



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017



Gameday: Hurricanes at Blue Jackets

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

12:00 AM

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Happy Tuesday!

This is the gameday hub, where you can find all the latest news and information you need to know for tonight's Metropolitan Division match-up between the Carolina Hurricanes and Columbus Blue Jackets. Make Hurricanes.com a regular stop throughout the day, as we update this hub with notes, photos and more as puck drop draws near.

The Hurricanes will take the early ice at Nationwide Arena for a 10:30 a.m. morning skate, and we'll be rinkside to provide the latest updates.

Last updated: 12:00 a.m.

CANES FINISH NOVEMBER IN COLUMBUS

12:00 a.m.

The second month of the 2017-18 regular season draws to a close for the Carolina Hurricanes when they visit the Columbus Blue Jackets for the second time in under three weeks.

The Hurricanes head northwest for their sixth Metropolitan Division match-up of the season following a 4-3 shootout victory over the Nashville Predators on Sunday. That victory cemented a 2-2-0 record for the Hurricanes in their four-game homestand, the two wins sandwiching two disappointing losses around Thanksgiving.

Sunday's game against the Predators, who brought a four-game winning streak into the contest, was a back-and-forth affair, both teams evenly matched throughout the 60 minutes of regulation. In the shootout, Finns [Sebastian Aho](#) and [Teuvo Teravainen](#) each scored for the Canes to secure the extra point.

"I thought it was a high-end game. I think it might have been the best game we've been involved in all year between both teams. I think they're a real good team, and we're a real good team when we play properly. I thought we did that today. Both teams looked like they were dialed in. I thought it was very competitive. I thought we were physical, which

helps us," head coach Bill Peters said after the game. "A lot of good things here in the last two games."

To close out the second month of the regular season, the Canes face off with the Blue Jackets, a team against which they've compiled a 1-0-1 record this season. Two-and-a-half weeks ago, the Canes came to Columbus and skated away with two points in a 3-1 victory. [Jordan Staal](#) scored two goals, his first multi-goal game as a member of the Hurricanes, and [Cam Ward](#) made 25 saves.

The Blue Jackets were in action on Monday night in Montreal, and they fell 3-1. That loss snapped a six-game winning streak that began the day after the Canes claimed victory in Columbus on Nov. 10.

Tuesday's game in Columbus begins a stretch for the Canes in which they will play 10 of their next 13 games on the road.

CANESPR NOTES: [Justin Williams](#) is one point shy of 700 points, and [Justin Faulk](#) is one point shy of 200 points. ... The Canes have earned a point in 14 of their last 17 games against Columbus, posting a 11-3-3 record during that stretch.

CLICKS AND CLIPPINGS

Articles

- [Recap: Hurricanes Top Preds in Shootout](#)

Audio

- [CanesCast, Ep. 19](#)

Videos

- [Highlights: CAR 4, NSH 3 \(SO\)](#)
- [Postgame Quotes: Nov. 26 vs. NSH](#)

Gameday Links

- [Cool Bars: Garner](#)
- [First Goal Contest presented by Kayem](#)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017



Blue Jackets put home streak on line vs. Hurricanes

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- The Carolina Hurricanes, the last visiting team to win at Nationwide Arena, return for the second time this month to face the Columbus Blue Jackets on Tuesday night.

by [STATS](#)

5h ago • 3 min read Update 5h ago

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- The [Carolina Hurricanes](#), the last visiting team to win at Nationwide Arena, return for the second time this month to face the [Columbus Blue Jackets](#) on Tuesday night.

Since the Hurricanes' 3-1 victory on Nov. 10, the Blue Jackets have won four straight on home ice. Columbus had won six in a row overall before falling 3-1 to the Canadiens in Montreal on Monday night.

The Hurricanes will be the more rested team Tuesday after beating the Nashville Predators 4-3 in a shootout on Sunday in Raleigh, N.C. They traveled to Columbus on Monday while the Blue Jackets (15-8-1) were in Montreal for the first game of a back-to-back set.

The shootout win over the formidable Predators was much needed for the Hurricanes (10-8-4), who ended a two-game losing streak before heading out to play 10 of their next 12 games on the road.

The Hurricanes reside in seventh place in the highly competitive Metropolitan Division standings, but they have played fewer games than each of the teams ahead of them.

"Every game is big, but you don't want to slide too far and get in too big of a hole," Hurricanes center Jordan Staal said. "It was nice to get on the right side of it."

The Hurricanes were just 1-4 in overtime games before the shootout win that halted the Predators' four-game winning streak. Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen came through with goals in the shootout, and Carolina goaltender Scott Darling was strong in the net.

"That was a big game, really big, especially finishing up our homestand here and going on the road," Hurricanes forward Justin Williams said. "We know where that (playoff) line is, and we know we're beneath it. It's time to go punch in and get some points."

Williams scored a power-play goal against the Predators that gave the Hurricanes a 3-2 lead. Victor Rask also had a goal for Carolina in his second game since returning to the lineup after being a healthy scratch for two games.

"We need that out of him," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said of Rask. "We need that each and every night. He's a big part of what we do, and we need it."

Carolina is having more success than Columbus with the man advantage, scoring four power-play goals in the past four games, but the Hurricanes still rank 27th of 31 teams in the league.

The Blue Jackets have struggled all season with generating goals on their power play. They are dead last in the [NHL](#) in power-play percentage at 9.6 percent after going 0 of 5 on Monday night. In the past 15 games, they are 3 of 43 (6.9 percent).

"I am tired of dissecting our power play," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said after the loss. "We had 10 chances on the power play. (The) problem was we didn't finish. We developed a lot of scoring chances on it."

But when a team has a goaltender such as Sergei Bobrovsky playing at a high level, it offsets some of the deficiencies.

Bobrovsky took a rare loss on Monday, and he may get a night off Tuesday. Backup goalie Joonas Korpisalo could be in line to get the start against the Hurricanes.

Korpisalo hasn't started a game for Columbus since Nov. 7 against Nashville. He was sent down to Cleveland of the American Hockey League for a tune-up start on Saturday in the Monsters' 3-2 loss before he was recalled Sunday along with forward Markus Hannikainen, who also played against Texas to get some game action.

In four games for the Blue Jackets this season, Korpisalo has a 1-3-0 record with a 3.28 goals-against average and an .896 save percentage.

"If I don't play here, at least there's a place where I can play," Korpisalo said of playing for Cleveland. "Otherwise, I would be sitting here for three weeks in a row, just practicing, and that's tough. I'm glad I can do it."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017



SB NATION CANES COUNTRY

Carolina Hurricanes at Columbus Blue Jackets: Preview, Storm Advisory

The Canes come off of a shootout win on Sunday to take on a Columbus Blue Jackets team that lost last night in Montreal.

by [Andrew Ahr@andrew_ahr](#) Nov 28, 2017, 8:02am EST

Jamie Kellner

Carolina Hurricanes (10-8-4) vs Columbus Blue Jackets (15-8-1)

Tuesday, November 28, 2017 - 7:00 p.m. ET
Nationwide Arena - Columbus, OH
TV: Fox Sports Carolinas
Radio: 99.9 The Fan
Opposition coverage: [The Cannon](#)

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The [Hurricanes](#) take on yet another streaking team tonight in Columbus. Prior to their regulation loss to the [Canadiens](#) last night the Jackets had won six straight games. That streak began after a decisive Hurricanes win on November 10th in Columbus. Watch for the [Blue Jackets](#) to come out hot tonight after a flat effort last night in Montreal.

Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Blue Jackets
Record	10-8-4	15-8-1
Points	24	31
Division Rank	7 Metro	2 Metro
Conference Rank	T10 EC	T3 EC
Last 10 Games	6-3-1	6-4-0
Streak	Won 1	Lost 1
Goals/Game	2.91	2.75
Goals Against/Game	2.95	2.25
Shots/Game	35.9	33.3
Shots Against/Game	29.1	29.3
Faceoff %	52.6%	46.4%
Power Play % (Rank)	15.8% (27)	9.7% (31)
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	77.3% (T22)	84.5% (T4)
ES Corsi For %	55.43%	52.55%
ES PDO	98.6	101.2
PIM/Game	5:10	6:04

Goaltender #1

Category	Scott Darling	Sergei Bobrovsky
Record	7-6-4	14-5-1
Save %	.901	.935
GAA	2.71	1.92

Goaltender #2

Category	Cam Ward	Joonas Korpisalo
Record	3-2-0	1-3-0
Save %	.907	.896
GAA	3.03	3.27

Game Notes

- Carolina leads the series with Columbus all-time with a 17-12-3 record (31), including a 8-7-0 record on the road.
- Tonight marks the third of four games between the two sides this season. The Hurricanes have posted a 1-0-1 record against the Jackets this season, losing in overtime in PNC Arena on October 10th. The Canes exacted their revenge one month later as they took down the Blue Jackets in Columbus in regulation, with Jordan Staal scoring his first multi-goal game as a member of the Hurricanes in a 3-1 win.
- The Blue Jackets are coming off of a tough loss in Quebec last night as they battled in a tight low scoring game that remained 2-1 for almost half of the game. The Canadiens would ultimately score an empty netter to put the Jackets away late in the third. The Hurricanes will need to take advantage of a tired Columbus team tonight in order to produce a favorable result.
- The Blue Jackets' loss last night ended the longest active winning streak in the NHL as well as the team's season high winning streak.
- [Sergei Bobrovsky](#) started his 8th straight game for the Blue Jackets, dating all the way back to the November 10th matchup against the Hurricanes in Nationwide Arena. Expect to see backup [Joonas Korpisalo](#) between the pipes tonight as the Jackets complete the second matchup of a back-to-back.
- [Jeff Skinner](#) scored the lone goal in the October loss to the Blue Jackets, and enters tonight's game



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

on a six game goal drought. He has not been totally absent from the scoresheet however, posting 4 assists in the same span.

- Hurricanes center [Victor Rask](#) earned two points on Sunday afternoon after spending 2 straight games in the press box as a healthy scratch. [Has his game turned a crucial corner](#) after a disappointing start?
- Keep an eye on [Justin Williams](#), who scored Sunday and is one point away from 700 career NHL points. [Justin Faulk](#) is one point away from 200 points.

- Sergei Bobrovsky has been on fire in his six starts prior to last night (Lucky for us, he cooled off a bit in Montreal last night):
- [Avalanche](#) captain [Gabriel Landeskog](#) was assessed a four game suspension for a crosscheck on [Flames](#) player Matthew Tkachuk on Saturday. [\[NHL\]](#)
- Do you like Star Wars? Earn a chance to win a unique Star Wars T-shirt by listening to this week's CanesCast:
- Tonight's Canes Cool Bar is at the Garner Carolina Ale House. Head out for a great atmosphere for an away game and some Canes merchandise.

