



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 22, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### McElhinney, Hurricanes knock off Leafs 5-2

By Chip Alexander

The Toronto media swarmed around Carolina Hurricanes goalie Curtis McElhinney after the morning skate Wednesday, which was understandable.

The Canes were hosting the Toronto Maple Leafs and the best storyline was McElhinney, who was facing the team that put him on waivers in early October.

"It should be a fun challenge," McElhinney said. "They have so many weapons and it certainly will be a challenge. The biggest thing for us is to get out to a good start again."

The Canes got that good start by scoring the first two goals of the game as defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk and team captain Justin Williams scored in the first period. Micheal Ferland added a power-play goal in the third period, and Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov had late empty-netters in a 5-2 victory at PNC Arena.

"It's huge," Ferland said. "Coming in, we wanted to make a statement we can play with any team and we played really good tonight."

McElhinney, composed in net, finished with 30 saves for his fifth win of the season for the Canes (10-8-3), who celebrated after the game by breaking out of a circle at center ice and spreading to all corners of the rink to hop into the glass.

"It was good, McElhinney said. "I'm not going to lie. It was a tough way to leave Toronto, with the situation. It's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings."

The Leafs (15-7-0), who had won four straight and seven of eight, lead the Eastern Conference with 30 points. They've done it with Auston Matthews sidelined 14 games with a shoulder injury, and center John Tavares, the biggest of the free-agent signings, has been a big part of it.

Tavares scored in the first for the Leafs picking off a pass and striking on a breakaway for his 14th of the season.

Ferland's goal, his 11th, pushed the Canes ahead 3-1, but Kasper Kapanen pulled the Leafs within 3-2 with a snipe and it was a tight finish in the final eight minutes until the empty-netters after the Leafs pulled goalie Frederik Andersen for a sixth attacker.

"The team that won was the team that started on time and the team that worked the hardest," Leafs coach Mike Babcock said.

The Canes' start Wednesday wasn't as startling as the one Sunday against the New Jersey Devils -- Williams and Ferland scoring in the first 30 seconds of the game. But it again was rapid-fire goals as van Riemsdyk and Williams scored in a 22-second span of the first.

The Canes had 29 shots in the opening period, a team record for one period since the franchise relocation and the most shots in a first period in the NHL since 1997-98. If that was eye-opening, the Canes then had two shots on goal in the second period, the first with 1:54 left by Justin Faulk.

Svechnikov had five of his eight shots in the first and it was his line, with center Lucas Wallmark and winger Jordan Martinook, that produced the first goal. Van Riemsdyk pinched in to put a backhander into the net.

"He's been coming on," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Svechnikov. "You can see the confidence starting to come out in him, hanging onto pucks, taking it to the net really hard."

Williams' goal came after a set play off a faceoff. Jordan Staal won the draw to defenseman Calvin de Haan, who found Williams open in front for a quick redirection.

The Canes killed off a pair of penalties in the second period, then got Ferland's power-play score at 7:45 of the third as Teuvo Teravainen set up Ferland in the right circle for the shot.

Canes center Victor Rask played his first game of the season after a kitchen accident in September resulted in hand surgery. Rask had 10:32 in ice time.

McElhinney was Andersen's backup in Toronto, playing 32 games the past two seasons and putting up good numbers. But when the decision was made by the Leafs to have Garret Sparks back up Andersen this season, McElhinney was placed on waivers Oct. 1 and claimed by the Canes.

"There was some disappointment in being pushed out the door," McElhinney said.

With Scott Darling injured as the season began, McElhinney won his first three starts. But Wednesday's game was different. This was the Leafs.



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## Canes' Rask out of the kitchen, back in the lineup

By Chip Alexander

Some would say it was almost like opening night for Victor Rask, who played his first game of the season Wednesday for the Carolina Hurricanes.

Not Rask, though.

"I've played hockey for a long time," he said. "I know how to play a hockey game."

The Swedish center missed all of preseason and the first 20 games of the regular season because of a freaky injury. He was cut by a blade, but not the blade of a skate.

Rask was slicing into sweet potatoes in the kitchen of his Raleigh condo when the knife slipped, cutting into the last two fingers on his right hand.

"At first, I wasn't sure how bad it was," said Rask, who at first simply bandaged up the fingers. "Obviously it was pretty bad."

Surgery on the hand was performed Sept. 13. The timetable was for Rask to be out until early December and he was placed on the injured non-roster list. But Rask's recovery has come quicker than expected and he was cleared for contact this week.

On Wednesday, Rask was back in the lineup in the Canes' 5-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs, centering a line with Phil Di Giuseppe and Warren Foegele. He had 10:32 in ice time, winning four of seven draws and finishing with two shots.

"I thought he looked great," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "He didn't play much but the shifts he had were productive."

"I think we'll still probably ease him in a little bit but he looks like he's right where he needs to be. This was a good step in the right direction."

Rask, a left-handed shooter, said he doesn't use the little finger on his right hand -- the "pinky," as he calls it -- in holding the stick. That made it easier and quicker, he said, to regain a normal grip.

"I can hold my stick and control it exactly the way I used to," he said.

Rask's absence allowed one of his best friends on the team, Lucas Wallmark, a fellow Swede, to solidify his place in the

lineup and earn more playing time at center. When Rask was activated Wednesday, the Canes reassigned center Clark Bishop to the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL.

After Rask's surgery, Brind'Amour said it would be like the Canes trading for an extra forward when Rask was able to return. And an experienced center, at that.

"Give him a few weeks," Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "He is a good player. He is one of the guys we were counting on to start the season and it's been tough not having him for this long."

The hand surgery wasn't Rask's only surgery in 2018. He played part of last season with bad shoulder and underwent surgery in March, resulting in a summer of rehab in Sweden.

Rask, 25, returned to Raleigh saying the shoulder had fully healed and he was ready to atone for a subpar 2017-18 season -- 14 goals and 31 points in 71 games. Then, the accident.

"Obviously it (stinks) but it could always have been worse, you know?" Rask said after Wednesday's morning skate. "But I battled through it. I've skated through pretty much the whole time I was injured. My legs are really good."

"If I had a knee injury or something, you can't skate for a long time. Then when you're ready you have to start skating and get back in it. Now I've been skating the whole time and I'm ready to go."

Until Wednesday, Rask could only sit and watch the Canes play. "You don't even practice with the guys for a long time, don't go on the road," he said.

Asked where he viewed the away games, Rask said, "At home, on my couch," sounding like many a Canes fan.

Any screaming at the TV in the privacy of his home? Rask smiled.

"No, just watched it," he said. "Pretty calm. You *know* that."

Rask said there was one positive from the injury. "I've learned a lot of new things about fingers," he said.

As for avoiding the dangers of cooking in the kitchen, he said, "I eat out a lot."



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## William Nylander, Scott Darling and the Canes-Leafs drama far from the ice

By Luke DeCock

Somehow, before the Carolina Hurricanes' stirring 5-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday, all the attention was on two guys who didn't even play as the immediate future of the Hurricanes' goaltending situation crossed paths with their pursuit of unsigned Toronto restricted free agent William Nylander. Not all the drama was on the ice.

Scott Darling's absence from practice on Tuesday – a day off after a day off, curious to say the least – signaled Rod Brind'Amour's intention to go with Curtis McElhinney and Petr Mrazek for the time being, with McElhinney getting the start as a reward for his performance Sunday and posting an excellent win Wednesday night against his former team, and that duo expected to split this weekend's back-to-back with Mrazek apparently ready to return from injury.

Which isn't to say that Darling, who dressed as the backup Wednesday, is permanently out of the picture – while he hasn't played terribly, he continues to give up back-breaking soft goals and has yet to regain the form he showed late in the preseason before getting hurt – but it's not a good sign when you're sent home from practice so the other two guys can get the work. For now, he's the odd man out.

If that situation seems murky, it's nothing compared to Nylander, who has been unable to agree on a new contract with the Leafs and faces a Dec. 1 deadline to sign or sit out the rest of the season. The dynamics of those negotiations are complicated enough; the potential dynamics of a trade to the Hurricanes are even more byzantine.

From an on-ice perspective, it's a no-brainer: Nylander, a 22-year-old coming off a pair of 61-point seasons, is the kind of skilled forward the Hurricanes desperately crave and they have a surplus of the heavy-duty right-shot defensemen the Leafs lack.

There's an obvious framework for a trade that includes one of Justin Faulk, Dougie Hamilton or Brett Pesce, a prospect not named Martin Necas or Adam Fox, and a lottery-protected

first-round pick -- if that's enough to get the Leafs to make a deal

It's not quite as simple beyond that. First, there's Nylander himself: Can he potentially be the center the Hurricanes really need, or is he a better fit on the wing at 6 feet, 191 pounds? Not that the Hurricanes couldn't use the latter, but they'd be giving up a lot of the ammunition that could potentially be used to acquire a center at some point.

Then there's the Leafs: Even if a package like that is enough, would they let Nylander go to an Eastern Conference team? The Hurricanes pursued center Ryan O'Reilly and goalie Philipp Grubauer over the summer, and both were traded out of the east and to Western Conference teams instead.

Finally, there's the money. While the Hurricanes have ample cap space at the moment – they're \$16.1 million under the \$79.5 million cap as of Wednesday afternoon – they're going to use a bunch of it re-signing Sebastian Aho and potentially Micheal Ferland regardless of whether they can swing a deal for Nylander. Just because they have a ton of cap space today, it doesn't mean they can recklessly overpay for Nylander.

And whatever they would give Nylander, they're going to have to give Aho at least that much. That's probably less of an issue than it was at the start of the year, as Aho continues to print money with his performance, but cap space would still evaporate in a hurry. If the Hurricanes had to go to the top end of the scale to sign both Nylander and Aho – approaching the ridiculous \$8.5 million per season the Edmonton Oilers gave Leon Draisaitl – suddenly the Hurricanes are a cap team and re-signing Ferland becomes a lot trickier even as other contracts come off the books.

Which brings the discussion back to Darling, who is making \$4.15 million with two more years left to run on his deal. If Mrazek and McElhinney end up locking down the net, the Darling contract becomes an even bigger anchor than it was already, and there will be even more incentive to find a way out from under it sooner rather than later – whether the Hurricanes can make a deal for Nylander or not.



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## THE ATHLETIC

### LeBrun Notebook: Will Canes and Leafs reach the next level in trade talks and what's next behind the Blues bench

By Pierre LeBrun

The Maple Leafs and Hurricanes will be battling on Wednesday night in Raleigh and there's no truth to the rumour Don Waddell was planning to lock Kyle Dubas in a suite and corner him.

By now, because the two of them have had several exchanges since the start of the season, the Leafs GM knows about the Canes GM's interest in William Nylander and there's no real point to revisit that conversation until it's time to take it to the next level.

And as far as I know, according to sources as of Wednesday morning, that next-level conversation has not yet happened.

But in the meantime, what I'm hearing around the league is other teams see Carolina's surplus on D and are also reaching out to the Hurricanes to see what's what. Which sets up an interesting scenario for Waddell at some point — wait to see how the Nylander situation plays out or consider other options that present themselves over the next few weeks.

Because the fact of the matter is that teams wanting D easily outnumber the teams willing to sell some. The Hurricanes, in search of a top-six difference maker up front, will at some point be in the driver's seat, depending on the quality of offers.

Other notes from around the league:

Behind the Blues bench

The Twitter-verse was quick to connect Joel Quenneville to St. Louis once Mike Yeo was relieved of his duties on Monday night. I mean, I'd imagine it's a possibility down the road but for the moment my sense is that Quenneville is intent on taking it easy the rest of the season to recharge his batteries. Which is smart. I think all coaches should do that and decompress before their next gig, especially when they're getting paid handsomely like Quenneville is. Of course, Claude Julien had the very same intention after being let go in Boston, and told people that, but then couldn't resist the opportunity Habs GM Marc Bergevin gave him about a week later. I'd say it's more likely Quenneville sticks to his plan to take some downtime, but like Julien, the right opportunity could be hard to ignore.

The Blues, meanwhile, will give Craig Berube the first crack as their head coach and it's a legitimate opportunity. Depending on how it goes, it could be for the rest of the season and perhaps beyond but if the team doesn't respond, the coaching search goes into high gear probably after the Christmas holidays and a new coach would most likely be in place before the end of the season. I think Blues GM Doug Armstrong is keeping an open mind to any scenario. What also caught my attention on Tuesday during his news conference was when Armstrong detailed how wide a net he was planning to cast when assembling a potential coaching list.

"We're going to start the process of putting a list together of head coaches," Armstrong said. "There's going to be experienced head coaches on that list, there's going to be European head coaches on that list, there's going to be college head coaches on that list, major junior ... We're not going to minimize or limit the scope that we're going to look at. But it's not something that's going to be done over the next day or two. This is going to be a process that we're going to look hard and be thorough on. (But) we're going to support Craig and his staff. You would love to have a situation where "enough is enough" for our core group and they take charge of this team, and Craig is at the helm of that and we have great success and we move forward together."

Certainly you get the sense that what Armstrong wants most is for the Berube experiment to work first and foremost. But he's got to multitask and the coaching list will be put together regardless. What piqued my interest was Armstrong mentioning that they were considering European candidates. The NHL is made up of so many players from overseas and yet we still have so few European coaches in the league. I'm willing to bet Swedish national team head coach Rikard Gronborg ends up on Armstrong's search list. He's exactly the kind of guy, that when given a chance in the NHL, has the potential to have a real impact in my mind.

Battle in Devils' crease

Keith Kinkaid gets the starting nod over Cory Schneider in net for the Devils against Montreal on Wednesday night and it is becoming a story once again because both are healthy and competing for the net. The reality is that Schneider, 32, remains a big part of what the Devils aspire to in the big picture, he's signed through 2021-22 at \$6-million a year, but it's going to take some time for him to find his mojo after offseason hip surgery. Think about the process Pekka Rinne went through five years ago after a similar surgery at a similar age that Schneider is now.

And no, the Devils aren't phoning teams about Schneider. He will return to form but in the meantime, my sense is the Devils feel they can't just give him the net every single night while he feels his way through it. They're trying to climb out of a hole in the standings and need every point they can muster right now and Kinkaid, who had an spectacular run late last season, is the most secure option. What the Devils hope to establish is top-notch 1a-1b situation where they can't go wrong. But in the meantime, Kinkaid, 29, is UFA July 1. He's earning \$1.25-million this season and there's no question his play over the past year has netted him a raise, but also the attention of other teams. There haven't been any meaningful contract discussions yet but the Devils' intention is to try and extend him at some point before he hits free agency. My sense is GM Ray Shero would probably reach out to Kinkaid's agent Allain Roy sometime in the New Year to get the ball rolling. Kinkaid really likes it in New Jersey so I don't think he's looking go anywhere. But what price point makes sense for him and



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Schneider to both share the net past this season? Can the Devils keep affording the 1a-1b situation past this season? We'll know the answer to that come the summer.

## Weber's return

There are teams around the league that are closely monitoring Shea Weber's return to the Montreal Canadiens and how it might force GM Marc Bergevin to make a move. Weber's return would give the Canadiens nine NHL blueliners on their roster. But just as I mentioned on TSN on Monday

before the Canadiens played Washington, who's to say they would have nine healthy defencemen by the time Weber rejoins the team. That very night Noah Juulsen suffered facial fractures from a puck to the face and is out indefinitely. While the Canadiens would much rather have a healthy Juulsen in the lineup, it does buy them some time when Weber returns. Eventually, if they do get to nine healthy D, the guy I know a few teams have talked about internally is veteran Jordie Benn, who has logged 19 minutes a game this season.



## Canes start, finish fast to top Toronto

By Shawn Krest

The Carolina Hurricanes started fast and finished fast, which was more than enough to snap the Toronto Maple Leafs' four-game winning streak with a 5-2 win in Raleigh on Wednesday.

On Thanksgiving Even the Canes had a first-period feast, peppering Toronto goaltender Frederik Andersen with 29 shots on goal, the most they've shot in a single period since relocating to North Carolina.

The Hurricanes broke through with a pair of first-period goals, 22 seconds apart. Trevor van Riemsdyk scored first, firing a rebound into the left side of the net while Andersen was still flat on the ice after making a save.

The review of the goal, to make sure Carolina wasn't guilty of goaltender interference, took longer than the time until the next score. Less than half a minute after play resumed, Justin Williams scored for the second straight game, his 100<sup>th</sup> goal as a Hurricane.

Much like Thanksgiving diners, after the early feeding frenzy, the Canes appeared to settle in for a mid-game nap. Carolina managed just two shots in the second period, although they were able to keep the Leafs off the board as well, clinging to a 2-1 lead.

"We had a great first period," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Not so great second. ... We just didn't play the same way. We had some good kills, but the two penalties took the flow right out of our kind of game."

The Canes woke up for the final period, scoring three times in the third to pull away from Toronto. Micheal Ferland netted the first insurance goal, scoring his team-high eleventh goal on a pass from Teuvo Teravainen.

Acquired in the same offseason trade that brought Dougie Hamilton to the Canes, Ferland couldn't have asked for a better beginning to his Carolina career.

"Coming here, obviously I wanted to have a good start," he said. "We've been doing good."

"We knew what we were getting," Brind'Amour said of Ferland. "We knew he brings that element we didn't have. We knew he could score, but we didn't anticipate he'd have 11 goals this early. But he's been what we thought we were getting."

Goaltender Curtis McElhinney has also been as good as expected. The 35-year-old 12-year NHL veteran was waived by Toronto in October and picked up by the Hurricanes. He got a bit of revenge against his old team, tallying 30 saves in the win.

"He's been great for us," Ferland said. "It all starts from back there. We just keep battling in front of him, keep grinding, keep building something here."

"Comin in, he's been solid," Brind'Amour said. "He's done everything we've asked of him. He left his family. I think he's still staying in a hotel. It sucks for him. He's a professions. There's a reason why a guy lasts that long."

The scoring outburst, in front of McElhinney, helped the Canes answer the challenge in the third quarter.

"We played really well," Brind'Amour said. "We got the lead and did it right. ... I like the way we competed in the third. We went after it."

The Canes also got some good news with the return of Victor Rask, who missed the first 20 games of the season after slicing his hand in an offseason kitchen accident. He had two shots in 10 and a half minutes of play.

"He looked great," Brind'Amour said. He didn't play much, but the shifts he had were productive. I think we'll ease him in a little bit, but he looks like right where he needs to be. Tonight was a good step in the right direction."

The Canes return to the ice on Friday to host the Florida Panthers.



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## Hurricanes GameDay: Time to eat the Leafs

By Adam Gold

First, let me wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving. Not to get emotional about things, but I'm thankful for the opportunity you've afforded me to give you my insights on your favorite team. With that said, and with the Toronto Maple Leafs in town for a 7:00 game, I thought I'd liken some of the key players to your favorite Thanksgiving foods.

### Turkey

This is easy, Jordan Staal is a rock solid centerpiece of your holiday table. And, no, I didn't choose Staal because he's big and lumbering, like a Turkey. I picked Staal because he's still the main man for the Hurricanes. He's second in the NHL in face-offs won, 4th in face-off percentage (among those with 100 attempts), kills penalties, plays on the power play and logs the most minutes of Carolina forwards. Ol' reliable.

### Stuffing

Jacob Slavin, like stuffing, is the best thing on the table. He covers up a lot of mistakes. There are many components to great stuffing, from mushrooms and onions to breadcrumbs and sausage, just as there are many layers to Slavin's advanced game. One of the best skaters on the Canes, useful in every situation and even great in the shootout.

### Green Bean Casserole

There are some who wish to phase this out of the Thanksgiving meal. "Too old timey", they say. Well, there's a reason green bean casserole is still a staple of every holiday feast, it's damn good. Just like Justin Williams. When the Captain has it going he makes everyone around him better, and he's got a knack for coming through when you need him the most. The Canes needed a fast start against New Jersey on Sunday, and Captain Casserole got the job done.

### Sweet Potatoes (or yams, if you'd rather)

Sneaky great almost any way you fix them. Sweet, especially with the brown sugar and pecan crusty topping, but hearty and borderline healthy (other than all the butter and sugar, of course). Sounds like Michael Ferland, to me. Where would your meal be without sweet potatoes? Where would this team be without Ferland's 10 goals?

### Cranberries

First, a point of clarification. This is not the cranberry mold you back out of a can that can stand on its own merits on the table. If that's your fancy, fine, but I'm talking about REAL cranberries. REAL cranberries baked with Grand Marnier and waaaaaay too much sugar to be healthy (though I'm sure you could convince someone that the antioxidants are a plus).

This just explodes with tart deliciousness. A dynamic element of the meal. So amazing you could just eat it with a spoon right out of the serving dish. Great hot or cold and absolutely vital on the leftover turkey sandwich. Yes, use it it all zones. This is undoubtedly Sebastian Aho. Now's the time to break him out and let the magic happen.

### Mac 'n Cheese

Jordan Martinook just looks like the mac 'n cheese your mother used to make. No Velveeta garbage either. Actual cheese, like a sharp Wisconsin cheddar.

### Dinner rolls

You might not even eat them. Heck, I might go two or three years without having one, but when the mood hits, it's nice to know that Curtis McElhinneyC is on the table. Not going to make or break the night, but it's just comforting to know he's there.

### Apple Pie

For my money, this is the greatest of all the holiday desserts. Filled with promise of what's to come. Sweet, snappy, bursting with flavor (Granny Smith apples are best for this). You can just tell by looking at it — as your mouth starts watering — how great it's going to be, just like Andrei Svechnikov. But, you've got to be patient and get through all the other things before you sink your teeth into it.

If you're wondering why the likes of Watergate Salad, or mashed potatoes or pumpkin pie were left off the table, let me just say that tonight is about positivity. I didn't want to disparage anyone by likening them to foods I detest or find unnecessary.

Incidentally, we're going to open a fine bottle of Tuevo Teravainen. Lighter in body, a little peppery, versatile and goes well with a hearty meal. Can easily be paired with turkey or fish, for instance, sea bass.

With that said, it's time to eat. Enjoy the Canes and the Leafs. Happy Thanksgiving.



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## Recap: Canes Defeat Maple Leafs

McElhinney makes 30 saves against former team in 5-2 win  
by Michael Smith

Buoyed by a two-goal first period and a solid performance in net from Curtis McElhinney, the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs, 5-2.

Micheal Ferland's power-play tally in the third period was the game-winner, and McElhinney made 29 saves on 31 shots against his former team.

Here are five takeaways from tonight's Thanksgiving appetizer at PNC Arena.

One

The Maple Leafs sat atop the Eastern Conference coming into tonight's game, and the Hurricanes were up to the task right from the drop of the puck. The Canes dominated the first period, Toronto pushed back in the second and the Canes closed out strong in the third.

The win improved the Canes to 4-1-1 in their last six games, and the team has collected seven of a possible 10 points through five games of a season-long, six-game homestand.

"It was huge," Ferland said. "Coming into tonight, we wanted to make a statement that we could play with any team. I thought we played really good tonight."

Two

A game removed from scoring two goals in eight seconds, the Canes struck twice in 22 seconds tonight to take a 2-0 lead in the first period.

The game's opening tally came off the stick of Trevor van Riemsdyk. Svechnikov centered the puck from behind the net, and a mad scramble ensued in the slot. Lucas Wallmark and Jordan Martinook had whacks at it, but it was van Riemsdyk creeping into the slot and gently backhanding in his first goal of the season.

Soon after, Calvin de Haan skated down along the near wall and centered the puck to an uncovered Justin Williams in the slot for the tap-in, the veteran's second goal in as many games and 100th with the Hurricanes. Williams is now just the ninth player in NHL history to score 100 goals and win a Stanley Cup with multiple teams.

"We had a great game today. The boys were on fire," Andrei Svechnikov said. "We scored the first couple of goals. That's important for us to score first."

Three

That two-goal output was the tangible result of firing 29 shots on goal in the first period, marking the most single-period shots in team (since relocation) history. While three shots shy of a franchise record (set in March 1984, also against Toronto), 29 shots on goal is the most in any first period in the NHL since 1997-98.

"It was a huge start for us," McElhinney said. "29 shots for us in the first period, which is unbelievable. If we're funneling pucks to the net, good things are going to happen."

Of the Hurricanes' 29 first-period shots, Andrei Svechnikov had five of them. The Russian rookie was dynamic in the opening frame. On his first shift of the game, he put his shoulder down on a defender and drove the net with the puck. And, though not appearing on the scoresheet, Svechnikov played an integral role in van Riemsdyk's tally.

Svechnikov was rewarded for his solid performance with an empty-net goal in the game's waning moments.

"He's coming on. You can see that," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "You can see the confidence starting to come out of him. Hanging on to pucks in the O-zone, taking it to the net really hard. Still got to work on the D-zone stuff, but he's trying. I love it. He wants to learn."

Four

The Canes dipped in the second period, registering just two shots on goal, the first coming in the final two minutes of the period. But, they rediscovered their game in the third period and stretched their lead back to two goals on their first and only power play of the game.

Teuvo Teravainen had a nice keep at the blue line while Sebastian Aho scampered to the bench for a new stick, and Teravainen slid the puck over to Ferland for the one-time blast that beat Frederik Andersen five-hole.

"It was a good play by Turbo to keep the puck in. I was getting open to get a shot off," Ferland said. "It was a nice play."

"I liked the way we competed in the third," Brind'Amour said. "We went after it."

At the other end of the ice, McElhinney continued to stand tall. Kasper Kapanen scored on a laser wrist shot to bring the Leafs back within a goal at 3-2, but that's as close as they would come. The veteran netminder finished the night with 30 saves in his fifth win of the season.

"It feels good," McElhinney said. "I'm not going to lie, it was a tough way to leave Toronto, but I certainly understand what



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the circumstances were. It's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings."

"He's been great," Ferland said of McElhinney. "It all starts from back there. Hopefully we can keep battling in front of him, keep grinding and keep building something here."

"Curtis has come in and been solid. He's done everything we've asked him to do. It's not an easy situation for him. He has to leave his family. He comes down here. I think he's still in a hotel. It sucks for him probably," Brind'Amour said. "He's a professional. There's a reason why a guy lasts that long. You can see it."

Aho and Svechnikov potted empty-net goals late in regulation to seal the victory for the Hurricanes.

Five

## Projected Lineup: Maple Leafs vs. Hurricanes

Victor Rask will make season debut

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes' lineup will get a jolt on the eve of Thanksgiving when they face off with the Eastern Conference-leading Toronto Maple Leafs.

Center Victor Rask will return to the lineup after missing the team's first 20 games with a right-hand injury. Curtis McElhinney, who the Canes claimed on waivers from Toronto in the first week of October, will make the start against his former team.

Here is the projected lineup for the Hurricanes.

Forwards

McGinn-Staal-Williams  
Ferland-Aho-Teravainen

Victor Rask returned to game action tonight after missing the team's first 20 games of the season with a right-hand injury. In his season debut, Rask logged two shots, one hit and a 57-percent faceoff win rate in 10:32 of ice time.

"I thought he looked great. He didn't play much, but the shifts he had were productive. I think we'll still probably ease him in a little bit, but he looks like he's right where he probably needs to be," Brind'Amour said. "I know he would have loved to play a little more, so we'll have to figure that out as we go, but there's no real rush to bury him right away. This was a good step in the right direction."

Up Next

The Hurricanes close out their season-long, six-game homestand on Black Friday against the Florida Panthers.

Svechnikov-Wallmark-Martinook  
Foegele-Rask-Di Giuseppe

Defense

Slavin-Hamilton  
de Haan-Faulk  
Fleury-van Riemsdyk

Goalies

McElhinney  
Darling

Scratches: Zykov (conditioning stint), Mrazek (lower body), Pesce (lower body)

Note: Lineup subject to change prior to opening faceoff.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 22, 2018



## Hurricanes set shots record, hand Maple Leafs rare road loss

Take 29 in first period, McElhinney makes 30 saves to defeat former team

by Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Curtis McElhinney made 30 saves against his former team, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs 5-2 at PNC Arena on Wednesday.

"It feels good, I'm not going to lie," McElhinney said. "It was a tough way to leave Toronto, but I certainly understand what the circumstances were. It's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings."

McElhinney, claimed off waivers from Toronto on Oct. 2, won his second straight game for Carolina (10-8-3). The 35-year-old, 11-season veteran is 5-2-0 this season.

John Tavares scored for the Maple Leafs (15-7-0), who had won four straight games, and nine of 10 on the road. Frederik Andersen made 40 saves but lost for the first time in seven starts.

"Bottom line is we didn't get what we wanted here today," Toronto coach Mike Babcock said. "Ideally, it's a good lesson for all of us. If we're not prepared, we have no chance at success, and we'll move on."

Trevor van Riemsdyk and Justin Williams scored 22 seconds apart in the first period, and Micheal Ferland scored a power-play goal in the third period before empty-net goals by Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho.

"It's huge," Ferland said. "Coming into tonight, we wanted to make a statement that we could play with any team. I thought we played really good tonight."

The Hurricanes outshot the Maple Leafs 29-11 in the first, setting a Carolina single-period record before getting two shots in the second period.

"They threw everything on net and they've been shooting a lot so far this season," Andersen said. "They definitely came and put everything on net. I thought we came back in the second, played a really good period there and just couldn't get it in."

Carolina took a 1-0 lead at 10:56 of the first period when van Riemsdyk swept a loose puck in the slot for his first goal of the season.

Williams scored at 11:18 to give Carolina a 2-0 lead. After Jordan Staal won a face-off, Calvin de Haan pinched with the puck and fed Williams at the net for his 100th goal for the Hurricanes.

Tavares made it 2-1 with his 14th goal of the season at 15:30 after he intercepted a pass from Williams.

Ferland made it 3-1 with a one-timer on the power play at 7:45 of the third period.

"(After the second period), we played it right," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We didn't sit back. I liked the way we competed in the third. We went after it."

Kasperii Kapanen scored on a wrist shot from the right circle to make it 3-2 at 11:57.

"It seemed like the pucks were kind of bouncing on us a little bit and we weren't able to finally connect and tie it up and really change the momentum of the game," Tavares said. "Obviously, we had a chance at the end in the last eight minutes, again within one, but obviously we'd like to start better than we did."

Aho scored an empty-net goal with 1:18 remaining to make it 4-2, and Svechnikov scored another with 38 seconds left for the 5-2 final.

Svechnikov, selected No. 2 in the 2018 NHL Draft, had a game-high eight shots in 15:17 of ice time.

"He's coming on," Brind'Amour said. "You see the confidence starting to come out of him. He's hanging on to pucks in the offensive zone, taking it to the net really hard."

They said it

"We talked about the process here today and being ready and we weren't. If you don't win any battles, any races, then it doesn't matter how much skill you have." -- Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock

"Curtis has come in and he's been solid. He's done everything we've asked him to do. It's not an easy situation for him. He's got to leave his family behind (in Toronto). I think he's still in a hotel. It [stinks] for him probably. There's a reason why a guy like that lasts so long, and you can see it." -- Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour

Need to know

Tavares has 23 goals in 35 games against the Hurricanes. ... Williams is the ninth NHL player to score 100 goals and win the Stanley Cup with two teams. He scored 103 goals and won the Cup twice with the Los Angeles Kings (2012, 2014). ... The Tampa Bay Lightning set the NHL record of 33 shots on goal in a period Oct. 21 against the Chicago Blackhawks.

What's next

Maple Leafs: At the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday (7 p.m. ET; FS-O, TSN4, NHL.TV)



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Hurricanes: Host the Florida Panthers on Friday (7:30 p.m. ET; FS-CR, FS-F, NHL.TV)



## Hurricanes beat Maple Leafs 5-2 to halt Toronto streak at 4

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Coming into the night, the Toronto Maple Leafs were tied for the NHL lead in scoring and ranked second in goal differential on the strength of a top-notch power play.

Still, the Carolina Hurricanes found a way to neutralize the Leafs behind a former Toronto goaltender and solid special-teams play.

Trevor van Riemsdyk and Justin Williams scored 22 seconds apart in the first period, sending the Hurricanes to a 5-2 victory Wednesday.

Curtis McElhinney, claimed off waivers from Toronto in early October, made 30 saves as Carolina snapped the Maple Leafs' four-game winning streak. Jordan Staal had two assists for the Hurricanes, who killed three penalties.

"The defensemen and the forwards did a phenomenal job, and we got a couple of key blocks in there, which were huge," McElhinney said.

Micheal Ferland scored his 11th of the season with 12:15 remaining, a power-play goal that put the Hurricanes ahead 3-1. Teuvo Teravainen assisted on the play.

Kasperii Kapanen answered for Toronto with 8:05 left, racing in to score his ninth of the season and cut the margin to 3-2. Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov added empty-net goals for Carolina.

"It feels good. I'm not going to lie, it was a tough way to leave Toronto, but I certainly understand what the circumstances were," McElhinney said. "But it's a huge win for us, especially considering where they are in the standings."

The Hurricanes (10-8-3) dominated the first period and handed Maple Leafs goalie Frederik Andersen (40 saves) his first loss in seven starts.

Toronto (15-7-0) fell to 9-2 on the road this season.

"We weren't prepared to go, for whatever reason," Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock said. "The message is pretty clear: You don't work, you don't win."

Carolina went ahead when van Riemsdyk scored his first of the season. He took a backhand swipe at the puck after a scramble in front, beating a prone Andersen at 10:56. Toronto

challenged the play for goaltender interference, but the call was upheld.

Staal then won a faceoff to the left of Andersen. Calvin de Haan skated in and found Williams alone in front of the net.

John Tavares scored his 14th of the season unassisted for Toronto later in the period to cut the lead to 2-1.

