qualifies for the post-season this year. If they don't, then what happens next? I can tell you the market is really angry with the firing of Joel Quenneville. So Stan Bowman is definitely in the crosshairs. Now, Bowman has made some significant trades. He moved out Artemi Panarin, he moved out Niklas Hjalmarsson and he's now fired a highly decorated coach so if it doesn't work out, then the general manager will likely be next.

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1116818 Websites

USA TODAY / Ken Hitchcock is the perfect fit for defensively challenged Edmonton Oilers

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published Nov. 20, 2018

When Ken Hitchcock said he was retiring as he left the Dallas Stars, everyone knew better.

It was always assumed that if Hitchcock, 66, were presented with the right opportunity, he would be back behind the bench.

Could there be a better opportunity than coaching a Connor McDavid-led Oilers team?

This is a perfect fit. The Oilers are ranked 25th in the NHL with a 3.30 goals-against average through Monday and Hitchcock has made his reputation as a taskmaster who knows how to force his team to play better defensively.

What we know about Hitchcock is that his teams are always difficult to play against. It's hard work to get to the net against a Hitchcock team. If you want to play for Hitchcock, you must commit defensively.

This is an Oilers franchise that has missed the playoffs 11 out of past 12 seasons. Hitchcock's style isn't right for every team, but his approach is a logical solution for an Oilers team that hasn't made the most of having McDavid as its offensive catalyst.

The Oilers haven't taken advantage of McDavid's presence. General manager Peter Chiarelli hasn't been able to fix the team's defensive shortcomings with personnel moves.

The hope would be that Hitchcock can do it with a fresh defensive emphasis and a commitment to relentlessness.

You can't make an offense more dynamic. You can't coach players to have better hands. You can't magically transform a 12-goal scorer into a 35-goal scorer.

But you can make a team better defensively in a short period of time. We've seen Hitchcock do that before.

MORE NHL:

John Tortorella chastises Blue Jackets forward for 'Pee Wee' play

NHL's quarter-mark duds: Start with the Penguins, Kings captain Anze Kopitar

Hitchcock also counts heavily on veteran players, and Chiarelli is probably hoping that Hitchcock's arrival might re-ignite Milan Lucic, who has one goal and five points in 20 games. His plus-minus is -8.

Fans were ready to move on from coach Todd McLellan. While it wasn't solely his fault, the timing is right for a coaching change. The Oilers' building efforts have grown stale. Boldness is required.

Hitchcock was born in Edmonton. This should be a popular choice with fans.

Hitchcock can't solve all of the team's problems. The Oilers are also short on scoring depth. McDavid is third in the NHL in scoring (28 points in 20 games), but there are only five forwards with six or more goals on the roster. There's almost no offensive production out of the third and fourth lines. The Oilers are averaging 2.85 goals per game in a season when scoring is up slightly.



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Chiarelli will have to address that. If he doesn't, he will be the next firing in Edmonton.

USA TODAY LOADED: 11.21.2018

1116819 Websites

USA TODAY / Coach John Tortorella chastises Blue Jackets forward for 'Pee Wee' play

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 11:02 a.m. ET Nov. 20, 2018

Columbus Blue Jackets players never have to guess how coach John Tortorella feels about their play.

The fiery coach often offers a blunt post-game assessment of his team's performance.

On Monday, Tortorella didn't wait to show his dissatisfaction with center Lukas Sedlak's poor defensive play on Toronto center Zach Hyman's game-winning goal in the 4-2 loss.

Tortorella was visibly unhappy with Sedlak, who is in his third NHL season, when he came to bench after the goal was scored with 4:30 remaining in regulation.

"Dumb coverage," Tortorella said in a post-game news conference. "It's Pee Wee coverage and we didn't handle it. It's frustrating. We played well enough to win, and not to get a point out of it off a simple coverage off the faceoff, it just (ticks) you off. It's dumb."

Sedlak, 25, lost the faceoff to Hyman and chose to cover John Tavares instead of Hyman on the play. Hyman was alone to tip in Morgan Rielly's shot from the point.

Tortorella was also unhappy with defenseman Scott Harrington for allowing Mitch Marner to set up the 2-2 tying goal by Tavares.

Zach Hyman scores to put the Leafs up 3-2 in the third period
pic.twitter.com/ULzIFWBQBx

— Jeff Veillette (@JeffVeillette) November 20, 2018

"It's a soft goal," Tortorella said. "It's just simply getting outworked off the puck."

Tortorella has his team in first place in the Metropolitan Division, but he isn't going to ease up on his Blue Jackets. That's not his style. He will always be among the league's most feisty and combative coaches. Above all, Tortorella believes in accountability.

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