Storm Advisory

Victor Rask Elevating His Performance and Compete Level After Hitting Rock-Bottom

After months of being patient and hoping that Victor Rask would eventually play his way out of a debilitating slump, the Hurricanes finally put their foot down, and it may have worked.

by [Brett Finger@brettfinger](#) Nov 27, 2017, 6:33pm EST

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Jamie Kellner

On October 29, 2014, a 21-year-old [Victor Rask](#) was eight games into his rookie season in the NHL. He had zero points and his team was 0-6-2, fresh off of a loss that marked the merciful end to a devastating, winless opening month of the 2014-15 season, a monumental disaster that made their goal of breaking a five-year playoff drought unfathomable.

20 months later, he put pen to paper on a contract extension that guaranteed him \$24 million and six years of job security, making him an integral cornerstone of a team viewed as having massive upside and an undeniably bright future.

16 months later, his coaches, now looking to avoid the team's looming nine-year playoff drought, determined that the team would be better with him watching the game instead of playing in it and he was removed from the lineup ahead of a must-win game.

That was nine days ago.

Where are we today? Well, Victor Rask had a two-point game yesterday, earning first star honors and acting as a key cog in the machine that defeated one of the league's best teams. After two consecutive losses, that, too, was a must-win hockey game for his [Carolina Hurricanes](#).

You could say a lot of things about Rask's young NHL career, but you can't say it has been uneventful.

You could also say a lot of things about Rask's play over the past ten months, in which case "uneventful" would be a tragically appropriate descriptor.

He hasn't always been that way, though... at least not with regards to his production. An expectation-exceeding start to his 2016-17 campaign erased any lingering doubts surrounding his substantial payday during the preceding offseason.

At the 42-game mark, Rask had 32 points, and while the Hurricanes were on the outside looking in at a playoff spot, it was difficult to place any of the blame on the third-year center as he had formed a dangerous duo with [Jeff Skinner](#), who was on pace to eclipse the 30-goal mark for the third time in his career.

Skinner kept pace and even improved late in the season. Rask did not.

The combination that gave the Hurricanes a legitimate chance of competing every night fell apart, seemingly out of nowhere. The duo followed up a five-game stretch in which they combined for 14 points with a goose egg in the next six.

From there on, the Rask-Skinner connection faded away and the Ryan-Skinner connection formed in its place. Skinner then went on a rampant scoring tear through the end of the year, capping it off with 14 goals in 14 games. Rask, meanwhile, experienced the worst extended scoring slump of his career as he tallied just 13 total points in his final 40 games of the season and endured a dreadful 14-game point drought from January 14 to February 21.

In the second week of April, the Hurricanes were watching the first round of the playoffs on their televisions for the eighth straight season. Coupled with a truly incompetent goalie tandem, offensive consistency failed Carolina as they finished with the league's 20th-ranked offense despite Skinner finishing sixth on the NHL goal-scoring shortlist.

It's tough to be a good hockey team in the NHL, and losing a top-six centerman halfway through the season can make it damn-near impossible, especially when you don't have guys in line who are ready to fill in and do so competently.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

The Hurricanes lost a top-six centerman at the halfway point a season ago. Though, it wasn't due to an injury or a trade. It was due to an unforeseen vanishing act from Victor Rask, Carolina's newly appointed third-highest paid forward.

A 40-game stretch of disappointing hockey, while never dismissable for a player with Rask's talent and cap hit, was not bad enough to totally write him off entering a new season, at least not according to the coaching staff.

From every indication we were given, that second-half slump in '16-17 wasn't going to rear its ugly head again in '17-18. Canes' bench boss Bill Peters said that their end-of-season individual meeting went well and that Rask was ready to work hard and have a bounce-back season as a fourth-year NHLer.

Weeks later, in poetic fashion, he was tremendous in the World Championships, helping his native Sweden win a gold medal, thus legitimizing much of what Peters said in April. He finished with seven points in ten tournament games, good for second on the team.

Victor Rask SOG and assist in the third period vs. Germany. (2017 IIHF World Championships) [@brettfinger](#) Victor Rask goal in the first period vs. Italy. (2017 IIHF World Championships) [@brettfinger](#)

In those two gifs, you see Rask do things that he hasn't done in a Hurricanes sweater in a long time - he holds onto the puck, drives to the middle of the ice, and fires the puck on net with authority. One play results in a rebound goal for [Gabriel Landeskog](#) and the other nearly ripped a hole right through the twine in the top-left corner of the net.

Maybe it was the larger ice surface, or the setting, or his teammates, or any number of factors that could have worked its way into his game, but this was not the player that was wearing red and black just a month and a half earlier.

Ultimately, the reasons for his success were irrelevant as long as Rask's uptick in production and rediscovered confidence during the international tournament could carry over to the North American ice surface.

The early results were promising.

On opening night, Carolina's #49 came through during a huge stage in the game, ripping a one-timer home to give his team a late third-period lead.

A good opening night was just that, though, a *good opening night*.

In the 17 games thereafter, the optimism surrounding Rask quickly evaporated as it became wholly apparent that last season's issues never truly went away. He, again, was a shell of the player that earned a long-term contract and looked like a long-term staple in the top-six and on the powerplay.

The young top-six center signed to a bargain of a long-term contract turned into a player who seemingly did not care about the outcome of any given hockey game he played in, straying away from good hockey habits and instead staying at the perimeter of the offensive zone, not hustling on the backcheck, playing half-hearted defense, getting into scoring areas on rare occasion, and wasting those rare opportunities

with a lack creativity, consistently flicking the puck directly into the goalie's chest.

Throughout the process, the Hurricanes' coaching staff was patient, either trusting that Rask would magically correct the months of poor play and absence of effort on his own or perhaps realizing that they had no other option but to keep him in the lineup. Then, following a narrow win in Buffalo wherein Rask saw 11:50 of ice time, his lowest number in two years, the staff's reasoning to stick with him for so long became irrelevant, and their patience had worn too thin.

Victor Rask had finally reached rock-bottom and the coach decided to send his message.

Just two hours prior to Carolina's November 19 matchup against the [Islanders](#), Bill Peters was asked what would need to happen in order to get his Swedish center going.

"We're going to look at it some more and try and find a solution to that problem that we have," Peters said. "If we can do that, we'll become a much more balanced team and a much more dangerous team."

The solution was to get him off of the ice.

With the struggling center sitting in the press box, the Hurricanes won a game they desperately needed to win in order to keep pace in the Metropolitan Division.

A couple of nights later, the Canes followed up that big win with a blowout loss to a Rangers team with which they were neck-and-neck in the division standings. The stunning loss sent Bill Peters back to the drawing board and spelled the return of Victor Rask.

Instead of starting Rask in a small role and going from there, Peters threw him right back into the mix in the top-nine. He started out centering a line with [Brock McGinn](#) and [Elias Lindholm](#) on the wings at even strength and was back on the second powerplay unit.

I don't think you ever really know how a player will respond to getting sat out for any stretch of time due to their performance. Each player responds in a different way - sitting out could make them angry, inspired, motivated, or determined to prove their doubters wrong. It could also crush any confidence that they had left.

It was anyone's guess as to what category Rask would fall into. It was a risky move by Peters, but he was seemingly out of options and had to make a statement of some kind. This wasn't an X's and O's problem. His prolonged stay in the realm of mediocrity wasn't a result of a bad corsi share or a little bit of bad luck. It was a between the ears problem through-and-through.

The wrench that was thrown into this particular situation is how long these issues have lingered, the increasingly decreased level of interest from the player, and the importance of his production as a top-six forward.

For those reasons, all eyes were on Rask from the getgo, and everyone watching him would be in for a show.

In his first period of game action in six days, he was often the Hurricanes' most noticeable player with regards to his



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

intensity level and the quality scoring opportunities he was involved in.

An early powerplay gave the Canes a chance to be in a very advantageous position, and Rask was on the ice to take the offensive zone faceoff.

He won the faceoff, hustled to a puck in the corner to break up the clearing attempt, and created room for Jeff Skinner to move the puck low to high.

Victor Rask hustles to break up clearing chance on CAR powerplay vs. Toronto (11/24). [@brettfinger](#). *Gif captured from Fox Sports Go stream.*

From there, the Hurricanes set up in their powerplay formation. Rask camped himself out in front of the net, controlling that area in the low slot as the perimeter players of the Hurricanes' umbrella formation rotated and moved the puck up top.

[Noah Hanifin](#) made a great read and used his top-tier skating ability to move in down the left wing, curled around and found Rask all alone in front.

Noah Hanifin skates down the left wing, finds Victor Rask alone in the slot vs. Toronto (11/24). [@brettfinger](#)

Andersen comes up with a big save, but Rask looks engaged in this play from start to finish.

As Hanifin slides up, Rask backs up to the tops of the circles. When he sees Hanifin create space and the potential for a passing lane to open, he goes right back to the top of the crease, creating separation from his man and finding a soft spot in the d-zone coverage. It would've been great for him to get a goal there, but these are big steps forward for the Swede.

Late in the first frame, Rask got yet another grade-A chance. This time, Frederick Andersen made the save of the game.

Victor Rask gets open, rips a one-time shot on goal vs. Toronto. (11/24) [@brettfinger](#)

This is great puck movement from [Sebastian Aho](#) and [Teuvo Teravainen](#), per usual, but Rask isn't a bystander in this play. He is reading his teammates and playing off of them, sagging to his offside, making room for himself, and putting himself in an ideal one-time position.

Again, this would have been a big goal had he been able to finish, but the fact that he is putting himself in these positions to score is already a huge step in the right direction for him.

The Toronto game was about laying the groundwork. Rask showed effort, smarts, and executed at a level that he hadn't been within shouting distance of all season.

As I said earlier with regards to his strong opening night performance, a good game is only that, a good game. He needs to make high effort plays, good reads, and consistent

execution of plays a habit that he carries in and out of every game.

He took another step in the right direction against the [Nashville Predators](#) on Sunday.

The matinee was huge for the Hurricanes. They had lost two straight and were in danger of putting themselves behind the eight-ball on the heels of a long month of December with ten of 15 games coming on the road.

One week after being held out of a must-win game, he not only played in a must-win game, he was a difference maker. In the second period, down 2-1 to a dominant Western Conference club, of course, it was Rask who tied things up.

Victor Rask scores rebound goal vs. Nashville. (11/26) [@brettfinger](#)

Brock McGinn works the puck low to high, [Noah Hanifin](#) wasted no time getting the puck on net, and Victor Rask hammered home the rebound, a huge goal in the second half of the middle frame.