Carolina outshot Toronto 29-11 in the first, a record for shots in a period by the team since it relocated from Hartford in 1997. But the Hurricanes needed more than 18 minutes to register a shot on goal in the second.

Carolina killed off two penalties, keeping the lead despite being outshot 12-2. The final shot total was 45-32 in favor of the Hurricanes.

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said his team hasn't made changes to its penalty kill, but he acknowledged it has improved.

"The first few games we had some (tough) bounces, but that happens on the penalty kill," he said. "Really nothing has changed, and the guys have gotten more comfortable with things. Honestly, I just think the bounces have been going our way."

NOTES: Announced attendance was 12,562. ... Tavares' goal was his 11th of the season on the road. ... Williams' goal for Carolina was his 100th with the team. He became the ninth player in NHL history to score at least 100 goals and win the Stanley Cup with two franchises. Williams scored 103 goals for the Los Angeles Kings and was part of championship teams in 2012 and 2014. He also played on Carolina's 2006 Stanley Cup-winning squad. ... Toronto entered as the least-penalized team in the NHL, and Carolina ranked second. ... Carolina activated forward Victor Rask, who missed the first 21 games with a hand injury, and sent Clark Bishop to the AHL. ... It was the first of three meetings between the teams this season. The Maple Leafs return to Raleigh on Dec. 11, and the Hurricanes visit Toronto on April 2.

UP NEXT

Maple Leafs: At Columbus on Friday.

Hurricanes: Host Florida on Friday.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SPORTSNET™

### Potential Maple Leafs' Nylander trade targets to watch vs. Hurricanes

By Luke Fox

The interest is mutual.

But pulling off a trade for a 60-point star forward yet to reach his prime is easier said than done.

Peter Chiarelli's dealing away of MVP Taylor Hall to modestly boost the Edmonton Oilers' defence reminded the hockey world how grave a mistake a GM can make. On the flip side, however, the Ryan Johansen–Seth Jones deal is still benefitting both Columbus and Nashville.

Which brings us to contractually stuck William Nylander and the pressure on Toronto Maple Leafs rookie GM Kyle Dubas to get it right.

Prior to the Leafs' visit to Carolina on Wednesday, Dubas has scouted the Hurricanes in person. Carolina has sent a pro scout (or two or three) to Scotiabank Arena for every Toronto home game this month.

Despite ranking first overall in shots taken (809), the Hurricanes sit dead last in the Eastern Conference in goals scored (52). It's a problem.

Nylander scores goals. Through 21 games, the Leafs are showing they can score goals without him.

Carolina is flush with twenty-something defenders, and Toronto would like to upgrade in that area, especially when you realize half of the Leafs' top six are on expiring deals (Ron Hainsey, Jake Gardiner, Igor Ozhiganov) and a right-shot D has only been on the franchise wish-list since before the Shanaplan.

There is a fit to be found.

Dubas and Hurricanes GM Don Waddell have been speaking about a possible Nylander deal for weeks, but just as it is for Dubas, Nylander's asking price might be a stumbling block.

"It wouldn't do us any good to trade for any player in this situation without knowing that we could sign the player also," Waddell said on a Toronto radio station last week.

"My thinking is that until you even get to a point where you think you can potentially have a trade, I think you're putting the cart in front of the horse. I'd rather be in a position where if I knew something was going to happen down the road, then you pick up the phone and find out if there's a deal to be made. Being in this spot multiple times myself, I don't want to create any illusion or conflict between the Toronto Maple Leafs and Nylander trying to get signed. I think it's unfair for me to get into that mix, unless of course something was moving forward as far as acquiring a player."

What makes Carolina so intriguing as a trade partner is the presence of more than just one obvious target from the Maple Leafs' point of view.

The Hurricanes are blessed with flexibility in terms of cap space (a league-high \$21.38 million), extra draft picks, plus

some potential secondary pieces to make a multi-player blockbuster work for both sides.

While we still believe Dubas's preference is to sign Nylander within the next 200 hours or so, as the Leafs and 'Canes face off in Raleigh on Wednesday night, here are a few names to ponder if it does come to dealing the young star.

**Jacob Slavin**

Patrolling the left side on Carolina's top pairing, the 24-year-old Slavin is regarded as an emerging star on a team-friendly contract. As a \$5.3-million cap hit through 2024-25, Slavin represents the type of financial known that could ease Brandon Pridham's nearing migraines and guard against a Jake Gardiner departure if the Toronto lefty seeks greener pastures as a free agent this summer.

He'd be Dubas's first inquiry but Waddell's last resort.

A 2012 fourth-round pick, Slavin leads his team ice time (23:17), and although his deal doesn't provide him with trade protection until 2021-22, Waddell would be loath to let him go — and he loves living in Raleigh.

"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," Slavin, a man of faith, told the Toronto Star. "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.

"[Christianity] is 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."

**Brett Pesce**

A right-shot D (hey!) signed through 2023-24 at a palatable \$4.025-million AAV, Pesce was sidelined for a couple days after taking a knee-on-knee hit but did skate with Carolina Tuesday morning in a yes-contact sweater.

He's the most likely candidate on this list, but Dubas would probably want some supplementary pieces (draft pick and/or a bottom-six forward) to get a fair return.

The Leafs and Hurricanes had discussed a deal involving Justin Faulk in the off-season, but Toronto's expressed significant interest in Pesce.

Pesce, a 2013 fifth-round gem, is a big lad (six-foot-three, 206 pounds), which should appeal to Leafs coach Mike Babcock. He's not a scorer (58 points in 233 career games), but who cares? He tops all 'Canes in PK ice time (2:53) and is a career plus-15 defender on a team that's never been good enough to make the playoffs.

If you're a betting man, put your money on Pesce plus.

**Justin Faulk**

The most veteran and understood commodity among



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Carolina's blue-liners has been available to trade for months. Faulk, 26, is a right shot who plays in all situations — and he's a workhorse (21:50). More regarded for his offensive flair, he was the youngest skater to crack the U.S. Olympic squad in Sochi.

Faulk carries a very fair \$4.83-million cap hit but only through 2019-20, at which point his price goes up. With a modified no-trade clause that kicked in over the summer, the defenceman does have some say in where he ends up (15 team trade list).

Dougie Hamilton

This one is a long shot. Hamilton, 25, has already been dealt twice, and eyebrows would raise if Waddell moved him again so quickly after paying a high price to bring him in from Calgary. A silver lining for Hamilton: The ROM is world-class. (Just kidding.)

The fact the Toronto native doesn't spend much time killing penalties would concern the Leafs, although they'd love his right shot, young age and fixed contract (\$5.75 million through 2020-21). If Hamilton, an offensive mind who could operate a second power-play unit, was traded to Toronto, you could all but guarantee Gardiner goes on July 1. Carrying three 50-point defencemen gets redundant.

Valentin Zykov

The obvious tact for Dubas would be to seek a defenceman

in return, but the GM is a creative thinker and may wish to replace a right wing with a right wing. Andrei Svechnikov can't be on the table, but 23-year-old Zykov might be. A second-rounder in 2013, the Russian flexed some offensive flair late in 2017-18 for Carolina after lighting up the AHL but has struggled early this season.

He was healthy-scratched for a few games and returned to Charlotte for a conditioning stint. If Waddell did include Zykov in a Nylander deal, he'd have to beef up the package with more elements.

Draft picks

While Carolina is on track for the Jack Hughes lottery, its first-round pick must be considered off-limits. Keep in mind, however, that Waddell holds an extra 2019 second-rounder (Buffalo's), an extra 2019 sixth-rounder (Calgary's), and an extra 2020 third-rounder (Buffalo's).

With the NHL's longest-running playoff drought and attendance an issue, it's time for the Hurricanes to quit stockpiling futures and spend on the now.

Goalie depth

Carolina, you'll recall, is carrying three NHL goalies: Scott Darling, Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney. We could totally see Toronto being interested in McElhinney (or Mrazek) getting tossed into a deal. The Marlies' depth in net is an organizational concern.



## Recap: Hurricanes strike quickly again in 5-2 win over Maple Leafs

It was far from a Thanksgiving turkey in the Canes' first win over the Leafs at home in nearly four years.

By Brian LeBlanc

The Carolina Hurricanes hadn't seen much sustained play of the level that sparked them to a 4-0-1 start since they came back to earth six weeks ago. In fact, they hadn't even won consecutive games in nearly a month, and with the league-leading Toronto Maple Leafs in town, it seemed like an unlikely scenario to spark a winning streak.

But hockey has a way of surprising everyone, and the Canes indeed went into the Thanksgiving holiday with a 5-2 win over the Leafs, their first win over Toronto at home since February 20, 2015.

The Hurricanes came out of the gate absolutely flying. Every skater in w lineup save Jaccob Slavin took at least one shot in the period, led by Andrei Svechnikov with five, on their way to a franchise-record 29 shots in the first period. Svechnikov in particular was everywhere, and while he didn't officially factor into the opening goal by Trevor van Riemsdyk, it was his hard work behind the net that set up the defenseman to shovel the puck into the net. The Maple Leafs challenged the goal for goalie interference, arguing that Jordan Martinook knocked Frederik Andersen's blocker off his hand

on purpose, but the review upheld the goal and took less time than Mike Babcock did to decide whether to challenge the play.

Twenty-two seconds later, the quick-strike Canes scored again, the second time in as many games that they had scored two goals in less than a minute. And just like Monday, the Canes' captain lit the lamp. Justin Williams was the beneficiary of a gorgeous Calvin de Haan pass off a faceoff, the defenseman head-faking Nikita Zaitsev out just enough to open up a lane to thread a pass to Williams for a tap-in.

But then Williams made a lackadaisical pass at the blue line that John Tavares picked off, taking advantage of the breakaway to beat his erstwhile teammate Curtis McElhinney and pull the Leafs to within one despite being outshot 29-11 in the period.

The second period, though, was as barren as the first was fruitful for the Hurricanes. Outshot 12-2 in the middle frame, the Canes were back on their feet early and often, but McElhinney stood tall. The Canes' penalty kill was pressed into service against one of the top power plays in the league, including once with Jordan Staal in the box for a questionable interference penalty, but the unit that had been so shaky for long stretches was flawless.



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It took Carolina more than 45 minutes of game time to earn a power play, and they cashed in on their chance. Sebastian Aho's stick snapped on a shot from the point, but the clearing attempt came right back to Teuvo Teravainen, who set up Micheal Ferland on a one-timer for his 11th of the season to restore the Hurricanes' two-goal lead.

(Incidentally, Bojangles' is open on Thursday despite it being Thanksgiving, so your Boberry biscuit redemption will be available for all your breakfast needs tomorrow. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.)

But the Leafs weren't done yet. Kasperii Kapanen, showing off speed that his father made famous in this arena years ago, took off on a stretch pass with the teams at 4-on-4 and went high to beat McElhinney and pull the Leafs back to within a goal. A minute later, Tyler Ennis whiffed on an open net to tie the game, and the Canes were back on their heels yet again.

But McElhinney stood tall the rest of the way, helped by a perfect pass breakup by Justin Faulk to thwart a Mitch Marner/Tavares two-on-one with four minutes left, and Sebastian Aho iced the game with an empty net goal 1:18 from the final horn to send the Canes into Thanksgiving on a roll. Svechnikov, appropriately, was rewarded for a sterling performance by scoring a second empty-net goal with 37 seconds remaining.

They Said It

Rod Brind'Amour:

It was a good game. Great first period, not a great second, thought we played really well in the third. With the lead, we did it right. Just the way we played it, we didn't sit back, we played it right. Even in the second period there were times we were doing things right - we hit a crossbar, we had some good looks, but we just didn't play the same way. We knew they were coming out after their first period, but we had some good kills. I liked the way we competed in the third. We went after it.

[On McElhinney:] He's earned every start he's had. Probably makes sense to do it again, but I have to get decompressed before Friday. I thought Rask looked great. He didn't play much, but the shifts he had were productive. I think we'll still ease him a little bit, but he looks like he's right where he needs to be. There's no real rush to bury him right away. This was a good step in the right direction.

[Svechnikov] is coming on, you can see that. I didn't like his game the other night - it was probably one of his worst ones - but I loved that he bounced back. You see the confidence starting to come out of him, hanging on to pucks, taking it to the net really hard. Still needs to work on the D zone stuff, but he's trying. I love it. He wants to learn, and if he wants to learn, he'll just keep getting better.

Dean's done a nice job getting the [PK] message across. What's different? Nothing. The first few games we had some strange bounces going in, and that happens on the penalty kill. I do think we're getting a lot better at it, but nothing has really changed. The guys may be a little more comfortable with what's going on, but to be honest with you I just think the bounces have started going our way.

Andrei Svechnikov:

I think we had a great game today. The boys were on fire today, and we scored our first couple of goals. That's important for us, to score first.

It's my game, to play behind the net and forecheck. No question, I started off the season and didn't have that kind of confidence, but right now, the way I'm going, creating those plays increases my confidence.

I think we just stayed together, that's the important thing. We have got to win. I think when we win, every game we get more confidence, and now we just need to keep going.

Micheal Ferland:

Yeah, I saw that [Aho] broke his stick. Good play from Turbo to keep the puck in and I was just getting ready for it, get open and get a shot off. It was a nice play. Special teams was huge tonight. It wasn't where we wanted it to be early in the season, but I think we have to just keep building off it, keep chipping away and try to get better.

It was huge, coming into tonight we wanted to make a statement that we could play with any team and it felt really good tonight. I think, as a line, we just try to keep things simple and try to be solid at both blue lines. It's nice to get rewarded. Curtis has been great for us. It all starts from back there, and we just have to keep battling in front of him, keep grinding and build something here.

Curtis McElhinney:

It feels good. I'm not going to lie, it was a tough way to leave Toronto but I certainly understand how the circumstances were. But it's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings.

The way that Toronto's power play is set up, it's obviously a lot of point shots coming down and those guys coming off the half wall rolling down. I thought the defensemen and the forwards did a phenomenal job. We got a couple of key blocks in there as well, which were huge.

Another huge start for us - 29 shots in the first period, which is unbelievable. If we're just funneling pucks to the net, good things are going to happen.

Game Notes

- Justin Williams' goal in the first period made him only the ninth player in NHL history to score 100 goals and win Stanley Cups with two different teams.
- Rask only took two real shifts in the second period, on his way to 10:32 of ice time, second-lowest on the team (only Phil Di Giuseppe at 9:01 was out there less). Brind'Amour said that he knows Rask wanted to play more, and Rask was feeling confident about his play, so it wouldn't be a surprise to see him up closer to 13-14 minutes on Friday.
- There's something blatantly obvious about how the Hurricanes play in front of goalies not named Scott Darling. The Canes were aggressive defensively, got out of the way and let McElhinney see shots all night, and were very effective on what looked like textbook penalty killing in the second period.



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- At this point, Darling has to be the odd man out, doesn't he? This is McElhinney's crease until further notice, and there's no reason Darling or Petr Mrazek should usurp him until his play determines otherwise.
- Andrei Svechnikov finished with eight shots on goal. It's the most he's ever had in a game, and reached a plateau that three other players have attained this season, most recently Lucas Wallmark in the shootout loss to the Red Wings on November 10.
- Speaking of Wallmark, I haven't really been a fan to this point, but it looks like Brind'Amour's patience with him is paying off. He had three shots of his own tonight, finished +2, and looks to be building a bit of chemistry with Svechnikov. Perhaps there's a bit of Skinner/Rask/PDG strange-bedfellowing going on between Wallmark, Svechnikov and Martinook?
- Your Dougie Hamilton Consecutive Games With A Shot Counter: 186 and counting.
- The Canes are off tomorrow and will have their usual 10:30 morning skate on Friday before the Panthers come to town.

## Carolina Hurricanes vs. Toronto Maple Leafs: Lineups and Game Discussion

The ahead-of-schedule return of Victor Rask highlights the Canes' pre-Thanksgiving tilt with the Leafs.

By Andy House

The Carolina Hurricanes will welcome Victor Rask back to the lineup for his season debut, as the center returns from missing the first 20 games of the season with a right-hand injury.

Coach Rod Brind'Amour will slot Rask in the middle with Warren Foegele and Phil Di Giuseppe (alongside whom Rask played for a good stretch a few seasons ago). Rask was not expected to return until sometime in December, but his rehab has continued to progress, and with the Canes in need of flexibility at center, Brind'Amour has elected to put the former 21-goal scorer back in the lineup immediately, with the team returning Clark Bishop to Charlotte in a corresponding move.

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Brind'Amour will also turn back to former Maple Leaf Curtis McElhinney in net following his solid performance in the 2-1 win over the Devils on Sunday. Below is the projected Canes lineup:

Brock McGinn - Jordan Staal - Justin Williams

Micheal Ferland - Sebastian Aho - Teuvo Teravainen

Andrei Svechnikov - Lucas Wallmark - Jordan Martinook

Warren Foegele - Victor Rask - Phil Di Giuseppe

Jacob Slavin - Dougie Hamilton

Calvin de Haan - Justin Faulk

Haydn Fleury - Trevor van Riemsdyk

Curtis McElhinney

Scott Darling

With Auston Matthews still on the shelf dealing with a shoulder injury, the Eastern Conference-leading Toronto Maple Leafs may not enter Raleigh with a full arsenal, but they certainly have plenty of weapons at their disposal as they take on the Canes. Netminder Frederik Andersen will be back between the pipes sporting an NHL-best 12 wins on the season. His play, paired with an improving defense led by Morgan Rielly and a dynamic offense, has proven to be a recipe for tremendous success in the early going.

Coach Mike Babcock can wait patiently for a healthy Matthews as well as contract holdout William Nylander to return, as his squad has not missed a beat to this point. His lineup is projected as below:

Zach Hyman - John Tavares - Mitch Marner

Patrick Marleau - Nazem Kadri - Kasper Kapanen

Andreas Johnsson - Par Lindholm - Connor Brown

Tyler Ennis - Frederik Gauthier - Josh Leivo

Morgan Rielly - Ron Hainsey

Jake Gardiner - Nikita Zaitsev

Travis Dermott - Igor Ozhiganov

Frederik Andersen

Garret Sparks



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## Charlotte Checkers Corner: A Roller Coaster Week

The Checkers have a lot to be thankful for as they head into the holiday weekend.

By Justin Lape

The Charlotte Checkers had a roller coaster week that was wrapped up by their worst loss of the season to Belleville on Tuesday. This didn't sit well with Checkers head coach Mike Vellucci:

The team remains the best of the best but Vellucci sees room for improvement. He was unhappy with his team's performance and expects more out of them moving forward.

### Week Recap

The Checkers started their week by earning a point but falling to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms in overtime. Charlotte got on the board first with a goal from Andrew Poturalski. Lehigh Valley took over in the second period, outshooting Charlotte 13-9 while scoring a pair of goals to take the lead. Julien Gauthier scored the equalizer with just a few minutes left in the third period but TJ Brennan secured the win for the Phantoms in the extra frame. Rookie goalie and standout prospect Carter Hart made 35 saves on 37 shots.

Charlotte remained in the state of Pennsylvania and headed to Wilkes-Barre to take on the Penguins. Special teams were a deciding factor in Charlotte's 2-1 win over the Penguins on Friday. Charlotte killed off all five penalties they committed and both of the Checkers goals came on the power play.

Wilkes Barre-Scranton took the lead at the 1:00 minute mark of the first period but the Checkers defense remained strong and the offense responded in the second period with a goal from Janne Kuokkanen. Poturalski secured the win with a power play tally with less than five minutes to go in the game. Trevor Carrick assisted on both Charlotte goals. Alex Nedeljkovic won the goalie battle against Penguins goalie Tristian Jarry, stopping 27 shots.

Saturday's game was a thrilling 6-5 win for Charlotte that was full of excitement. Aleksii Saarel started the scoring of the Checkers but things went south...fast. The Penguins scored three unanswered goals on Alex Nedeljkovic and head coach Mike Vellucci decided he had seen enough. Nedeljkovic was yanked for Callum Booth and shortly after the Penguins added another tally to go up 4-1. Charlotte then stormed back, scoring four straight goals, highlighted by Cliff Pu and Dan Renouf's first goals of the season. Martin Necas scored his second goal since being sent down. Wilkes-Barre forward Anthony Angello scored with less than five minutes remaining to send the game to overtime. Saarela added his second goal of the game to secure the win for Charlotte.

The Checkers returned home to take on the Belleville Senators yesterday. Here's our coverage:

### Sloppy Checkers Fall To Sens

### Thought of the Week

Not to stir up a goaltending controversy, but Alex Nedeljkovic could maybe use a rest on the pine. It wouldn't be beyond Mike Vellucci sending a message to his young goaltender whose save percentage has dropped. Vellucci sent a message in game 2 of the Penguins series. He did it earlier in the season with forward Saku Maenalanen. The Finnish forward now ranks fifth on the team in scoring with 11 points in 16 games.

Nedeljkovic was on the wrong side of a 5-1 decision on Tuesday night. Vellucci blamed the team in front of him rather than the goaltender and rightfully so. The defense was atrocious in front of him and left him high and dry at points. He was yanked in place for Callum Booth for the second time in two games.

Nedeljkovic's save percentage has now dropped to .895 on the season. Sound familiar?

### Player of the Week

The player of the week is Andrew Poturalski. He's the energizer bunny of the team and is a leader on the ice outside of injured captain Patrick Brown. His two goals this past weekend came at opportune and needed times for Charlotte.

### Looking Ahead

The Checkers play game two of their series against Belleville tonight at home. Charlotte will get a rest for Thanksgiving and Black Friday and then turn their attention to the Laval Rocket on Saturday and Sunday. Canes Country will not have coverage of Wednesday's game but will have coverage of both games against the Rocket this weekend.

The Rocket come into Charlotte with some notable names on their roster that may peak the attention of NHL fans. Byron Froese, Hunter Shinkaruk and Michael McCarron have played a majority of the Rocket's games and each have NHL experience. 2014 7th round pick Jake Evans has impressed for the Rocket this season in his first year in professional hockey. Evans is coming off an impressive college hockey career with Notre Dame and finished with 46 points in his senior year campaign.

Also of note, Checkers PR extraordinaire Nick Niedzielski shared some injury updates. Spencer Smallman will not play another game for the Checkers this season after undergoing surgery.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving holiday.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 22, 2018



## Svechnikov, McElhinney, strong start propel Canes over Leafs

Andrew Schnittker

The Carolina Hurricanes rode a strong first period and solid performance from their goalie Curtis McElhinney to a 5-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs at PNC Arena Wednesday night.

The Hurricanes (10-8-3) got goals from defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk and forwards Justin Williams, Micheal Ferland, Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov against the Maple Leafs (15-7-0). It was a bizarre night for the high-shooting Canes in that regard. They fired 29 shots on goal in the first period, the highest single-period total in team history, but were outshot 12-2 in the second.

"I thought it was a great game," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Great first period and then not a great second, and I thought we played really well in the third. With the lead, we did it right. We didn't sit back; we played it right. Even in the second period we were doing things right and we knew how they were going to come out."

McElhinney played a strong game in net for the Canes, stopping 30 of 32 shots against the team that put him on waivers days before the season started.

"It feels good," McElhinney said. "I'm not going to lie, it was a tough way to leave Toronto with the situation. I certainly understand what the circumstances were. But it's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings."

Van Riemsdyk poked home a backhander from the slot to make it 1-0 about 11 minutes into the game to cap off a strong shift with a number of good chances for the line of Svechnikov, Jordan Martinook and Lucas Wallmark. Svechnikov did not get an assist on the goal, but was instrumental in setting it up with his forechecking and cycling behind the net.

"It's my game, play behind the net and on the forecheck," Svechnikov said. "No question at the start of the season I didn't have that kind of confidence, but right now, the way I'm going, creating those plays increases my confidence."

The Maple Leafs challenged for goalie interference after goalie Frederik Andersen's glove was knocked off on the scramble, but a quick review upheld the call.

Williams made it 2-0 22 seconds later, tapping in a perfect feed from defenseman Calvin de Haan, who swooped in from the point off a faceoff. Williams' goal was his 100th with the Hurricanes, making him the ninth player in NHL history to score 100 goals and win a Stanley Cup with two different teams (he also did it with the Los Angeles Kings).

The Leafs cut the lead in half with 4:30 to play in the opening frame on a breakaway from forward John Tavares after Williams turned it over at the blueline.

The Canes went up 3-1 on their first power play of the game about eight minutes into the third period. Forward Teuvo Teravainen corralled a clearing attempt by former Canes defenseman Ron Hainsey at the point and zipped a pass to Ferland at the right circle, who one-timed it through Andersen's five hole. Ferland is off to a blazing start to his first season in Carolina, with 11 goals in 21 games.

Carolina won the special teams battle emphatically, going 1 for 1 on the power play and holding the Maple Leafs' man advantage off the scoreboard on two opportunities.

"It was a good play from [Teravainen] to keep the puck in," Ferland said. "I was getting ready for it, get open and get a shot off. It was a nice play. Special teams was huge tonight. It wasn't where we wanted it to be early in the season, but I think we've just got to keep building on it, keep chipping away and try to get better."

Toronto cut it to 3-2 with a four on four goal from forward Kasper Kapanen with 8:03 to play; he beat McElhinney with a tight-angle shot from the circle that the veteran goalie would probably like a second chance on.

McElhinney redeemed himself with a couple strong saves to keep Toronto from tying the game.

"Curtis has come in and he's been solid," Brind'Amour said. "He's done everything we've asked him to do. It's not an easy situation for him. He's got to leave his family. He comes down here; I think he's still in a hotel. It probably sucks for him, but the fact that he's a professional. There's a reason why a guy lasts that long. You can see it."

Toronto pulled Andersen for an extra skater with about two minutes to play, but empty net goals from Aho and Svechnikov in the final 1:18 of the game sealed the win.

Svechnikov played the best game of his rookie season Wednesday, racking up a whopping eight shots on goal (five in the first period) before finally being rewarded with the final tally. The Russian winger is starting to heat up as the season goes along.

"He's coming on; I think you can see that," Brind'Amour said. "I didn't like his game the other night. I thought it was one of his worst ones. I love that he bounced back. You see the confidence starting to come out of him, hanging on to pucks in the o-zone, taking it to the net really hard. He's still got to work on the d-zone, but he's trying. I love it. He wants to learn. I've said all along, if he's willing to learn and he wants to do it, he's just going to keep getting better."

The Canes will wrap up their six-game homestand Friday with a visit from the Florida Panthers.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## TriangleSportsNetwork

### Hurricanes score in bunches, take down Leafs 5-2

Goalkeeper McElhinney earns win over former team

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – Quick starts and long and steady finishes are critical to winning games in the National Hockey League (NHL).

Following up a 2-1 win over New Jersey on Sunday, the Carolina Hurricanes posted two quick goals, 22 seconds apart, and finished with two empty-net goals 40 seconds apart.

Add in a power play goal in between and the end-result was a 5-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs at PNC Arena on Wednesday.

"It was a good game," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said matter-of-factly.

"Great first period, but not a great second. I thought we played really well in the third. Just the way we played it. We didn't sit back, we played it right."

Hurricanes captain Justin Williams scored his third goal of the season, his second in as many games and also his 100<sup>th</sup> with the club.

The achievement also placed him in a did-you-know trivia question category as he became the ninth player in NHL history to score at least 100 goals and win the Stanley Cup with multiple franchises.

Williams' marker came just 22 seconds after defenseman Trevor Van Riemsdyk's first of the year slid into the Leafs net following a goalmouth scramble at the 10:56 mark of opening period.

The two goals came about as a result of a grinding and suffocating forecheck and offensive zone time that created 29 shots on goal in one period, a franchise record.

After putting 11 pucks on their former netminder, Curtis McElhinney, during the opening 20 minutes, and trailing 2-0, the Leafs worked harder to even it up, outshooting Carolina 10-2 in the second.

John Tavares cut the difference to one when he picked off a Williams chip pass into the middle of the neutral zone.

The Leafs' top goal scorer added another, his 14<sup>th</sup> on the year, when he skated in on McElhinney unopposed and sniped a wrist shot past the keeper's blocker with 4:30 remaining.

Toronto didn't back down, but couldn't connect on chances and not due to lack of effort according to head coach Mike Babcock.

"Oh, we worked," he said.

"Tough game – you don't win any races or battles. We weren't prepared to go for whatever reason, but it's not like we didn't have a normal day, normal process, and try to get prepared. But we weren't prepared.

"They were prepared, they worked, and they were excited. If you don't win any battles any races, it doesn't matter how much skill you have."

Carrying the 2-1 lead into the third, Carolina regained its offensive momentum and pace and continued to test Andersen.

Micheal Ferland scored his 11<sup>th</sup> goal of the season on the power play when he teed up a one-timer that beat the Toronto netminder between his pads as he slid across in an attempt to square up on the shot from the left faceoff dot.

Andersen did his part as part in making a 43-save effort while suffering the loss against the team that originally drafted him in the 7th round back in 2010.

He got some support in the third when Kasper Kapanen entered the Hurricanes zone to McElhinney's left side and labeled the opposite corner as his by snapping the puck against the twine there for his ninth goal of the season.

Looking to play out the final 8:03 of the game with a 3-2 lead, Carolina didn't relent and helped its keeper earn his fifth win of the season against his former club.

McElhinney made two critical saves down the stretch as the Leafs sent on the extra skater on for Andersen who left his net vacant.

Carolina's leading scorer Sebastian Aho and rookie Andrei Svechnikov helped to put game firmly out of reach of a Toronto comeback with empty-net goals 40 seconds apart at the 18:42 and 19:22 marks.

"It's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings," McElhinney said.

"Twenty-nine shots in the first period is unbelievable. When you're putting pucks to the net good things are going to happen."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Martin Necas scores overtime winner as Checkers top Belleville

By Nicholas Niedzielski

After a tough loss the night before, the Checkers responded with a thrilling overtime victory courtesy of Martin Necas to beat Belleville 3-2.

The Checkers found themselves down by one heading into the final five minutes of regulation and pulled netminder Alex Nedeljkovic for an extra attacker. They continued to apply pressure on the Senators until Aleksii Saarela found the back of the net, evening the score and sending the contest to overtime.

Both teams traded chances in the extra frame, including a crucial kill by the Checkers, and in the final minute of play Martin Necas broke up the right side before cutting across the crease and beating Filip Gustavsson to secure two points for the first-place Checkers.

That marked the second tally of the night for the rookie, as he wired a wrist late in the first to tie the score at one.

### QUOTES

Coach Mike Vellucci on Martin Necas

We moved him to the wing tonight where there was a little less responsibility defensively, and I think that just freed up his mind to be able to show his skill and his offensive ability. It was a good first day on the right wing and he was able to get some big goals for us.

Vellucci on Aleksii Saarela

He's a goal scorer and we've got to make sure that he's put in positions to score goals. We had pressure there for probably 30 seconds with three minutes left and decided to pull the goalie at that time, and then we kept in there for almost a minute and a half or two minutes and got a lot of scoring chances. We just stayed with it, tired them out and got back to what we do best, which is battle and compete every shift.

Vellucci on responding from yesterday's loss

The point I'd make to the guys is that you can't just turn it on and off and think you're just going to play this shift or play this game. You've got to play every game. We turned it off yesterday and turned it on today, but it took us a while to get

going. You've got to make sure you have it on all the time.

Martin Necas on his performance

I switched to the wing today, and it was a much better game for us today than yesterday. Yesterday was brutal. That's the way to play, and we played much better today.

Necas on this game vs. last night's game

No one was happy. It was so far our worst game and that happens sometimes. We had two days off and we were just kind of slow everywhere. We showed that we can show up and play better.

Aleksii Saarela on scoring important goals lately

For me it's just confidence. The goalie looks a little bit smaller when you've got confidence and it's easier to put the puck in the net. I've just got to work hard and earn that confidence.

Saarela on his team bouncing back

I think we're such a good team that we knew right after the game right away. It was pretty quiet and everyone knew that we were terrible. We showed today that we can push back, and I think we deserved the win today.

### NOTES

This was Necas' first multi-goal game of the season ...

Saarela has three goals in his last three games, including tonight's tying effort and an overtime goal on Nov. 17 ...

Janne Kuokkanen extended his point streak to four games (1g, 4a) ... He has at least one point in 11 of his last 12 games (4g, 10a) ... Trevor Carrick had two assists ... Julien Gauthier picked up the first fighting major of his career and earned 17 total penalty minutes for the incident, most of which were for instigating ... The Checkers avoided losing consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season and for the first time since Jan. 12-13 ... Forwards Patrick Brown and Spencer Smallman and defenseman Josiah Didier missed the game due to injury ... Forwards Morgan Geekie and Zack Stortini were healthy extras.

### UP NEXT

Charlotte's holiday home stand continues this weekend with two tilts against the Laval Rocket on Saturday and Sunday.



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# SportScan

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

1116849 Carolina Hurricanes

William Nylander, Scott Darling and the Canes-Leafs drama far from the ice

BY LUKE DECOCK

RALEIGH-Somehow, as the Carolina Hurricanes prepared to host the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday, all the attention was on two guys who weren't even supposed to play as the immediate future of the Hurricanes' goaltending situation crossed paths with their pursuit of unsigned Toronto restricted free agent William Nylander. Not all the drama was on the ice.

Scott Darling's absence from practice on Tuesday – a day off after a day off, curious to say the least – signaled Rod Brind'Amour's intention to go with Curtis McElhinney and Petr Mrazek for the time being, with McElhinney getting the start Wednesday night against his former team as a reward for his performance in Sunday's win and that duo expected to split this weekend's back-to-back with Mrazek apparently ready to return from injury.

Which isn't to say that Darling, who was scheduled to dress as the backup Wednesday, is permanently out of the picture – while he hasn't played terribly, he continues to give up back-breaking soft goals and has yet to regain the form he showed late in the preseason before getting hurt – but it's not a good sign when you're sent home from practice so the other two guys can get the work. For now, he's the odd man out.

If that situation seems murky, it's nothing compared to Nylander, who has been unable to agree on a new contract with the Leafs and faces a Dec. 1 deadline to sign or sit out the rest of the season. The dynamics of those negotiations are complicated enough; the potential dynamics of a trade to the Hurricanes are even more byzantine.

From an on-ice perspective, it's a no-brainer: Nylander, a 22-year-old coming off a pair of 61-point seasons, is the kind of skilled forward the Hurricanes desperately crave and they have a surplus of the heavy-duty right-shot defensemen the Leafs lack.

There's an obvious framework for a trade that includes one of Justin Faulk, Dougie Hamilton or Brett Pesce, a prospect not named Martin Necas or Adam Fox, and a lottery-protected first-round pick -- if that's enough to get the Leafs to make a deal

It's not quite as simple beyond that. First, there's Nylander himself: Can he potentially be the center the Hurricanes really need, or is he a better fit on the wing at 6 feet, 191 pounds? Not that the Hurricanes couldn't use the latter, but they'd be giving up a lot of the ammunition that could potentially be used to acquire a center at some point.

Then there's the Leafs: Even if a package like that is enough, would they let Nylander go to an Eastern Conference team? The Hurricanes pursued center Ryan O'Reilly and goalie Philipp Grubauer over the summer, and both were traded out of the east and to Western Conference teams instead.

Finally, there's the money. While the Hurricanes have ample cap space at the moment – they're \$16.1 million under the \$79.5 million cap as of Wednesday afternoon – they're going to use a bunch of it re-signing Sebastian Aho and potentially Micheal Ferland regardless of whether they can swing a deal for Nylander. Just because they have a ton of cap space today, it doesn't mean they can recklessly overpay for Nylander.

And whatever they would give Nylander, they're going to have to give Aho at least that much. That's probably less of an issue than it was at the start of the year, as Aho continues to print money with his performance, but cap space would still evaporate in a hurry. If the Hurricanes had to go to the top end of the scale to sign both Nylander and Aho – approaching the ridiculous \$8.5 million per season the Edmonton Oilers gave Leon Draisaitl – suddenly the Hurricanes are a cap team and re-signing Ferland becomes a lot trickier even as other contracts come off the books.

Which brings the discussion back to Darling, who is making \$4.15 million with two more years left to run on his deal. If Mrazek and McElhinney end



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up locking down the net, the Darling contract becomes an even bigger anchor than it was already, and there will be even more incentive to find a way out from under it sooner rather than later – whether the Hurricanes can make a deal for Nylander or not.

News Observer LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116850 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes' Rask out of the kitchen, back in the lineup

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH-Some would say it was almost like opening night for Victor Rask, who played his first game of the season Wednesday for the Carolina Hurricanes.

Not Rask, though.

"I've played hockey for a long time," he said. "I know how to play a hockey game."

The Swedish center missed all of preseason and the first 20 games of the regular season because of a feaky injury. He was cut by a blade, but not the blade of a skate.

Rask was slicing into sweet potatoes in the kitchen of his Raleigh condo when the knife slipped, cutting into the last two fingers on his right hand.

"At first, I wasn't sure how bad it was," said Rask, who at first simply bandaged up the fingers. "Obviously it was pretty bad."

Surgery on the hand was performed Sept. 13. The timetable was for Rask to be out until early December and he was placed on the injured non-roster list. But Rask's recovery has come quicker than expected and he was cleared for contact this week.

On Wednesday, Rask was back in the lineup in the Canes' 5-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs, centering a line with Phil Di Giuseppe and Warren Foegele. He had 10:32 in ice time, winning four of seven draws and finishing with two shots.

"I thought he looked great," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "He didn't play much but the shifts he had were productive."

"I think we'll still probably ease him in a little bit but he looks like he's right where he needs to be. This was a good step in the right direction."

Rask, a left-handed shooter, said he doesn't use the little finger on his right hand -- the "pinky," as he calls it -- in holding the stick. That made it easier and quicker, he said, to regain a normal grip.

"I can hold my stick and control it exactly the way I used to," he said.

Carolina Hurricanes forward Victor Rask has last two fingers of right hand bandaged during player introductions before the Canes 5K run on Sept. 9, 2018 at PNC Arena. Rask had hand surgery Sept. 13.

Chip Alexander

Rask's absence allowed one of his best friends on the team, Lucas Wallmark, a fellow Swede, to solidify his place in the lineup and earn more playing time at center. When Rask was activated Wednesday, the Canes reassigned center Clark Bishop to the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL.

After Rask's surgery, Brind'Amour said it would be like the Canes trading for an extra forward when Rask was able to return. And an experienced center, at that.

"Give him a few weeks," Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "He is a good player. He is one of the guys we were counting on to start the season and it's been tough not having him for this long."

The hand surgery wasn't Rask's only surgery in 2018. He played part of last season with bad shoulder and underwent surgery in March, resulting in a summer of rehab in Sweden.

Rask, 25, returned to Raleigh saying the shoulder had fully healed and he was ready to atone for a subpar 2017-18 season -- 14 goals and 31 points in 71 games. Then, the accident.

"Obviously it (stinks) but it could always have been worse, you know?" Rask said after Wednesday's morning skate. "But I battled through it. I've skated through pretty much the whole time I was injured. My legs are really good."

"If I had a knee injury or something, you can't skate for a long time. Then when you're ready you have to start skating and get back in it. Now I've been skating the whole time and I'm ready to go."

Until Wednesday, Rask could only sit and watch the Canes play. "You don't even practice with the guys for a long time, don't go on the road," he said.

Asked where he viewed the away games, Rask said, "At home, on my couch," sounding like many a Canes fan.

Any screaming at the TV in the privacy of his home? Rask smiled.

"No, just watched it," he said. "Pretty calm. You know that."

Rask said there was one positive from the injury. "I've learned a lot of new things about fingers," he said.

As for avoiding the dangers of cooking in the kitchen, he said, "I eat out a lot."

News Observer LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116851 Carolina Hurricanes

McElhinney, Hurricanes knock off Leafs 5-2

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH-The Toronto media swarmed around Carolina Hurricanes goalie Curtis McElhinney after the morning skate Wednesday, which was understandable.

The Canes were hosting the Toronto Maple Leafs and the best storyline was McElhinney, who was facing the team that put him on waivers in early October.

"It should be a fun challenge," McElhinney said. "They have so many weapons and it certainly will be a challenge. The biggest thing for us is to get out to a good start again."

The Canes got that good start by scoring the first two goals of the game as defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk and team captain Justin Williams scored in the first period. Micheal Ferland added a power-play goal in the third period, and Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov had late empty-netters in a 5-2 victory at PNC Arena.

"It's huge," Ferland said. "Coming in, we wanted to make a statement we can play with any team and we played really good tonight."

McElhinney, composed in net, finished with 30 saves for his fifth win of the season for the Canes (10-8-3), who celebrated after the game by



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breaking out of a circle at center ice and spreading to all corners of the rink to hop into the glass.

"It was good, McElhinney said. "I'm not going to lie. It was a tough way to leave Toronto, with the situation. It's a huge win for us considering where they are in the standings."

The Leafs (15-7-0), who had won four straight and seven of eight, lead the Eastern Conference with 30 points. They've done it with Auston Matthews sidelined 14 games with a shoulder injury, and center John Tavares, the biggest of the free-agent signings, has been a big part of it.

Tavares scored in the first for the Leafs picking off a pass and striking on a breakaway for his 14th of the season.

Ferland's goal, his 11th, pushed the Canes ahead 3-1, but Kasper Kapanen pulled the Leafs within 3-2 with a snipe and it was a tight finish in the final eight minutes until the empty-netters after the Leafs pulled goalie Frederik Andersen for a sixth attacker.

"The team that won was the team that started on time and the team that worked the hardest," Leafs coach Mike Babcock said.

The Canes' start Wednesday wasn't as startling as the one Sunday against the New Jersey Devils -- Williams and Ferland scoring in the first 30 seconds of the game. But it again was rapid-fire goals as van Riemsdyk and Williams scored in a 22-second span of the first.

The Canes had 29 shots in the opening period, a team record for one period since the franchise relocation and the most shots in a first period in the NHL since 1997-98. If that was eye-opening, the Canes then had two shots on goal in the second period, the first with 1:54 left by Justin Faulk.

Svechnikov had five of his eight shots in the first and it was his line, with center Lucas Wallmark and winger Jordan Martinook, that produced the first goal. Van Riemsdyk pinched in to put a backhander into the net.

"He's been coming on," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Svechnikov. "You can see the confidence starting to come out in him, hanging onto pucks, taking it to the net really hard."

Williams' goal came after a set play off a faceoff. Jordan Staal won the draw to defenseman Calvin de Haan, who found Williams open in front for a quick redirection.

The Canes killed off a pair of penalties in the second period, then got Ferland's power-play score at 7:45 of the third as Teuvo Teravainen set up Ferland in the right circle for the shot.

Canes center Victor Rask played his first game of the season after a kitchen accident in September resulted in hand surgery. Rask had 10:32 in ice time.

McElhinney was Andersen's backup in Toronto, playing 32 games the past two seasons and putting up good numbers. But when the decision was made by the Leafs to have Garret Sparks back up Andersen this season, McElhinney was placed on waivers Oct. 1 and claimed by the Canes.

"There was some disappointment in being pushed out the door," McElhinney said.

With Scott Darling injured as the season began, McElhinney won his first three starts. But Wednesday's game was different. This was the Leafs.

News Observer LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116852 Carolina Hurricanes

LeBrun Notebook: Will Canes and Leafs reach the next level in trade talks and what's next behind the Blues bench

By Pierre LeBrun Nov 21, 2018

The Maple Leafs and Hurricanes will be battling on Wednesday night in Raleigh and there's no truth to the rumour Don Waddell was planning to lock Kyle Dubas in a suite and corner him.

By now, because the two of them have had several exchanges since the start of the season, the Leafs GM knows about the Canes GM's interest in William Nylander and there's no real point to revisit that conversation until it's time to take it to the next level.

And as far as I know, according to sources as of Wednesday morning, that next-level conversation has not yet happened.

But in the meantime, what I'm hearing around the league is other teams see Carolina's surplus on D and are also reaching out to the Hurricanes to see what's what. Which sets up an interesting scenario for Waddell at some point — wait to see how the Nylander situation plays out or consider other options that present themselves over the next few weeks.

Because the fact of the matter is that teams wanting D easily outnumber the teams willing to sell some. The Hurricanes, in search of a top-six difference maker up front, will at some point be in the driver's seat, depending on the quality of offers.

Other notes from around the league:

Behind the Blues bench

The Twitter-verse was quick to connect Joel Quenneville to St. Louis once Mike Yeo was relieved of his duties on Monday night. I mean, I'd imagine it's a possibility down the road but for the moment my sense is that Quenneville is intent on taking it easy the rest of the season to recharge his batteries. Which is smart. I think all coaches should do that and decompress before their next gig, especially when they're getting paid handsomely like Quenneville is. Of course, Claude Julien had the very same intention after being let go in Boston, and told people that, but then couldn't resist the opportunity Habs GM Marc Bergevin gave him about a week later. I'd say it's more likely Quenneville sticks to his plan to take some downtime, but like Julien, the right opportunity could be hard to ignore.

The Blues, meanwhile, will give Craig Berube the first crack as their head coach and it's a legitimate opportunity. Depending on how it goes, it could be for the rest of the season and perhaps beyond but if the team doesn't respond, the coaching search goes into high gear probably after the Christmas holidays and a new coach would most likely be in place before the end of the season. I think Blues GM Doug Armstrong is keeping an open mind to any scenario. What also caught my attention on Tuesday during his news conference was when Armstrong detailed how wide a net he was planning to cast when assembling a potential coaching list.

"We're going to start the process of putting a list together of head coaches," Armstrong said. "There's going to be experienced head coaches on that list, there's going to be European head coaches on that list, there's going to be college head coaches on that list, major junior ... We're not going to minimize or limit the scope that we're going to look at. But it's not something that's going to be done over the next day or two. This is going to be a process that we're going to look hard and be thorough on. (But) we're going to support Craig and his staff. You would love to have a situation where "enough is enough" for our core group and they take charge of this team, and Craig is at the helm of that and we have great success and we move forward together."

Certainly you get the sense that what Armstrong wants most is for the Berube experiment to work first and foremost. But he's got to multitask and the coaching list will be put together regardless. What piqued my interest was Armstrong mentioning that they were considering European candidates. The NHL is made up of so many players from overseas and yet we still have so few European coaches in the league. I'm willing to



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bet Swedish national team head coach Rikard Gronborg ends up on Armstrong's search list. He's exactly the kind of guy, that when given a chance in the NHL, has the potential to have a real impact in my mind.

### Battle in Devils' crease

Keith Kinkaid gets the starting nod over Cory Schneider in net for the Devils against Montreal on Wednesday night and it is becoming a story once again because both are healthy and competing for the net. The reality is that Schneider, 32, remains a big part of what the Devils aspire to in the big picture, he's signed through 2021-22 at \$6-million a year, but it's going to take some time for him to find his mojo after offseason hip surgery. Think about the process Pekka Rinne went through five years ago after a similar surgery at a similar age that Schneider is now.

And no, the Devils aren't phoning teams about Schneider. He will return to form but in the meantime, my sense is the Devils feel they can't just give him the net every single night while he feels his way through it. They're trying to climb out of a hole in the standings and need every point they can muster right now and Kinkaid, who had an spectacular run late last season, is the most secure option. What the Devils hope to establish is top-notch 1a-1b situation where they can't go wrong. But in the meantime, Kinkaid, 29, is UFA July 1. He's earning \$1.25-million this season and there's no question his play over the past year has netted him a raise, but also the attention of other teams. There haven't been any meaningful contract discussions yet but the Devils' intention is to try and extend him at some point before he hits free agency. My sense is GM Ray Shero would probably reach out to Kinkaid's agent Alain Roy sometime in the New Year to get the ball rolling. Kinkaid really likes it in New Jersey so I don't think he's looking go anywhere. But what price point makes sense for him and Schneider to both share the net past this season? Can the Devils keep affording the 1a-1b situation past this season? We'll know the answer to that come the summer.

### Weber's return

There are teams around the league that are closely monitoring Shea Weber's return to the Montreal Canadiens and how it might force GM Marc Bergevin to make a move. Weber's return would give the Canadiens nine NHL blueliners on their roster. But just as I mentioned on TSN on Monday before the Canadiens played Washington, who's to say they would have nine healthy defencemen by the time Weber rejoins the team. That very night Noah Juulsen suffered facial fractures from a puck to the face and is out indefinitely. While the Canadiens would much rather have a healthy Juulsen in the lineup, it does buy them some time when Weber returns. Eventually, if they do get to nine healthy D, the guy I know a few teams have talked about internally is veteran Jordie Benn, who has logged 19 minutes a game this season.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116887 Florida Panthers

Stamkos has 4 points, Lightning beat Panthers 7-3

### BY MARK DIDTLER

TAMPA, FLA.-Steven Stamkos had a goal and three assists and the Tampa Bay Lightning reclaimed the top spot in the Eastern Conference with a 7-3 victory over the Florida Panthers on Wednesday night.

Nikita Kucherov and Ryan McDonagh each had a goal and two assists. Mathieu Joseph, Yannick Gourde, Adam Erne and Dan Girardi also scored, J.T. Miller had three assists, and Louis Domingue made 40 saves.

The Lightning are 11-1-1 at home against Florida since the start of the 2013-14 season.

Panthers left wing Mike Hoffman extended his points streak to 17 games (10 goals, 20 points) with a late third-period power-play goal. He is the fifth player in NHL history to have a points streak of at least 17 games in his first season with a franchise.

Troy Brouwer and Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Panthers. They are 2-3 on a six-game trip. Roberto Luongo was pulled early in the third after allowing six goals on 28 shots.

Tampa Bay went ahead 4-1 early in the second when Gourde scored on an in-close give-and-go with Stamkos at 2:37 before Erne put home a backhander 2:08 later.

Barkov made it 4-2 on the power play with 1:35 remaining in the second.

Stamkos, McDonagh and Girardi had third-period goals. It was Girardi's first goal in 23 games.

Joseph stole the puck from Alexander Petrovic and scored on a backhander 59 seconds into the game.

After Brouwer scored at 2:19 of the first, Kucherov's power-play goal put the Lightning up 2-1 with 10:38 left in the period.

Kucherov has two goals and nine points during a four-game point streak.

NOTES: Panthers C Vincent Trocheck had surgery for a fractured right ankle and may play again this season. Trocheck was hurt in Monday night's game at Ottawa. "He's bummed out," Florida coach Bob Boughner said. "The surgery went well. He'll be back. It's just a matter of when." ... Former Lightning star Martin St. Louis was honored before game following his induction last week into the Hockey Hall of Fame. "It's the ultimate honor," St. Louis said. "I can't believe I'm part of that group."

### UP NEXT

Panthers: At Carolina on Friday night.

Lightning: Host Chicago Friday night.

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116888 Florida Panthers

Panthers forward Vincent Trocheck out indefinitely after ankle surgery

### Wells Dusenbury

Florida Panthers forward Vincent Trocheck will be out indefinitely after suffering an ugly leg injury during Monday night's game in Ottawa.

The 25-year-old forward underwent surgery to repair an ankle fracture, general manager Dale Tallon announced Wednesday.

In the first period of Monday's win, Trocheck crashed awkwardly against the boards, grasping his ankle in pain as he landed on the ice. After being attended to by medical personnel, he was carted off on a stretcher.

"Vinny is a tremendous competitor and leader for our club," said Tallon. "It's never easy to see a player and person like him suffer an injury like this, but we are confident that he will make a full recovery and be back on the ice with our team this season."

Trocheck has recorded 14 points (three goals, 11 assists) through 18 games this season. The forward is coming off a stellar 2017-18 campaign, notching 75 points (31 goals, 44 assists) to earn All-Star Game honors for the first time in his career.

With the injury, the Panthers have recalled Denis Malgin from AHL Springfield. The 21 year old has appeared in 14 games for Florida this



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year, registering five points (one goal, four assists). The 5-foot-9 forward has played in 112 career NHL games, all with the Panthers.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116889 Florida Panthers

Luongo struggles again in Tampa as Lightning rout Panthers 7-3

Mark Didtler

Tampa Bay scored early and often in another home victory over Florida.

Steven Stamkos had a goal and three assists and the Lightning reclaimed the top spot in the Eastern Conference with a 7-3 victory over the Panthers on Wednesday night.

"Guys were battling all night," Stamkos said. "That's just what you want to see. Compete, and then when you compete the skill takes over."

Nikita Kucherov and Ryan McDonagh each had a goal and two assists. Mathieu Joseph, Yanni Gourde, Adam Erne and Dan Girardi also scored, J.T. Miller had three assists, and Louis Domingue made 40 saves.

"It's tough to lose when you score seven," said Domingue, who was won three of four filling in for injured starter Andrei Vasilevskiy. "I just thought we played a great game from start to finish."

Vasilevskiy has a fractured left foot and will miss three to five more weeks.

The Lightning are 11-1-1 at home against Florida since the start of the 2013-14 season.

Panthers left wing Mike Hoffman extended his points streak to 17 games (10 goals, 20 points) with a late third-period power-play goal. He is the fifth player in NHL history to have a points streak of at least 17 games in his first season with a franchise.

Troy Brouwer and Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Panthers. They are 2-3 on a six-game trip. Roberto Luongo, who was injured in the season opener in Tampa, was pulled early in the third after allowing six goals on 28 shots.

"We kind of let Luon out to dry there," Florida defenseman Aaron Ekblad said. "Ultimately they were coming in waves at us all game and we didn't have a response."

Tampa Bay went ahead 4-1 early in the second when Gourde scored on an in-close give-and-go with Stamkos at 2:37 before Erne put home a backhand 2:08 later.

Barkov made it 4-2 on the power play with 1:35 remaining in the second.

Stamkos, McDonagh and Girardi had third-period goals. It was Girardi's first goal in 23 games.

"Just too many unforced errors," Hoffman said. "You can't be giving up that many goals if you expect to win any game."

Joseph stole the puck from Alexander Petrovic and scored on a backhand 59 seconds into the game.

"We just feed off that," Stamkos said.

After Brouwer scored at 2:19 of the first, Kucherov's power-play goal put the Lightning up 2-1 with 10:38 left in the period.

Kucherov has two goals and nine points during a four-game point streak.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116890 Florida Panthers

Tired Panthers already miss Trocheck, get rolled by Lightning

By George Richards Nov 21, 2018

TAMPA, Fla. — The last time the Panthers were in Tampa, they were a team full of promise, a squad with a blank canvas in front of them.

On Wednesday night, they were just a mess.

In the season opener on Oct. 6, the Panthers and host Lightning played an exciting 65 minutes with Tampa Bay getting the extra point with a 2-1 victory in a shootout.

Fast forward to Wednesday and you have one team enjoying the view of being on top of their division.

Then there are the Panthers.

Florida took another one on the chin Wednesday night as the Lightning saluted Martin St. Louis' Hall of Fame induction during the pregame then honored him by hammering the rival Panthers 7-3.

"You allow a team like this space in the neutral zone and let them crank up the speed, they're going to score some goals," coach Bob Boughner said.

For Florida, the loss was only its third in the past nine games.

But after losing center Vincent Trocheck to a broken ankle on Monday and playing without him in a full game for the first time, things sure didn't look good for much of the night.

Was Florida's performance hung solely on missing one of its top players? No.

Playing the fifth of six road games and being a tad on the tired side — the team didn't get to their Tampa hotel from Ottawa until 5 a.m. Tuesday morning — had something to do with it as well.

Wednesday marked Florida's 19th game of the season — 13 have been away from Sunrise.

Tampa Bay being better also played into the equation.

"We have been on the road for 30 of the first 40 days," Boughner said, "with a European trip thrown in there. There are a lot of reasons, but they're all excuses. And there is no time to dwell on excuses."

Out indefinitely

Missing Trocheck didn't help the situation.

Trocheck will not be back on the ice with the Panthers for a while after having surgery Tuesday in Miami.

The Panthers say Trocheck is out indefinitely and hope he'll be back before this season ends. Word around the organization is he will miss at least two months.

Trocheck will not be easy to replace, and everyone knew that.

It showed on Wednesday.

"We know they are a good team but we simply got outplayed," said Jonathan Huberdeau, who was playing with Jared McCann as his center instead of Trocheck. "I felt like they were just flying around us, getting opportunity after opportunity. To be a good team, we can't play like that. I have to step up, a lot of guys have to step up for us to be a good team."



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"Troch is going to be out for a while. We know that. We feel bad about it. But we have to win some games until he comes back."

Not only is Trocheck the center of Florida's second line, but he also is one of its top faceoff players. Trocheck also played a key role on both the top power play and penalty kill units.

The Panthers penalty kill didn't look as good without Trocheck. Florida did get a pair of power play goals but faceoffs were a problem for much of the night. Trocheck won 54 percent of his draws this season.

On Wednesday, Florida won 40 percent against the Lightning.

"You lose impact players, but Trocheck is probably a little different," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "I was fortunate enough to coach him at World Cup, got to know him a little. The Panthers had two top centers who are dependable two-way guys who play all 200 feet. [Trocheck] plays all the special teams.

"Coaches like to say 'guys need to step up,' but Vinny is an elite player in this league and you hate to see what happened to him. He's such a good kid."

On Monday, Boughner shuffled things up on the fly after Trocheck got hurt.

Wednesday, with a few hours to ponder things, Boughner at least had time to come up with some options.

He will keep working on it.

"We have guys playing up lines and they are facing tougher matchups," Boughner said. "On the road, that makes it tougher. There are teams you can get away with that against, but this ain't one of them."

EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR ALL OF THE SUPPORT AND WELL WISHES I'VE RECEIVED OVER THE LAST DAY OR SO. CAN'T THANK YOU ALL ENOUGH. SURGERY WAS A SUCCESS, AND THE ROAD TO RECOVERY BEGINS NOW. I'LL BE BACK BEFORE YOU KNOW IT. THANKS, EVERYONE, AND GO CATS @FLAPANTHERS

— VT3 (@TROCHECK\_89) NOVEMBER 21, 2018

Denis Malgin was recalled from AHL Springfield after being sent there earlier in the week. Malgin didn't play Wednesday, however, as Colton Sceviour got back in after being a healthy scratch in Ottawa.

Sceviour centered Florida's fourth line Wednesday, his versatility giving Boughner the opportunity to move rookie Juho Lammikko up to the third line and slot McCann into Trocheck's position centering Nick Bjugstad and Huberdeau.

"I know it's a huge loss losing Trocheck like that, but I am excited about the opportunity," McCann said before the game. "I'm ready for this. I'm not going to play like Troch, but I have more responsibility. This can be my time to shine and I relish this opportunity."

The Panthers, who will spend this Thanksgiving in North Carolina, fell behind 1-0 just 59 seconds into the game before Troy Brouwer tied it 1:20 later.

Tampa Bay led 2-1 going into the second period and extended that lead to 4-1 before Barkov scored a power play goal with 1:35 left in the second.

The Lightning kept on pounding away at the Panthers in the third with two goals in the opening 3:21 to chase Roberto Luongo to the bench.

Since kicking off this six-game trip with a 2-1 win at Philadelphia, the Panthers have allowed 23 goals in the following four games.

Not surprisingly, the Panthers have won just one of those four games.

"That's one of the best offensive teams in the league," Mike Hoffman said. "We weren't on the top of our game and when you play a team like them, it looks like that."

The Panthers scored seven to win at Ottawa on Monday in tough circumstances, but that isn't going to happen very much.

Florida may not have Trocheck for a while, but they can still tighten things up defensively and maybe get some timely saves.

"We left our goalies hanging out to dry," Hoffman said.

Hoffman keeps going

Hoffman continued his hot streak as he scored a power play goal with 3:35 left to record at least a point in his 17th consecutive game.

Pavel Bure set the previous franchise record by scoring in 13 straight games in 2000.

— After finishing the six-game trip Friday at Carolina, the Panthers return home Saturday to kick off an eight-game run at home.

Florida is 2-3-0 on the trip.

"We have a chance to go .500 on this trip and then come home for eight," Boughner said. "I will definitely take that. I would be pretty satisfied."

— Florida's power play kept clicking Wednesday, scoring on two of its four chances against the Lightning.

Since going 0 for 4 with the advantage at New Jersey on Oct. 27, the Panthers have at least one power play goal in each of their past 10 games and have multiple power play goals in three.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116935 New York Islanders

Islanders fan, angry after blowout loss, punches Rangers rooster bloody outside Madison Square Garden

By KERRY BURKE and JOHN ANNESE

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

NOV 21, 2018 | 11:35 PM

An angry hockey fan decked out in a New York Islanders jersey punched a Rangers supporter in the face outside Madison Square Garden after the rival teams faced off in a blowout Rangers win Wednesday night, police sources and witnesses said.

The crowds were pouring out of the Garden at about 9:45 p.m. after the Rangers' 5-0 win over the Isles when the fighting fans squared off on Seventh Ave., between 31st and 32nd Sts., witnesses said.

The 27-year-old attacker, who wore a Todd Bertuzzi jersey, punched the Rangers fan in the face, splitting his lip, police said.

Medics took the 25-year-old victim to Bellevue Medical Center. His condition wasn't immediately known. Cops cuffed the Islanders fan and hauled him to the Midtown South Precinct stationhouse. He's expected to face a misdemeanor assault charge.

Police sources and witnesses initially thought the victim was slashed, but police later corrected he was only punched.

"I responded with the cops. It was two guys in hockey jerseys fighting it out," said an MSG security guard, who didn't give his name. "When we got there, he was bleeding and he was down."

"His girlfriend was trying to explain to the cops what happened," the guard added.



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Rangers fan Rich Eubanks, 46, said several fights broke out after the game.

"He was down and out. He was bleeding from his nose to his cheek. Someone was holding his neck steady while another guy called 911," Eubanks said. "It was Islanders vs. Rangers, and it was a Rangers fan down. There were fights all night long. It's sad. It was a good game."

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116936 New York Islanders

Rangers dominate Islanders in battle of cross-town rivals

Staff Report

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS |

NOV 21, 2018 | 10:50 PM

Alexandar Georgiev stopped 29 shots for his first career shutout, Filip Chytil scored for the fifth straight game, and the Rangers beat the cross-town-rival Islanders 5-0 on Wednesday night.

Chris Kreider had a goal and an assist, and Cody McLeod, Neal Pionk and Kevin Hayes also scored to help the Rangers win for the ninth time in 11 games (9-1-1). Kevin Shattenkirk and Mika Zibanejad each added two assists in the Rangers' seventh straight win at home, now by a combined 26-10 margin.

The Rangers ended an eight-game skid (0-7-1) to the Islanders, who had won 12 of the previous 13 meetings, including a 7-5 win at home last Thursday night.

Robin Lehner finished with 22 saves for the Islanders, losers of five of their last seven (2-4-1). They also lost to a Metropolitan Division opponent for the first time after starting the season 7-0-0.

Georgiev, 7-6-1 in 15 career games coming in, made several nice stops, including 13 saves in the third period while winning his fourth straight start.

Kreider beat Lehner from the left circle on a rush with 3:41 left for his team-leading 12th to cap the scoring.

The Rangers led 3-0 after one period, and neither team could muster anything for most of the second until Hayes added to the advantage. Shattenkirk dropped the puck for Hayes at the top of the left circle, and Hayes skated in, cut across the front of the goal and beat Lehner with a backhand for his fifth with 2:43 left.

Both teams finished with five shots on goal in the middle period. The Islanders had seven shots go wide, and the Rangers had one.

Chytil extended his streak and got the Rangers started in the opening minute of the game. On a 2-on-1 rush with Kreider, he was skating up the right side and tried to send a pass across the front of the goal to his teammate, but the puck deflected off Islanders defenseman Ryan Pulock back to Chytil and he beat Lehner 29 seconds in.

McLeod got his first since being claimed off waivers by the Rangers on Jan. 25 last season, doubling the lead at 3:30. Tony DeAngelo fired a long shot from the right point in front of the blue line, and McLeod deflected it in the air with his stick past Lehner.

The Rangers also led 2-0 less than six minutes in last week in Brooklyn before the Islanders tied it with two goals late in the opening period and went on to the win. There was no comeback this time.

Pionk made it 3-0 on the power play at 8:04. He took a pass from Vladislav Namestnikov and fired a one-timer from center point that beat a screened Lehner on the blocker side for his fourth. It gave Pionk five points (one goal, four assists) in his last five games.

Georgiev stopped a slap shot by Pulock with 5:43 left in the opening period, and then another through traffic about three minutes later.

NOTES: Islanders F Matt Martin missed his eighth straight game due to an upper-body injury. ... Barzal ended a five-game points streak, in which he had a goal and five assists. ... The teams meet again twice — Jan. 10 at Madison Square Garden, and Jan. 12 in Brooklyn's Barclays Center. ... D Brady Skjei was back in the Rangers' lineup after sitting out the previous two games. D Brendan Smith was a healthy scratch to make room. ... Rangers F Mats Zuccarello missed his third straight game due to a groin injury. ... Rangers F Ryan Strome had an assist on McLeod's goal, giving him his first point in three games since being acquired from Edmonton last Friday. ... The Rangers have scored at least one power-play goal in five of the last six games.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116937 New York Islanders

How Barry Trotz's system has turned around the Islanders

By Larry Brooks

November 21, 2018 | 4:16PM

Barry Trotz was talking about the identity the Islanders had established under his watch in his first year behind the bench. Beyond the "Tough to play against" tag and "five-man structure," the coach talked about how his team has "to go with a four-line mentality because we're not loaded with top-end talent."

Mat Barzal and perhaps Anders Lee aside, there is truth in that statement. But what makes it so intriguing is that Trotz had the ultimate top-end talent in his last gig in Washington with Alex Ovechkin. Nicklas Backstrom and Evgeny Kuznetsov weren't too shabby, either.

The coach believed in five-man structure there, too, but Trotz rode his horses in DC to the NHL's best record in 2015-16 and 2016-17 before winning the Cup and bouncing to the Island in a Johnny Keane-like scenario. In his 20th season behind an NHL bench, the first 15 with Nashville, Trotz coaches the players he has, not the ones he wishes he had and not the ones he had the previous year or two.

"There are basic principles of structure and playing responsibly on the defensive side of the puck, but I try to assess what I have in terms of personnel and go from there," Trotz told The Post before his team's Thanksgiving Eve showdown with the Rangers at the Garden. "I think I'm good at putting players in the right roles where they can be productive.

"In Nashville, we had as good a defense as anybody, so we played to that strength. When I got to Washington, I moved Ovie to the right side because that's where he's most effective cutting in toward the net, but there were things I needed from him on the defensive side. And I explained that I needed that so we could get the puck back as quickly as possible to get it onto his stick.

"Don't get me wrong, we have good offensive players here, but it's more a byproduct of our depth. So you play to that."

And playing to that, the Islanders have gotten important contributions from the Matt Martin-Casey Cizikas-Cal Clutterbuck unit that is currently



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disassembled following injuries to both Cizikas and Martin, and from free-agent signees Leo Komarov and Valteri Filppula.

Trotz's precept sounds simple, but it isn't. After the Rangers changed the nature of their team over the summer of 2012 by acquiring Rick Nash in exchange for a package featuring Brandon Dubinsky and Artem Anisimov, John Tortorella spent much of the following season pining for the 2011-12 Black-and-Blueshirts. That's a for-instance, not necessarily a lone exception to the rule. After last season, Alain Vigneault spoke about how he's proven himself a very capable coach when he's had a very capable team.