He also pitched in with a secondary assist on [Justin Williams'](#) third-period tally and the Hurricanes would go on to win in shootout.

After countless months of wondering if Rask would get back to the level he is capable of playing at, he played at that level and was a standout performer in each of Carolina's weekend games.

He had his chances, and while he didn't convert on all of them, the fact that he is getting himself into dangerous scoring areas on a regular basis is a consolation prize that the team will gladly accept. After watching him play the way he has for the better part of the past year, baby steps are fine, as long as the improvement is there and the compete level is visible, which it undoubtedly was against Toronto and Nashville.

Bottom line, Victor Rask can't be a pedestrian. He is far too talented to stand around the perimeter of the offensive zone and not put forth the effort necessary to make a big play or score a timely goal, and he should be far too competitive to lollygag on the backcheck as his opponents rush down the ice for scoring opportunities.

He is a highly skilled center with a great shot, a big frame, remarkable vision, a skill set that rivals most top-six centers in the league and, when he wants to, he can influence the outcome of a hockey game in a variety of ways.

If these past two games were a sign of things to come, getting healthy scratched may have been the wake-up call that finally gets Rask to turn a corner. If that's the case, we are about to see a very different player, one who is dialed in, competitive, and really damn good at hockey.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017



Hometown Weekly Report: November 27

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: November 27, 2017

The Checkers finally returned to Bojangles' Coliseum last week for an action-packed holiday week, taking five of a possible eight points from Belleville and Providence.

Charlotte's home stand continues this week with contests Friday and Sunday against the Springfield Thunderbirds.

Week in Review

Team Statistics

- Overall record 12-8-1
- Home record 4-3-1
- Road record 8-5-0
- Last week's record 2-1-1
- Last 10 games 4-5-1
- Division Standings 5th
- Conference Standings 7th
- League Standings 10th

Checkers 4, Belleville 2

Returning home after a long road trip, the Checkers shook off an early deficit to right their losing ways and top the Belleville Senators. Charlotte found itself in a hole right off the bat thanks to a pair of Senators goals within the first three minutes of play. A point blast from Brenden Kichton quickly cut that lead in half, then a snipe by Aleksii Saarela late in the second evened the score heading into the final 20 minutes of regulation. The Checkers kept their feet on the gas and completed their comeback in the third, with Saarela ripping his second of the night past Belleville netminder Chris Driedger midway through the frame and Janne Kuokkanen putting home a late empty netter to seal the deal. Alex Nedeljkovic got back into the win column between the pipes with 21 saves on the night. [Full recap](#)

Belleville 5, Checkers 2

The next night's rematch didn't go as well for the Checkers. The Senators once again found the back of the net early on in regulation, though Roland McKeown was able to draw the score back even with his second goal of the season late in

the same frame. Belleville responded back in the second with a pair of goals in the middle frame and headed into the third with a lead despite a Mike Ferrantino tally in the waning moments. The Checkers pushed hard for the equalizer in the third, more than doubling the Senators up in shots during the frame, but they couldn't find a way to the back of the net. Max Reinhart netted his second of the night to give the visitors a cushion in the third, then Max McCormick put the final nail in the coffin with an empty net dagger in the final minute, clinching a 5-2 win for Belleville. [Full recap](#)

Checkers 8, Providence 2

Back on the ice after a quick Thanksgiving break, the Checkers used their power play to propel them to a blowout win over the Providence Bruins. The visitors struck first early in the second, but the Checkers would respond with eight unanswered goals, three of which came on the man advantage and five of which came in a big third period. Last year's AHL MVP Kenny Agostino found the back of the net late in regulation, but it was too little, too late and the Checkers rolled their way to a lopsided 8-2 victory. [Full recap](#)

Providence 2, Checkers 1 (SO)

The Checkers closed out a busy week with an extremely tight rematch against the Bruins that didn't resemble the previous night's bloodbath at all. The Checkers finally found themselves opening the scoring for a change, with Nicolas Roy throwing one in late in the first to trigger the annual Teddy Bear Toss. The Bruins answered shortly after and that would conclude the scoring in regulation. In overtime for the first time, the Checkers couldn't create much but kept the visitors at bay and the game proceeded to a shootout. After no goals in the first three rounds pushed things to sudden death, both sides lit the lamp in round four. Warren Foegele was then denied in the fifth round, setting up Ryan Fitzgerald to pick up the two points for his team with a quick wrister to the back of the net. Despite only picking up one point in the standings, Jeremy Smith was stellar between the pipes, making 40 stops in 65 minutes of play. [Full recap](#)

Three Stars Of The Week

- **3rd Star Nicolas Roy** 1g, 3a
- **2nd Star Aleksii Saarela** 3g, 0a
- **1st Star Janne Kuokkanen** 1g, 4a



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Notables

FROM THE BOOTH TO THE BENCH

Sunday's game introduced a bit of a twist to the Checkers' goalie situation. After winning the previous night's game, Alex Nedeljkovic was unable to dress due to an illness, leaving Jeremy Smith as the only netminder on the Charlotte roster. Needing another body, head coach Mike Vellucci turned to Checkers broadcaster Jason Shaya, who plays recreationally and often fills in between the pipes for Checkers' practices but had never suited up for an AHL game. Shaya donned a jersey and served as Smith's backup for the game, becoming just the second emergency goaltender to dress for Charlotte during the team's AHL tenure.

MORE FINNS, MORE WINS

- Cyber Monday Deals [Read More](#)

Last Week's News

- [Notebook: Back Home, Back On Track](#)
- [Holiday Gift Drive](#)
- [Checkers Recall Didier From Florida](#)

The Checkers' biggest offensive push as of late has come from the duo of countrymen in Aleksii Saarela and Janne Kuokkanen.

Saarela's deadly shot was first introduced during his late stint in Charlotte last season, but the forward's play as of late has shown that was no fluke. He had three goals in four games last week, bringing his total up to seven on the year, the third-highest total on the team. Kuokkanen has operated more on the playmaking side of things during his time with the Checkers, posting eight assists and 11 points in his first 12 AHL regular season games, including five points in four games during last week's home stand.

The two have been especially productive when playing alongside each other, as Kuokkanen picked up the primary assist on each of Saarela's three goals last week and Saarela was on the ice for all five of Kuokkanen's points.

ROY WOWS

After just notching four points in his first 10 games this season and serving as a healthy extra at one point, Nicolas Roy seems to have found his footing as of late. The rookie has exploded for eight points in the nine games following that slump, including a pair of multi-assist games in his last four games to give him five points over that stretch.

A fourth-round pick by Carolina in 2015, Roy now ranks fifth on the team in scoring and sits just one point behind Warren Foegele for the rookie lead.

CARRICK HELPS OUT

As one of the team's most dependable defenseman, Trevor Carrick has shouldered a heavy load of minutes lately and continues to produce on the offensive end as well.

After bouncing in and out of the lineup due to a recall and an

injury early in the year, Carrick has settled into a groove on the Charlotte blue line and has notched eight assists over his last nine games. That surge not only puts Carrick as the team's top scoring defenseman, but ties him for 10th among league blue liners with 12 points this season.

Carrick, who recently became the franchise's all-time highest-scoring defenseman, is just four away from matching his point total from all of last year. His career high is 42 points, set during 2015-16.

Ranks

- Valentin Zykov is tied for sixth in the AHL in goals and is tied for the league lead in power-play goals
- Warren Foegele is tied for the AHL lead in shorthanded goals and points, is tied for second among league rookies in goals and tied for ninth among rookies in scoring
- Nicolas Roy tied for third in the AHL in shorthanded goals
- Alex Nedeljkovic is tied for third in the AHL in wins
- Trevor Carrick is tied for 10th among AHL defensemen in scoring, tied for sixth in assists and tied for second in power-play assists

INJURIES

- Jake Chelios missed 12 games starting Nov. 3
- Lucas Wallmark missed nine games starting Nov. 10
- Valentin Zykov missed three games starting Nov. 22
- Dennis Robertson missed three games from Nov. 18 to Nov. 22
- Jake Chelios missed two games starting Nov. 25

Transactions

Incoming

- None

Outgoing

- None

Coming Up

- **Friday, Dec. 1 at 7:15 pm - Checkers vs. Springfield**
- **Sunday, Dec. 3 at 1 pm - Checkers vs. Springfield**

By the Numbers

CATEGORY	RECORD	AHL RANK	LAST WEEK
Power play	21.6%	t-2nd	t-7th
Penalty kill	84.2%	12th	t-10th
Goals per game	3.62	3rd	3rd



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Shots per game	28.86	20th	23rd
Goals allowed per game	3.14	18th	19th
Shots allowed per game	29.14	13th	15th
Penalty minutes per game	12.67	9th	9th

CATEGORY	LEADER(S)
Points	Andrew Miller (16), Valentin Zykov, Lucas Wallmark (15)
Goals	Valentin Zykov (10), Warren Foegele (9), Aleksii Saarela (7)
Assists	Lucas Wallmark, Trevor Carrick (11), Andrew Miller (10)
Power play goals	Valentin Zykov (6)

Shorthanded goals	Warren Foegele (3)
Game-winning goals	Warren Foegele, Valentin Zykov, Andrew Poturalski (2)
Shots on goal	Andrew Poturalski (40), Trevor Carrick, Warren Foegele (36)
Penalty minutes	Zack Stortini (42), Trevor Carrick (27), Patrick Brown (25)
Plus/minus	Philip Samuelsson (+12), Lucas Wallmark, Patrick Brown, Roland McKeown (+7)
Wins	Alex Nedeljkovic (9)
Goals-against average	Alex Nedeljkovic (2.56)
Save percentage	Alex Nedeljkovic (.904)



Rask Gets Bounce-Back Game he Needed

By [Mark Shiver](#) November 27th, 2017

34

SHARES

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The Nashville Predators came calling on the Carolina Hurricanes Sunday, and the game turned out nicely for Victor Rask. The Hurricanes center has been struggling with his game, dating all the way back to last season, and was actually benched by head coach Bill Peters for two games. There was even some mild [speculation that Rask might be on the auction block](#) as a player the 'Canes were willing to trade. When the final horn sounded later Sunday afternoon, Rask had been awarded the game's first star.

Rask: "It's nice to be out there."

After the game, Peters said that making the decision to sit a player is not an easy one, but Rask seems to have responded. After noting that Rask had been a plus three against Toronto, Peters said,

"He was plus one again tonight with a goal and an assist, right. So, we need that out of him, we need that each and every night. That's part of being a pro. He's a big part of what we do, and we need him."

Rask is a big part of the Hurricanes, and if he can regain whatever it was that he had missing since last season, it will be a big lift for the team. Many people were of the opinion

that general manager Ron Francis should have gone out and gotten a scoring center during the off-season. I don't disagree, however, if Rask can play to his ability, that need will be a lot less glaring.

I spoke with Rask after the game and asked him how he felt having to sit out a couple of games.

"I wasn't playing well, so you know, it's tough to be on the side," Rask said. "We're a really good team with a lot of good players and everyone wants to play, so you have to play your best all the time."

I asked Rask if he could tell a difference coming back after sitting out and he said that, while it's only been two games, he feels good and has been skating well, and that it is nice to be out there.

Two Teams, Opposite Ends

The Predators are one of the better teams in the NHL. They attracted 11,133 in their Sunday matinee contest with the Hurricanes. The Western Conference's representative in the 2017 Stanley Cup Finals, is having what has become a typical season. They came into Raleigh's PNC Arena with a 14-6-2 record, their 30 points placing them in third place in the Central Division behind the St. Louis Blues and the Winnipeg Jets. On paper, the [Predators should dominate the division](#). On the other hand, the Hurricanes were looking for a chance to redeem the week, which saw them get blown out



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

by the New York Rangers, 6-1, and lose to the Toronto Maple Leafs, 5-4.

Prior to the game, the Hurricanes record was 9-8-4, with 22 points. The team sat three slots back in the Wild Card race, five points behind the Pittsburgh Penguins who, at 27 points, held the second Wild Card position. Both teams are having typical seasons, thus far. The Predators are winning regularly and are expected to make the playoffs. The Hurricanes are winning sporadically, and their frustrated fans are hoping yet again that their team will make the playoffs. Sadly for hockey in Carolina over the past several years, the more things have changed, the more they have stayed the same.

The Hurricanes need better, more consistent play all across their roster. Rask is no exception. If they are ever going to break through the barrier of mediocrity and build a program such as the Predators' that can count on winning as a norm instead of losing, then players like Rask, Jeff Skinner, and Justin Faulk need to be legitimate threats every time they are on the ice.

Rask Takes a Step Forward

With the Predators not playing Pekka Rinne against the Hurricanes, but instead starting backup goalie, Juuse Saros, the path to the net should have been a little wider. And for

the most part, it was, with the Hurricanes getting three goals in regulation. One of those was this greasy goal from Rask, who was at the right place at the right time to score:

This is the kind of thing that Rask has to have at the front of his mind, get in front of the net and fight for those goals shot from right in front. [Peters calls them "greasy goals"](#) or dirty goals, and they are the type of goal that is not easily scored, but essential for a team to win consistently. Rask will find his game much easier by working hard and going to the net, than by bombing away from the blue line.

Rask also got an assist on this power play goal by Justin Williams:

In the end, Saros did okay standing in for Rinne but was no match for the Hurricanes in the shootout. The 4-3 loss still gave a point to the Predators, but more importantly, the Hurricanes got the two points they had to have from that game. They don't worry if a Western Conference foe gets a point at this stage of the season, but they do have to get all of the points they possibly can, from all their games.

The Predators won't give Rask a second thought. But, having a good game is a good start for Rask. He needs to build on good games, one after the other until he is back in form completely and even better. Peters is right in saying that the team needs him.

TriangleSportsNetwork

Hurricanes come up 4-3 shootout winners over Predators

November 27, 2017 Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – First Sebastian Aho, then Teuvo Teravainen netted shootout goals that finalized the Carolina Hurricanes' 4-3 win over the Nashville Predators at PNC Arena on Sunday afternoon.

Josh Jooris, Victor Rask, and Justin Williams tallied goals for the Hurricanes in regulation before the Finns' heroics claimed the second point and win for goaltender Scott Darling who made 32 saves throughout.

Viktor Arvidsson, Mattias Ekholm, and Craig Smith fueled the Nashville offense in front of netminder Juuse Saros who faced 36 shots from Carolina.

"I thought it was a high-end game," Carolina head coach Bill Peters said.

"I think it might have been the best game we've been involved in all year between both teams."

—

[Boxscore – NHL GameCenter \(NHL.com\)](#)

—

It was a back-and-forth affair as Peters predicted would be with two strong puck-possession teams off the draw.

The Hurricanes claimed a razor-thin edge in faceoffs – winning 51 percent with Jordan Staal (65%), Rask (60%), and Elias Lindholm (55%) leading the way over the dots.

The score was tied after one period following the game-opening five-hole slider from Jooris at 3:37, and the masterful stick-handling prowess of Arvidsson past Canes D-man Noah Hanifin and top-shelf finish over Darling 12 minutes later.

Ekholm gave Nashville the 2-1 lead on the power play at the 10:37 mark of the second before Rask tucked in a rebound following Lindholm's tip towards Saros a minute later for his fourth of the season.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

With the score even at two apiece to start the third, Williams converted for Carolina on the power play at 5:49 – the lone tally on four man-advantage opportunities earned throughout the game for the Hurricanes.

Smith's eighth goal of the season pulled both teams even once more in regulation.

Skating to a scoreless overtime which included a critical penalty kill for the Hurricanes, the stage was set for the thrilling shootout finish.

Saros stopped Brock McGinn, but Darling denied opportunities from Kyle Turris and Filip Forsberg following Aho's elusive wrist shot that gave Carolina the advantage.

With the chance to finish it off, the red-hot Teravainen roofed the puck under the crossbar for his first career shootout goal that [ended the Hurricanes' recent home stand with a win.](#)

"Turbo's been so hot," Peters said.

"Turbo's been outstanding offensively, his compete level's been improved from last year to this year, and that's what allows him to be successful. His skill level is undeniable."

Notables: Rask scored a goal and notched an assist (1g, 1a) for his third multi-point game of the season... Carolina was 1-for-4 on the power play tonight and is 12-for-76 (15.8%) on the man-advantage this season. The Hurricanes were 1-for-2 on the penalty kill and are 41-for-53 (77.4%) on the kill this season... The Hurricanes are 8-1-1 this season when scoring first... Carolina now holds an 8-1-3-1 mark in 13 games against Nashville at PNC Arena.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-carolina-hurricanes-vs-columbus-blue-jackets/c-293410386>

<https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/blue-jackets-put-home-streak-on-line-vs-hurricanes/>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2017/11/28/16706518/carolina-hurricanes-at-columbus-blue-jackets-preview-storm-advisory-how-to-watch>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2017/11/27/16703738/victor-rask-returning-to-form-after-hitting-rock-bottom-carolina-hurricanes-bill-peters-maple-leafs>

<http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/hometown-weekly-report-november-27>

<https://thehockeywriters.com/victor-rask-hurricanes-bounce-back-game/>

<http://trianglesportsnet.com/carolina-hockey-network/hurricanes-come-4-3-shootout-winners-predators/>

SportScan

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

1085443 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets: Bobrovsky named NHL's second star after outstanding week

By Scott Davis The Columbus Dispatch

Posted at 1:03 PM

Updated at 1:03 PM

Blue Jackets goalie Sergei Bobrovsky has been named the NHL's second star of the week after a stellar three-game stretch last week.

Vegas center Jonathan Marchessault was named first star and Washington winger Alexander Ovechkin was the third star.

Bobrovsky earned wins against Buffalo, Calgary and Ottawa from Nov. 20-24 while recording a 1.32 goals-against average and .950 save percentage. He stopped 76 of 80 shots, including all 22 in a 1-0 overtime win against the Flames on Wednesday.

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The two-time Vezina Trophy winner, who is bidding to become the first goalie to claim the honor in back-to-back seasons since Martin Brodeur won the third and fourth of his career in 2006-07 and 2007-08, has won six consecutive starts since Nov. 11. During that span, he has posted a 0.98 goals-against average, .967 save percentage (172 saves on 178 shots) and two shutouts.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

For the season, the 29-year-old is 14-4-1 with 1.91 goals-against, .936 save percentage and three shutouts. He leads the NHL in goals-against average and save percentage, is tied for first in shutouts and ranks second in wins.

Bobrovsky won his second Vezina after going 41-17-5 with a 2.06 goals-against average, .931 save percentage and seven shutouts in 2016-17. He is the Jackets' all-time leader in wins (153).

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085444 Columbus Blue Jackets

Canadiens 3, Blue Jackets 1 | Jackets' power-play futility hurts in loss

By Steve Gorten

Posted Nov 27, 2017 at 11:04 PM

Updated Nov 27, 2017 at 11:04 PM

MONTREAL — The Blue Jackets have managed to thrive thus far despite owning the NHL's worst power play, but Monday night that weakness was glaring.

They really could have used a power-play goal — just one — as they tried to rally from a putrid first period. But they came up empty again, and again, and again, and again and again.

The Jackets were 0-for-5 on power plays and couldn't overcome a two-goal deficit in a 3-1 loss to the Canadiens at the Bell Centre. The loss snapped the Jackets' season-high six-game winning streak.

"We allowed two goals in the first (period), and that's what really got us," said Pierre-Luc Dubois, who scored with 3:52 left before the second intermission to pull the Jackets within one goal heading into the final period. "We fought back, but it was a little too late."

"Whenever you go down 2-0, it's a hard league to fight your way back from that," defenseman Zach Werenski added. "We just didn't have enough tonight."

The Canadiens tacked on an empty-netter late to avenge a 2-1 overtime loss to Columbus two weeks earlier. The Jackets, who came in with just six power-play goals on 62 chances (9.7 percent) this season, couldn't beat goalie Carey Price with an extra man Monday.

"We had quite a few opportunities," winger Boone Jenner said. "They got one and we didn't. It's just about finding a way to get it done. In these games, the special teams are crucial. When you have a chance, you have to bury it."

"We were close," Werenski said. "I think we did everything but score — a lot of shots, crossbar."

The Jackets trailed 2-0 after the first period, and the deficit would have been worse if not for goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, who made multiple saves to mask turnovers from his teammates.

The Canadiens scored on their first two shots on goal — Brendan Gallagher's unassisted blast to the far post from the right circle at 3:11 and Jonathan Drouin's power-play slapper from the left dot past a screened Bobrovsky into the top right corner at 8:10.

Both of the Canadiens' power plays in the first period came courtesy of David Savard. The Jackets defenseman, who grew up about an hour's drive from Montreal, was sent to the box at 8:03 for holding, and then again 96 seconds later for interference.

The Jackets received three power plays of their own in the opening eight-plus minutes of the second period. They came up empty on each chance against Price, who posted a 36-save shutout Saturday to snap the Canadiens' five-game losing streak in his first game back from a lower-body injury that cost him 10 games.

But then Dubois finally broke through. Josh Anderson drove hard to the net and was denied at the left post, which left the puck lying on the goal line for Dubois to stick in.