Both Battle of New York contestants have been pleasant surprises, the Rangers at 11-8-2 and the Islanders at 10-7-2 entering the match. Both have turned the page on bygone eras, the Blueshirts moving on from the Vigneault pocket of substantial success with the deadline teardown and summer hiring of BU coach David Quinn, the Islanders leaving behind the quirky days of Garth Snow with the hiring of Lou Lamoriello as franchise mayor, justice of the peace, police chief, chairman of its chamber of commerce and chief custodian.

"You hear so much talk about Lou's rules, but they're not even rules" captain Anders Lee told The Post before his team sought its 13th victory over the Blueshirts in their last 14 confrontations. "They're just the right way to do things. They've been easy to embrace. We're all buying in. There's pride about being an Islander."

The Islanders are living life without John Tavares without even a glance into the rear view. It's as if Tavares, captain for the last five years and face of the franchise since his first-overall selection in 2009, has been gone for as long as, say, Hector Marini. The changing of the guard has gone off like clockwork.

"First there were the changes in the front office and with the coach [with Trotz replacing Doug Weight], and then Johnny, so when camp opened, it seemed like everything was different," said Lee. "From Day One, you could feel it. There's been no looking back. There's been a feeling of excitement around the team.

"Barry and his staff, with what they accomplished last year, they have an incredible amount of knowledge. They've opened the door to different ideas on how to attack and play within a structure to create better scoring chances while defending as a five-man unit.

"And Lou, he's just a great guy. He believes in doing things the right way. And we're doing them together, as a team."

New York Post LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116938 New York Islanders

David Quinn had a hard time with this particular benching

By Brett Cyrgalis

November 22, 2018 | 3:50am

It was easy to see the difficulty of the decision drawn on David Quinn's face.

But it was one the Rangers coach felt he had to make, scratching defenseman Brendan Smith for Wednesday night's 5-0 thumping of the Islanders at the Garden. It was the fourth time in the past six games that Smith has been scratched, but it was the first time Quinn had to scratch someone that he didn't think deserved it.

"Really the first time this year that a guy is sitting that shouldn't be," Quinn said before he brought Brady Skjei back into the lineup after his two-game sojourn in street clothes. "But as I've talked about, we really feel like we have eight defensemen that can play. Every time we've sat a guy up to this point it's been an easy conversation because their play warranted it. I can't say that about Smitty."

The 24-year-old Skjei played a relatively steady 17:28 while paired with Tony DeAngelo.

"I wasn't playing the way I wanted to play, and coaches agreed with that," Skjei said about the benching. "To get two games off and watch — obviously you never want to sit out — but you see the game from a different view, for sure. I feel like I bounced back."

Quinn said he thought in the first period that Skjei was "feeling his way back in the lineup. But you can really see in the second and third period, a lot more confidence."

The Islanders had a late scratch of winger Cal Clutterbuck, who was sick.

He joined a crowded group of Islanders regulars unable to play, with Matt Martin remaining out since suffering his upper-body injury on Nov. 1, along with Casey Cizikas (lower body) and Andrew Ladd (lower body).

"No excuse," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "There are some guys that are stabilizing forces, but at the same time, there are guys that want opportunity, and this is their opportunity. You have to grab hold of that, and some guys aren't grabbing hold of that."

Rangers winger Cody McLeod left the game with a hand injury suffered in a fight at 9:32 of the second period when he was just an assist away from a Gordie Howe hat trick. McLeod scored in the first period, and reluctantly fought Ross Johnston in the second.

Quinn seemed to get a lengthy explanation from the officials on why Johnston didn't get an instigator penalty — or at least an extra roughing call — after he had accosted McLeod before he finally accepted the duel, which Johnston won unanimously.

Islanders winger Michael Dal Colle played in his second straight game since his recall from AHL Bridgeport, but was a non-factor in 8:27 of ice time on a fourth line with Johnston and Steven Gionta.

The Rangers played without winger Mats Zuccarello, who missed his sixth game out of the past seven with a right-groin strain.

Vlad Namestnikov never went to the locker room and remained in the game after the Rangers winger's head was driven into the stanchion near the Islanders bench by defenseman Johnny Boychuk midway through the third period.

The Islanders brought defenseman Adam Pelech back in after he had been scratched for two of the past three. He replaced Luca Sbisa.

New York Post LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116939 New York Islanders

Rangers finally get revenge on Islanders — and are tied for first

By Brett Cyrgalis

November 21, 2018 | 10:02PM

So it was with the Rangers being able to finally put down the Islanders in a 5-0 blowout victory on Wednesday night at the Garden that marked just their second win against their rival in the previous 14 games, going back



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three-plus years. It also was the first career shutout from 22-year-old backup goalie Alex Georgiev, who made 29 saves in front of his parents, in town for the American holiday.

"It couldn't be better," said the affable Bulgarian, swimming under the Broadway Hat and with the commemorative game puck safely stowed away.

It also felt great for the Rangers (12-8-2) as a whole. They are now 9-1-1 in their previous 11 games — the only regulation loss coming to the Islanders (10-8-2) last Thursday in a 7-5 drubbing at Barclays Center, where they still haven't won. That night, the Rangers couldn't defend the front of the net and were exposed. This night, they were defensively stout for most of the game and it resulted in the first rivalry revelry in quite some time.

"It was getting a little ridiculous," alternate captain Marc Staal told The Post. "Obviously that building is a lot different. But the fact that we couldn't even win [more than once] in our own building? They're supposed to be one our biggest rivals, and to keep laying eggs, it wasn't sitting well."

This game also continued the Rangers' improbable ascension up the standings. With Thanksgiving a traditional holiday marker for league-wide assessment, the Blueshirts are tied with the Blue Jackets with 26 points atop the Metropolitan Division (with Columbus holding one game in hand). Only four points behind are the Islanders, who on this night were just bereft of execution despite getting a handful of good chances that either missed the net or were stopped by Georgiev.

"The execution and the details early weren't good," said Islanders coach Barry Trotz, who was missing key pieces in Cal Clutterbuck, Casey Cizikas, Matt Martin and Andrew Ladd — even though the latter three missed last week's game, as well. "Couldn't get it back on the rails close enough."

The game always seemed to be in the Rangers' hands, beginning just 29 seconds in when Filip Chytil scored his fifth goal in as many games to continue his historic teenage hot streak. It was followed by a redirected goal from Cody McLeod at 3:30, and then a power-play goal from Neal Pionk on 8:04 that had the Blueshirts holding a commanding 3-0 lead before half the people in the lower bowl had even reached their seats.

The Islanders contingent of the 17,297 in attendance were washed out, and the shouts of "Potvin Sucks!" only got louder. Late in the second period, Kevin Hayes was afforded the opportunity to walk unabated towards the Islanders net — set up by Kevin Shattenkirk, who played his best game of the season while collecting two assists — easily beating goalie Robin Lehner with a deft backhand along the ice to make it 4-0.

"When they got the fourth one," Trotz said, "they were pretty well done."

Yet that's when Georgiev was forced to be at his best. In a span of five minutes late in the third period, he made terrific saves on Mathew Barzal, Jordan Eberle and Tom Kuhnhackl to preserve the shutout.

"Great time to get a shutout," Georgiev said. "Big win for the boys against our rival team. Just very grateful."

This game had a little more bite than the first one, with McLeod eventually agreeing to fight Ross Johnston midway through the second period. And there might be more snarl in the two more games left between these two, a back-to-back that starts on Jan. 10 at the Garden followed two nights later for what might be the last-ever meeting in Brooklyn.

By then, it might be less about exorcisms and more about the standings. On this night, it was about both.

"I think eventually when you lose so often to someone, eventually you're going to win one. Odds were just in our favor," Rangers coach David Quinn said. "And when you do breakthrough and win a game, it usually happens like that."

New York Post LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116940 New York Islanders

Ryan Strome gets to see the other side of the Islanders-Rangers rivalry

By Andrew Gross

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November 21, 2018 1:24 PM

Ryan Strome knows how much the Islanders-Rangers rivalry means to his former team. Now, the former first-round pick gets to experience it as a Ranger.

The teams meet on Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden after the Islanders took the first game in the season series with a 7-5 win at Barclays Center on Thursday. That was a day before the Rangers acquired Strome, the fifth overall pick in 2011 by the Islanders, from the Oilers for Ryan Spooner.

"Our coaches used to fire us up pretty good," Strome said of being an Islander in the rivalry. "They used to be really amped for this game. Not just the rivalry, but it always seemed to be a big division game in the standings or for the points and for playoff spots. No lack of intensity to the crowd, the players, everyone. So it's a lot of fun. People are very passionate in New York for their sports."

After Thursday's win, 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.

"No, couldn't tell you," Islanders defenseman Adam Pelech said when asked to explain the one-sided nature to the rivalry. "It's always a fun game to play. The crowd gets into it. Maybe that has something to do with it. Hopefully, the success continues."

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 of 21-10.

"I think they're a very good attack team," said Islanders goalie Robin Lehner, who will get his first start since stopping 27 shots in a 4-2 loss at Florida on Nov. 10, though he did make 11 saves in relief of Thomas Greiss in Sunday's 6-2 loss to the Stars in Brooklyn.

"Their counters are really good so you don't want to play back and forth against this team," Lehner added. "They have a lot of top-end skill. They're really fast. If you stay within the structure and outwork them, you're going to get good chances."

Alexandar Georgiev will be in net for the Rangers. His last start was also on Nov. 10, when he made 34 saves in a 5-4 shootout win at Columbus.

Rookie Filip Chytil has scored one goal in each of his last four games for the Rangers while Islanders left wing Anthony Beauvillier has four goals in his last two games, including his first career hat trick against the Rangers. Islanders center Mathew Barzal has a five-game point streak, with a goal and five assists in that span.

Each team is beginning a stretch of four games in six days.

"It's in the past," Rangers coach David Quinn said of the loss at Barclays Center. "There's been a couple of games since then. It's the next game on the schedule. It's a four-point game because it's a division game."



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We've got to keep building, got to keep going in the direction we've been going."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116941 New York Islanders

Filip Chytil, Alexandar Georgiev lead Rangers to a rare win over rival Islanders

By Colin Stephenson

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Updated November 21, 2018 11:24 PM

This is how hot the Rangers are running right now: They even beat the Islanders.

Filip Chytil scored 29 seconds into the game — becoming the first Rangers teenager to score a goal in five consecutive games — and the Rangers never looked back, ending their recent futility against their rivals in emphatic fashion with a 5-0 win Wednesday at Madison Square Garden.

"I think when you lose so often to someone you're going to win one, eventually," Rangers coach David Quinn said. "I think the odds just were in our favor. And, I think, usually, when you do break through and win a game, it usually happens like that.

"That's a good hockey team," he said about the Islanders. "We were very opportunistic tonight, for sure. I thought they had some 'Grade A' [scoring chances] where they missed the net. It could have been a different game. I'm certainly not ignorant to that. We'll take it, that's for sure."

The Rangers have played well in the month of November (7-1-1), but they entered Wednesday with a 1-10-2 record against the Islanders in their last 13 games, dating to the 2015-16 season.

"They've had our number, no doubt," defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk (two assists) said of the Islanders. "I think that's huge for us, as a confidence-builder, going forward, and just getting over that hump. But really, I think we need to realize that if we play like that night in and night out, we're going to beat a lot of teams."

The Rangers cruised to their third straight win, and their ninth in 11 games (9-1-1). With the victory, the Rangers — 12-8-2 overall for 26 points — moved into a tie for first place in the Metropolitan Division with the idle Columbus Blue Jackets.

The Islanders had topped the Rangers, 7-5, in the teams' last meeting last Thursday at Barclays Center in Brooklyn. But on the game's first shift Wednesday, Chytil tried to pass the puck to Chris Kreider and Islanders defenseman Ryan Pulock dropped down and blocked the pass. As goalie Robin Lehner came off the post tracking the initial pass, the puck came right back to Chytil, who whipped it inside the near post to give the Rangers the lead 29 seconds into the game.

"I think that was luck," said Chytil, who is 19. "I tried to pass to [Kreider] on the back door, for an empty net, and it came back to me, and I had an empty net. That was something special, to score a goal after 29 seconds, and five in a row."

Chytil now sits one game short of the NHL record of consecutive games with a goal by a teenager.

Enforcer Cody McLeod then tipped in a shot from Tony DeAngelo for his first goal of the season to make it 2-0 at 3:30 of the period, and Neal

Pionk scored on a power play to make it 3-0 at 8:04. Kevin Hayes scored in the second period to make it 4-0 and Kreider netted his 12th goal of the season, with 3:41 remaining in the third to close the scoresheet.

McLeod left the game after a second-period fight with Ross Johnston. The Rangers said he suffered a hand injury.

Georgiev, who played the third period of last Thursday's game and took the loss after allowing Leo Komarov's goal that put the Isles up 6-3 got the start in net for the Rangers and improved his record to 4-2-0 on the season.

"It was a great time to get a shutout — a big win for the boys against our rival team," he said. "I'm very happy and thankful for the team, they played great defense today. They jumped out, straight from the gate and got the lead. It was so much easier to play when we were leading 3-0. They played amazing. I think they deserved to win 5-0 today."

Georgiev was asked at what point he started to think about possibly getting the shutout.

"I tried to push this thought away, as much as possible," he said. "I tried to keep focused. Because it's a 60-minute game, at least."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116942 New York Islanders

Adam Pelech back in Islanders' lineup, but Barry Trotz wants to see 'consistency'

By Andrew Gross

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Updated November 21, 2018 11:00 PM

Defenseman Adam Pelech was back in the Islanders' lineup for Wednesday's 5-0 loss to the Rangers at Madison Square Garden after being a healthy scratch in two of the previous three games.

But Pelech, 24, still needs to show coach Barry Trotz he can play more consistently as he logged 17:52 in an overall shaky team defensive performance.

"Consistency in terms of the overall firmness in his game," Trotz said. "Just always be engaged. Sometimes, he falls out of the engagement part that I think he's capable of. I know he's a better player than he's shown."

Pelech has a goal and four assists in 17 games.

"It's always tough when you're not playing," Pelech said. "You just have to stay confident and play your game when you get in. I think I know what I need to improve on. I haven't been my best."

Defenseman Luca Sbisa, who played in two of the last three games, was a healthy scratch for the 15th time this season.

Trotz clarified his comment after the Islanders' 6-2 loss to the Stars on Sunday afternoon at Barclays Center that he was "done protecting them" with regards to needing more from his "top guys."

He said he was talking about trying to put his top lines on the ice for favorable matchups.

"I've made it happen, where they get certain matchups, especially at home, where they should be able to take advantage of the other group and they've been taken advantage of," Trotz said.



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Center Mathew Barzal had a five-game point streak snapped... Left wing Ross Johnston pursued Cody McLeod to fight at 9:32 of the second period... Left wing Matt Martin (upper body/injured reserve) participated in the morning skate but missed his eighth straight game... Right wing Cal Clutterbuck (illness) sat out.

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1116913 Montreal Canadiens

Stu Cowan: Canadiens give Île-Bizard native Michael Chaput a shot

STU COWAN, MONTREAL GAZETTE

Updated: November 21, 2018

NEWARK, N.J. — Michael Chaput was wearing a Laval Rocket long-sleeve undershirt in the locker room after the Canadiens' morning skate Wednesday at the Prudential Center.

Wednesday night he was probably still wearing that shirt, but on top he had a Canadiens sweater for the first time in his NHL career.

For a player who grew up in Île-Bizard on Montreal's West Island, it was going to be a special night for the 26-year-old Chaput and his family back home.

"The exhibition (season) is one thing, but I think a regular-season game is going to be something pretty special," said Chaput, who signed with the Canadiens this summer as a free agent. "I just can't wait to get started."

The Canadiens called Chaput up from the Rocket on Tuesday after he posted 7-3-10 totals in 18 AHL games. Wednesday night he took Matthew Peca's spot as the Canadiens' fourth-line centre between Nicolas Deslauriers and Charles Hudon to form a French Connection trio with three Quebecers.

Coach Claude Julien hasn't been happy with the defensive play of his fourth line, which was on the ice for two regulation-time goals against during Monday night's 5-4 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals. Julien likes his fourth line to have an identity and this season there hasn't really been one.

Maybe this French Connection will work.

"It's changed because we've had different players," Julien said after the morning skate when asked about the lack of identity on the fourth line. "You lose (Tomas) Plekanec and you lost (Jacob) de la Rose. You got some guys that aren't here anymore. You got some injuries, too. When you put (Paul) Byron and (Joel) Armia back in the lineup, there's guys that may end up being there that would make your fourth line a lot better. Right now, it's more about disappointment about how we're getting scored on when that line's on the ice and, I guess, it's the reality of things where you have to make everybody accountable."

Chaput grew up as a Canadiens fan and his favourite player was Saku Koivu, followed by Richard Zednik. He was a star in minor hockey on the West Island, posting 23-17-40 totals in 23 games with the Lac St. Louis Royals Midget Espoir team during the 2007-08 season before being selected ninth overall by the Lewiston MAINEiacs as a 15-year-old at the 2008 QMJHL Draft.

The Philadelphia Flyers selected Chaput in the third round (89th overall) at the 2010 NHL Draft after he posted 28-27-55 totals in 68 games with the MAINEiacs, but the Flyers traded him to the Columbus Blue Jackets the next year. In his final season of junior hockey, after being traded from

Lewiston to Shawinigan, Chaput helped the Cataractes win the 2012 Memorial Cup and was named MVP of the championship tournament after posting 5-7-12 totals in six games.

Since then, Chaput has spent most of his time in the AHL. Heading into Wednesday night's game, the 6-foot-2, 204-pound forward had 6-11-17 totals in 135 career NHL games with the Blue Jackets and Vancouver Canucks. As a free agent this summer, Chaput said he had similar offers from a few NHL teams, but decided to sign a two-year, US\$1.3-million contract with the Canadiens that is a two-way deal, paying him only \$275,000 per season in the AHL.

"Obviously, I grew up watching Montreal play and I just told myself: Why not just give it a shot and see what happens?" he said about signing with the Canadiens. "When I was young, me and my brothers and my dad, we'd go watch games quite a bit. Obviously, when you're a kid from Montreal you kind of grow up loving the Habs. So it's going to be pretty special to play here tonight."

Chaput was on the ice in Utica, N.Y., practising with the Rocket on Tuesday when coach Joël Bouchard told him he was getting called up by the Canadiens.

"I was kind of surprised," Chaput said. "I didn't think anyone (on the Canadiens) was hurt or whatever. We watched the game from the night before (against the Capitals). I know the guys were playing well, so it was a good surprise for sure."

"For me, it is an opportunity for sure," he added. "No matter when you get the chance to play it's a good opportunity and I think I'm just going to go in there and make the most of it."

When asked why he hasn't been able to stick in the NHL, Chaput said: "I think a lot of it has to do with opportunities or spots or stuff like that. Sometimes consistency has to do with it. Confidence, maybe ... I'm not sure. You get a different opportunity elsewhere and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. So I'm just going to try and make the most of this one and see what happens."

Hopefully for Chaput he can stick around long enough to get a Canadiens undershirt.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.22.2018

1116914 Montreal Canadiens

Canadiens Game Day: Claude Julien shakes up his fourth line

STU COWAN, MONTREAL GAZETTE

Updated: November 21, 2018

NEWARK, N.Y. — Canadiens coach Claude Julien made it clear after Monday night's 5-4 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals that he wasn't happy with the performance of his fourth line, which was benched after the second period.

So you knew changes were coming and when the Canadiens play the New Jersey Devils Wednesday night at the Prudential Center (7 p.m., SN1, RDS, TSN 690 Radio) centre Matthew Peca will be watching the game from the press box, while Michael Chaput takes his place between Nicolas Deslauriers and Charles Hudon.

Call it the new French Connection line.

Chaput was called up from the Laval Rocket on Tuesday after posting 7-3-10 totals in 18 AHL games.



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Peca, Deslauriers and Hudon were on the ice for two of the Capitals' four goals during regulation time Monday night. Hudon finished the game with 8:46 of ice time, while Peca played 7:17 and Deslauriers 5:36.

"We just need a better performance from our fourth line," Julien said after Wednesday's morning skate at the Prudential Center. "It's not just the centre position, it's all three guys have to be better. The way that they're getting scored on for a fourth line has to be better."

"Right now we can't call three guys up, but we can call one guy up and then from there it's game-to-game," the coach added about his fourth line. "Whoever deserves to be in's going to be in. But we definitely need a little bit more from our fourth line. More as far as not getting scored on as much as they have been lately than the offensive part."

Chaput signed a two-year, US\$1.35-million contract with the Canadiens as a free agent this past summer. It's a two-way deal that pays him \$650,000 this season in the NHL and \$275,000 in the AHL. Last season, the 26-year-old had 17-25-42 totals in 55 games with the AHL's Utica Comets and was pointless in nine games with the Vancouver Canucks.

The Philadelphia Flyers selected the 6-foot-2, 204-pound forward in the third round (89th overall) at the 2010 NHL Draft. Heading into Wednesday night's game, the Île Bizard native had played in 135 career NHL games with the Columbus Blue Jackets and the Canucks, posting 6-11-17 totals.

"He's played centre and he's played wing," Julien said about Chaput. "He's played more wing lately. He played centre for probably the first part of the year. So he's a guy that can play both positions. We saw him at centre with our team in training camp."

### Price back in goal

Goalie Carey Price will make his fourth straight start in goal Wednesday night, while defenceman Xavier Ouellet gets back in the lineup against the Devils to replace Noah Juulsen, who is on the injured-reserve list after suffering a facial fracture during Monday's game.

When asked after the morning skate if he's concerned about his depth on defence now with Juulsen out indefinitely, Julien said: "We still got an extra D (Karl Alzner) and we got Weby (Shea Weber) that's skating with the team. So hopefully we can stay healthy long enough that we don't get into that situation."

Alzner will be a healthy scratch against the Devils for the 16th time in 22 games this season.

Keith Kincaid will start in goal for the Devils. He has a 8-5-2 record with a 2.61 goals-against average and a .916 save percentage. Price is 7-4-4 with a 3.05 goals-against average and a .900 save percentage.

### Kotkaniemi on first power-play unit

It took a while, but rookie Jesperi Kotkaniemi seems to have earned a spot on the Canadiens' first power-play unit. Kotkaniemi picked up an assist on Jeff Petry's power-play goal against the Capitals and practised on the first power-play unit at Wednesday's morning skate.

"It's a little bit of the evolvement, it's also us trying to put the right group together for the power play," Julien said after the morning skate. "Where we saw (that) Kotkaniemi's always been good at is in tight areas. He seems to be able to make those plays. So being on the goal line close to the crease with some options, we thought we'd give him a shot there. I thought he did a good job the other night when he did have the puck on his stick, so we're going to continue to work with that."

Also on the first power-play unit are Max Domi, Brendan Gallagher, Jonathan Drouin and Petry.

Heading into the game, Kotkaniemi had 3-9-12 totals in 21 games and was plus-1 while averaging 13:54 of ice time. Kotkaniemi ranked fourth among NHL rookies in scoring behind Vancouver's Elias Pettersson (12-7-19), Ottawa's Colin White (6-6-12) and the New York Rangers' Brett Howden (4-8-12).

While the Canadiens have scored a power-play goal in each of their last two games, they still only rank 28th in the NHL on the PP with a 14.1 per cent success rate.

### Ten-game streak for Domi

Domi, who leads the Canadiens in scoring with 10-15-25 totals, brings a 10-game point streak into Wednesday night's game, during which he has 5-9-14 totals.

Domi is the first Canadiens player to have a 10-game point streak since Vincent Damphousse in 1996. Domi had only been held off the scoresheet three times in the Canadiens' first 21 games.

### Where the Canadiens stand

Heading into Wednesday night's game, the Canadiens (11-6-4) were holding the first wild-card playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. They ranked 12th in the NHL in offence, scoring an average of 3.24 goals per game, and 26th in defence, allowing an average of 3.33. They ranked 28th on the power play (14.1 per cent), 17th in penalty-killing (80.0 per cent) and remained the worst team in the league on faceoffs, ranking 31st (45.3).

Domi was leading the Canadiens in scoring with 10-15-25 totals, followed by Tomas Tatar (9-8-17), Drouin (7-10-17), Petry (2-15-17) and Gallagher (10-5-15). Heading into the game, Domi ranked 15th overall in the NHL in scoring, while Petry ranked seventh among defencemen.

### Where the Devils stand

The Devils (8-9-2) went into the game in 15th place in the 16-team Eastern Conference standings. They ranked 22nd in the NHL in offence, scoring an average of 2.89 goals per game, and 22nd in defence, allowing an average of 3.21. They ranked 13th on the power play (21.2 per cent), fourth in penalty-killing (84.0 per cent) and 29th in faceoffs (46.6 per cent).

Kyle Palmieri was leading the Devils in scoring with 11-9-20 totals, followed by Taylor Hall (5-14-19), Travis Zajac (7-7-14), Damon Severson (3-10-13) and Nico Hischier (3-9-12).

### What's next?

After Wednesday night's game, the Canadiens were headed to Buffalo, where they will play the Sabres Friday afternoon as part of U.S. Thanksgiving weekend (4 p.m., TSN2, RDS, TSN 690 Radio). The Canadiens will then return home to face the Boston Bruins Saturday night at the Bell Centre (7 p.m., SN, TVA Sports, TSN 690 Radio).

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1116915 Montreal Canadiens

Canadiens become foster family to Mira puppy

STU COWAN, MONTREAL GAZETTE

Updated: November 21, 2018

NEWARK, N.J. — The Canadiens are getting a new puppy.

The club announced on Wednesday that it is teaming with the Mira Foundation to become the foster family to a Saint-Pierre Labernese puppy for one year. The Canadiens will be responsible for socializing the puppy under Mira's guidelines to become a future guide dog or service dog. Since its creation in 1981, Mira has provided more than 3,000 people with guide and service dogs to help with their disabilities.



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For the next year, the Canadiens' puppy will undergo basic obedience training, as well as social and environmental stimulation. The puppy will be allowed in the team offices and will also be at the Bell Centre during games. The puppy will live with a Canadiens front-office employee for the next year. After that, the puppy will be returned to Mira for evaluation to decide which program will be a best fit. The dog will then undergo three to six months of more training, depending on which program it is put in.

The Canadiens are following the lead of the St. Louis Blues, who this season partnered with Duo — a non-profit organization that specializes in training service dogs — to adopt a yellow Labrador Retriever puppy for the season. Once that dog has completed his 18-month training and qualifies for certification, Duo will find his best fit as a service dog. The Blues asked fans to submit names for their new puppy online and the name Barclay was chosen.

The Canadiens are asking fans to submit names for their new puppy online at [nhl.com/canadiens/community/habs-puppy](http://nhl.com/canadiens/community/habs-puppy).

"Everyone in the organization is happy and excited to participate in this initiative," Geneviève Paquette, vice-president of community engagement for the Canadiens, said in a news release. "This is an extraordinary opportunity to raise awareness and educate our colleagues and the public on the challenges of independence, accessibility and social integration of people with disabilities. The work that Mira does is remarkable and we welcome the chance to contribute in our own way."

Said Nicolas St-Pierre, general manager of the Mira Foundation: "We consider it a privilege to count on the support of the Montreal Canadiens organization and are thrilled to witness the great enthusiasm generated by this team project. This puppy will have the opportunity to grow in an extremely stimulating and diverse environment. During his first year of life, he will have been exposed to many situations and I am sure it will greatly contribute to making him a good service dog."

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1116916 Montreal Canadiens

Canadiens at New Jersey Devils: Five things you should know

PAT HICKEY, MONTREAL GAZETTE

Updated: November 21, 2018

Here are five things you should know about the Canadiens-New Jersey Devils game at Prudential Centre on Wednesday (7 p.m., SN1, RDS, TSN 690 Radio):

The matchup: The Canadiens are holding the first wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference after earning a point in their 5-4 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals at the Bell Centre on Monday. Montreal has taken five of a possible six points in the last three games and boasts an 11-6-4 record. The Devils got off to a promising start this season, but they are 3-6-1 in their last 10 games. After losing 2-1 in Carolina on Sunday, the Devils share the Eastern Conference cellar with Pittsburgh, but Montreal should be aware the Devils have a 6-1-2 record at home.

Kotkaniemi steps up: Rookie Jesperi Kotkaniemi was promoted to the first unit on the power play Monday and earned an assist on Jeff Petry's goal. It was one of two assists for the 18-year-old Finn, who has three goals and 12 points. That ties him for second place among rookie scorers in the NHL — Vancouver's Elias Pettersson leads the parade with 19. There are only five players from last June's draft playing in the NHL and Kotkaniemi is the leading scorer in that group. He's also getting better on his faceoffs, winning 10 of 16 against the Capitals.

Domi can handle himself: Max Domi's father, Tie, was one of the fiercest fighters in the NHL and it seems he passed on a few tricks to his son. The younger Domi sought retribution for what he perceived as a dirty hit on Tomas Tatar and dropped the gloves with Dmitry Orlov. The Washington player got in the first licks, but Domi bounced off the ice and did some damage with two uppercuts. When he wasn't fighting, the Canadiens' leading scorer picked up an assist on Petry's goal to run his consecutive-game points streak to 10 games.

Juulsen sidelined indefinitely: There will be at least one lineup change for the Canadiens. The team announced Tuesday that defenceman Noah Juulsen suffered a facial fracture when he was struck by a shot from Brett Connolly in the first period Wednesday. It was a tough night for Juulsen, who was struck in the face by a shot from Jakub Vrana on his first shift. He returned after that incident, but was sent to a hospital after he blocked Connolly's shot and the puck went off his stick and hit him in the face. Look for Xavier Ouellet to replace him.

The other guys: The Devils will get a lift with the return of centre Nico Hischier, who has missed four games with an upper-body injury. The 19-year-old Swiss star practised Tuesday and will rejoin Taylor Hall and Kyle Palmieri on the Devils' top line. Palmieri is the team's top scorer with 11 goals and 20 points, while Hall has five goals and 19 points. Keith Kinkaid, who was tabbed as the backup, has wrestled the No. 1 goaltending job away from Cory Schneider. Kinkaid has an 8-5-2 record with a 2.61 goals-against average and a .918 save percentage.

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1116917 Montreal Canadiens

In the Habs' Room: 'Well, our back end had a tough night,' Julien says

STU COWAN, MONTREAL GAZETTE

Updated: November 21, 2018

NEWARK, N.J. — There are probably going to be some Canadiens fans putting the blame on Carey Price for Wednesday night's 5-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils when they see the goalie only faced 28 shots.

They would be wrong.

No goalie was going to get a win for the Canadiens on this night as the defence coughed up the puck time and again in their own zone and left Devils players standing alone in front of the net.

The Devils' first goal came when the Canadiens couldn't clear the zone and Kyle Palmieri deflected in a point shot while standing alone in front of Price. The Devils' second goal came after Jesperi Kotkaniemi cleanly won a defensive-zone faceoff, only to watch defenceman Mike Reilly get beaten to the puck behind the net by Taylor Hall, who then set up Nico Hischier standing in front. Hall was the one left alone in front of Price for the Devils' third goal on a tic-tac-toe play, while Pavel Zacha was alone at the side of the net for the Devils' fourth goal. Zacha also scored the fifth goal after splitting the Canadiens' defence at the blue line and going in alone on Price.

Jonathan Drouin and Max Domi scored for the Canadiens.

"Well, our back end had a tough night ... there's no doubt about that," Canadiens coach Claude Julien said after the game. "But at the end of the day, there's a lot of things, too, the forwards can do on the defensive side of things. Even our backcheck ... our backchecking at times once we get past the blue line, they're still beating us to the net. So we need to be better in those situations as a team, not just as defencemen. But the



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defencemen, definitely, I think we need a little bit more in winning battles and killing plays and making sure that those kind of situations that happened tonight — a lack of, I guess, not doing the right assignment and leaving somebody all by himself to the side of the net. I think those are mistakes tonight."

Julien was asked if it might be a case of the Canadiens simply not having the horses on defence — especially with Shea Weber still sidelined after off-season knee surgery.

"I'm not going there guys," the coach said. "Weber's skating with us (in practices). That the good news. We'll figure it out here as we go along. ... You can't win in this league if you don't have all 19 horses going and tonight we didn't have 19 horses going."

The biggest horse is Weber, and he can't come back soon enough. But even when Weber does return, he's a 33-year-old defenceman who will not have played a game in a full year.

Price wasn't around to talk with the media after the game, but he never really says much anyways. The goalie has to be frustrated as his record fell to 7-5-4 with a 3.17 goals-against average and an .895 save percentage. It was surprising Julien didn't pull Price after two periods for mercy. When asked if Price asked to stay in the game, Julien said: "I don't think that matters. That's internal stuff. How we handle things, I don't think has to be public knowledge. Basically, it was handled and I think it was handled the right way."

But how does Julien handle the defence moving forward? He has talked about the inter-competition for jobs on the blue line being a good thing, but there's one less body now with Noah Juulsen on the injured-reserve list with a facial fracture. Could that inter-competition be causing pressure problems among the defencemen, who might be so worried about making mistakes that they're making even more?

"It's the NHL," said Xavier Ouellet, one of the defencemen who has been in and out of the lineup. "Pressure is part of it. You have to learn how to deal with it. It can't be an excuse for the way you play. You got to perform through the pressure, it's part of it. It's a competition. You know every day, every year there's new kids coming in looking for your job. So it's nothing new here. It's our job to respond."