The Jackets outshot the Canadiens 17-8 in the second period after an 11-6 advantage by the home team the opening 20 minutes.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085445 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets | As injured players return, decisions loom

By Steve Gorten

Posted Nov 27, 2017 at 9:55 PM

Updated Nov 27, 2017 at 10:12 PM

MONTREAL — Center Alexander Wennberg, who missed his sixth consecutive game Monday despite making the trip, could return to the Blue Jackets' lineup as early as Tuesday at home against the Carolina Hurricanes.

With Wennberg's return from an upper-body injury imminent, and with winger Matt Calvert creeping closer to coming off injured reserve — both skated at the Bell Centre in the morning — coach John Tortorella has lineup decisions upcoming, notably whether to leave rookie Pierre-Luc Dubois at center and move captain Nick Foligno back to wing.

"The wild card in our lines in all this, if we get healthy, is going to be Luc," Tortorella said before Monday's game. "Can he play center? And we have to judge that each day as it goes by."

Tortorella said the Jackets had planned on waiting until after Christmas to try Dubois at center, but were "forced" to do so earlier.

"He stepped right in and wasn't afraid of the position, wasn't afraid of the responsibility, and that has actually been a pretty good line," Tortorella said. "I'm impressed with Luc and how he has handled things thrown at him quicker than we thought would be thrown at him."

Tortorella said he doesn't know if it would benefit Foligno to move back to his natural position, but "I think if he had his druthers, he would play wing." As comfortable as Dubois has looked at center, Tortorella added, he is cautious about putting the 19-year-old in a pressure position where he is relied on there, especially should Dubois eventually struggle.

Of his forward combinations, Tortorella noted, "You're still going to change your lines, but I'd like to get at least two guys with each line playing together. I don't want to blow up all the lines."

Bobrovsky honored

Hours before making his eighth consecutive start, Blue Jackets goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky was named the NHL's Second Star of the Week for this past week. Former Jackets center Jonathan Marchessault, now with the Vegas Golden Knights, was the First Star.

In wins against the Sabres, Flames and Senators, Bobrovsky had a 1.32 goals-against average and .950 save percentage. Foligno said the two-time Vezina Trophy winner has been "in a zone."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

"He has found what works for him consistently," Foligno said. "You can just see it in him. He's so confident in himself as a pro now."

Korpisalo stays patient

Backup goalie Joonas Korpisalo, who has made just four starts this season, said he benefited from recent reassignments to the team's AHL affiliate in Cleveland.

"I got lucky that I could go and get some games," Korpisalo said. "In practice, you can get some things done, but it's completely different when you get in a game."

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085446 Columbus Blue Jackets

DuBois scores in Jackets 3-1 loss to Canadiens

AP

Nov 27, 2017 at 11:03p ET

MONTREAL (AP) — Carey Price made 37 saves, Brendan Gallagher got his 10th goal and the Montreal Canadiens ended the Columbus Blue Jackets' six-game winning streak with a 3-1 victory Monday night.

Jonathan Drouin scored in the first period and Andrew Shaw had an empty-net goal for Montreal in Price's second straight victory since returning from injury.

Rookie Pierre-Luc Dubois scored for the Blue Jackets, who lost for the first time since Nov. 10. Sergei Bobrovsky had allowed just six goals on Columbus' winning streak but gave up two on 27 shots.

It was the second regulation loss for the Blue Jackets in 10 games against Atlantic Division opponents this season.

Coming off a 3-0 win against Buffalo on Saturday, the Canadiens picked up where they left off.

Montreal scored on its first two shots against Bobrovsky, the league leader in save percentage and goals-against average.

Gallagher capitalized on a giveaway by Cam Atkinson for the first at 3:11 with a sharp-angle shot, his 200th career point. Gallagher had 10 goals in 64 games last season.

Drouin doubled Montreal's lead with a power-play goal at 8:10. Using Shaw as a screen, Drouin roofed the puck with a slap shot from the faceoff dot for his first goal since Nov. 5, ending an eight-game goalless drought.

Shaw added the empty-netter with 1:24 remaining in the game.

Price followed up his shutout performance against the Sabres with some jaw-dropping stops to deny the Blue Jackets. He sprawled for two quick pad saves on captain Nick Foligno five minutes into the game, the first coming when Price had his back to the puck. Midway through the second period, the Canadiens goalie denied Boone Jenner twice in quick succession from the crease.

Columbus outshot Montreal 18-7 in the second period, and Dubois scored at 16:08. He crashed the net and poked a loose puck past Price. Montreal coach Claude Julien challenged the play for goaltender interference, but the goal stood.

NOTES: Canadiens D Shea Weber missed his fourth consecutive game with a lower-body injury. ... Columbus beat Montreal 2-1 in overtime earlier this month (Nov. 14).

UP NEXT

Blue Jackets: Host Carolina on Tuesday night.

Canadiens: Host Ottawa on Wednesday night.

foxsportsohio.com LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085504 New York Rangers

Rangers need to be more consistent in order to be considered a 'good team'

BY Justin Tasch

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Monday, November 27, 2017, 6:45 PM

Now that the Rangers have won 10 of their last 12 games — in stark contrast to their first 12 contests, when they won just three and appeared to be on a road to ruin — can the Blueshirts be called a good team?

"I think it's coming," Rick Nash said. "I think we've still got some areas to fix and some consistency issues where we need to put together a full 60 (minutes) instead of a good period here and there."

That's definitely been the case for the Rangers in their last two games, when they were clearly outplayed in the first period. But whereas poor starts doomed them earlier this season, these haven't been insurmountable.

"We have to try to figure out our first periods in the next few days," Nash said. "Good teams find ways to win the games that they don't play their best and I thought we did that."

Rangers overcome early deficit to defeat Canucks in shootout, 4-3

Another issue the Rangers face is their forward depth, particularly at center. David Desharnais was back in the lineup during the Rangers' 4-3 shootout win Sunday after spending the previous three matches as a healthy scratch, returning because rookie Boo Nieves was out with a hip pointer.

Desharnais, who seemed like a good low-risk signing in July on a one-year, \$1 million contract, has been a liability defensively and in puck battles — Jake Virtanen's goal to put Vancouver up 2-0 in the second period Sunday being the latest example. After that, Desharnais saw one more shift before he was benched for the final 27:39 of the game. Paul Carey played just 1:27 in the third period. Nieves, Carey and Jimmy Vesey had been operating as an effective fourth line before Nieves' injury.

"It's not an easy situation for him (Sunday)," Vigneault said after the game. "He's been sitting out a couple games and we haven't had a lot of practice time here. ... We're down going into the third, so I'm shortening up my bench here. I just went with 10 guys that I thought were just a little better tonight."

The 31-year-old has been good on faceoffs, leading the team at 58.7%, and had an eight-game stretch of productivity, notching seven points from Oct. 14 through Oct. 31. He has only one point in his other 13 appearances.

Boo Nieves will miss Rangers game vs. Canucks with hip injury

Desharnais was going to be a healthy scratch on Nov. 4 at Florida, but Nieves came down with a stomach bug and missed three games.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

J.T. Miller has played center for the last four games. Vigneault prefers Miller on the wing but right now things are working out with Miller between Michael Grabner and Mats Zuccarello.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085505 New York Rangers

The minor injuries exposing Rangers' larger depth problem

By Brett Cyrgalis

November 27, 2017 | 11:16PM

The absence of fourth-line center Boo Nieves for most of Friday's game in Detroit and for all of Sunday's at the Garden threw off the Rangers' entire rotation up-front. As a result, coach Alain Vigneault has had to shorten his bench and get away from rolling his forward groups.

Of course, the game Nieves missed completely with a hip pointer was a 4-3 shootout win over the Canucks on Sunday at the Garden. It was the Rangers' fourth win in a row, their eighth straight win at home and their 10th victory in the past 12 games. They are far from needing any type of drastic change right now.

But there is concern with their depth up-front.

David Desharnais, the veteran center who signed a one-year, \$1 million deal this summer, has not been able to play his way into a consistent spot in the lineup. Once again, he was benched late in the game Sunday, sitting for the final 27:39 of regulation. The unit Nieves had centered, with Jimmy Vesey on the left and Paul Carey on the right, had just started to find some chemistry and usefulness before Nieves was hurt late in the first period of Friday's 2-1 overtime win over the Red Wings.

And when Desharnais stepped into that spot after three straight games as a healthy scratch, the line was on the ice for the first two goals against, digging the Rangers a 2-0 hole.

"It's not an easy situation for him, sitting out a couple games, and we hadn't had a lot of practice time," Vigneault said of Desharnais after the game, his team getting Monday off before returning to action Tuesday with a Garden match against the Panthers. "We're down [2-1] going into the third, so I'm shortening up my bench here. I just went with 10 guys that I thought were just a little bit better."

Vigneault's maneuvering put Vesey up on a line with Kevin Hayes and Rick Nash and resulted in Vesey scoring the game-tying goal 5:05 into the third period before he won it in the seventh round of the shootout. But that limited the ice time of one of Vigneault's favorite players, Jesper Fast, who had scored a huge goal late in the second period to cut the deficit to 2-1 but got only four shifts in the third period — one more shift than Carey.

This also was the fourth game in which J.T. Miller was back at center, something Vigneault had experimented with (again) at the beginning of the season, when it was determined (again) Miller still is best suited on the wing. Miller has been good down the middle, but it often limits his ability to get in a hard forecheck as one of the few forwards on the team who brings a consistent physical edge.

This would appear to put an enormous workload at even strength on the top two centers, Hayes and Mika Zibanejad, who often double-shift when Vigneault shortens his bench. But Hayes is averaging 14:01 of even-strength ice time per game, good for third on the team behind Miller and leader Mats Zuccarello. Zibanejad is fourth at 13:44 per. Both are just

outside the top 100 in the league for average even-strength ice time among forwards.

That is a testament to the Rangers being a team that is not top heavy. During this run of seven straight postseason appearances, the strength of the roster has started in goal with Henrik Lundqvist, but the skaters have been predicated on depth, especially up front. Now, the defense is deeper — still weathering the loss of captain Ryan McDonagh, having missed the past three games with a mild abdomen strain. His status should be updated Tuesday morning.

Nieves is likely to be available Tuesday night, calming the nerves at least a little. But to think the Rangers will go through the season without a major injury up-front also is wishful thinking. The same can be said for hoping Desharnais is able to earn the trust of the coaching staff.

For now, it's working. But for how long is a more difficult question for the Rangers to answer.

New York Post LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085506 New York Rangers

The missing pieces that could keep Rangers from playoffs

By Brett Cyrgalis

November 28, 2017 | 12:27am

As of early Monday evening, all three local NHL teams were in the playoff picture, making for what could be an interesting hockey winter in the metropolitan area. But the Thanksgiving Rule that most teams in playoff position by the final Thursday in November are going to make it to the postseason might not apply this year. Before play Monday, only the Sabres were more than 10 points out of a spot in the East.

So in this predicament, let us examine how each team got here and whether they might sustain or drop off.

Rangers

Second wild card, 13-9-2

What's worked? During the 1-5-2 getaway, nothing worked. But since then, goalie Henrik Lundqvist has been sharp, the power play has been mostly humming and the defensive structure has drastically improved. Mika Zibanejad (11 goals, 22 points) has taken the role as a top center, Michael Grabner is having more early-season puck luck (10 goals) and Kevin Shattenkirk (five goals, 18 points) finally has settled in.

Will it last? The Rangers' depth up-front is a big question, especially at center. They have some young pivots in the pipeline (Lias Andersson and Filip Chytil) who might not be ready for prime time just yet. They still heavily rely on Lundqvist, and if the defense comes in waves, they might not have the offensive firepower to win shootouts consistently.

Prediction: Could contend for playoff spot or choose to think ahead and sell off assets.

Islanders

3rd place in Metro, 14-7-2 (30 points)

What's worked? In his contract year, John Tavares is making a case for the Hart Trophy as league MVP, already with some jaw-dropping highlight-reel plays that add up to 15 goals and 26 points in 23 games. Also in a contract year, Josh Bailey is off to a scorching start, leading the team with 23 assists and 28 points. With forward Mathew Barzal (six



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

goals, 23 points) as a contender for the Calder Trophy as the best rookie, the offense drives this team, ranked third in the league with 3.61 goals per game.

Will it last? Odds are Tavares will keep it up, but Bailey always has been a streaky player and Barzal still is a 20-year-old figuring out the league. They're also giving up the ninth-most goals in the league (3.17 per), with both goalies outside of the top 20 of qualifiers in even-strength save percentage: Jaroslav Halak (92.3) and Thomas Griess (91.5). They desperately could use another strong-skating defenseman.

Prediction: Still a playoff team, but where depends on trade-deadline action.

Devils

1st place in Metro, 14-6-4 (32 points)

What's worked? Start with No. 1-overall pick Nico Hischier, who has five goals and 18 points in his first 24 games, while the Swiss 18-year-old looks quite at home with the physicality and grit of this league. Add in reigning Hobey Baker Award winner and free-agent signee Will Butcher with 18 points and 16 assists. Cory Schneider is having a bounce-back year with a .921 save percentage, and the team also is helped by the good feelings brought by Brian Boyle's return to the ice after a cancer diagnosis.

Will it last? It's hard to think a team led by a rookie up-front and rookie on the back end is going to be able to stay in first place. But there has been little on the ice — only history — to think a wall is coming for either Hischier or Butcher. Not a good indicator that they're second-to-last in the league in Corsi-For Percentage (46.48), illustrating that wins have come partially through "puck luck" and they're likely to regress.

Prediction: The most likely team to drop off dramatically.

New York Post LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085507 New York Rangers

Surging Rangers hoping to get off to better starts

By Steve Zipay

steve.zipay@newsday.com @stevezipay

November 27, 2017 6:32 PM

Although they have won 10 of the last 12 games, the Rangers aren't exactly humming like Henrik Lundqvist's Maserati. But it's a long way from the first few weeks of the season, when the Blueshirts were rattling along and leaking oil like a rusty jalopy.

"This is a good team that's on a roll," said former Islander Travis Green, the coach of the Vancouver Canucks, who fell to the Rangers, 4-3, in a Sunday afternoon shootout at Madison Square Garden.

On Tuesday, the Blueshirts, with a 2-6-2 start finally in the rearview mirror, are aiming for their fifth consecutive win and ninth straight at home. They will face the Florida Panthers, who will be on the second night of a back-to-back.

Yet if any game had "trap" written on the dressing room marker board, it's this one against the Panthers, who were 8-12-2 before facing the Devils in Newark on Monday.

For the last three games, the Rangers haven't been sharp in the first 20 minutes, relying on Lundqvist to rescue them. They surrendered 17 shots

in Carolina, were outshot 17-6 against the Red Wings in the first period and 11-4 by the Canucks before victories in each.

"It was a little bit of a slow start again," Rick Nash said after Sunday's game. "We have to try to figure out the first periods in the next few days." The disjointed openings were reminiscent of first periods early in the season, when Lundqvist wasn't at the top of his game, either and couldn't hold the fort.

But in his 12 starts since Oct. 31, he has gone 10-2, with a 2.28 GAA, a .930 save percentage and leads the NHL in wins over that stretch.

Nonetheless, Lundqvist, the key factor in the recent run, knows he alone can't carry the load every night.

"Everybody makes a difference, every shift . . . you can't take a shift off. It's the same thing for me, every shot matters, every pass matters," he said. "It was sloppy [Sunday]. I felt like we can play a lot better."

Notes & quotes: Two players to WATCH: Kevin Shattenkirk, who scored twice, including the game-winner, in the first matchup with the Panthers in Sunrise on Nov. 4, a 5-4 overtime win, and J.T. Miller, who had a career-high three assists in that game . . . It remains unclear whether defenseman Ryan McDonagh, who has been shut down for three games to try to heal a nagging abdominal strain that coach Alain Vigneault described as "mild" will dress. It's possible that the captain will test his readiness in the morning skate at the Garden. But the doctors and trainers could be cautious and hold him out until Friday's home rematch against the Hurricanes . . . Don't be surprised if center Cristoval (Boo) Nieves is back in the lineup after missing the Canucks game with a hip pointer, and David Desharnais is a healthy scratch.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085508 NHL

Thunderbirds defenseman Austin Strand signs three-year entry level deal with L.A. Kings

Originally published November 27, 2017 at 9:27 pm Updated November 27, 2017 at 9:30 PM

By Seattle Times staff

The Seattle Times

Defenseman Austin Strand, who leads the Seattle Thunderbirds in scoring with 10 goals and 16 assists in 24 games, has signed a three-year entry level contract with the Los Angeles Kings.

Strand is tied for fifth in the Western Hockey League in scoring by defenseman.

"We are very excited for Austin with his signing an NHL contract," said Russ Farwell, Seattle's general manager. "He has worked hard on his game and came in this year with a determined attitude to continue to improve and had a great start to the season."

NOTES

- Carter Hart of the Silvertips in Everett has been named the goaltender of the week in the WHL for the second consecutive week. Hart, 19, went 3-0 and stopped 99 of 102 shots. His shutout against Tri-City was the 22nd of his career, breaking the franchise record.

- Former Seattle Reign coach Laura Harvey has been named coach of the new Real Salt Lake-affiliated team in the National Women's Soccer



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

League. Harvey, 37, coached the Reign for the past five seasons and was a two-time league coach of the year.

- Amy-Eloise Neale, a senior at Washington, has been named a finalist for the Honda Award for women's cross-country. Neale was the NCAA runner-up and one of just two women to post a repeat NCAA top-10 finish.
- After averaging 23.3 points on 64 percent shooting and 7.0 rebounds in three games at the PK80 Invitational, Gonzaga's Johnathan Williams was selected the West Coast Conference basketball player of the week.

Seattle Times LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085459 Florida Panthers

McCann gets winner, Luongo ties record, Panthers 3, Devils 2

BY MIKE FARRELL

Associated Press

NOVEMBER 27, 2017 11:13 PM

UPDATED 6 HOURS 2 MINUTES AGO

He made 23 saves Monday night as Florida beat the New Jersey Devils 3-2 for Luongo's 200th victory as a Panther.

He also won 252 with Vancouver. The other netminder to accomplish the feat was Hall of Famer Patrick Roy with 289 wins for Montreal and 262 for Colorado.

Luongo downplayed the feat.

"That's stuff that I'll look at when it's all said and done," Luongo said. "Right now, when you're in the moment, you don't want to think too much about those things. Other than you guys reminding me on a daily basis, I don't really think about it."

His goal is helping the struggling Panthers gain traction in the standings to make a postseason push.

"Obviously if you're playing well, you're going to give your team a chance to win, and those wins and those milestones will come," Luongo said. "It's always nice when you reach a certain milestone but the focus is on primarily on winning games and trying to get into the playoffs."

The Panthers took one small step in that direction as Jared McCann scored the go-ahead goal in a see-saw third period.

Aleksander Barkov and Vincent Trocheck also scored as the struggling Panthers cooled off the streaking Devils who were on a 5-1-2 run coming in. The win was the second in the last five games for Florida.

Rookies Nico Hischier and Jesper Bratt scored for New Jersey and Corey Schneider made 35 saves.

Barkov snapped a scoreless deadlock on the Panthers 30th shot with 2:40 remaining in the second period.

Florida had dominated play and was finally rewarded with Barkov's shorthanded tally.

He broke into the Devils zone on a 2-on-1 break with Colton Sceviour and opted to keep the puck, beating Schneider just inside the left post.

It was the second straight period in which the Panthers were clearly the better team. The outshot the Devils 31-10 after 40 minutes and clung to a 1-0 advantage.

Things opened up in the third.

Hischier pulled New Jersey even at 2:20. Trocheck got his team-leading 10th at 4:07 on a shot that nicked the post to put Florida back in front at 2-1.

Bratt threw the puck at the crease from a bad angle and wound up with the Devils second goal as it bounced in off the skate of Panthers defenseman Aaron Ekblad at 8:19.

McCann gave the Panthers their third lead of the game, putting in his own rebound at 12:45.

"I haven't seen the replay but it might have glanced off me and gone in," Schneider said. "It's just a bad bounce. We got one for us in the third and they got one. Sometimes you just have to find a way to make saves off bad bounces."

After not seeing much action through two periods, Luongo made 13 saves in the third to secure the win, and his place in the record book.

"He's obviously world class goaltender and a future Hall of Famer and everything he does back there kind of makes us a better team," Trocheck said. "He's our backbone and whenever he plays like he did tonight in net, it gets us to give it that extra push to have his back."

The Panthers also dominated the opening period yet came away empty handed. Florida outshot New Jersey 16-3 during the scoreless frame as Schneider was under constant pressure.

Luongo saw little action in his end with New Jersey defenseman John Moore providing two of his club's few chances. Moore hit the post with a drive from the left post and almost broke the deadlock in the closing seconds only to have Luongo snare his wrist with a sharp glove save.

The three shots tied New Jersey's season low for a period.

NOTES: The Panthers recalled C Denis Malgin from Springfield of the AHL on Monday. ... Panthers RW Evgenii Dadonov could miss several weeks with an upper-body injury suffered in the third period Saturday in Florida's 4-1 loss to Chicago. ... Devils LW Marcus Johansson missed a 13th straight game with a concussion. He has resumed practicing and could return during New Jersey's upcoming three-game road trip.