They didn't respond against the Devils.

The question now is can the horses the Canadiens have on defence ever really respond — even when the biggest one returns to the lineup?

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1116918 Montreal Canadiens

About last night ... Devils top Canadiens 5-2

MIKE BOONE

Updated: November 21, 2018

Has it taken 22 games for us to finally get a glimpse of the REAL Montreal Canadiens?

If the playoffs were to start Thursday, we would be seeing postseason hockey in Montreal.

But when the real playoffs begin in April ...

Well, let's just say the 5-2 loss in New Jersey Wednesday night did not augur well for a happy spring in Montreal.

The Canadiens are still holding down an Eastern Conference Wildcard spot. And because the NHL is idle Thursday, the Canadiens will still be in the playoff picture when they face Buffalo on Friday afternoon.

Perhaps the poop show in Newark was an aberration. The Devils are tough on home ice. Their 7-1-2 record at the Pru is the NHL's best.

We'll get a clearer picture in Buffalo — and at the Bell Centre on Saturday, when the Bruins visit.

Will Shea Weber be back in the lineup for the Boston game?

If so, how many minutes will he play?

And after a long absence, how effective will Weber be?

Many questions ... particularly on the Canadiens' back end.

The D corps was horrible in New Jersey. In scoring four unanswered goals that settled the game, the Devils owned the Canadiens' zone. Unhindered, the team in red moved the puck around effortlessly until they cashed a high-percentage chance.

"That's their identity, that's a hard-working team," Max Domi said in a segment carried on L'Antichambre. "They pinch on our half walls, they're hard on our D on the forecheck, they're good in the neutral zone."

"When a team works that hard, you gotta at least match their work ethic. We came up a little bit short in that category tonight."

A lot short.

In watching the second period, you had to wonder which of these teams is in a playoff spot and which is floundering near last place in the Eastern Conference.

The Canadiens were awful.

It happened in Edmonton, and it happened again in New Jersey.

The team misses Weber, of course.

The Canadiens also miss Paul Byron, Joel Armia and, most recently, Noah Juulsen.

And the organization is not deep in talent.

Price-haters will be in full bay, but Gaston Therrien put the situation in context. In the game against Washington, the RDS analyst said, Price had to make miraculous saves.

"Tonight he maybe didn't make any miracles. But there were incredible scoring chances, in the slot and off tic-tac-toe passing plays."

Citing Price's much-discussed — and, by some, lamented — annual salary, Therrien said the goaltender would have been helped by \$10 million in \$20 bills stacked in front of the net.

I agree.

Enough about Price's salary.

This team has other problems ... and the Canadiens had better find solutions soon.

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1116919 Montreal Canadiens

Canadiens' defence abandons Carey Price in 5-2 loss to Devils

STU COWAN, MONTREAL GAZETTE



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Updated: November 21, 2018

NEWARK, N.J. — After Ottawa missed the playoffs last season with an even worse record than the Canadiens, Senators GM Pierre Dorion said: "Rest is a weapon" — if I hear that one more time I'll go crazy."

It's going to take a lot more than rest to fix what's wrong with the Canadiens' defence this season after Wednesday night's 5-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils at the Prudential Center. What little hair Canadiens coach Claude Julien has left on his head might have been pulled out during this game.

The Canadiens and their fans are counting the days until Shea Weber returns to the lineup after off-season knee surgery, but he alone might not be enough to fix this defence.

The Canadiens had problems getting the puck out of their own zone right from the start against the Devils, who took full advantage — getting two goals from Pavel Zacha and singles from Kyle Palmieri, Nico Hischier and Taylor Hall. Jonathan Drouin and Max Domi scored for the Canadiens.

Carey Price allowed five goals on 28 shots, but had almost no help defensively as the Canadiens saw their record fall to 11-7-4.

Julien tried to use rest as a weapon when he cancelled a scheduled practice Tuesday in Brossard and instead made it a travel day only with the Canadiens flying to New Jersey.

"It's actually tough because we really wish we could have more practice time because we could certainly use it," Julien said after the team's morning skate Wednesday. "But then you have to weigh what's more important: practice or a day off and travel. Coming back from out west, even the Monday game (a 5-4 OT loss to the Washington Capitals at the Bell Centre) you could see as the game went on we kind of wore off a little bit. If you feel it as a coach — which we did as coaches — you know the players are feeling it. So we thought yesterday was better to just use it as a travel day, give a chance to recover some more, because we're talking about four games in six nights. You have to pick your poison and sometimes rest trumps the practice."

It didn't this time. The Canadiens' defence needs all the practice it can get.

The Devils' first goal came after the Canadiens couldn't get the puck out of their own zone — a sign of things to come — and Palmieri deflected a point shot past Price at 6:26 of the first period. Drouin tied it up only 24 seconds later with his eighth goal of the season, but the Devils took the lead before the end of the first period and then added three unanswered goals in the second. Domi scored the only goal of the third period, extending his point streak to 11 games.

After the game, the Canadiens flew to Buffalo, where they will face the Sabres Friday afternoon (4 p.m., TSN2, RDS, TSN 690 Radio).

It's a good bet the Canadiens will be practising Thursday in Buffalo.

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1116920 Montreal Canadiens

The Canadiens aren't playing fast anymore because they can't keep up with their own system

By Arpon Basu

NEWARK, N.J. — It was Oct. 16, the NHL season was two weeks old and the way the Canadiens were playing was basically unrecognizable.

It was fast. It was efficient. It was effective.

Coming off a 7-3 win against the Detroit Red Wings to run their record to 3-1-1, Claude Julien answered questions for a long time after practice about the new system he and his coaching staff had implemented this season, the reason being that the system was such a departure from what the Canadiens did last season, and also a departure from what Julien himself had done for most of his NHL coaching career.

"It's because of the way we work together," Julien said that day. "We chose to play a certain way this year because of what we identified over the summer, and that was speed, execution. So we needed players who believed, who were able to play that style, to play the right way together."

But Julien, perhaps identifying how carried away people were getting with this, was quick to add a disclaimer to all the glowing talk of the Canadiens new system, one he would use often whenever he talked about it.

"It's early in the season," he said. "It's up to us to show that this style can work for the whole season."

It was Nov. 8, three weeks later, and the Canadiens had just lost 6-5 in overtime to the Buffalo Sabres at home, registering their first consecutive losses of the season after blowing a 3-1 lead to the New York Rangers to lose 5-3 two nights earlier. However, they also hadn't registered consecutive wins in 10 games at that point and their record was 8-5-3 — or just as many losses as wins.

Julien was asked after that Sabres game if the way his team was playing was a result of how demanding that new style is, if the warnings he had been delivering were now becoming a reality.

"I wouldn't get to that point right now because it's a couple of games, it doesn't mean it's going to continue," he said. "We need to fix that; I think we can get back to being the way we have been. If that's something that prolongs throughout the rest of the year, we'll definitely have that answer."

It's Nov. 21 and the Canadiens get blown out by the New Jersey Devils after piling up the defensive breakdowns.

"We play 11 games in, I think, 21 days and I'm sensing, honestly, some fatigue," Julien said Wednesday. "Mentally, that's where you've got to stay sharp and maybe keep your game a little simpler if you're going to get through those kinds of situations because that's the way the league is."

When asked if the system that worked so well earlier in the season is now slipping, however, Julien didn't appear to really appreciate the question, and again pointed to the schedule and fatigue to find an answer.

"You're digging into stuff there, obviously if you know the game you'll understand that, again, playing that much, sometimes games aren't always perfect," he said. "That's why we win a lot of them and that's why sometimes you play games like this. It's about trying to build some consistency in our game and being better in every area. But you can't win in this league if you don't have all 19 horses going, and tonight we didn't have 19 horses going."

Players, of course, don't want to admit they are tired because it is seen as an excuse. Every team has difficult stretches of the schedule, and this was something that had to come at some point for the Canadiens because of how easy their October schedule was with no back to back games, no extensive travel, no time zone changes, nothing that would pose a challenge for them in the way they wanted to play.

They are now getting those challenges from the schedule, and it's clear the much-vaunted system from earlier in the season is not holding up to that pressure.



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The system, when it was working well, had several key characteristics. One was using the middle of the ice to break out of the defensive zone, another was applying constant pressure on the puck carrier through the neutral zone to create turnovers and counter opportunities and yet another was shutting plays down quickly in the defensive zone by, again, applying a lot of pressure and getting the puck back as fast as possible. These are not the only components of it, obviously, but they are three important ones that appear to have fallen off lately.

The Canadiens, almost exclusively, now use the boards to exit their own zone, they are no longer pressuring pucks through the neutral zone with the same zeal they once had and they are losing puck battles in their own end, particularly behind their own net, creating coverage breakdowns out front. All three of these things require a lot of energy. Using the middle of the ice to exit the zone means the centre starts with the puck deep in his zone with the wingers there in support, resulting in more ice to cover to get to the offensive zone. Applying pressure through the neutral zone means forwards coming back hard and skating with attacking players to take away their time and space with the puck. Shutting down plays in the defensive zone requires extra quickness, decisiveness and hard work from the defencemen.

"We've got to get back to what we do well," Gallagher said after the loss to New Jersey. "We've got to be the one outworking teams, we've got to be the one winning puck battles and tonight we were on the wrong side of that too many times."

When offered the excuse of fatigue and the schedule no longer being in their favour, Gallagher didn't want to hear it.

"That's not a thought that goes through our head," he said. "We've just got to be better, we can't be looking for excuses or answers. If we were to compete harder tonight, we probably would have had a better result."

Except you need energy to compete harder.

Gallagher, back in October, said this about how well the Canadiens were breaking out of their zone: "That is something I think every team talks about, getting pucks to the middle because it's tougher to get your forecheck. If the puck's on the wall you can close it off ... A lot of that is us breaking out better and having control and not so much just chipping and chasing it, releasing pressure but having them come back at you. It's more controlling the puck and skating out with it."

The puck very often finds itself on the wall lately, and teams are indeed closing it off, forcing the Canadiens to chip it out and chase it to release pressure, often resulting in teams coming back at them. That is what the Devils did Wednesday, and that is what teams are doing to the Canadiens with greater regularity because the exit route from their own end has predominantly become the boards.

"Sometimes you have to (use the boards), and then that winger's got to make the play," Gallagher said Wednesday. "Tonight we just didn't make the play. You've got to make the play that's handed to you, and sometimes your first option isn't always there so it comes down to winning battles and making that play to get the puck out of the zone. They executed better than we did."

Defenceman Xavier Ouellet, who re-entered the lineup to replace the injured Noah Juulsen, acknowledged that what the Canadiens are doing on breakouts has changed, but said that's a function of how teams are forechecking against them combined with their own lack of execution and dictating the play.

"There's certain teams that come down the wall, there are teams that clog the middle," he said. "We've got to adjust to that, but that being said we still need to execute the plays we want to do, which we didn't do tonight. Whether we were going on the boards or in the middle, we weren't quite making the play we were looking for."

Devils coach John Hynes had this to say about his team's ability to cleanly get through the neutral zone against the Canadiens:

"I thought we played fairly fast and direct and a lot of that comes to puck execution and puck support. Tonight, the guys were skating, I thought our puck support was good and then we were making the right decisions; whether it was an area play, or a play to speed or we had some underneath plays, guys were making the right decisions. That helps our game because then you can get into the offensive zone and you can use a tenacious forecheck. We won some pucks, and then I thought in the offensive zone, as we talked about with our team, we needed to be more direct and get inside the dots and get more high-quality chances for than we have in the previous couple of games. We addressed it in the video and the guys went out and did a heck of a job tonight with that. It's nice to see the guys be rewarded, to be able to score inside the dots, in the high danger areas."

Playing fast and direct, playing inside the dots, tenacious forecheck, these are all things the Canadiens were saying regularly earlier in the season to describe how they wanted to play. One thing they were doing effectively was not allowing their opponents to do those same things.

"They won puck battles, they outcompeted us," Gallagher said. "All the stuff that we've been successful with this year, we got a little bit of a taste of our own medicine."

Back on Nov. 9, just after that overtime loss to the Sabres, Jeff Petry spoke about the importance of continuing to "hound pucks," or in other words apply constant pressure on the puck carrier and how much of an impact that has on the defence's ability to deny the blue line because they can then step up in the neutral zone and kill a zone entry before it happens thanks to that support from the forwards.

"When we are on top of our game it's almost, I wouldn't say easier, but it's a more comforting situation when you have those forwards coming back hard and giving you the ability to stay up," Petry said. "When the forwards are right on top of them we can shift over, if they can't get them we shift the other way and then they pick up the late guy. It just helps with our gaps and making it hard, making teams dump the puck in."

Petry admitted it is demanding, but recognizing that and adjusting to it is what's important. Things like keeping shifts short by dumping pucks in deep to get a change instead of extending a shift for another shot at an offensive opportunity become vital in order to maintain the energy required to play that style of game.

"It is demanding," he said, "but I think that's what gave us success and I think that's where our success lies in the future."

Gallagher admitted Wednesday that element of the Canadiens' game has slipped, that teams are not getting pressured through the neutral zone at all, and it's leading to energy-sapping shifts spent in their own zone.

"When we do that I think you see us spend more time in the other zone," he said. "It's obviously more tiring playing defence than it is playing in the other end. You're not really looking at the schedule or anything like that; every team goes through this. It's an 82-game grind, I think that's part of it. For us we have to have a bounce-back effort the next game."

Losing puck battles was a recurring theme of Julien's postgame comments last season, probably his most consistent gripe about his team was playing. Earlier this season, we didn't hear about it much. Lately, it's crept back into his game analysis.

"Our back end had a tough night, there's no doubt about that, but at the end of the day there's a lot of things our forwards can do on the defensive side of things," Julien said Wednesday. "Even our backcheck, we're backchecking and at times once they get past (our) blue line they're still beating us to the net. So we need to be better in those situations as a team, not just as defencemen. But the defencemen, definitely, I think we need a little bit more in winning battles and killing plays."

It was something Ouellet clearly heard from his coach as well.

"We need to find a way to close out plays and win battles," he said.



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The Devils were frequently able to win battles behind the Canadiens' net to create opportunities out front. It wouldn't be such a cause for concern if it wasn't such a regular occurrence. Shea Weber's eventual return will surely help in this area because it is what he is most effective at, but it remains something the Canadiens need to clean up quickly.

So the question now is what do the Canadiens do?

The schedule gets easier once this difficult stretch ends with Saturday's home game against the Boston Bruins, which will be the Canadiens' third game in four nights and 13th in 24 days this month. But the schedule will get difficult and challenging again as the season rolls along, and based on how they have reacted to this current stretch perhaps future fatigue will need to be taken into account and the Canadiens will need to pick their spots for when they try to play fast and when they try to slow things down a bit.

"We do realize the game is getting quicker, so you adapt and say what will be most successful for us? So that's what we've done this year. We all adapt. As a coach, I've said it many times, from my first year here in Montreal to now, it's so different," Julien said back on Oct. 16, back when the system in place was working perfectly.

"As a coach if I don't adapt and change along the way, I'm not standing here today."

Might be time to adapt again, because the early-season disclaimers Julien kept offering on the Canadiens' new system look like some serious foreshadowing to what is happening right now.

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1116921 Montreal Canadiens

A blow by blow analysis of the Canadiens' defensive breakdowns in their loss to the Devils

By Marc Dumont

In general, the Canadiens have avoided being flat out dominated for two consecutive periods this season, but that was definitely the case against the New Jersey Devils. A slow start led to a significant shot and scoring chance advantage for the host team for the first 40 minutes, as the Devils cruised to a 5-2 victory.

The heat map after the second gives us a great idea of how badly the Canadiens were outplayed to start the game:

The Canadiens pushed back in the third period, but by then it was way too little and way too late, though Max Domi did manage to extend his point streak to 11 games.

We're going to skip over the standout performances tonight and focus on the defensive issues that have plagued this team for almost a month.

First goal against

The forwards do a rather poor job of supporting their defencemen, who in turn do a poor job of clearing the zone.

Xavier Ouellet gets into trouble due to a heavy forecheck by the Devils, and sends an ugly pass to Victor Mete, who quickly turns the puck over to Blake Coleman. The Devils eventually send the puck to the point and Andy Greene takes a point shot.

Ouellet gets in trouble once again, though this time it's due to poor positioning. He actually looks at Kyle Palmieri twice, but leaves a

significant gap in his coverage. All Ouellet does is screen Price as Palmieri is free to take all the time he needs to tip the point shot.

Second goal against

Mike Reilly goes around the net rather than cutting in front of Price, which allows Taylor Hall more than enough time to take control of the puck. Hall ditches his defensive coverage with ease and has plenty of time to find Nico Hischier.

Hischier is completely open to take the shot, as neither David Schlemko nor Jesperi Kotkaniemi is close enough to stop him.

Third goal against

Jeff Petry loses the puck up the ice but does a good job of returning into position quickly to defend the oncoming Devils rush. But that's about where the good job stops, and the busy work begins. Petry chases the puck around and eventually settles on not defending any particular player, and not shutting down any passing lanes. Brendan Gallagher fails to support his defence once Schlemko gets sucked behind the net.

Another easy goal for the Devils.

Fourth goal against

Scotty Bowman has yet to return my phone call to confirm my hypothesis, but I suspect that four players covering one player is not an ideal defensive strategy. But if it does happen, you simply can't let the player who's outnumbered 4-to-1 be first on the puck, as the Canadiens did on this play.

Marcus Johansson's shot is deflected to a wide open Pavel Zacha, and halfway through the game the Canadiens are already down 4-1.

Fifth goal against

This is simply poor positioning by Ouellet and Schlemko. Zacha is given a wide open lane that would make any Montreal motorist envious, and drives to the net with ease to score the fifth Devils goal. This is made worse by the fact it came on a Devils power play, when a breakdown like this at your own blue line just shouldn't happen.

Final Word

I'm running out of ways to describe the Canadiens' defence. It's never a good sign when a team is chasing the puck as if they're playing in a Timbits uniform during the intermission. It's an even worse sign when those performances become the norm. Expect the losses to become more frequent until the defensive problems are addressed, though the defensive breakdowns will likely continue until the players available to Claude Julien are improved.

The current lineup can do a much better job in terms of positioning, and the forwards certainly have to provide more support, but the defensive personnel is simply not good enough to shut down the opposition and allow the Canadiens to compete night in and night out.

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1117023 Websites

The Athletic / The league's best (and worst) top power-play units through the first quarter

By Tyler Dellow Nov 21, 2018 10



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The NHL is a hard league in which to obtain a competitive advantage. With the league hitting the quarter mark this week, we're going to take a look at where teams are generating competitive advantages or disadvantages with different aspects of play. Up first: power-play units.

We're in a Golden Age of NHL power-play units. Through games played on Sunday, teams are scoring 7.0 GF/60 and allowing 0.9 GA/60 with the man advantage. A few years back, that was an elite power play. Now it's the norm and the bar for success keeps rising. We're going to focus at 5-on-4. Here's the goal difference that teams have generated relative to the league so far.

There are more than a few surprises in the graphic above. For everything that's wrong with the Ottawa Senators – and lord knows, there's a lot – the power play has rolled along. Colorado's another one that surprise, while Winnipeg, Toronto and Washington are less surprising. At the other end of the scale, the Predators fans who moan about their power play to me won't be surprised. The other bottom four teams aren't really a surprise per se, although all of them – particularly the Flyers – have had a lot of success over the years.

Keeping in mind that it takes about a three goal difference to net a point in the NHL, you can see that most teams aren't much more than an overtime loss away from average. You can see what a huge issue the Predators' power play is though. Entering play on Monday night, they were three points ahead of the Wild and five points ahead of the Jets, albeit with Winnipeg having a pair of games in hand. The goal difference swing at 5-on-4 between the Wild and Predators is 11, or nearly four points in the standings. The Jets are nearly 15 goals better than the Predators at 5-on-4. Nashville's had a fantastic start to the season but their horrific power play has certainly helped Winnipeg and Minnesota hang around.

Looking at these things on the team level isn't overly helpful though. Rather, you want to really dig into it and look at it by unit. The tricky part with that is units in hockey are constantly changing. What I've done is classify each team's first unit as the two man group that's seen the most ice time together this year. That results in average of about 55 percent of the time being classified as PP1 time, although there is something of a range from team to team. Bad teams tend to wildly shuffle the units a little more often, injuries can impact things and there are a few teams giving a pile of time to their PP1.

By this measure, the average PP1 is scoring about 8.5 GF/60 at the moment and allowing 0.7 GA/60, for a net +7.8 GD/60. You can look at that as a line in the sand for your team's first PP unit. One team towers above the others at the moment: the Winnipeg Jets. Toronto's well clear of the pack too and then you've then got a mess of teams.

On the other end of things, you've got Nashville, Florida, Columbus, Arizona and Chicago having gotten markedly less from their first unit than league average.

Second units tend to be a little bit more of a dog's breakfast in the NHL. We can define them as "anything that's not the first unit" and then look to see how they're doing relative to league norms when the first unit isn't on the ice. As you'd expect, the success rates here are a lot lower – teams have averaged 5.1 GF/60 and 1.1 GA/60 with the second unit on the ice, or 4.0 GD/60. The threshold for a good second unit is a lot lower than it is with a first unit.

Some different teams stand out here, with Tampa, Colorado and Minnesota forming an elite three and Ottawa, Florida and Detroit forming the next group. Montreal, Anaheim and Philadelphia are kind of uniquely bad, with Philadelphia's PP2 seemingly existing as an homage to the Carolina Hurricanes at even-strength: they've outshot their opposition 22-12 in 43.45 minutes, while getting outscored 3-1.

Tampa's a special case because they're absolutely loaded with talent but in general, I'm a little leery of power play success that's heavily driven by the second unit, which is the case with both Minnesota and Colorado. Colorado is generating an outrageously good shot volume on PP2 but both the Avalanche and Wild have benefited greatly from shooting nearly

18 percent. (Tampa, to be fair, is getting a 22 percent shooting percentage from PP2; that will fall as well, although I'd expect it to end up somewhere higher than Colorado and Minnesota.)

With the discussion of league norms complete, lets get into the best and worst units so far this season. This is sort of data-driven opinion – it works within the framework set out above but leaves some room to move units around if there's something beyond the goals that suggests they should be moved up or down.

The five worst PP1

### 5. Chicago Blackhawks

Chicago's most commonly used power play duo is Patrick Kane and Nick Schmaltz. Unsurprisingly, given Chicago's struggles on the power play this year, they've played a little less together than the most commonly used duo, at 49.8 percent of the Blackhawks' ice time. Their linemates have really been in flux too, with Brent Seabrook and Jonathan Toews being the only two having played more than 50 percent of these minutes with Kane and Schmaltz. Furthermore, Seabrook, who's played more with them than Toews, is barely playing in 70 percent of the unit's ice time.

Also of note: Chicago's played 3F2D with this unit a lot. Long-time readers will know that I'm not really a fan of this due to the reams of empirical evidence that it's an inefficient way to score goals. Fifty-three percent of this unit's time has been in a 3F2D. Minnesota (95 percent) is the only other team that's above 40 percent. If you're going to do things differently, they better work. This unit doesn't.

Looking a little more closely, what sticks out for me with Chicago's PP1 is the lack of pace. They're generating just 89.1 shot attempts per 60 minutes (CF/60) despite winning 65 percent of their offensive zone faceoffs – there's a big difference between winning and losing an offensive zone faceoff in terms of what you can expect on the shift. That's not the issue. When I've watched them, it seems like they just play slowly. It's not unlike watching an NBA team during the days of iso-ball, when they wanted to get the ball to their star and wait for him to create something. It shows up even in two of the, uh, four goals scored by Chicago's PP1.

Also of note: Chicago's relying on defencemen for a lot of their shot attempts, at just over 40 percent over the total. The average PP1 is at about 23.4 percent. A slow power play that lets the defencemen shoot a lot is not a recipe for success.

### 4. Arizona Coyotes

There's a lot to like about Arizona this year, so it's a bit of a shame that I'm teeing off on them here. I have a feeling they'll pop up on the other side of the ledger when we get to penalty killing units tomorrow. The power play though? Woof.

Arizona's most commonly used duo is Clayton Keller and Oliver Ekman-Larsson, who've played about 55 percent of Arizona's 5-on-4 time together, which is basically average for a PP1. Along with Keller and OEL, Derek Stepan has been a near constant on the unit. It gets a little murkier after that, although Alex Galchenyuk looks like he's been a fixture too, until recently.

Unlike Chicago, you can't really complain about the Coyotes running with an obsolete mix of players or giving too many shot attempts to the defencemen. They're committed to the 4F1D and, although OEL attempts a few more shots than the typical player, it's not that many more. It's just a power play that isn't generating all that much in the way of shots. Arizona's fiddling with the mix on the power play now – Richard Panik and Vinnie Hinostroza have had some time there lately. They still haven't sorted it out though and the early returns from that group don't look particularly promising.

Looking at the shot map, it doesn't look awful. The Coyotes do manage to get to the inside on occasion.



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A quick primer on the information contained in these shot plots. The plot shows all unblocked shot attempts. The bold line at the top shows the team and two players I'm using as a proxy for PP1. The second line is the three most commonly used players with that pair, along with the percentage of the unit's time that they played. The third line contains some pretty basic information about the power play – goals, shots and attempts per 60 minutes, along with shooting percentage and the percentage of time played in a 4F1D.

The fourth line contains some more esoteric information. The first number there is the percentage of the power play's attempts that come from the defencemen. Then you've got the rate at which the team generates rebounds and the percentage of saved shots that become rebounds. Finally, you find the unit's offensive zone faceoffs per 60 minutes and their success rate on those faceoffs. The final line is a summary of what happens defensively – goals, shots and attempts allowed per 60 minutes and the save percentage.

So: we know that the shot volume is too low in Arizona but the shooting percentage is low too – first units are shooting 14.5 percent and the Coyotes are at just 9.3 percent. This makes me wonder if their mix of unblocked shot attempts isn't good enough. To that end, I looked at what Arizona's PP1 is generating from the hashmarks down, inside of an area bound by the trapezoid. You can see that there is a little cluster of shots there for the Coyotes. It's a great spot from which to generate shots – first units are putting them away at a 24.5 percent rate. Arizona's light compared to the league there – one for eight – and they've failed to put as many of their shots on net as first units typically do from that area, with just eight of 16 turning into shots on goal – it should be more like 12.

The average first unit is generating these attempts at a rate of 20.9 per hour. Arizona is at 17.7, which isn't terrible once you remember that their pace is too slow. The shot mix doesn't look awful; the pace just needs to pick up.

### 3. Columbus Blue Jackets

It feels like the Blue Jackets' power play has wavered between awful and garden variety bad since they started the year with a phenomenal run back in 2016-17. There's been a ton of change in their PP1 this year, which probably doesn't help things. The pair that I'm using as a proxy for Columbus' PP1 (Artemi Panarin and Zach Werenski) has played just 40.6 percent of Columbus' power play time, the lowest percentage of any team in the NHL. Nick Foligno's been a near-constant too and Anthony Duclair has seen a surprising volume of time on the unit. Cam Atkinson, Boone Jenner and Pierre-Luc Dubois are all around 20 minutes with this unit too.

There's nothing that particularly suggests that this unit should be as bad as it is. They're around league average for a PP1 in terms of shot volume. They aren't playing a 3F2D a lot. They aren't giving too many shots to the defencemen. Despite that, they're only shooting 9.5 percent. It must be insanely frustrating.

One thing that does jump out from a shot map is that the Blue Jackets aren't particularly good at getting close to the net.

Columbus is a little weaker in terms of getting into that slot area that I highlighted with Arizona but not by much. Like Arizona, they've struggled to score when they have gotten in there – they're one for eleven. I'd expect that to come around. What really stands out for me with Columbus is that it's kind of all or nothing on the PP1. Either they get into that area in front or they're shooting from a long way out. Fifty-three percent of Columbus' unblocked attempts have come from at least 40 feet away from the goal line, against a PP1 league average of 41.3 percent. There are very few players in the NHL that can reliably score from that far out and ...

### 2. Florida Panthers

... none of those players play for Florida, the NHL's league leader in PP1 long shots with more than 60 percent of their attempts coming from 40+ feet away from the goal line. Unlike most of the teams on this list, the

Panthers actually have a respectable volume of attempts, although it'd be nice if more of them would end up on net.

This has been a fairly consistent unit in terms of personnel, with Evgenii Dadonov, Keith Yandle and Jonathan Huberdeau rounding it out. Truthfully, a lot of the numbers here don't look terrible – they're not far off league average in terms of their shooting percentage for a first unit and not far off league average in terms of the number of shots that turn into shots on goal either.

What's particularly killed Florida so far is the volume of shorthanded goals allowed. The Panthers have given up a lot of attempts – they're fourth worst in the NHL. All three of the goals that they've allowed have been off the rush. I wondered a little bit whether there might be some sort of commonality like the Panthers getting caught with a turnover high in the offensive zone, given that it seems like a potential consequence of doing business in that area of the ice. That doesn't really seem to be the case. While this isn't a particularly good power play, I'd be surprised if the shorthanded goals against continue to pile up.

### 1. Nashville Predators

Ah, one of the best teams in the NHL and yet, an inexplicably awful power play. Nashville has been a bit fiddly with their units, although Ryan Johansen is close to a lock with this group, with P.K. Subban generally being paired with him too. Viktor Arvidsson looks like he's a lock on the unit too, although he's missed time with injury this year and will be out for the foreseeable future. Subban has also recently missed games due to an injury.

First things first, a 3.0 GF/60 won't cut it for the Predators. Their shot rate is below average and their attempt rate is worse. They're actually pretty good in terms of generating rebounds, a top ten team both in terms of the rate at which they generate rebound shots and the percentage of saved shots that turn into rebounds. They aren't letting the defencemen shoot too much and are using a modern formation.

In all fairness to the Predators, it should be noted that this unit worked reasonably well for them last year, although it did benefit from some luck – the shooting percentage is a touch high and they did put in a goal from centre ice. Looking at the shot map, you can infer that there's been a change in how the Predators are approaching things this year. If you look above, you'll notice that Forsberg has shot much more from the left side of the ice this year than he did last year.

The inference that I draw from that is that the Predators have spent more time with Johansen on the right flank this year than they did when this unit was succeeding last year. It looks like he's shooting less too, which would make sense if he's been moved away from his off-wing. Looking at the shot map, it seems like the Predators have started to use something more like Winnipeg's group of Blake Wheeler, a right shot on the right side, and his gang of three shooters in position to one-time the puck in Dustin Byfuglien, Patrik Laine and Mark Scheifele. Sure enough, if you look at the two goals Forsberg's scored, there's a distinctly "Wheeler to Laine" smell to them.

Watching the video of the goals that this five man group scored for Nashville last year, an element that's missing from them is that pass to a man down low, which leads to a pass into the slot for a shot. Smith (the bumper) and Arvidsson (the low man) were living off rebounds, deflections and the rush. Ultimately, as we'll see when we look at the best power plays, they tend to have options down low to make plays into the slot or across the goalie. That doesn't really seem to be a part of what the Predators do and it probably limits the heights that they can reach.

All of that said, I don't have an issue with Nashville experimenting on their power play. If they're looking to see if they're better off with Forsberg in more of a Laine spot, that's fine with me. Their season starts in mid-April. Everything before that is an 82 game exhibition season to find what works. If they've successfully found a way to generate shots from in close by April, some experimentation early in the year won't bother anyone.



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The five best PP1

### 5. Boston Bruins\*

Astute observers looking at the graph of the league's 31 PP1 will have noted that Edmonton was actually in fifth place. I made an editorial decision to bump the Oilers on the grounds that a) they're barely ahead of Boston with nearly 20 more minutes of PP1 time and b) writing "teams should get a Connor McDavid and have him blow the doors off people on the rush" isn't particularly useful.

Boston's PP1 has three constants: David Pastrnak, Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand. They're almost solely a 4F1D unit, with Torey Krug and Matt Grzelcyk having split the defenceman's role so far. Neither is shooting, with the defencemen on this unit having attempted 7.8 percent of the shot attempts. Fun fact: of the five PP1s that top this list, four of them are also in the top five in terms of lowest percentage of shots attempted by defencemen. Even acknowledging that, Boston's number is absurd. Washington's PP1 is second at 14.0 percent of the attempts coming from the defencemen. The point shot is dead, even if a lot of teams don't know it yet.

As you'd expect from a unit with Bergeron, Boston wins a lot of faceoffs. The shot and attempt numbers are very good, although not quite on the same level as some of the league's other elite power plays. Boston is riding a bit of a hot streak in terms of shooting percentage at the moment, which will come back to earth. They'll probably also stop giving 2.0 GA/60.

Looking at the shot map, David Pastrnak seems like the real story of Boston's power play. One of the lessons of the last decade is the utility of right-handed forwards who can really shoot the puck. There just don't seem to be very many of them. Patrik Laine. Alex Ovechkin. Steven Stamkos. Ilya Kovalchuk. Phil Kessel. David Pastrnak is making a case that he belongs in that group.

(This is very much a random aside but I've wondered a bit if the lack of right shots with the killer release is down to the fact that left shots are so much more prevalent than right shots in Canada. If you're a right shot with the kind of skill required to play in the NHL, your coach probably wants you touching the puck as much as possible on the power play growing up, which doesn't encourage developing a one-timer for 5-on-4. Of the six right shots who can really rip it that I mentioned above, only one is Canadian.)

### 4. St. Louis Blues

It's been a rough couple of days for the coaches of the teams that ranked fourth and fifth in my ranking of PP1s by goal difference relative to the league average for first units. Mike Yeo was fired on Monday night and Todd McLellan followed him on Tuesday morning. In St. Louis' case, there are some warning signs that the success of PP1 relative to the league is a bit illusory.

The Blues have had a pretty consistent PP1 this year, with Ryan O'Reilly and Vladimir Tarasenko generally joined by Tyler Bozak (late of Toronto's phenomenal 2017-18 PP1), Vince Dunn and Patrick Maroon. The first red light comes in their ratio of shots on goal to shot attempts. It's high and will likely drift down a bit. The second warning sign is part of St. Louis' success relative to the league lies in the fact that their PP1 hasn't given up a shorthanded goal yet. To their credit, they don't give up a lot of shots. But this will probably come.

Looking at the shot map and video of the Blues PP1, it's pretty clear that the power play is largely based on hitting the opposition with a seam pass, most commonly to Tarasenko on the left side of the ice. When it works, it works. We'll see if the goal volume holds up – as I'm written before, I'm skeptical of left shots on the left flank of a power play. They've got enough talent though that this should continue to be a relative bright spot for St. Louis.

### 3. Washington Capitals

Old Faithful. Washington's been on lists like this for close to a decade. I was a little surprised that they aren't higher up though and I think the reason for that is that Alex Ovechkin, John Carlson and Nick Backstrom have picked up some time with players other than Evgeny Kuznetsov and T.J. Oshie. The Coke Classic version of the Capitals PP1 has been as good as ever – it has 14.2 GF/60 in just over 50 minutes.

The place where Ovechkin scores goals from is pretty well known (it's call the Ovi Spot for a reason) and not worth mentioning. It's been interesting seeing this power play evolve over the years. Two things stand out to me. First, Carlson is barely shooting the puck at all. The Capitals went through a bit of a funk a few years ago where Carlson was shooting a lot – their PP ended up working a lot better when Matt Niskanen or Kevin Shattenkirk, who weren't as shot happy, were on the ice. Carlson seems to really have his role figured out.

The other thing that stands out is that the bumper spot hasn't been particularly productive for the Capitals.

That spot on the ice has made some guys a lot of money – Joel Ward and Troy Brouwer both earned nice paycheques for their work there. Oshie has just a single power play goal so far after scoring 27 in his first three years with the Capitals and it was off a rebound, not a puck worked in to him to shoot. The Capitals have made it up with a lot of goal scoring from Kuznetsov, who seems able to score from any angle, and a nice little element that I've noticed with Toronto and Winnipeg as well. If the penalty kill isn't paying attention, Washington's low man will slide backdoor to create a pass for a tap-in. Here's three examples of the Capitals setting it up, with two of them leading to goals.

It's a unit built around Ovechkin but they've always had a few different ways to score. Even though Oshie isn't doing it this year, Kuznetsov certainly is and they have additional elements like this in their bag of tricks.

### 2. Toronto Maple Leafs

This is probably my favourite power play to watch in the NHL. The thing with Washington and Winnipeg is that they have a bit of a cheat code, in the forms of the greatest goal scorer since Gretzky and his likely Finnish heir. Toronto doesn't have a hammer to blow the puck past goalies from the outside or create space by virtue of his presence. They just relentlessly create shots from in tight.

The Maple Leafs do, of course, have Mitch Marner and John Tavares, which is a pretty good set of players to be giving the touches on your power play. The numbers are pretty fantastic across the board. The shot rate and attempt rate are outstanding. The shooting percentage is a touch high but not outrageously so. They don't give up anything. It's pretty phenomenal.

Looking at it, one of the interesting things to me is that the rebound rate has fallen off dramatically from last year's JvR variant. Their rebound rate is down by about 67 percent, from 18.1 rebounds per 60 minutes to 5.6 rebounds per 60 minutes. I suspect that this is likely deliberate – as I wrote at the start of the year, I wasn't particularly convinced that Auston Matthews was a great fit for this unit because it seemed easier to me for a right-handed shot to clean up garbage than a left-handed one. One solution, I suppose, is to rely less on creating garbage.

The jury's still out on how well this unit will work with Matthews, who's only had about 20 minutes with it so far. It is interesting to me that the scoring has really dried up since Patrick Marleau replaced him on that unit – they've scored 20.1 goals per 60 minutes on 30.4 percent shooting with Matthews and 8.0 goals per 60 minutes on 8.6 percent shooting with Marleau. As someone who was a little skeptical of using a left-handed shot on the left flank entering the year, I'll be interested to see where things end up settling in once he returns. So far, so good when he's in the lineup though.

### 1. Winnipeg Jets

Winnipeg just has an overwhelming volume of weapons. I've written a lot about them over the past year and don't have a ton to add, although I



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note that their shooting rate as a unit has spiked this year – they’ve gone from a unit that attempts 91.5 CF/60 and puts 56.5 SF/60 on goal to one attempts 133.9 CF/60 and 80.6 SF/60. The shooting percentage is probably a little bit high but they shot 21.1 percent last year too.

The change in pace is what’s really taking Winnipeg to the next level here. As long as you’re generating shot volume like this from spots like this from shooters like they have, you’re going to have a lot of success.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117024 Websites

The Athletic / Why switching coaches provides short-term benefits for an NHL team

By Justin Bourne Nov 21, 2018 27

The schedule in the NHL doesn’t stop due to upheaval, which meant the Edmonton Oilers would face the San Jose Sharks just hours after announcing they had fired head coach Todd McLellan in favour of Ken Hitchcock.

The Sharks recently took over first place in the Pacific Division, a slot they seemed likely to fill as far back as preseason – they’ve got some real talent throughout their lineup. Needless to say, having lost six of their last seven and having just swapped coaches, the Oilers odds of winning seemed pretty thin.

In the most hockey result ever, the Oilers won.

On its face, given the circumstances, it might seem like an unlikely outcome. But I’ve come to accept a reality about coaching changes – regardless of who the new guy coming in is, the team usually plays better for a bit. And if you think about it, it makes perfect sense.

Consider yourself as a player – you know what you can do, but sometimes you aren’t afforded the same opportunities as some other guys. That may be due to a slow start, or some bad luck early, but whatever it is, the labels get slapped on quickly. Coaches make up their mind about what you are, pencil you down for that role and that’s usually where it ends. Very few players get “tested out” on the power play after they’ve been a bottom six penalty killer for three years. They might get a brief opportunity in a new role when there’s injury issues, but for the most part, once a coach decides what you are, tough beans, that’s what you are.

But when a new coach comes in, whoa buddy. NHL coaches would say they know opposing NHL teams and players but you never really know what guys truly are until you’re around them every day. So for players, this is their small window to improve their lot. This is their time to show they can do things their previous coach wouldn’t even let them attempt. In turn, a team with a new coach suddenly has 18 skaters, 20+ if you count practices, that are doing everything they can to demonstrate they deserve more minutes and opportunity. It’s like training camp or tryouts all over again, only this time, it’s actual game play and you know you’ve got a coach with a mostly open mind.

This is one of my favourite things to watch as an analyst – which players see the biggest swing in ice time and opportunity with a new coach. The success of Las Vegas in their first year is a prime example – suddenly you had players who had the tools, but who weren’t being afforded the opportunity, lighting the world on fire. As much as the media and team play up the shock of the whole “who could’ve seen William Karlsson/Jonathan Marchessault/Nate Schmidt etc. etc. coming,” the success of those players is a glaring indictment of the management and coaching that didn’t put them in a position to be among the league’s best players. Nothing looks worse than having good players underperform

simply because you used them wrong. If the Oilers suddenly see Ty Rattie (or some other Oiler) become a point-per-game player, it’s not going to look good on Todd McLellan.

Something you forget as a coach is how often you need to reassess your preconceived notions. Maybe once a month or so there should be an overall reflection, which can be difficult since the season can feel like one long rollercoaster ride that just isn’t gonna stop. It’s tough to think big picture and start over after you’ve already made key decisions on which players can do what. There’s just so little time – it’s game, travel, new city, assess last game, meetings, game, game, travel ... one day just blends into the next. It would almost be worthwhile preseason to look at your team’s schedule, and mark down seven to eight days to really pull back, assess how you’ve handed out opportunities to your players and see if a few deserve different responsibilities.

(I know everything always seems to come back to the Leafs in the hockey media, but I think this is relevant to them. They know they’re good, who’s contributing and all signs point to them being a home-ice playoff team. Now would be a good time to play around and see if they aren’t under-utilizing certain players. Andreas Johnsson? Travis Dermott? Could these guys do more if they were used more or in different situations?)

Players improve during the year, while others get worse. Systems tighten up, but at the same time, sometimes your systems get figured out. The expression “you can’t see the forest for the trees” is extremely apt for coaching in the NHL. That’s the one huge benefit a new coach has – he’s cognizant of assessing everything in the big picture.

The Oilers are not going to be a playoff team as I see it – they just don’t have the tools. I also think McLellan is a good coach, who happened to repeatedly see his team stripped of assets they could’ve better used. Maybe he had some say in those decisions, but there’s no doubt it would have been a bit easier to coach with the talent they had before some terrible trades were made. Regardless, I do think the Oilers will be better off for making the coaching switch. While I don’t love their choice of replacement, everyone needed a fresh start from top to bottom.

With the Oilers back in tryout mode, with each player looking to make a good impression on their new coach, I expect them to have some success. It doesn’t hurt that their upcoming schedule sees them go about 20 days before facing a team that’s currently top-three in its division. There will be opportunity, they’ll have some success and some players will see their stock rise. For the Oilers, all of those things provide some good news. As coaching changes go – even though more pink slips should have been handed out to the staff – the Oilers needed change, and it looks to me that this was the right time to make it. In hockey, sometimes change for the sake of change does have some short-term benefits.

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The Athletic / As he prepares to enter the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame, Paul Stewart keeps fighting the good fight

By Rick Carpiello Nov 21, 2018 55

Paul Stewart tells people he had a hat trick in his first NHL game, at the old Boston Garden.

Inevitably he gets one of those, “Wait. What?” looks from those who know he scored two goals in his entire 21-game NHL playing career.



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Stewart smiles a smile that fans of a certain age know from his days as a player, a referee, and as one of hockey's best characters, and explains simply:

"Well, I fought Terry O'Reilly, Stan Jonathan and Al Secord right in a row.

"That's sort of a Dorchester hat trick to me," Stewart laughs, acknowledging the tough Boston neighborhood where he was born 65 years ago.

Now the former WHA-NHL player and NHL referee is approaching another sort of a hat trick, as well as an assist:

First, November is Hockey Fights Cancer Month in the NHL, and Stewart, a survivor of a nasty bout that was supposed to take his life, was one of the league initiative's first honorees.

Second, Stewart's autobiography, "Ya Wanna Go?" (published by Forthright Press) is out on Friday; a tale that goes beyond fighting – Stewart insists the title relates, also, to his dad taking him to hockey games and such, always asking, "Ya Wanna Go?" – through playing, refereeing, and his goal of helping people and the game.

Third, on Dec. 12 in Nashville, Stewart will be inducted into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame, a testament not to his bare-knuckles skill and willingness, but to his being the first American-born referee to work 1,000 NHL games.

And the assist:

Inspired by a story Stewart told on National Public Radio, one he has repeated publicly many times in blog posts and speeches, about how his skates took him around the world on his journey through hockey and life, nine-year-old Matthew Sherman has written a children's book "A Magical Christmas for Paul Stewart."

"I think this is an opportunity that I'm taking to let people know – all of those people who thought that they knew me – I'm pretty sure they didn't," Stewart said. "And I think this book is written with a number of different objectives, and among them is to let people know that, I may have fought in the National Hockey League, and every other league I played in, but it didn't make me stupid. It made me a guy that knew which way I had to go in order to get there. Probably of all the things people would not suspect me of, I'm probably the hardest and harshest critic of myself. And also, in attempting to reach all these goals, including returning from Stage 4 cancer, you have to have a brutal honesty and be frank with yourself when you look in the mirror. I think some people might get to know there's a little more to me than just what they saw on the ice."

Then, typically, he laughed, "Maybe they don't care."

Stewart is now the men's and women's league director of officiating for ECAC Hockey and a judicial/discipline consultant for Russia's KHL.

The book jacket features Stewart, in his Quebec Nordiques uniform, about to "go" with O'Reilly, who wrote the foreword and "honored" Stewart upon his asking for permission to use the photo. The two had a bloody rivalry, as do most of the men whose fists earn their livings, yet like so many of the tough guys who crossed his path, Stewart gushes respect for the fighters and for the fighters' code.

Stewart, an undrafted, undersized (for what he did) 6'1", 195-pound winger, had some staggering numbers – 505 penalty minutes in 106 games in the North American Hockey League; 135 minutes in 30 Central League games; 266 in 60 AHL games; 288 in 65 WHA games; 74 (to go along with those two goals) in 21 NHL games.

"That was sort of my calling card," he said. "It opened the door for me a little bit, if you know what I mean."

Did he just fight everybody?

"Anybody that wanted to," Stewart said. "I never went out looking for it. But I was always available. And the fact of the matter is that I was more fearful of showing fear than I was of getting shellacked. Thus I trained,

and I got pretty good at it. I may not have been the best, and I may not have won every fight, but I showed up every night. I can take a little pride in that. And I never checked my dance card (he laughed). Whoever was next, they were next."

The fighting was a vehicle for Stewart to realize a dream, and he did. It also taught him to persevere, and he could have had no idea what he would face later on.

The grandson of long-time referee and U.S. Hockey Hall of Famer Bill Stewart Sr., and the son of Bill Jr., who refereed six national collegiate championships and 19 Beanpot tournaments in Boston, officiating was in Paul's blood as well.

MY GRANDFATHER, BILL STEWART SR., IS IN THE U.S. HOCKEY HALL OF FAME BUT ALSO BELONGS IN THE HALL IN TORONTO. FIRST AMERICAN TO COACH A STANLEY CUP CHAMPION, REFEREED IN 5 STANLEY CUP FINALS, HELPED BUILD EVENTUAL 1960 GOLD MEDALIST US OLYMPIC TEAM AND COACHED THEM IN LATE 50S. PIC.TWITTER.COM/FU0Q7BZUC7

— PAUL STEWART (@PAULSTEWART22) NOVEMBER 16, 2018

ON VETERANS DAY HERE IN THE USA (REMEMBRANCE DAY IN CANADA), I ALWAYS THINK ABOUT MY DAD (PICTURED HERE) AND MY GRANDFATHER (THE FIRST PRO BASEBALL PLAYER TO ENLIST FOR WORLD WAR I SERVICE) AND MANY OTHERS WHO HAVE SERVED OUR GREAT COUNTRIES. THANK YOU!!! PIC.TWITTER.COM/KVQ5MNQ1VL

— PAUL STEWART (@PAULSTEWART22) NOVEMBER 12, 2018

His NHL playing career ended quickly and he faced a crossroads.

"I don't think I'm unlike a lot of other fellas who have had to reassess who they are and what they were going to do," Stewart said. "Primarily what it came down to was, being human, I faced the same questions and same insecurities that anyone else would have had. You know, 'what am I going to do now?' It's like that, what do you do after the roaring stops? I used to be somebody that you loved, like that song. I think it's a terribly scary feeling to go from being somebody to being nobody. I'm human and I went through a lot of different challenges, like drinking, and getting overweight. As a friend said to me, I lost my urgency. I lost my purpose."

He started down his grandfather's path as a man of stripes and asked for a tryout. With the help and guidance of, among others, three former long-time referees, John McCauley, at one point the NHL's director of officiating, Scotty Morrison, at one point the league's vice president of officiating, and Frank Udvari, at one point a supervisor of officials, he got there quickly.

Along the way, Stewart met resistance, including a foe who told him his playing career was too despicable for him to ever be a referee. Stewart used that "prove him wrong personal challenge" as motivation. He also told the guy, "The next time you watch me work, you'll be paying to get in." He laughed when he said it, and laughed when he retold it.

That challenge was minor to the one he faced in February 1998. Stewart was watching TV with his pregnant wife, Lori, when Katie Couric spoke emotionally.

"She talked about her husband passing at age 42 from colon cancer and she listed all the symptoms," Stewart said. "My wife elbowed me and said, 'You better get to the doctor; you have all those symptoms. You're sick.'

"That was a week before my son (McCauley, named after the former NHL referee) was born, and I went through all the tests. The day after my son was born I went to the doctor and he took his glasses off and said, 'I don't think this is very good news for you.' I said to him, 'This is some type of joke, right?' He said, 'I think you should go home and get your papers in order.'"

Stewart took the orders to heart.



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"Let me put it this way," he said. "The day I was diagnosed in '98, I drove to St. Joseph's Cemetery (in West Roxbury, MA), and I bought the plot next to my grandfather and my dad. People think that's so appropriate. I said, 'No, it's environmentally a great idea.' They said, 'Why is that?' I said, 'Because most people would like to piss on a referee. So they can get three in a row right now.'

"But I went that day, and drew up a will, met a financial planner and drew up a trust for my kids and did what I had to do to make sure that if I wasn't around, that I left the place a little better than I found it."

Stewart said his chemo treatments, in the morning and again at night, were at twice the levels most people would receive. Doctors felt he would have to be "doused" with chemo; that was his only chance.

"In fact, they didn't use that term 'doused,' Stewart said. "You know what they used? 'Carpet-bombing.' They said the only reason we're going to do this is because you're so big and you're so strong and mentally, you're so tough, we've never met anybody like you."

"I trained every day. My trainer would come to the house, sick as I was. I would throw up and get in the car and go to the gym with him and do spin class. I would babysit my son. I couldn't go outside all day because of the sun and the chemo. In the afternoon, when the sun started to go down, I would go over to the golf course. I couldn't play because I had this catheter in my chest, but I would chip and putt. I would put McCauley in his little seat and we would go and see the geese and the ducks, or get a loaf of bread. It was a night out for me, to get out of the house. Then my neighbors would come over and we'd have cocktail hour at 5 o'clock. I just refused to surrender my life."

On Nov. 13 of that year, he returned to officiating, starting at the AHL level.

And when the NHL began the Hockey Fights Cancer initiative, what better person to be included than this fighter?

"They started (Hockey Fights Cancer) with Rocket Richard and Johnny Cullen and me. We were all sick. Then Mario (Lemieux) developed Hodgkin's Lymphoma and there was a kid in Anaheim from Russia, and then Saku Koivu. So there were a number of us, then a number of people off the ice, like Billy Harris and Roger Neilson got cancer, and the Knox Brothers, who owned the Sabres. So the Hockey Fights Cancer was an actual outreach of people in the league to recognize there were a number of people in this battle."

On the dais, Rocket Richard leaned over to Stewart to ask a question. Here Stewart puts on his French-Canadian accent:

"After surgery what did you have, radiation or the chemo?" I said 'the chemo.' He said, 'How's that going?' I said, 'Well, I have some neuropathy in my hands and feet, and my eye sight is a little bit affected.' He goes, 'Your eye sight? (Stewart laughs) Nobody give a shit because you never see anything anyway.'

"I think that's an interesting thing that he did. He turned a tough situation into something we could all laugh about. I stood up and said, 'It's so great to be up here sitting with these two guys. Rocket Richard, 500 goals, Johnny Cullen, 300 goals – so right here in this first row there are 802 goals.' So you see part of my dealing with this was having a sense of humor."

Since then, Stewart has dealt with a non-cancerous brain tumor the last three years and some skin cancer – "The perils of being a Scotch-Irishman and a golfer," he said. He has an MRI scheduled on his brain on December 3rd, admitting, "Nobody knows real anxiety until you wait for a biopsy."

"One thing I'm going to tell you and I mean it. I wasn't afraid. I knew that, like anything else, like Terry O'Reilly, or going up against the Islanders and Clark Gillies and those guys, and that can put the fear of the Lord in you, I'm not afraid of death. I've faced it. And I found out it's not my time."

Stewart will continue his mission to use his station to do good, to volunteer his time, to raise money, awareness, or whatever help he can

deliver. He's a master at motivational speaking and he at least deserves an assist for helping women's college hockey referee Katie Guay to do men's games, including the Olympics last winter in Korea. Stewart has scheduled her to work the men's game between Boston College vs. Harvard in February.

"When one looks at the aspects of the evolution of women in the game, this is a pinnacle moment and I had a small part in it," Stewart said.

"I love breaking glass ceilings, you know?" he laughs hardily. "I've broken a lot of things."

Underneath is a guy who appreciates the little things. Like a hand-written congratulatory letter he got from a WHA super-heavy tough guy Jack Carlson (1,111 penalty minutes in 508 career games).

"I fought Jack Carlson twice in Hartford in the WHA and he was purported to be the toughest guy in the league," Stewart said. "I fought him to a standstill twice, and people say, 'How'd you do it.' I say, 'Well, he didn't ask for a third fight.'"

"But here's the ultimate surprise. I get elected to the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame and it gets announced. Do you know that Jack Carlson wrote me a letter? I hadn't talked to him since 1977 or '78. Haven't seen him. I consider that letter one of the greatest compliments, one of the greatest tributes I've ever gotten, from a guy that really was one of the best, one of the tough guys, and he did it honestly."

"What he did was so inside the code that we all live by. It was straight up and honest."

Today, Stewart's son McCauley referees in the Western College Hockey Association in Duluth, and his son Maxwell, while playing junior hockey, referees bantams and midgets.

"So we're four generations now of refereeing and playing," Stewart said.

"The torch has been passed."

He also prefers the word "poetic" to "ironic" that one with so many penalty minutes lived the life of a Hall of Fame referee.

Stewart is quick to quote Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, from memory, about how people remember a man's deeds, not his words. He's going to use some of that in his induction speech, which won't be nearly long enough to do his life justice.

Perhaps the pages of his book will paint a more accurate picture.

"If I can help people that need a lot of help," Stewart said, "then maybe I'm not so useless." Of course, he laughed.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117026 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames full of swagger after impressive win over Jets

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis November 22, 2018, 1:57 AM

CALGARY – This time the comeback wasn't the story.

Nor was the stellar netminding.

On Wednesday the Dome discourse revolved entirely around a spectacularly similar conversation to the one Flames fans had Monday when the lads scored five times in the opening period against Vegas.

On Wednesday against Winnipeg they did it again.



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A franchise first.

In fact, it marked the first time since the 1989 St. Louis Blues that a team posted back-to-back games featuring five-goal periods.

#Flames are the first team to score 5 first-period goals in back-to-back games since the Blues on Nov 21 & 23, 1989

— Sportsnet Stats (@SNstats) November 22, 2018

It capped a five-period stint in which the Flames scored 15 goals, dating back to the third frame of Saturday's Battle of Alberta comeback.

Just like Saturday, Wednesday's 6-3 win over Winnipeg also involved a rally as the Flames actually found themselves down 1-0 a mere 15 seconds in thanks to a Brandon Tanev rebound conversion.

The Dome Groan suggested people were bracing for an abrupt end to the recent run that has catapulted the Flames up the standings.

But what followed in the next 17 minutes launched the hosts into first place in the Pacific Division with a 13-8-1 record.

Two minutes in Dillon Dube scored his first NHL goal to kick-start the five-spot, which included a brilliant, top-cheese snipe by Sam Bennett, followed by a long-range wrister off the glove of Connor Hellebuyck that understandably ended the netminder's night 11:35 in.

Mark Jankowski solved Laurent Brossoit soon thereafter, as did Johnny Gaudreau with a short-side roof job in the final minute of the first that had the crowd giddy.

The Blues club that made previous history with its double fivers included former Flame Dave Lowry, whose son Adam was part of the Jets team that rebounded well in the second period, outshooting the Flames 17-3.

It was then Flames backup revelation, David Rittich, did what he's done to up his record to 8-1 – he played the hero.

The man they call Big Save Dave finished with 37 saves, but not before Patrik Laine scored twice and the Jets rattled two off the iron early in the third. Without Rittich's stellar play, the five-goal opener might not have been enough.

The ever-animated Rittich – who kissed the post after one fortuitous bounce – admitted he made one big mistake on the night.

Late in the second period the Flames goalie took exception to a late tap of the glove by Dustin Byfuglien, seconds after the whistle.

Rittich snapped, jumping up and racing towards Big Buff in a rage.

"That was bad by me because I just felt someone's stick on my glove and I just got up and want to let them know... and then I see 33. That was a little bit of a scary moment," he laughed.

"I saw couple videos from last playoffs and how he took two guys in two hands and go fight with them. That was a really bad pick by me."

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Six minutes into the third it appeared for a few seconds the Jets' second-half onslaught had brought them within one. However, it was waved off because Jacob Trouba clipped Rittich's skate, causing him to fall before the puck slid in.

Potential disaster averted, leaving the Flames to seal the deal with an empty-netter that should have the club feeling on top of the world as they head to Vegas and Phoenix for the next two.

"It's a great feeling – especially nice when you're getting contributions from all the lines," said Bennett, the game's first star, who has goals in consecutive outings as a second-liner.

"The confidence is definitely pretty good right now."

Michael Frolik was scratched due to a lower-body injury and Bennett left the game briefly after blocking a Byfuglien blast with his arm. He was going for x-rays after the game.

Otherwise, the Flames move on with nothing but swagger.

"Our line got the first goal there to kind of get the momentum back and the top two lines did the rest," beamed Dube, wearing the Calgary Police Service hat as awarded by his teammates.

"At this point (the first goal) is more of a relief than anything – it definitely felt good."

The win moved the Flames to 7-3-1 at home and pushed Rittich's remarkable start to 8-1, with no end in sight to his three-game run of starts that will surely continue Friday afternoon in Vegas.

"That's maybe the best team I ever played," said Rittich.

"We have three wins in a row and everyone in our locker room is feeling great."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117027 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Canucks' losing streak hurting team's confidence and spirit

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet November 22, 2018, 2:16 AM

A poor defence is no match for a poor attack.

In a clash of weakness versus weakness, the Anaheim Ducks' pop-gun attack scored four goals for the first time since Oct. 17 and beat the porous Canucks 4-3 Wednesday in California as Vancouver's National Hockey League losing streak hit seven games.

The Canucks have the second-worst defensive record in the NHL, yielding opponents 3.57 goals per game before Wednesday. The Ducks, who had just one regulation win in 15 games, had the league's second-worst attack, averaging just 2.09 goals per game.

But Canuck defending and goaltending would not be outdone as the Ducks pumped 37 shots on netminder Jacob Markstrom and pretty much won wire-to-wire, taking the lead on Ryan Getzlaf's first-period goal from Derrick Pouliot's failed clearance and holding retaining it for 47 of the final 50 minutes.

Pouliot did tie the game at 4:15 of the second period on a beautiful pass by Sam Gagner, but in the third gave away the puck again on what turned out to be a game-winning goal by Kalle Kossila.

Nikolay Goldobin and Bo Horvat had the other Canucks goals, while Adam Henrique and Ondrej Kase also scored for the Ducks, who passed Vancouver in the Pacific Division standings and bumped the reeling Canucks out of a playoff spot for the first time since early October.

Here are some takeaways from Wednesday's game...

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

About the worst thing that can be said about the Canucks' loss is that it looked routine, which isn't surprising when you are on a 0-6-1 freefall and haven't collected a point in six games.

It's certainly not about effort. The Canucks continue to work relentlessly, and again displayed fortitude against the Ducks by twice cutting two-goal deficits to one in the third period. Vancouver might even have



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manufactured a tying goal in the frantic final minute had it had even a little luck as the puck bounced around the Anaheim crease.

But there's a sameness to these losses now. The Canucks chase the game, surrender a pile of shots and scoring chances as they press, and with six injured players, including top wingers Brock Boeser and Sven Baertschi, they don't have enough talent to outscore their defensive mistakes.

The grave danger in this losing streak isn't what it's doing to the Canucks' unexpected playoff battle – with one point since Nov. 8, they're still only a point out – but what it's doing to the players' confidence and spirit.

There was a lot of positive energy and enthusiasm surrounding the Canucks' 10-6-1 first month. But that has almost entirely evaporated.

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### THE GOOD

Goldobin had another strong game for the Canucks, logging a season-high 20:47 of ice time while setting up one goal, getting credit for another when Jake Virtanen's shot hit his skate, and helping drive the Vancouver attack with five shot attempts.

Including Goldobin's goal and assist in Monday's 6-3 loss to the Winnipeg Jets, the 23-year-old has as many goals the last two games as he did the previous 22. But the 23-year-old Russian has 12 points in his last 12 games and finally is building some consistency into his game. He's playing more directly, and with more speed.

As we've noted before, injuries have kept Goldobin in a prime role and it's vitally important that he take advantage of the opportunity while he can. In November, at least, he has.

### THE BAD

At the start of the season, Derrick Pouliot was in the lineup and Ben Hutton wasn't. It seemed there would be room for only one of them on the left side of the Canucks' defence, although Alex Edler's sprained knee has guaranteed both playing time.

But Pouliot's goal against the Ducks was offset by glaring giveaways on two of the Anaheim goals. Pouliot finished minus-two with a shots-for percentage of 38.71, playing on a pairing with top shutdown defenceman Chris Tanev.

It looks at times like Pouliot has lost his confidence along with his prime power-play spot, now occupied by Hutton. After a poor performance against the Jets, Hutton bounced back in Anaheim and had a power-play assist, five shot attempts and a shots-for percentage of 60.0

If you could choose only one of Hutton and Pouliot right now, it wouldn't be a difficult call.

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

### MARKSTROM TOO SHORT

We understand goaltending is constantly evolving and is not only the most technical position in hockey but one of the most technical in team sports. Goaltenders are trained to do things now, mostly along the ice, that they'd have been ridiculed for in earlier eras.

But Wednesday was the second straight game that Markstrom was beaten over his shoulder from a sharp angle while he was down on one knee at his near post. Henrique exploited that space to make it 3-1 for Anaheim in the third period, two nights after Winnipeg's Kyle Connor lifted the puck into the gap between Markstrom's right shoulder and the crossbar.

We couldn't even tell you if, technically, those are good goals or not. But for a goaltender who is listed as six-foot-six, Markstrom looks awfully short on those plays.

### FRONT OFFICE SHUFFLE

And you thought NHL coaches had little job security. Within the Canucks, job-life expectancy seems equally short for the top executives.

Four months after hockey operations president Trevor Linden abruptly left after a clash with managing owner Francesco Aquilini, ownership is now changing the top employee on the business side of the operation.

After just 2 ½ years on the job, Jeff Stipek is being replaced as chief operating officer by Trent Carroll, who is being promoted from his post as executive vice-president of revenue. Stipek was hired in 2016 after career-employee Victor de Bonis was promoted by the Aquilinis to run the parent company that oversees the family's business empire.

De Bonis was soon gone from that job, too. He is now a senior member of the Seattle group planning to bring a second NHL franchise to the Pacific Northwest.

Part of Wednesday's corporate carnage was close Linden friend and former hockey-ops VP T.C. Carling, whose new role – as of last spring – of vice-president of arena operations is being eliminated.

Changes at the top of an NHL organization are always a little unsettling, but the impact of Stipek's departure should have a negligible effect on hockey operations. General manager Jim Benning has reported directly to the Aquilinis since Linden was forced out in July.

At times in the franchise's history, the Canucks' top hockey man has also doubled as the team's president (Pat Quinn, Mike Gillis). But Gillis's corporate title was largely symbolic, and there hasn't been much daily involvement between business and hockey operations since the late 1990s, when John McCaw owned the team.

This is a good thing. No hockey fan wants to see a business employee influencing hockey decisions. It's bad enough when an owner does it, but at least he owns the team.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117028 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Kapanen makes another memory in Carolina

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris November 22, 2018, 12:30 AM

RALEIGH, N.C. — Kasperi Kapanen has scored an untold number of goals in the building now known as PNC Arena.

It's just that until Wednesday night, when the flying Finn made his first working visit with the Toronto Maple Leafs, they'd all been scored with a mini-stick outside the wives' room. The son of Sami was flooded with memories in his first visit back here in 16 years — the first since his dad was traded to Philadelphia during the 2002-03 season — and he made one more by ripping a shot past Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Curtis McElhinney in the third period.

"Obviously it's cool. But the team didn't win today so it didn't feel as special," Kapanen said after a 5-2 loss. "You kind of recognize some signs out there and some rows and the section where we used to sit with my Mom for a long time."

Kapanen has come a long way — and that's just in the seven weeks since he started receiving top-six minutes as an NHLer. They arrived as a gift when William Nylander was unable to work out an extension with



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Leafs management before the season, but he's made good use of his good fortune.

The Leafs spent the last three seasons grooming Kapanen to fill a meat-and-potatoes role. He started killing penalties in the American Hockey League and almost exclusively got strapped to the fourth line during his cameos with the big club.

With the Nylander negotiations being stretched to the limit, his outlook has changed dramatically. Kapanen has nine goals in 22 games — third on the Leafs behind John Tavares (14) and Auston Matthews (10) — and he's produced 3.6 shots per game.

He's an offensive threat.

"In the American League he didn't look this good, he just didn't. You know I saw him lots," Leafs coach Mike Babcock said this week. "He's obviously got a skill set of speed, he can shoot the puck, he's a much bigger guy. He's worked on his body over a three-year period and I don't think he got to the NHL too soon. When you get to the NHL too soon you don't score.

"I think it's a real good thing that he took his time getting here, and we helped him take his time getting here, and now he's an important player for us."

This has been a process. Sami Kapanen once explained to me that it was tough for his son to keep getting returned to the AHL because he grew up with Nylander and Patrik Laine and Mikko Rantanen and saw those guys filling big roles in the NHL.

He felt like he was falling behind.

To his credit, Kapanen continued pushing and he was ready to be a difference-maker when the organization needed him. He's averaging 16 minutes per game — five more than he saw in the NHL last year — and it's hard to imagine him falling any lower than the third line even if Nylander returns soon.