UP NEXT:

Panthers: At New York Rangers on Tuesday.

Devils: At Colorado on Friday

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085460 Florida Panthers

Panthers add forward depth by recalling Denis Malgin from Springfield

Matthew DeFranks

The Florida Panthers recalled Denis Malgin on Monday morning from AHL affiliate Springfield, adding to a forward group that's been racked by injuries over the last month.

Malgin, 20, received an abbreviated look early this season for the Panthers, playing in five games, but only registering six shots. He's been solid for Springfield since he was sent down on Nov. 3, posting three goals and nine assists in 15 games.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Last season, Malgin played 47 games for the Panthers, averaging 11:14 of ice time a game and notching six goals and four assists. He made the team out of training camp this fall, but was a healthy scratch in his first six games on the NHL roster.

Malgin's addition comes two days after top-line right wing Evgenii Dadonov exited a loss to Chicago with a shoulder injury. He had a MRI on Sunday and is expected to miss extended time. Radim Vrbata is still recovering from being hit in the face with a puck on Nov. 18 in Los Angeles.

The injuries have left Florida lacking forward depth both at even-strength and on the power play. Earlier this season, Malgin played two games on the third line and three games on the fourth line. He could slot in as a winger on the third line for Monday night's game in New Jersey.

The Panthers roster now stands full at 23 players.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085461 Florida Panthers

Nearly a decade later, New Jersey's Taylor Hall still appreciative of Panthers coach Bob Boughner

Matthew DeFranks

Taylor Hall is nearly a decade removed from his playing days under Bob Boughner. The Devils star forward and the Panthers first-year coach can trace their relationship back to Windsor, where Hall was a teenage phenom with the Ontario Hockey League's Spitfires and where Boughner was an up-and-coming coach.

Together, they dominated the junior hockey circuit, with Windsor claiming back-to-back Memorial Cups in 2009 and 2010. Hall was among the leaders on the Spitfires, scoring a whopping 123 goals and adding 157 assists across three seasons in Windsor.

The two will be reunited again Monday night, when Boughner's Panthers take on Hall's Devils in Newark. Hall still has a soft spot for Boughner, said "he was awesome" when the two were together.

"I came there as a 15 year old and they not only taught me how to play both ways on the ice and how to play the right way, it was off the ice," Hall said Monday morning. "I was a lonely 15 year old in a new city. They were so nice, always checking in on me, always making sure that I had the right food, the right everything. I can't say enough about what Bob and what the whole ownership did there for me.

"It's always fun seeing Boogie and catching up. We had such good times together in junior hockey. It's some of the best times in my life."

Hall became the No. 1 pick in the 2010 draft, with Edmonton selecting the now-26-year-old. He played in Edmonton for six seasons, notching 328 points in 381 games before the Oilers traded him to New Jersey last June.

This season, Hall leads the Devils with 26 points, including five points in his past two games.

When the Panthers hired Boughner over the summer, they brought on a man without any NHL head coaching experience. He was an assistant in San Jose for two years and in Columbus for one, but also brought eight seasons of coaching the Spitfires.

"I wasn't surprised at all," Hall said. "I think it's been a long time coming for him. He's got so much knowledge about the game. I think what we loved about him in Windsor, and I'm sure the guys in the Florida, is that he's so respected throughout the game.

"He's been around for so long. He has that knowledge, but just the passion for the game. Just the leadership skills that he had when he played. It's always fun playing for a guy like that."

Boughner, 46, played 10 seasons in the NHL for six different teams.

Hall said he hadn't seen enough of the Panthers to decide if their systems and style of play matched what Boughner did in Windsor, but added that junior hockey systems are typically less complex than NHL ones.

"I will say that for a junior hockey team, we were held accountable a lot," Hall said. "Even though we were young kids, it was 'You got to play this way or else you're not going to play.' I'm sure it's no different there."

Roommates on opposite blue lines

Panthers defenseman Ian McCoshen and Devils defenseman Steven Santini are also familiar with each other from previous playing days: the two were roommates at Boston College.

McCoshen and Santini roomed together for all three seasons while the two were at BC, ending with the 2015-16 season, when both chose to turn professional.

"Really easy to live with," Santini said. "He's very low maintenance, awesome guy. We're still best friends to this day."

The two had dinner Sunday night after the Panthers arrived, a nice change, Santini said, from Florida's last visit to New Jersey. That game was the second half of a back-to-back that began in Buffalo. Santini said he hadn't seen McCoshen since the summer.

McCoshen has been a pleasant surprise for the Panthers this season. Entering training camp, he was pegged as a potential seventh defenseman that could split time with MacKenzie Weegar. But he's only been scratched once and entered Monday with three goals in 21 games.

"He's steady," Santini said. "He's a strong, hard player, hard to play against. Manages the puck well, he's got a heavy shot. Just keeps it simple, in a good way. He doesn't make many mistakes out there."

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085462 Florida Panthers

Panthers come out firing, finally break through in 3-2 win over New Jersey

Matthew DeFranks

After the embarrassment of another home-ice blowout and the ghost of an abysmal period, after a postgame shooting session and after two days had cooled the sting of a loss to Chicago, the Florida Panthers were given the opportunity to prove Saturday a fluke.

In a 3-2 win over the Devils on Monday night at the Prudential Center, Florida erased the memory of the prior 48 hours in dominating New Jersey. The Panthers controlled play through much of the first two periods, outshooting the Devils 16-3 in the first, then 15-7 in the second.

The win inched the Panthers (9-12-2, 20 points) farther from the bottom of the Eastern Conference and avenged a loss from earlier this month to the Devils (14-6-4, 32 points). Aleksander Barkov and Vincent Trocheck each scored and Jared McCann tallied the game-winner with 7:15 left in the third period.

"After the way the first 20 games have gone, we definitely have something to prove to the rest of the league," Trocheck said. "I think



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

teams are going to take us a little bit lightly right now. We haven't played the way we wanted to from the start of the season until right now.

"It's games like tonight that prove the type of team we do have and the type of way we can play. Going forward, starting now, it's a matter of playing that way consistently."

Between Saturday's loss to Chicago and Monday's game in New Jersey, a host of Panthers personnel displayed a sense of urgency. Barkov said the Panthers needed to avoid frustration but play "pissed off." Trocheck said the team needed to get back to playing desperate hockey. Coach Bob Boughner talked about the club's preparation needing to improve in all areas, including both coaches and players.

Trocheck and Barkov returned to the ice after Saturday's loss to work on their shooting. The two star centers for the Panthers were in a shooting slump, so they fed each other passes and took aim at an empty net.

Monday was their first chance to show that things changed.

"It's just one game," Trocheck said. "You got to win games in this league in order to make it to the playoffs in order to win the Stanley Cup. Can't get too high whenever you win a game. Can't get too low whenever you lose a game."

The Panthers came storming out of the gates in the first period. They stifled the Devils offense, suffocating it by keeping the puck in the New Jersey zone. As New Jersey mustered just three shots on goal, Trocheck and McCann each already had three of their own.

Luongo was barely tested in the first period, with the lone dangerous chance coming right at the end of the period. Luongo added it to his highlight reel. With John Moore speeding in and the final seconds ticking away, Luongo robbed him with a spectacular glove save as the buzzer sounded.

"I drank a couple cups of coffee after the first to make sure that I was awake and a couple more after the second," Luongo deadpanned after the game.

The second period looked much like the first, including the Panthers inability to crack Devils goaltender Cory Schneider at the back of the New Jersey defense. Trocheck tried to stuff a shot past Schneider's pad. Barkov nearly flipped a puck off Schneider and in. But he kept it goalless.

Until Barkov struck for his third shorthanded goal of the season. With Denis Malgin in the penalty box for tripping, the Panthers forced a 2-on-1 shorthanded opportunity. Barkov raced up the left side with Colton Sceviour to his right. After hesitating, Barkov whipped a shot that beat Schneider glove-side.

"Sitting back on the bench, you're hoping to get the first goal after having such good hockey over 40 minutes," Boughner said. "Sometimes that can be a blow to your team if you're outplaying a team and now you're down 1-0."

The Panthers had finally broke through. By the time the Devils finally fired their 10th shot on goal, only 23 seconds remained in the second period.

New Jersey's Nico Hischier tied the game with a third-period goal after his collected a loose puck in the slot and beat Luongo. After Trocheck's goal, the Devils tied it again when a puck deflected off Aaron Ekblad's skate past Luongo. Jesper Bratt was credited with the goal.

Monday's game comes in the shadow of ominous news for the Panthers. Top-line winger Evgenii Dadonov was ruled out for 4-6 weeks with a shoulder injury, breaking up one of the best lines in hockey and forcing Malgin up to the No. 1 line.

Malgin's placement on the top line headlined a host of changes to the Panthers lineup made by Boughner. Dryden Hunt patrolled the wing on the third line. Connor Brickley scratched. Defenseman Alex Petrovic ended an eight-game absence by playing Monday. Ian McCoshen sat in his place.

But it all returned to Saturday night for the Panthers, the memory of the loss still lingering over Florida.

"We're not happy about the way we came out two days ago against Chicago," Boughner said before Monday's game. "We talked about having a response, a pushback game here. We talked a lot about how we played in this building last time. Obviously, Jersey's playing well and we're going to have just as good an effort, if not better, to get a point or two out of here."

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085463 Florida Panthers

Preview: Panthers at Rangers, 7 p.m., Tuesday

Matthew DeFranks

Panthers at Rangers

When/where: 7 p.m./Madison Square Garden, New York

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

Scouting report: The Florida Panthers make their only trip to Madison Square Garden on Tuesday night to take on the New York Rangers. The game will cap a brief back-to-back road trip that began Monday night in New Jersey against the Devils. While the Panthers will be done with road games against the Devils and Rangers, they still have two at the Islanders. ... Tuesday's game will be a rematch of a Nov. 4 contest in which the Rangers beat the Panthers 5-4 in overtime. Roberto Luongo made his return from a hand injury in that game, but the Panthers couldn't pick up the extra point. Luongo will not play Tuesday night after playing against the Devils on Monday. Instead, James Reimer will get the start in Madison Square Garden. ... The Rangers have won four straight games entering Tuesday, and 10 of their past 12 games. The New York defense has stiffened recently, allowing five total goals in the past four games. Mika Zibanejad leads the Rangers with 22 points this season. ... Radim Vrbata (face) and Evgenii Dadonov (shoulder) are both likely out for Florida.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085464 Florida Panthers

After eight consecutive scratches, Alex Petrovic returns to Panthers lineup

Matthew DeFranks

Florida Panthers defenseman Alex Petrovic will make his return to the lineup on Monday night against the New Jersey Devils, replacing Ian McCoshen on the Florida blue line.