When asked what's made the biggest difference, he said: "I think once you get a little more ice time and you've got more opportunities and you get the chance to shoot the puck a little more. I guess just the ice time, to be honest. Or maybe it's just been clicking for me this year. I don't know. I think since Game 1 I've been performing pretty well and I feel like I can be a lot better still. I just have to keep going."

His speed is his most obvious asset. In Wednesday's game, he used that to gain separation down the right wing before beating McElhinney to get the score back to 3-2. It put Toronto in position to push for overtime — at least until the Hurricanes put two pucks in an empty net to kill the rally.

Kapanen is playing with a level of confidence he hasn't felt in a long time. It's evident to everyone around him.

"I just knew Kappy from a distance and his game playing against him," said Tavares. "You see the confidence and seeing how deadly or how effective his tools are — his shot, his skating ability — the confidence that's growing in that and the impact he can make and how hard he can be to defend."

Here in Carolina they remember him as the fair-haired little kid who used to bomb around the hallways and Hurricanes dressing room. Kapanen spent his first six years in Raleigh and took his first skating strides in this building.

"Oh yeah, oh yeah. He used to run around here," said Rod Brind'Amour, the Hurricanes coach and a former teammate of Sami Kapanen. "He was out here with his dad in the good old days when we used to have a lot of little kids running around. It makes you feel old, that's for sure."

Kapanen is carrying on the family business.

About the only thing Brind'Amour figures he can't do better than his dad is skate. Sami Kapanen won the fastest skater competition at the NHL all-star game and, in Brind'Amour's estimation, remains second-to-none in that department.

But we are still learning about the limits of Kasper's abilities and he's not yet ready to concede the family speed title.

"Me and my Dad have talked about it, we've been joking around about it," said Kapanen. "I think if we skated from goal line to goal line, he says that I'd be faster there. But if we're skating around the rink, he's got smaller legs and quicker legs, so I think he'd be faster in the corners."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117029 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets' Kyle Connor emerging as an important line driver for Winnipeg

Sean Reynolds November 21, 2018, 10:26 AM

Is there a more fitting nickname in the NHL right now than "Hat Trick" Laine? The young scoring machine added another three-goal night to his resume helping the Jets topple the Vancouver Canucks on Monday night. That marks the sixth hat trick of Laine's short career. Only Wayne Gretzky had more by his 21st birthday, although his 12 hat tricks at that age suggest Laine will have to settle for second on that list.

Not yet at the quarter mark of their season, the Jets now have three players with double-digit goal totals and none of them lead this team in points.

Second line success

The search for chemistry on the Jets' second line has been well-documented over the past two years. No doubt that search led to the acquisition of Paul Stastny at the trade deadline last season. But when he chose Vegas over Winnipeg in free agency last summer, the Jets were back to trying Bryan Little between Laine and Nikolaj Ehlers, which did not move the needle at the start of the season.

So it was surprising earlier this month to hear Paul Maurice say he was not done with the Little/Laine experiment. Maurice didn't think Laine's play early this season provided a proper look at that duo's capabilities so he wanted to try it again. No doubt he's happy he did.

The pair has been on the same page since being reunited and that line was the Jets' best unit Monday against the Canucks. Both players found ways to complement the other and it landed them multi-point games on the scoresheet — Laine's forecheck led to Little's game-opening goal against the Canucks, while Little's seam pass that set Laine up for his second of the game was a thing of beauty.

If the second line continues that level of play it gives the Jets arguably the best 1-2 punch in the league.

Driver's license

Maurice likes to talk about drivers in the game of hockey — players who don't just capitalize on opportunity, but consistently generate it. Players such as Blake Wheeler, Mark Scheifele and Dustin Byfuglien are good examples of these types on the Jets roster. The trick is finding the complementary pieces to leverage the space and chaos created by those players.

Luckily for the Jets they have a long list of those assets.

Kyle Connor has had a lot of success being one of those players. Maurice talked recently about the young sniper, suggesting his time as a driver on this roster was coming.

It may be coming sooner than even he thought.



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Though Connor entered the league resembling a prototypical trigger man, he is morphing into something more.

Since returning from Finland Connor has points in five straight games, totalling nine points in that stretch and giving the Jets the offensive punch that's been missing from the second line. His speed and ability to exit the defensive zone has freed Little to focus on his defensive responsibilities as his chemistry with Laine has the young Finn feeling as comfortable as he has all season.

When Connor lost his spot on the top line with Scheifele and Wheeler it may have hurt at the time, but being the pace-setter on a line away from those two will be a big fat bargaining chip come this summer when he's due a new contract.

Prime post-season position

By now it's common knowledge in the hockey world that teams in a playoff spot come American Thanksgiving have a good chance of staying there in the spring, though disaster can strike. The 2017-18 St. Louis Blues are a prime example — they sat near the top of the league last Thanksgiving before a late-season meltdown led to them missing out.

How important is American Thanksgiving in relation to making the Stanley Cup Playoffs?

Over the last five seasons, 77.5% (62-of-80) of teams in a playoff spot at American Thanksgiving have went on to clinch a berth in the postseason. @NHL

— Nick Alberga (@thegoldenmuzzy) November 21, 2018

The key is avoiding slumps, something the Jets have excelled at so far this season. Winnipeg is 6-0-0 in games following a loss so far, outscoring their opponents 23-9 in the process.

Clearly the Jets' ability to stop a losing streak before it starts is rooted in their defensive game. They allowed just one goal in four of those bounce-back games, the result of a suffocating defensive structure based on a speedy forecheck. That system requires consistent buy-in, but the payoff is forced turnovers that often lead to scoring chances. Every player loves to score so a defensive system built on feeding you offensive stats is not a hard sell.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117030 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' Hitchcock talks coaching strategies, changing style of play

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec November 21, 2018, 6:43 PM

COSTA MESA, Calif. — What makes Ken Hitchcock so intriguing isn't that he is so accomplished at his craft. Or that he's won more games than every coach in NHL history but Scotty Bowman and Joel Quenneville.

He is an open book, and so by asking questions we — and by extension, you — learn so much more about his team.

Bill Belichick is the best in his business, but he shares so little that you could learn more from a football coach with a quarter of his experience. Todd McLellan is an excellent, cooperative, intelligent quote. He's one of the best, but he's not Hitchcock.

In fact, no one in the NHL is quite like "Hitch."

With Hitchcock, it goes like this: you ask a probing question, and he treats it like a pilot hole. Then he drills deeper, and deeper, and we all

discover what's really down there. He shares because he's been around long enough to have the confidence to share. Because his mentor, Clare Drake, shared.

He'll admit what he doesn't know, or is unsure of. Because no one has every answer.

He's 66, a career coach who can look at Milan Lucic for one night from behind the bench and diagnose his issues the way the guy at the "Fix It" shops solves the carburetor problem in your lawn mower. But he's also not so smart that he won't admit to being wrong, a trait shared by the wisest people we've ever known.

So, rather than get in the way, here's a rundown of a 14-minute session with Hitchcock, the day after his debut behind the Oilers bench in a 4-3 overtime win at San Jose Tuesday. His answers have been edited for brevity.

Enjoy:

On deploying Connor McDavid

"His recovery rate, cardio-wise, is astounding. He's able to get back up to speed quickly on the bench. That's something we've got to take advantage of. He can come out every second shift if it stays 5-on-5.

"My focus is going to be on building his game from our end, out. He needs to have the puck more, as do all of our centres, because that's the strength of the team.

"I think we need to find ways to get them the puck more, deeper. That's going to be the focus starting tomorrow at practice. Understand the value of playing inside the dots. Your touches are usually double. That's what we want to do, is get way more touches for our whole centre ice (corps)."

On his coaching philosophy, offence versus defence

"When you have the puck, that's for you. When you don't have the puck, that's for us. There's no negotiation when the other team has the puck, no negotiation at all. I expect everyone over the next couple of weeks to start looking the same when the opposition has the puck. That's the area in my domain, the stuff the coach controls."

On playing McDavid and Leon Draisaitl together, or apart

"I'm right now really focused on keeping them together. I think they work really well together. They find the ice for each other, they see the ice. To me, Leon's soft touches with the puck have really surprised me. I knew he was a good player, but I didn't know he had touch with the puck like he does. I think the thing that is underrated is I'm able to do that because of the play of (Ryan) Nugent-Hopkins."

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On the "Mike Modano Theory" — that McDavid may score less but become a more well-rounded player under Hitchcock

"I don't see the scoring less. To me, it's about value system. And even before Modano, it's Tyler Seguin. I think Tyler Seguin was a perfect example of guys that needed to change and embraced it. He had a great offensive year and even a better defensive year. I think it's just changing your value system and understanding that speed is a great weapon. Not many players have it. If you use it without the puck, you become more effective. If you use it with the attitude that you can create pressure, turnovers and mistakes, and you're able to buy into that right away, you can make an impact right away because you can make the other team nervous not only when you have the puck but when they have the puck.

"Seguin bought in and was very effective. Modano bought in and was very effective. The way Connor is, he's already two-thirds of the way there. Him and Draisaitl created about seven or eight turnovers yesterday that if I was the opposition I would be scared to death, because if you made one bobble, they're gone. I think if I can convince him that he can



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create unbelievable pressure even when the other team has the puck, he's going to be extremely effective."

On how his coaching strategies have changed when dealing with young players

"I think we've passed through millennial and we're into the 'I' generation. I think the 'I' generation is fascinating because it's the most prepared generation I've ever seen in sport. Academically, too. Culturally, the same. It's my job to eliminate surprises. It's my job to make sure they know what I want, why, and what's in it for them. I've got to be open and explain that to them or else they're not going to buy into that. I think if you're willing to buy into that stuff, you're making the adjustments that are necessary. If you just go at it stubbornly and say, 'This is what I want you to do,' and they don't have any impact in the decision-making, and there isn't discussion, then I don't think you get anywhere.

"You've got to be comfortable opening up as a coach. You've got to be comfortable with the dialogue. I know there's been lots of times over the past few years where we've gotten into discussions and the player hasn't agreed with me and we've negotiated a change and we've met halfway.

"I think that's what coaching is today – you've got to meet them halfway, and you've probably got to go the most distance at the start of the conversation."

On the game in San Jose, and what he learned

"This team is built differently than even I thought. The third period, to me, was real interesting. There was every reason to not play: third game in four nights; you're down, chasing the whole game. And then when you should be tired ... we went exactly the other direction.

"The weight and the size and the diligence of this team was really impressive. It's my job to get it out of them more and more as we move along.

"We're not the fastest team in the NHL but we can play quick. Being able to do that with no practice? Just a bunch of (white) board discussion? That made me feel real good as a coach."

On why the centres need the puck more, and what needs fixing

"We're too spread out. We're not close enough to the puck as a group of five. Our quickness has to be in 10-foot puck support, and we're having to make too many long plays.

"The buzz word in the National Hockey League is 'fast,' and I think it's an improper word. I think 'fast' ... becomes impatient. I think you want to play quick. Look at the top teams ... they find space to create pockets to play quick in, and that's what we want to get to."

On why he put together the Milan Lucic – Kyle Brodziak – Zack Kassian line

"An identity line. I believe that you have to have a group of players who set the work standard on your club. If you're asking your top players to do everything, then you're not putting players who should play that way in the position to have success.

"I want them to set the tone and the dial for how we want to play. They're maybe not going to score as many goals as when they were younger, but when you see the way they played some shifts (Tuesday), they set the table for other people to perform. I don't know who I'm going to put on that line, but whoever is playing with Brodziak has to play that way. They've got to grind that team down to where all they're doing is chipping and changing, and then we've got them on the three-quarter ice game, and now we're rolling."

On the trials of Lucic

"There's a reason he doesn't score. He goes to a support position on the ice too quickly. He doesn't hold (his) ice. If he holds ice longer he's going to get a ton of chances — off shin pads, off skates — but he doesn't hold ice. If I can get him to hold ice longer in critical scoring areas then he'll be

way, way more effective. And I think Kassian can do the same thing on the other side.

"It's really simple, small adjustments. We'll get them to do it at practice (Wednesday) and that's going to be the group that changes the quickest."

On how long it will take to change the way the Oilers play

"I thought you needed six or seven practices to get going, then I saw the third period (in San Jose) and said, 'Whoa...' I didn't expect what I saw in the third period to happen. I don't think we were a lot of fun in the third period for San Jose to play against."

On coaching his hometown team

"Look, I got 550 texts in 24 hours. Forty from former Midget players who all live and work in the community. Season ticket holders. That's a big deal.

"I feel a sense of responsibility that goes way deeper. When you're getting 150 calls... People I sold sporting goods to are all of a sudden your best friend. That's pretty deep.

"I feel that, and I'm not afraid of it. I know the responsibility that sits in front of me. There are people I lived my whole life with, it's their team, and I'm responsible for getting it to play as well as I can.

"I get that."

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens takeaways: Devils' strategy provides plenty to learn

Eric Engels November 21, 2018, 11:06 PM

Two Devils forwards below the goal line in the offensive zone.

That's what the Montreal Canadiens are going to see in nearly every frame of the game tape when they review how New Jersey jumped out to a 5-1 lead in the first 40 minutes of what turned out to be a 5-2 loss on Wednesday.

These aren't Jacques Lemaire's Devils, who turned themselves into perennial Stanley Cup contenders in the 1990s by feasting on the counter-attack after bottling the neutral zone with all five of their players. No, John Hynes' Devils play as aggressive of a game as the Canadiens have faced so far this season.

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New Jersey came into Wednesday's game seven points out of a playoff spot, mostly due to a porous 2-8 start on the road, but they improved to an NHL-leading 7-1-2 at home with the win over the Canadiens.

Goals for Nico Hischier, Kyle Palmieri, Taylor Hall and Pavel Zacha (2) were mostly the product of their tenacious forecheck, and Keith Kinkaid made 24 saves at the other end.

If New Jersey can bottle that formula, they're going to be a bear to contend with from here to the end of the season.

As for the Canadiens, there's much to learn from the loss that took them to 11-7-4 on their season.



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About that game-tape...

If the Canadiens are smart, they won't burn it.

Other opponents are going to want to watch what the Devils did to exploit Montreal's issues in its own end. And there are many teachable moments in there for the Canadiens to dissect so they can counteract that strategy in the future.

The coaching staff has preached moving the puck fast since training camp opened in September. They wanted to eliminate the passing between defencemen and move the puck up the ice—by any means necessary—in order to limit the amount of time spent in the defensive end.

It's going to be easy for Claude Julien and co. to reinforce the importance of executing that strategy when they show the team video from Wednesday's game.

On too many occasions in the opening 40 minutes, the Canadiens were caught reversing course and moving the puck sideways and backwards because the defencemen were looking to make clean outlet passes.

But you don't have time to look for passes when two forecheckers are breathing down your neck at every turn. And you can't make them on instinct when the puck support from the forwards isn't strong enough.

The hesitation to move the puck — the Canadiens made far too many soft plays up the boards in order to avoid icing calls — led to New Jersey's first two goals.

Fans don't like seeing it, but handling a forecheck like New Jersey's boils down to making hard plays up the boards and off the glass or flipping pucks out instead of angling for clean passes you don't have time to look for. Employing that strategy when the pass isn't there allows you to win the numbers game in the neutral zone, even if you have to win races and chase down loose pucks.

Sure the Devils sat back a bit in the third period, but the Canadiens got back to the way they usually play from their goal-line out and ended up generating their best chances of the game as a result.

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Lesson No. 2: Take away the shooting lanes

The Devils took away the puck seven times from the Canadiens in the first period and forced many more than two giveaways the Canadiens were credited for on the stat sheet.

They cycled down low and filtered the puck back to the point and crashed the net. That's how Palmieri's goal developed 6:26 into the game.

Here's the thing about that play: Montreal's Tomas Tatar was in good enough position to force Andy Greene to pivot and find a better shooting angle from the point, but he didn't take away the shooting lane when all was said and done.

This was a theme throughout the night — with the Canadiens' wingers not doing enough in that regard. The team blocked 11 shots, but Brendan Gallagher was Montreal's only winger to register a block in the game.

That's simply not good enough.

Defensive-zone coverage was a mess

It was Gallagher who allowed Egor Yakovlev to sneak behind him and setup the winning goal, which was a tic-tac-toe passing play finished by Hall at the 8:59 mark of the second period.

A minute and one second later, Max Domi, Andrew Shaw, Jonathan Drouin, Jeff Petry and Xavier Ouellet were the Canadiens who got all crossed up as Pavel Zacha found himself all alone in front of Carey Price and pushed a change-up into the net.

Zacha parted Montreal blue liners Ouellet and David Schlemko on a Devils power play to cruise in on a breakaway and score the goal that made it 5-1.

The Canadiens won't need to review the tape to fix this issue. This boils down to working hard and trusting that everyone is going to do their individual job on a given play.

In truth, the Canadiens can do better in this regard, but defensive-zone coverage is going to be a problem even when Shea Weber finally makes his season-debut after missing Montreal's first 22 games rehabbing from off-season knee surgery. Such is life with the defensive core the Canadiens have.

But it can be less of a problem if — when the struggle to move the puck up quick — they play better as a five-man unit.

It wasn't all bad

In spite of how the Canadiens performed on their half of the ice, they still could have won this game with the chances they produced at the other end.

Drouin and Artturi Lehkonen each hit the crossbar. Kenny Agostino had a goal waved off that appeared as though it should have counted. And Gallagher and Tatar missed wide-open nets from just a foot away on separate occasions.

That they out-scored New Jersey in the third period is a positive to take into a huge divisional game against red-hot Buffalo Sabres on Friday.

Domi extends point streak to 11 games, Drouin scores his eighth goal

Those were positives, too.

Domi, who scored Montreal's only goal of the third period, now has points in 19 of 22 games since being traded to the Canadiens from the Arizona Coyotes on June 15.

As for Drouin, who tied the game 1-1 just 24 seconds after Palmieri opened the scoring, he's now five goals from his total one year ago.

And with 18 points in 22 games, Drouin is now on pace for 71 points. That's a big step up from the 46 he recorded last season, and it's much more in line with the kind of production the Canadiens expected when they traded defenceman Mikhail Sergachev to acquire him from the Tampa Bay Lightning two summers ago.

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Sportsnet.ca / 31 Thoughts: Can Ken Hitchcock's demands lead Oilers to playoffs?

Elliotte Friedman November 21, 2018, 1:10 PM

In the end, Ken Hitchcock knew there was one thing he shouldn't change. In overtime, you call out "97!" and "29!" and see how fast they can win it. Tuesday night, it took 51 seconds.

San Jose scored 45 seconds into the game. The Oilers could have fallen apart, like they did in Calgary Saturday and at home against Vegas on Sunday, two backbreaking defeats that cost Todd McLellan his job. Three times, they came back from one-goal deficits before Leon Draisaitl scored the winner.

This time, they held on, moving one point back of Vancouver for a playoff berth.



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Hitchcock may have "retired," but no one who knows him was surprised to see him back behind an NHL bench. This is what he lives for, this is what he craves. He's not wired to be a consultant. There is no doubt that he was watching the Oilers' every move, thinking — and saying to anyone who asked — "I can fix this."

If Edmonton was going to fire McLellan, it was going to be for someone of Hitchcock's pedigree. A turnaround artist. Someone who could revive their chances right away, get them to the playoffs this year.

I'm not sure everyone internally agreed with the change, but they all agreed something needed to be done.

"It's not going to be comfortable at times," Hitchcock told reporters hours before the game. After, he said, "I needed about four shifts...I was grinding hard. I told them I was going to do it and I was pushing hard."

In my first season at Hockey Night in Canada, we did a feature on him. After it aired, one player said I missed out on asking Hitchcock about his favourite move. What was that? I asked. "During stops in play, he knows the camera is on him," was the answer. "He's calm then. When the play starts and he knows you're not watching him, he's all over us. Man, he's relentless."

The next time I saw him, I mentioned that. He smiled. Didn't say anything, but he didn't need to.

Dallas players say he still loves to challenge you during meetings. And he expects that you'll come right back at him. That's what he wants.

Here's what else we know: team defence gets better almost immediately. Dallas went from 260 goals against to 222 in his first full year. Philadelphia from 192 to 166. He coached 62 games in his opening season with Columbus. The Blue Jackets dropped from 276 to 244 when he joined for most of 2006-07. St. Louis was 228 to 155.

His return to Dallas came after a season where the Stars had an historically bad penalty kill. It was fourth-best in the league last year before Ben Bishop's injury damaged their final month.

He slows down the tempo. In 2016-17, Dallas had 3850 shot attempts, sixth-most in the NHL. Their games had 7686 total, one of the league's highest numbers. Last year, that dropped to 3722 (19th) and 7292.

The concerns in Dallas after last season were that the more passive system prevented power play opportunities (they were 20th with 244 attempts), that they dropped from eighth in scoring at all-star to 18th by season's end, and that they led the NHL in both icings and offsides.

"They hired Hitchcock," one executive said, "Because they can't check. He will demand that."

The big question is if "demand" will be enough. Is the roster built for that? Are they really good enough? The Oilers gambled their 2018-19 version would not resemble 2017-18. So far, that's come up snake eyes.

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### 31 THOUGHTS

1. Hitchcock loves "heavy, competitive guys," as another coach put it. An exec said one of the most interesting cases would be Drake Caggiula. "He's not big, but he's competitive." Would he get to stay with Connor McDavid and Draisaitl? If Game 1 is any indication, he's getting a real chance. Even in taking a penalty, the winger played 21 minutes in San Jose, almost seven above his average.

Hitchcock leaned on his two cornerstones, double-shifting them, and Caggiula stayed. There wasn't a ton of power play time in this one, so that can skew the numbers, but others way over their averages were Kyle Brodziak (3:22), Darnell Nurse (3:18), Zack Kassian (2:45), Draisaitl (2:07), Adam Larsson (1:56), McDavid and Kris Russell (1:44). No one played more at even-strength than McDavid, at 23:46. The Oilers backed off potentially record-setting numbers for him at even-strength, but Nurse was highest among defencemen (22:28).

2. Those who were down include Ty Rattie (5:59), Milan Lucic (3:32), Cooper Marody (3:19), Oscar Klefbom (2:29, but took a penalty) and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (1:57, with a goal though). Although Lucic's overall time was down, Hitchcock seemed to like him with Brodziak and Kassian. That kind of trio would appeal to him. Curious to see if the Oilers soon give Jesse Puljujarvi a run under this coach, simply because he likes big bodies.

3. There were rumblings Hitchcock's contract came with an option that became guaranteed for next season if Edmonton made the playoffs, but official word is everything re-evaluated at the end of the year.

4. We're one-quarter through the season, with four coaching changes. Aside from 2017-18, when there were zero in-season dismissals, this isn't too unusual. What is different: three of these jobs are interim appointments. Both Edmonton and Los Angeles made it clear Hitchcock and Willie Desjardins have the rest of the season. For now St. Louis GM Doug Armstrong said that while he throws his "full support" behind Craig Berube, an in-depth coaching search is underway. Only Jeremy Colliton has solid footing. Chicago is committed to him, although nothing is guaranteed in this business.

The most in-season changes this decade (by my count) is seven in 2011-12, and six of the replacements — Hitchcock (St. Louis), Bruce Boudreau (Anaheim), Randy Carlyle (Toronto), Kirk Muller (Carolina), Todd Richards (Columbus) and Darryl Sutter (Los Angeles) — stayed on. The only one who didn't was Randy Cunneyworth in Montreal. Go back to another heavy year, 2002-03, with eight changes. Seven stayed: Sutter (Calgary), Tony Granato (Colorado), Bob Hartley (Atlanta), Claude Julien (Montreal), Doug MacLean (Columbus), Glen Sather (Rangers) and Ron Wilson (San Jose). (The exception was Boston, where Mike O'Connell gave way to Mike Sullivan.) We are seeing a very unusual pattern.

5. So what does it mean? "It means you're going to see a lot of lobbying," one coach said, laughing. It also means that, as coaching salaries have skyrocketed (good for them), organizations realize the cost of a bad fit is much greater. Edmonton and St. Louis are at different places on the revenue spectrum, but both organizations were wary about severance and replacement monies. A test drive is better for them than a commitment.

The other thing that's going to be interesting is the depth of the search. When San Jose hired Peter DeBoer, it was after a lengthy process where the Sharks talked to around 20 people. Listening to Doug Armstrong say he was casting a worldwide net indicates others are going to follow that kind of process, especially if throwing bags of money at Joel Quenneville can't be your solution.

6. In talking to a few GMs about it over the past few months, one of the biggest things they are looking for is, "How does our next coach relate to this generation of player?" The AHL has always been a place for coaches to develop, and it helps that it's built to be a developmental league. But it's not a coincidence that we've seen a run (Dave Hakstol, Jim Montgomery, David Quinn) of NCAA bosses, too.

I've spent some time trying to put together a list of who will be interviewed for some of these jobs, and you get an eclectic selection. The obvious ones are Quenneville (who will have his pick) and Alain Vigneault. There were a lot of others, particularly those who are in "young" environments.

I don't know if all would be head-coaching candidates, and some might be used to pick their brains. But here were some names: Dallas Eakins (AHL San Diego), Dean Evason (now Minnesota, formerly AHL Milwaukee), Tim Hunter (Team Canada World Juniors), Sheldon Keefe (AHL Toronto), Troy Mann (AHL Belleville), Nate Leaman (NCAA Providence), Rocky Thompson (AHL Chicago), Andre Tourigny (OHL Ottawa) and Pascal Vincent (AHL Manitoba).

One suggested Rob Blake's connection with Patrick Roy might put him on the Kings' radar. Others went with NHL assistants in young environments like Jim Hiller/DJ Smith (Toronto) and Kirk Muller (Montreal). Marco Sturm was mentioned a few times. The takeaway is



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that if you're not going for the most obvious of options, there's a lot to investigate.

7. Craig Berube, by the way, had a good reputation with young players when he coached St. Louis's AHL affiliate in Chicago. That's not an easy place to develop, because the organization badly wants to compete — not always compatible with the parent club's goal. Three players who grew under his tutelage there were Ivan Barbashev, Sammy Blais and Vince Dunn. The Blues would love to see that replicated at the NHL level.

8. Another weird sidebar to two of the coaching changes: Desjardins and Hitchcock don't have any handpicked assistants on their staffs. Definitely not normal.

9. Armstrong's media conference had a couple of interesting nuggets. First, he mentioned that his search would go into Europe, which brings out at least two names: Rikard Gronborg and Ralph Krueger, who has politely declined at least one opportunity since taking Team Europe to the 2016 World Cup Final.

10. Second, Armstrong mentioned changes to the core if the Blues don't get going. The assembled media pointed out that it's not the first time he's said that, and he did perform major surgery in the off-season.

At times, there've been indications of the organization's frustration with Vladimir Tarasenko. No one's ever said it on the record, and I've never heard his name in a specific trade rumour. The Blues have to know it's a hard trade to win, because you're giving up a great talent. There's no bigger change they could make, if they wanted to.

11. Peter Chiarelli looked stressed and exhausted when he spoke to Gene Principe during our Oilers/Sharks broadcast Tuesday night. Firing someone isn't easy, and McLellan didn't take it quietly. Everyone in the organization knows what's at stake. The business side underwent a major reconstruction in the past year or so, with many employees (some estimated at least 50) moved out. That takes a toll, and now the hockey department is under the microscope.

12. Okay, some other stuff: sounds like Pittsburgh tried to get its hands on Brandon Montour from Anaheim. Don't think the Ducks are interested. He's a talented guy. Someone who does fit their profile? Jakob Silfverberg, a pending UFA. Entering Saturday's game in Ottawa, 41 of the Penguins' 46 goals from forwards came out of their top six.

13. With Shea Weber on the horizon, lots of talk the Canadiens wanted to move a defenceman rather than lose someone on waivers, as with Jacob de la Rose. Noah Juulsen's injury may change that. Tough thing for GM Marc Bergevin is that it is not easy to make a deal for an asset when you are facing a roster crunch.

14. Lots of talk about what Los Angeles will do. They've changed coaches and made one trade. Things can always change, but the Kings may choose to see how things evolve before anything else.

15. Several restricted free agents (Brock Boeser, Patrik Laine, Mikko Rantanen among them) have made it clear or agreed with their teams they'll wait until after the season to talk contract. At last week's GM meetings in Toronto, some of the managers said they feel others are waiting to see if William Nylander sets the market over the next 10 days before doing anything. (This note's for Joe Pavelski.)

Joe Pavelski, playfully needling the Toronto media: "You guys need a few more Nylander articles out there. It's been kind of quiet out there."

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) November 14, 2018

16. Last Saturday was an awesome flashback to the Battle of Alberta, but also what it was like to go into Calgary on a regular basis. For years, you knew that if you were going into that building, win or lose, you were going to get roughed up. Sam Bennett and Matthew Tkachuk energized their crowd and their teammates from the first shift, with both getting under the skins of the Oilers.

Tkachuk is going to get paid. He's such an important player for them. Bennett's contract is up too, and GM Brad Treliving's refusal to trade the

forward could go down as one of his best decisions. Sometimes, top selections (Bennett went fourth overall) get caught up in points and such. Bennett can have a long and excellent career as an edgy and productive all-around player. He just needs to embrace it.

17. Years ago, now-retired Mike Richards told a story about playing for Philadelphia against New Jersey. He said Sergei Brylin and Patrik Elias warned him that he was going to pay for it if he kept playing his way. I think some Oilers players tried the same tactic with Tkachuk. Remember the Kings going after him a few years ago? He drives people crazy.

18. Last season, David Rittich got an opportunity to be the No. 1 goalie in Calgary when Mike Smith was injured, and the mental side of it got to him. It happens. Even at 25, he was a rookie and it is new. One thing the Flames are working on with him is preparing the same way to start as he did when he was the backup. Always the same. Results are good so far, and it is clear his teammates believe in him.

19. Eight years ago, Drake Batherson is on the right, next to his cousin, Dean Vial.

Dennis Vial says that, as a midget player, Batherson was five-foot-eight and 140 pounds. He hit a growth spurt and filled out, equating his size with his talent and work ethic. "I would always tell him, you have to be tough," Vial said last week. "Not tough in what I did (Vial had 794 penalty minutes in 242 NHL games), but mentally tough. That guy across the ice from you is going to try and beat you on every shift. How are you going to handle that, to make sure you beat him?"

Batherson's father, Norm, had a lengthy career in the AHL, the IHL and overseas. "He would always tell Drake, 'No excuses. I don't want to hear excuses,'" Vial said. "Drake listened." One scout said that when Batherson was sent to AHL Belleville, he didn't think there was any way the player would be back in the NHL this season. It took less than two months.

20. Vial said that, as a former player, he appreciated how Ottawa's coaches handled Batherson before his first goal. "He was on the ice when Detroit scored. As a rookie, you're thinking you won't get back out there. But he was there for the power play minutes later when he scored."

21. So here we are, entering Wednesday's games with Buffalo fourth in the NHL. (Just as I predicted.) The latest excitement came Monday, when the Sabres came back from a 4-1 deficit to beat Pittsburgh in overtime.

"There is no way we win that game last year," Jason Pominville said Tuesday, as he watched his son's practice. "In a lot of those situations, we would fold. Pack it in." What's changed? "A few things. We are getting phenomenal goaltending. In that game, they have a five-on-three and (Carter) Hutton makes a huge save on (Phil) Kessel. Then we find a way to get one. And we get this feeling that we believe and can get more." Pominville also pointed to last Saturday in Minnesota, a 3-2 win. The Sabres were down 2-0 just 7:45 in. "Last year, we lost 6-2 there. We can't always give up early leads," he laughs, "But everything had to be different here. Wins aside, it is much different."

22. Pominville credits depth, too. "Zach Bogosian and Jake McCabe. People forget we lost them last year. They're both back, a big help." Jeff Skinner is obviously huge. But sports comes down to mindset and he says he sensed something fresh in August.

"A lot of guys arrived in town early. More than three-quarters of the guys were here by the middle of the month. You spend time together, get to know each other. Then, at training camp, they warned us they were going to push us harder. They told us they were going to change a lot of things. We bought in. We had to. We knew it couldn't be any worse, so were willing to do what it takes to make it better."

Pominville may be from Repentigny, PQ., but he's Buffalo through-and-through. He lives there and has played most of his career there. He sees a great fan base energized by early-season excitement. "I've been at this



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practice for four minutes, and people are coming to me saying how happy they are."

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.

23. No conversation about the Sabres is complete without Jack Eichel. He's got five goals and 24 points in 21 games. Pominville shrugged off the scoring. "Those will come. No one's worried. But his attention to detail is so much better. Digging in for faceoffs. He's always had great awareness. He knows by expanding his game, he can have the puck even more than he's used to. He's strong enough and big enough that a lot of things open up when he hangs on to it. He can see that. He's more patient and more confident with it. Look at all the plays he's making for others to produce."

24. Finally, on Rasmus Dahlin, Pominville said Buffalo coaches were showing players highlights of a ridiculous off-the-crossbar effort he had against Pittsburgh. They were basically laughing at how good it was. "But he's not afraid to battle down low. He competes. People notice that."

25. At his exit meeting last season, Jimmy Howard said he and the organization both discussed how he needed to get his save percentage from .910 to ".915 or .920." Fourteen games into the season, it is .922.

"I don't look at numbers anymore," he laughed on Tuesday. "I used to when I was younger, but not looking comes with maturity. Sometimes it doesn't tell the whole story. The only time I talk about it is with the media or my goalie coach. I have to be in my own little bubble, have to play well every single night. Give us a chance."

Detroit isn't up there with Buffalo, but after a rough start that could have gone off the cliff, they've battled and stabilized. "Last year, we found ways to lose. After the injuries (this year), some of our veterans have come back to calm things down. At the beginning, we were trying to do too much, and things snowball out of control."

26. Howard joked that he's "not that old," but recognizes how much the organization is changing. "Being a Red Wing still means a lot to us who have been here. It's no fun to be out of the playoffs. Everyone wants to be playing come springtime." He didn't want to get into it too deeply, but some time after an 8-2 loss to Boston in their fifth game of the season, there was an intense conversation between the players about how their play was not acceptable.

"We had to dig in. Play the right way. The good thing about this group is that it is not a cliquey team. We could be blunt with each other. Press the re-set button and demand we start doing things like winning battles." What did he say? "I kinda keep my mouth shut."

27. It has been reported that Howard, a free agent, will be extended. "There hasn't been dialogue as of yet," he said. "But everyone knows how I feel about the city and the organization. And how much it would mean to finish as a Red Wing."

28. Finally, Howard says he's really impressed with some of the younger players. "Dylan Larkin is leading us every night," he said. What about the rookies? "Michael Rasmussen. The way it started for him was probably not ideal, but he's now scored in three games in a row. Dennis Cholowski. Great skater with a great shot. Both guys have shown how they can contribute even though they are young."

29. Reported this last year, hoping I'll be correct this year, but Regina remains very much on the map for an NHL outdoor game. I'd assume Edmonton versus either Calgary or Winnipeg, but you know what happens when you assume. The league has visited Mosaic Stadium at least once this fall.

30. Another note from the GM meetings: there are many people who still think diving/embellishment is a big problem.

31. The first time I met Mike Foley in Ottawa, he said, "Our GM is looking for you." I started thinking, "What did I say this time?" only to see him

crack a smile. It became a bit of a running joke between us, although there were a couple of times it was actually true.

Just like life, there are a lot of really quiet, nice people you meet covering sports. Mike, who worked for the Senators for 26 years, was at the top of the list. He died last week from colon cancer at age 61. You saw all the tributes, you know how much he'll be missed.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117033 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks make front office change, Carroll new COO

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet November 21, 2018, 11:22 PM

VANCOUVER – Four months after a titanic change at the top of the hockey operations department, Francesco Aquilini and the family that owns the Vancouver Canucks are also changing their top employee on the business side.

Jeff Stipek is out as the Canucks' chief operating officer after just 2 ½ years and will be replaced by Trent Carroll, who has been with the National Hockey League organization since 2011 and is being promoted from his current role of executive vice-president of revenue.

Sportsnet NOW gives you access to over 500 NHL games this season, blackout-free, including Hockey Night in Canada, Rogers Hometown Hockey, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey, the entire 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs and more.

President of hockey operations Trevor Linden left the Canucks in July after an ideological clash with the Aquilinis made the sides' relationship untenable. Unlike with that earth-shaking move, managing owner Francesco Aquilini has so far offered no social-media explanation for changing his COO, and the Canucks are issuing no formal statements about the change.

Executive T.C. Carling, a close friend of Linden who was the former hockey-ops president's right-hand man, appears to be a victim of collateral damage in the executive changes. His position of vice-president of arena operations at Rogers Arena has been eliminated.

Carling left hockey operations for that role last spring, a move that seemed especially prudent when Linden was forced out a couple of months later.

The executive changes are expected to have no effect on hockey operations, which are overseen by general manager Jim Benning, who was hired by Linden and now reports directly to the Aquilinis.

Any functional ties between business and hockey operations ended when former team president and general manager Mike Gillis was fired in 2014.

He was replaced at the top of hockey operations pyramid by Linden, whose title was unconnected to business ops. Stipek ran those the last two years after long-time Canuck executive Victor de Bonis was promoted by the Aquilinis to run their parent company.

De Bonis is now a senior member of the Seattle group planning to bring an NHL expansion franchise to that city.

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1117034 Websites



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 22, 2018

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Power Rankings: Report Cards for all 31 Teams Edition

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox November 21, 2018, 8:14 AM

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.

With 6 grams of delicious, crunchy, energy-giving protein, there's nothing you and almonds can't do. Visit Almonds.com for more ways to slay your day.

### 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+

### 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 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 non-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



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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

A review by this newspaper found at least 20 contrived Twitter accounts, seemingly created to launch a co-ordinated disinformation campaign and to attack media coverage of the Sens while lauding the team and its owner Eugene Melnyk. <https://t.co/3ckUbjdDXg> [pic.twitter.com/cZ5So9HDU](https://pic.twitter.com/cZ5So9HDU)

— Ottawa Citizen (@OttawaCitizen) November 17, 2018

### 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-

[pic.twitter.com/19JE2hO7qy](https://pic.twitter.com/19JE2hO7qy)

— Gritty (@GrittyNHL) November 20, 2018

### 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: C

Let's check in on Joel Quenneville [pic.twitter.com/BxxlBPHwVD](https://pic.twitter.com/BxxlBPHwVD)

— The Hockey Hangout (@HockeyHangout) November 19, 2018

### 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 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

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1117035 Websites

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

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet 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



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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.

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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1117036 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets' Kyle Connor emerging as an important line driver for Winnipeg

Sean Reynolds November 21, 2018, 10:26 AM

Is there a more fitting nickname in the NHL right now than "Hat Trick" Laine? The young scoring machine added another three-goal night to his resume helping the Jets topple the Vancouver Canucks on Monday night. That marks the sixth hat trick of Laine's short career. Only Wayne Gretzky had more by his 21st birthday, although his 12 hat tricks at that age suggest Laine will have to settle for second on that list.

Not yet at the quarter mark of their season, the Jets now have three players with double-digit goal totals and none of them lead this team in points.

Second line success

The search for chemistry on the Jets' second line has been well-documented over the past two years. No doubt that search led to the acquisition of Paul Stastny at the trade deadline last season. But when he chose Vegas over Winnipeg in free agency last summer, the Jets were back to trying Bryan Little between Laine and Nikolaj Ehlers, which did not move the needle at the start of the season.

So it was surprising earlier this month to hear Paul Maurice say he was not done with the Little/Laine experiment. Maurice didn't think Laine's play early this season provided a proper look at that duo's capabilities so he wanted to try it again. No doubt he's happy he did.



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The pair has been on the same page since being reunited and that line was the Jets' best unit Monday against the Canucks. Both players found ways to complement the other and it landed them multi-point games on the scoresheet — Laine's forecheck led to Little's game-opening goal against the Canucks, while Little's seam pass that set Laine up for his second of the game was a thing of beauty.

If the second line continues that level of play it gives the Jets arguably the best 1-2 punch in the league.

### Driver's license

Maurice likes to talk about drivers in the game of hockey — players who don't just capitalize on opportunity, but consistently generate it. Players such as Blake Wheeler, Mark Scheifele and Dustin Byfuglien are good examples of these types on the Jets roster. The trick is finding the complementary pieces to leverage the space and chaos created by those players.

Luckily for the Jets they have a long list of those assets.

Kyle Connor has had a lot of success being one of those players. Maurice talked recently about the young sniper, suggesting his time as a driver on this roster was coming.

It may be coming sooner than even he thought.

Though Connor entered the league resembling a prototypical trigger man, he is morphing into something more.

Since returning from Finland Connor has points in five straight games, totalling nine points in that stretch and giving the Jets the offensive punch that's been missing from the second line. His speed and ability to exit the defensive zone has freed Little to focus on his defensive responsibilities as his chemistry with Laine has the young Finn feeling as comfortable as he has all season.

When Connor lost his spot on the top line with Scheifele and Wheeler it may have hurt at the time, but being the pace-setter on a line away from those two will be a big fat bargaining chip come this summer when he's due a new contract.

### Prime post-season position

By now it's common knowledge in the hockey world that teams in a playoff spot come American Thanksgiving have a good chance of staying there in the spring, though disaster can strike. The 2017-18 St. Louis Blues are a prime example — they sat near the top of the league last Thanksgiving before a late-season meltdown led to them missing out.

How important is American Thanksgiving in relation to making the Stanley Cup Playoffs?

Over the last five seasons, 77.5% (62-of-80) of teams in a playoff spot at American Thanksgiving have went on to clinch a berth in the postseason. @NHL

— Nick Alberga (@thegoldenmuzzy) November 21, 2018

The key is avoiding slumps, something the Jets have excelled at so far this season. Winnipeg is 6-0-0 in games following a loss so far, outscoring their opponents 23-9 in the process.

Clearly the Jets' ability to stop a losing streak before it starts is rooted in their defensive game. They allowed just one goal in four of those bounce-back games, the result of a suffocating defensive structure based on a speedy forecheck. That system requires consistent buy-in, but the payoff is forced turnovers that often lead to scoring chances. Every player loves to score so a defensive system built on feeding you offensive stats is not a hard sell.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.22.2018

1117037 Websites

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

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec 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 Edmonton Oilers 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 staying 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 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



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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: 11.22.2018

1117038 Websites

TSN.CA / Another slow start dooms Leafs

Kristen Shilton

The Maple Leafs fell into an early hole against the Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday and this time they couldn’t claw their way back, falling 5-2 to the ‘Canes in Raleigh. John Tavares and Kasper Kapanen had the goals for Toronto, but another slow start and continuing power play struggles doomed the Leafs and halted their four-game winning streak. Toronto moves to 15-7-0 on the season.

### TAKEAWAYS

Slow off the (opening) draw

The Hurricanes were credited with 29 shots in the first period, from 17 of their 18 skaters, which was equal to or more shots against than the Leafs had allowed through three periods in seven games this season. Toronto’s record for most shots allowed in a period this season was 22 against the Winnipeg Jets on Oct. 24, while the franchise record for most shots-against in a period was 32 against the Hartford Whalers on March 15, 1984.

In a strange twist, Carolina (10-8-3) didn’t put a single shot on goal in the second period until only 1:54 remained in the frame, and had only two shots total in that period, and 14 shots the rest of the way, but that first period production was enough to help sink the Leafs.

Carolina’s speed game, especially through the neutral zone, rivals that of the Leafs, and they used it to force some early turnovers and were outshooting the Leafs 12-6 through the game’s first 10 minutes.

Chaos in front of Frederik Andersen’s net had Carolina peppering him with shots and a Travis Dermott giveaway led to Trevor van Riemsdyk lighting the lamp to put Carolina up 1-0. Toronto challenged the score for goaltender interference after it appeared Andersen’s glove was knocked off prior to the shot from van Riemsdyk, but the ruling on the ice stood.

Just 22 seconds later, Justin Williams capitalized on Toronto’s miscommunication off a defensive zone draw that left him all alone in front of Andersen for his 100th goal as a Hurricane.

The slow start for Toronto came on the heels of an equally difficult opening to Monday’s game when the Leafs gave up two goals in the first period to the Columbus Blue Jackets. But unlike that contest that the Leafs came back and won, they had no such luck overcoming their early mistakes in Carolina.

John Tavares, road warrior

With the Leafs trailing 2-0 midway through the first period, Tavares, their leading goal scorer, slipped behind the Hurricanes’ defence and buried his 14th of the season behind Curtis McElhinney to cut Carolina’s lead in half.

Tavares has now registered a goal in six of the Leafs’ last seven road games, and has tallied 11 goals in 11 away games to date. He has also tallied at least one point in nine of the Leafs’ 11 road games, which accounts for 17 of his 26 points.

In total, Tavares has produced 11 points (seven goals, six assists) in the Leafs’ last 10 games.

With his contributions on Wednesday, Tavares became the fifth player in Leafs’ franchise history and the first since 1943-44 to score 11 or more goals through his team’s first 11 road games.

Hello, old friend

For a season and a half, Andersen and McElhinney developed a close bond as the starter and backup, respectively, for the Leafs. Then Toronto chose to go with the younger Garret Sparks as its backup instead of McElhinney out of training camp and waived the veteran, only to see him picked up by the Hurricanes. McElhinney has been in Carolina’s backup role ever since, but he earned the start on Wednesday opposite Andersen for the Leafs.

It was Andersen who was the busier goaltender of the two in Carolina, turning aside 40 shots to McElhinney’s 30, and it was Andersen who was ultimately bested by his former partner. After a disorganized first period for the Leafs (where Andersen made a standout save on Jordan Staal’s breakaway attempt), Andersen faced just two shots in the second period while McElhinney held the Leafs’ top talents at bay turning aside all 12 shots he saw.

In the third, the Hurricanes’ power play went to work and Micheal Ferland broke through with a goal, marking the second time in three starts Andersen has allowed three goals against after going eight straight games with two or fewer goals against.

McElhinney, meanwhile, was victimized by Kapanen’s blistering speed and shot when the winger raced down the wall while play was 4-on-4 and ripped a high shot over McElhinney to cut Carolina’s lead to 3-2.

Two empty-net goals by Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov are what ultimately sealed the victory for Carolina, and gave McElhinney his second straight win. Andersen finished with a .930 save percentage, while McElhinney ended at .935.

Power-less power play

The Leafs entered Monday’s game having gone 3-for-19 on the power play in their previous seven games, with all three goals coming in one outing against the NHL’s last-place team in Los Angeles. Toronto’s fortunes on the man advantage didn’t improve in Carolina, starting with their first power play in the second period that generated zero shots on goal. The Hurricanes’ penalty kill was aggressive in challenging Mitch Marner and Tavares especially, forcing them into quick shots that went nowhere. With their second power play in the middle frame, the Leafs were better (particularly their second unit with Josh Leivo, Kapanen, Tyler Ennis, Andreas Johnsson and Jake Gardiner) but still didn’t turn up any goals. The power play finished 0-for-2, moving them to 3-for-21 in the team’s last eight games.

The penalty kill for Toronto wasn’t much better. Carolina only had one power play midway through the third period, but the Leafs were pinned in their own end and Ron Hainsey failed to clear the zone right before Ferland fired a goal past Andersen. Toronto’s kill finished 0-for-1.

Blue and White Trending

Tracking Leafs’ trends all season long

The Leafs are now 9-2-0 on the road this season, and have given up five goals-against in both of those losses.



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Next game

Toronto faces the Blue Jackets in Columbus on Friday.

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TSN.CA / Hitchcock set to challenge McDavid for more

Frank Seravalli

COSTA MESA, Calif. — The first thing Ken Hitchcock noticed about Connor McDavid was the noise.

"The bench sniffs it out," Hitchcock said. "Any time he gets a step on someone, the bench gets loud."

The second thing Hitchcock noticed about his all-world centre was his ability to recharge on the bench, a video game-like restore and ease-of-breath that he hasn't seen since Sergei Zubov in Dallas.

"His recovery rate, cardio-wise, is astounding," Hitchcock said. "He's able to get back up to speed quickly. That's something we've got to take advantage of. He can come out every second shift if it stays 5-on-5."

Hitchcock said he is "really focused" on keeping McDavid in tandem with Leon Draisaitl for the foreseeable future, something he is able to do because the completeness of Ryan Nugent-Hopkins allows 'Nuge' to drive his own line.

For McDavid, that's about the only thing that will remain the same in his new world under Hitchcock.

His new coach says the best player in the world has room to grow.

"My focus is going to be on building his game from our end out," Hitchcock said.

That was perhaps the least surprising thing Hitchcock has said in his two days on the job as the new Edmonton Oilers head coach with his reputation preceding him. He has been notoriously demanding of his star players, from Mike Modano and Jeremy Roenick to Rick Nash and Tyler Seguin.

His comments about McDavid's new direction were a lightning rod for criticism on social media. Hitchcock was painted as a dinosaur, some saying that McDavid is not part of the problem.

Hitchcock, who turns 67 next month, pushed back against his reputation.

Before you judge, hear him out on why.

"He needs to have the puck more," Hitchcock said. "As do all of our centres, because that's the strength of the team. I think we need to find ways to get them the puck more deeper [in the defensive zone]. That's going to be the focus starting tomorrow at practice."

The end result if McDavid buys in, Hitchcock said, is to "double" his touches in a game.

"That's what we want to do, get way more touches for our whole centre ice," Hitchcock said.

For a team that GM Peter Chiarelli recently said does not have a B+ level passer on the back-end, that may be the only option – to get the puck in the hands of McDavid and Co. as close to their goal line as possible and let them take off.

"We're not the fastest team in the NHL, but we can play quick," Hitchcock said. "We're having to make too many long plays. The buzzword in the

NHL is 'fast' and I think it's an improper word. I think 'fast' becomes impatient. I think you want to play quick. Look at the top teams, they find space to create pockets to play quick in and that's what we want to get to."

So, how will McDavid react to being poked, prodded and pushed by Hitchcock? He said Tuesday was his first time meeting Hitchcock. The two had never crossed paths. McDavid became the eighth player in league history to net 100 goals and 170 assists before his 22nd birthday on Tuesday night.

Knowing Hitchcock, Toronto Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock said a player of McDavid's ilk will appreciate Hitchcock's straight-forward approach.

"I think the generational player wants honesty," Babcock told reporters Wednesday. "That's what 'Hitch' is, honest as the day is long. I like people to be honest with me. If my boss tells me what he wants, I've got a chance to please him. If he doesn't, it's hard. Hitch is going to let him know what he wants."

Some observers say Hitchcock will want McDavid to sacrifice offence in order to play to his system. Hitchcock doesn't buy that. He pointed to Seguin last year in his lone season in Dallas, when Seguin's point production went from 72 to 78 points.

"I think Tyler Seguin was a perfect example of a guy that needed to change and embraced it," Hitchcock said. "He had a great offensive year and an even better defensive year."

Harnessing McDavid's speed is how Hitchcock plans to appeal to the most highly evolved player in NHL history.

"I think it's just changing your value system and understanding that speed is a great weapon," Hitchcock said. "Not many players have it. If you use it without the puck, you become more effective. If you use it with the attitude that you can create pressure, turnovers and mistakes, and you're able to buy into that right away, you can make the other team nervous not only when you have the puck but when they have the puck."

Hitchcock said McDavid is "two-thirds of the way there already." He said McDavid and Draisaitl created about seven or eight turnovers in his first game behind the bench.

McDavid may be asked to change moving forward, but that doesn't mean it won't be a conversation. Hitchcock said he too has evolved through the battles with stars over the years to learn to engage today's player.

For a cerebral player like McDavid, that might involve some listening. Hitchcock is ready for that.

Just don't call him a dinosaur.

"There's been lots of times over the past few years where we've gotten into discussions and the player hasn't agreed with me and we've negotiated a change and we've met halfway," Hitchcock said. "I think that's what coaching is today. You've got to meet them halfway – and you've probably got to go the most distance at the start of the conversation."

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TSN.CA / Calm in the storm: Andersen improves mental game

Mark Masters



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Leafs. The Maple Leafs and Hurricanes skated at PNC Arena ahead of Wednesday night's game in Raleigh.

Frederik Andersen always seems to be calm in the net and a big reason for that is he's also calm on the inside. An important aspect of the goalie's strong start has been his improved mental game.

"The last two games showed that pretty well," Andersen noted. "Sometimes you got to reset and trust you're going to make that next save instead of losing the focus on what's important."

Last week in San Jose, a bad bounce off the end boards led to an easy Sharks goal in the first period, but Andersen didn't get flustered. He ended up making 42 saves to post his first-ever win at the Shark Tank.

Then on Monday, the Leafs came out flat and Columbus scored a goal late in the first period to go up 2-0. From that point on Andersen was a wall. He finished with 37 saves to win his sixth straight start.

"I like to do some breathing [exercises] and I do that before every game as well," Andersen said. "It's pretty personal what kind of resets you, but I've found some things that work with me and that's something I like to do."

This evolution didn't happen overnight. Andersen has been working on this for years with his high-performance coach Scot Prohaska.

"The earlier years it was all about getting out of his head," Prohaska explained in an interview last week in California, "stop worrying so much, stop thinking so deeply inside, talk about it or let it go. Let's focus on the things that matter and stop worrying about the things that don't. Well, this year he came with this unbelievable confidence. It's like, 'I want to win. This other stuff is out of me now.' He's mature."

Andersen is a big reason why the Leafs have been able to not just survive, but thrive without the injured Auston Matthews (shoulder), winning seven of 10 games in the absence of the superstar centre.

"He's won us a couple games that without him in the net who knows what happens," said Mitch Marner, who calls Andersen the team MVP. "He comes every single night, comes ready to play and he's been a beast since the start of the season."

"The biggest thing is to trust the guys," Andersen said, "and trust we got enough offensive power to score goals and just kind of reset if the first period hasn't gone as well as you hoped."

Leafs MVP: Andersen uses breathing technique to improve mental strength

Mitch Marner leads the Leafs in scoring with 28 points, but the dynamic winger says there's no doubt that Frederik Andersen has been the team's MVP through the first quarter of the season. Andersen tops the NHL in wins (12) and has posted a sparkling .925 save percentage. The soft-spoken Dane revealed Wednesday morning that he's made adjustments to the mental side of the game, which has contributed to the blazing start.

Andersen and the Leafs will be facing an old teammate on Wednesday as Curtis McElhinney gets the start for Carolina. Toronto placed the 35-year-old on waivers after training camp, opting to go with 25-year-old Garret Sparks as Andersen's understudy.

"Just a lot of good memories," said McElhinney of his time in Toronto. "Obviously, a lot of good things happened there and it was an enjoyable time in my career. Pretty special moment and something, when all is said and done, I'll reflect back on and say that was probably one of the highlights, getting the chance to play in Toronto."

McElhinney got into 32 games for the Leafs after being picked up off waivers from Columbus in January of 2017. What did he enjoy most about playing in Toronto?

"Just the attention," the London, Ont. native said. "It's a huge market and a fun place to play. There are a lot of people who care about it. [It's] just a good atmosphere, overall, to play in."

Despite bouncing between teams during his career (Carolina is his seventh NHL stop), McElhinney admits Toronto's decision to part ways still stung.

"I think there is always disappointment when you're pushed out the door, but that's just the nature of the game," he said. "They had a younger, more viable option with Garret and I think he has done a tremendous job so far to start the season so it was the right decision. But there is certainly frustration with it. But you move on and I have another opportunity here. It has been nice. I get to see the sun on a daily basis, so you don't complain about that."

McElhinney leads the Hurricanes in wins with a 4-2-0 record and a .903 save percentage so far. Sparks, meanwhile, is 3-1-0 with a .906 save percentage.

McElhinney is hoping his experience practising against the Leafs will help him tonight. Although it won't be easy to slow down someone like Marner, who leads the NHL with 20 primary assists.

"When most guys have one or two options, he's got three or five," McElhinney said. "They have so many weapons. It's tough to say one thing or another so it'll certainly be a challenge. Primary [thing] is stay out of the penalty box."

The Leafs power play is certainly due to break out soon having gone just 3-for-19 over the last seven games. All three goals in that span came against the woeful Los Angeles Kings.

McElhinney admits frustration, but understands why Leafs went with Sparks

Veteran goalie Curtis McElhinney knew it was a possibility, but that didn't make it any easier when the Leafs put him on waivers at the end of training camp opting to go with the younger Garret Sparks as Frederik Andersen's understudy this season. Tonight, McElhinney faces Toronto for the first time since then. He's hoping the inside information he garnered from practising against guys like Mitch Marner will help him.

Tonight will be the 77th NHL game for Kasper Kapanen, but his first one in Raleigh, where his dad spent most of his NHL career.

"It's going to be special, for sure," the Finn said. "I haven't been in here in close to 16 years now and it's pretty weird, but it's nostalgic. It's going to be good night."

Sami Kapanen suited up in 520 games with the Whalers/Hurricanes franchise from 1995 to 2003.

"I remember a little bit," Kapanen said. "Being in the wives' room and playing mini-sticks and being in the crowd and watching my dad play."

One of the players Kapanen recalls running into while hanging out in the dressing room is Rod Brind'Amour, now the head coach of the Hurricanes.

"He used to be running around out here with his dad in the good old days," Brind'Amour said with a smile. "It makes you feel old, that's for sure. He's a high-talent player getting his opportunity and he's cashing in."

Kapanen, who is in the final year of his entry-level deal, has eight goals and seven assists since being elevated in lineup in the season's third game. He made another big play on Monday against Columbus, springing Marner with a long pass leading to the tying goal by John Tavares.

But he's still pushing to be better.

"I'm not happy to just stay where I am right now," he said. "I feel like I can get better and I feel like me, [Nazem Kadri and Patrick Marleau] can get better."

Head coach Mike Babcock met with Kapanen this week to go over areas where the speedster can improve.



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"Just holding on to pucks," he said. "Using my body a bit more. I'm a decently big-sized body and I got to hold on to pucks ... just all-around be a bit better and I think I can do that."

Brind'Amour sees a lot of similarities between father and son.

"He doesn't quite skate like Sami, no one really does, but it's the same concept," Brind'Amour said. "I mean, you can play and you have some skill, but you can skate and that's a huge advantage."

The elder Kapanen twice won the fastest skater competition at the NHL all-star game. So, who would win a race: Sami in his prime or Kasperri right now?

"Good question," the 22-year-old Kapanen said. "I'd like to find out, but I don't think that's possible these days. Me and my dad talk about it, we joke around about it. I think if we skated from goal line to goal line, he says I'd be faster there. But if we were skating around the rink, he has smaller legs and quicker legs, so I think he'd be faster in the corners. It'd be interesting to see."

Raleigh return: Who'd win a race between Sami and Kasperri Kapanen?

Wednesday will be Kasperri Kapanen's 77th NHL game, but his first in Raleigh where his dad Sami Kapanen played most of his career. Kasperri spent a good chunk of his childhood growing up around the Hurricanes and admits it's weird to return to the building as a member of the opposition. He also used the occasion to reflect on who would be faster: his dad in his prime or him right now?

Carolina is averaging the most shots on net per game (40.3) in the NHL, but the team ranks last in the Eastern Conference in goals per game (2.6). The Hurricanes shooting percentage (5.72) ranks 30th in the league.

"There are teams with good shooting percentages and there's a reason, because they get high-quality chances and they have high-quality scorers, who can put the puck in the net," said Hurricanes captain Justin Williams. "We don't have the luxury of having a 50-goal scorer on our team, so we work our butts off for every opportunity we get and we need to work on getting seconds and thirds."

That said, you can certainly understand why the Hurricanes would be interested in someone like William Nylander, Toronto's restricted free agent. While Nylander recorded 61 points in each of his first two full seasons in the NHL, the Hurricanes only have two players (Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen) on pace to reach 60 points this season.

How is the Nylander trade speculation playing in Carolina's room?

"It hasn't dominated attention in this area," Williams said with a chuckle. "This is the first time anyone's asked me about it. We live in an area here where we don't have as much media as we have in the room today. Obviously, it's a big story in the NHL, absolutely, and one that will rectify itself, I'm imagining, soon. But I don't really have a comment on it."

Quiet in Carolina: Williams insists Nylander is off the radar

The William Nylander contract stalemate is a huge story in Toronto with trade speculation ramping up as the Dec. 1 deadline to sign the restricted free agent draws closer. The Hurricanes are often linked to the discussions, but Carolina captain Justin Williams insists it's really not an issue in his team's dressing room. He notes the media corp in Raleigh is small by Canadian standards.

Zach Hyman won an offensive-zone faceoff late in the third period on Monday and seconds later tapped in a Morgan Rielly pass for the game-winning goal.

The start of the play was just as important as the end for the 26-year-old. Usually a master at winning battles and getting the puck to his teammates, Hyman struggled early in his career on face-offs. The gritty winger won just 42.9 per cent of draws last season.

"I've been working on it a lot in the off-season and then I think I started off pretty poorly on the draws and I've battled back up to around 50 per

cent now," Hyman said. "It's important, especially on the PK, when I'm trusted to win it on the right side, so it's something I've been working on."

Hyman is certainly plugged into the numbers. After Monday's game, he's up to 15-15 on penalty-kill draws and 29-29 in all situations. But that only tells part of the story. Hyman started the season 5-13 on faceoffs (27.8 per cent) but in the last 12 games, Hyman actually leads the Leafs in faceoff percentage going 24-16 (60 per cent).

Some work with Frederik Gauthier and Par Lindholm before practice last month may have played a role in the rise.

What has been the biggest challenge for Hyman in improving on faceoffs?

"Well, on the PK you're going against their top guys on the draws," he pointed out.

Other than that?

"Just using your body and your strength and timing it properly."

Lines at Wednesday's Leafs skate:

Hyman-Tavares-Marner

Marleau-Kadri-Kapanen

Johnsson-Lindholm-Brown

Ennis-Gauthier-Leivo

Matthews

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Ozhiganov

Marincin-Holl

Andersen starts

Sparks

Lines at Wednesday's Hurricanes skate:

McGinn-Staal-Williams

Ferland-Aho-Teravainen

Svechnikov-Wallmark-Martinook

Foegele-Rask-Di Giuseppe

Slavin-Hamilton

de Haan-Faulk

Fleury-van Riemsdyk

McElhinney starts

Darling

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TSN.CA / Ottawa home to hockey's most perplexing team

Travis Oyst



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Ottawa Senators aren't exceeding expectations. With nine wins in 21 games (and playing to an 82-point pace), the rebuilding Senators are right about where we would expect at this point in the season.

But I'm not sure anyone was banking on Ottawa icing one of the league's most fascinating teams.

Heading into American Thanksgiving, Ottawa has the most perplexing squad in the league. Offensively, the Senators have more than proven that their style of attack is effective. They seemingly send waves of agile attackers who frequently put opposing bluelines in positions of discomfort. Matt Duchene (27 points, fifth in scoring league-wide) has earned most of the attention to date, but Mark Stone (24 points), Thomas Chabot (24 points), Chris Tierney (17 points) and Ryan Dzingel (16 points) are all having impressive offensive seasons.

Ottawa's attack isn't a typical gain-the-zone-and-work-the-cycle type of offence. The Senators are much more reliant on aggressive counterattacking and rush sequences to generate scoring chances. Some of this is a result of personnel – the team has clearly tried to transition some of their forward positions to speedier players, especially on the wings. Some of this is also a result of the fact that the Sens just don't have the puck very much and are frequently bottled up in their defensive third.

At any rate, it's worked so far. The Senators are relying on converting on a high percentage of their shots, which probably won't last the full season. But any time you can post a top-five offence for this long you're probably doing something right. A look at the offensive numbers for Ottawa tabled below:

The numbers are fantastic – certainly more than Pierre Dorion, Guy Boucher or anyone else in the Ottawa organization could have realistically expected from a team in a total rebuild. Even if the shooting percentage regresses over the next 60 or so games, you should have a team that's at least average or better offensively. That alone is going to be enough to win a number of games this season.

With this kind of scoring you would figure that the Senators would be near the top of the standings, but that obviously isn't the case. As electric as the Senators have been offensively this season, they've been comparatively abysmal defensively – arguably worse, in fact.

If we flip the story to the defensive side of the equation, the table is concerning.

One way to offset a pretty productive attack is to have the worst defence in the league. It's not particularly close either – Ottawa (be it by shot or scoring-chance measures) lives in the defensive third like no other team and they bleed goals as a result.

The Sens have already conceded 88 goals, putting them on pace for 343 goals against. For a point of reference, the second-worst team from a goals-against standpoint is Vancouver, and they're on pace to give up 51 fewer goals than the Senators.

The issue is predominantly with volume. If you watch a Senators' game, the team has a difficult time transitioning the puck out of their own zone and tends to be vulnerable to excessive opponent cycles and multi-shot shifts. Even though some of these shots against come from the perimeter, Ottawa consistently does a poor job of recovering and transitioning out of the defensive third, leaving them susceptible to second-chance and rebound opportunities more often than any other team in the league.

Ottawa giving up about 68 shots per-60 minutes is more than bad. It's actually the worst number we have seen in over a decade, and that includes a handful of teams that probably weren't trying to win games – ahem, the 2014-15 Buffalo Sabres – over the full season. Ottawa, fully incentivized to win without a first-round pick, is a different animal entirely.

Here's how they compare to some of the worst defensive teams in recent history:

Since we already know the Sens are comparatively dreadful when it comes to giving up scoring chances, we can reasonably conclude the team isn't trading shot quantity for shot quality. What it is doing is leading to some ugly, crooked scores on a fairly routine basis – the Senators already have conceded five or more goals in a single game eight times this season, or 38 per cent of the time.

Their goals-against numbers are comparably concerning. Again, not just in respect to other teams around the league this season, but even in consideration of some of the leakiest teams we have seen in the last decade:

If the Senators hold this pace, they will end up conceding 3,119 shots and 343 goals. If the shots hold, it will be the biggest volume of shots conceded since at least the 1960-61 season. The current high-water mark belongs to the 1992-93 San Jose Sharks, who gave up 3,080 shots. That team, for reference, had an 11-71-2 record in 84 games.

Three hundred and forty-three goals against wouldn't nearly be as bad within a historical context, but that's largely because previous eras of hockey – specifically the 1980s – were flush with high-scoring games. That number would sit 58th overall, with the current high-water mark belonging to the expansion 1974-75 Washington Capitals at 446 goals against. The worst goals-against number in the 2000s is property of the 2005-06 Pittsburgh Penguins, who gave up 316 goals in 82 games.

There is little doubt that this type of hockey has drawn some unexpected interest in the Senators this year. The offence is electric and the defence is a disaster – a combination that lends itself to games right out of the Wayne Gretzky era.

Unfortunately for Ottawa though, the offence appears ripe for some degree of regression – they'll likely remain a strong counterattacking team, but not one that can score on more than 10 per cent of the shots they take at 5-on-5. Defensively, it's a train wreck, with shots, scoring chances, goals and general goaltending performance all equally woeful.

The Senators had to expect this to some degree. It's a rebuilding year and their blueline is very raw. With time they will improve. But right now, it's a mess – one that they'll need to clean up quickly if they want to stay in any semblance of a playoff race.

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