Petrovic was a healthy scratch in the past eight games and hadn't played in a game since Nov. 7 in Carolina. Petrovic was paired with Mark Pysyk during warmups before Monday's game.

"Just going out and playing hockey," Petrovic said before Monday's game. "It's not rocket science or anything. Just go out and have fun, you got to enjoy it."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Petrovic has seen his playing time dwindle this season and entered Monday night averaging 14:31 of ice time per game. That figure would be the lowest since the 2013-14 season, when he only played seven games for Florida.

Petrovic said he would take things "step-by-step" on Monday and try not to put too much pressure on himself in his return to the ice.

"If you look at things in the long run, then they tend to be a little overwhelming," Petrovic said. "I'm just worried about warm-ups, getting my feet under me and then that first shift. Just kind of building off that, staying in the moment and just worrying about winning my shift."

Panthers coach Bob Boughner said Petrovic knows what he needs to do in the defensive corps, especially after the prolonged scratches.

"Regardless of what you've heard, we've talked a lot the last little while," Boughner said. "He knows the message. We need him to be good defensively, tough to play against, have a good stick and lean on guys, be a heavy player down low. He knows what the expectations are. He's been out for a while. He's going to get his chance."

Boughner said scratching McCoshen (three goals in 21 games) did not have to do with his performance.

"It has nothing to do with his game," Boughner said. "It's not a negative sitting or a demotion by any means. We got to get Petro in there. It's his turn to get back in. Cosh has been solid for us."

-- With Roberto Luongo starting in New Jersey on Monday night, Boughner said James Reimer would get the start Tuesday night against the New York Rangers.

Monday's projected lineup at New Jersey, 7 p.m.

Jonathan Huberdeau – Aleksander Barkov – Denis Malgin

Jamie McGinn - Vincent Trocheck – Nick Bjugstad

Henrik Haapala – Jared McCann – Dryden Hunt

Micheal Haley - Derek MacKenzie – Colton Sceviour

Keith Yandle – Aaron Ekblad

Mike Matheson – MacKenzie Weegar

Mark Pysyk – Alex Petrovic

Roberto Luongo

James Reimer

Scratches: Connor Brickley, Evgenii Dadonov, Ian McCoshen.

Injured reserve: Radim Vrbata.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085465 Florida Panthers

McCann gets winner, Luongo ties record, Panthers 3, Devils 2

Associated Press

9:53 p.m Monday, Nov. 27, 2017

He made 23 saves Monday night as Florida beat the New Jersey Devils 3-2 for Luongo's 200th victory as a Panther.

He also won 252 with Vancouver. The other netminder to accomplish the feat was Hall of Famer Patrick Roy with 289 wins for Montreal and 262 for Colorado.

Luongo downplayed the feat.

"That's stuff that I'll look at when it's all said and done," Luongo said. "Right now, when you're in the moment, you don't want to think too much about those things. Other than you guys reminding me on a daily basis, I don't really think about it."

His goal is helping the struggling Panthers gain traction in the standings to make a postseason push.

"Obviously if you're playing well, you're going to give your team a chance to win, and those wins and those milestones will come," Luongo said. "It's always nice when you reach a certain milestone but the focus is on primarily on winning games and trying to get into the playoffs."

The Panthers took one small step in that direction as Jared McCann scored the go-ahead goal in a see-saw third period.

Aleksander Barkov and Vincent Trocheck also scored as the struggling Panthers cooled off the streaking Devils who were on a 5-1-2 run coming in. The win was the second in the last five games for Florida.

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Florida had dominated play and was finally rewarded with Barkov's shorthanded tally.

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It was the second straight period in which the Panthers were clearly the better team. The outshot the Devils 31-10 after 40 minutes and clung to a 1-0 advantage.

Things opened up in the third.

Hischier pulled New Jersey even at 2:20. Trocheck got his team-leading 10th at 4:07 on a shot that nicked the post to put Florida back in front at 2-1.

Bratt threw the puck at the crease from a bad angle and wound up with the Devils second goal as it bounced in off the skate of Panthers defenseman Aaron Ekblad at 8:19.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

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UP NEXT:

Panthers: At New York Rangers on Tuesday.

Devils: At Colorado on Friday

Palm Beach Post LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085563 Websites

The Athletic / In fight against cancer, Brian Boyle is finding his voice

By Katie Strang 21 hours ago

There is the obvious reason why it has been such an emotional month for Brian Boyle: Diagnosed with a form of bone cancer before the season began, the beloved 6-foot-6, 245-pound center made his triumphant return to the ice earlier this month, scoring a goal in his fifth game back and leaving virtually the entire NHL community a bit misty-eyed when he notched his third of the season this past Friday on the Devils' Hockey Fights Cancer night.

There's another reason that hasn't been discussed much but has weighed on his mind heavily as he wages his own battle against the disease, which was discovered during a routine physical with the Devils prior to training camp.

Three weeks after he was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia, Boyle and his wife, Lauren, were dealt another sense of terror entirely: A protrusion on their two-and-a-half-year-old son Declan's jaw gave doctors concern. A CT scan did not assuage their worry.

They feared he too might have cancer.

A subsequent MRI revealed that the mass was benign, but it was a horrific process nonetheless. While Boyle was seeking clarity on his own prognosis, Lauren was shuttling Declan back and forth to the Children's Hospital in Boston for tests. Ultimately, it turned out to be a blood vessel issue, one that Boyle explained essentially was a result of "bad wiring" in his mandible. Still, Declan had to undergo multiple procedures to help the swelling subside. And though these were not major operations, he still had to go under anesthesia each time — a process Boyle described as "terrible."

"That was the hardest part," Boyle told The Athletic in a recent interview. "That was why it was so emotional."

Lauren has been the best linemate Boyle could have imagined, holding their family together throughout the past few months, not only caring for both of her boys, but their six-month-old daughter, Isabella, as well. All three of them joined Boyle on the ice before Friday's game for a ceremonial puck drop. The crowd broke into chants of "Bri-an Boy-le" after he scored, set up for the goal from Will Butcher, but in the Boyle family, Lauren has been the true MVP. While their family has faced the unthinkable, she has been resolute.

"I wouldn't be playing if it weren't for her," said Boyle, who scored his third goal of the season in the Devils' 4-3 overtime win against the Red Wings on Saturday. "She's letting me play, basically."

11.28.2017=

Cory Schneider has known Boyle since their college days playing together at Boston College, where Boyle was as much of a social sherpa

off the ice as he was a driving force on it. It was why Schneider was thrilled when Boyle joined the Devils as a free agent this past summer — he signed a two-year, \$5.1 million deal — and moved in around the corner from Schneider's own family in New Jersey.

The two friends were looking forward to reconnecting as middle-aged suburban dads and teammates, but the barbecues and reunions were put on hold when the Boyles were suddenly plunged into a harrowing stage of uncertainty.

The alarm went off during Boyle's preseason physical, which showed soaring white blood cell counts. Teammates knew something was awry when he wasn't present for the Devils' skating test, an absence considered odd by his fellow veterans who were wondering why he wasn't in their grouping.

Later, Schneider reached out to Boyle, calling him at the urging of the team trainer.

"I went numb," Schneider said.

He was stunned when Boyle told him why he wasn't going to be at camp anytime soon. He didn't have a lot of answers, either.

"Just hearing him talk the first few days, you could tell he was really unsure, uneasy. You could tell he was just a little scared. And who wouldn't be?" Schneider said. "When you hear something like that you just don't know what it entails. It's really tough to hear a teammate and a friend have that sort of uncertainty in their voice."

Boyle had two children under age 3 at home. The hulking Hingham, Mass., native, who grew up as one of 13 kids in a close-knit Irish-Catholic family, was just starting to build his own. Now, both his livelihood — and his life — were at stake.

"The first few days it was never-wracking, to be honest," Schneider said. "Even as his friend, I was losing sleep and thinking about him. I can't imagine what he and his family were going through."

Ultimately, Boyle's diagnosis was an optimistic one, treatable. He would have to take two pills, twice a day. Get bloodwork regularly. But he could return to hockey.

When he did, the effect was palpable, not just within the confines of the Prudential Center, which erupted when he jammed through a rebound against Cam Talbot for his first goal of the season, one after which he admittedly broke down in tears, but in the reverberations across the NHL community.

Boyle heard from people in the game he had never met, played with or known. NHL commissioner Gary Bettman called him to say the entire league was behind him. Doug Weight and Scott Gomez reached out, too. The Tampa Bay Lightning, where he spent the previous three seasons, treated him as if he were still one of their own — the team made a special video honoring Boyle in his fight — and head coach Jon Cooper was particularly demonstrative in his support.

Boyle was blown away.

"We're part of a special community," Boyle said. "Some of the highlight reels from the past of guys beating each other up may not be great for kids to watch these days, but when the chips are down, I think we're a special group of people. And I think that's the culture that's been established by guys that played before us. It's a humble group and it's family-oriented."

11.28.2017=

That's the sort of culture that Boyle was brought to New Jersey to help create. He was considered a glue guy both on and off the ice, which made it difficult when he missed the first 10 games of the season.

But his presence loomed large even when he wasn't in the locker room, and in some ways, his plight has reinforced a message that coach John Hynes has tried to preach to his players from the start. Hynes wants to forge a brotherhood, to cultivate relationships off the ice as well as on, to



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

foster an environment where these guys get to know each other outside the narrow sliver of sport.

"Brian's a big part of our team. If you know him, he just kind of oozes leadership and he's a guy that guys just follow, and the way he treats people is just special," Hynes said. "So I think when that happens to a teammate, it definitely brought our team closer together. You look at a game like Friday night and the emotions Brian had with his family, the way... he brings guys together a bit more, and then for our team, everyone understands how fortunate they are to be healthy, playing hockey at a young age. And I think that's brought some passion to our team."

It's reignited a passion for Boyle, too. The hulking forward, who also played for the Los Angeles Kings, New York Rangers, and Toronto Maple Leafs, was a mainstay in community-building efforts in Tampa Bay and was known for his support for local military personnel. He is now hoping to spread awareness about cancer and the many people it affects. The lavender jerseys and lavender-taped sticks worn for Friday's Hockey Fights Cancer night will be auctioned off, with proceeds donated to local childrens' hospitals, and additional money raised will be donated to Boyle's charity of choice.

So much has changed since his diagnosis in September, but he feels lucky that the residual effects have been minimal. He takes four pills a day and must undergo bloodwork once a month to make sure he is still on the path to good health. The most difficult factor of his day-to-day routine now is figuring out how much to eat on the road; he must take his nightly medication on an empty stomach, and he lost some weight at the onset of this regimen. Beyond that, Boyle said he feels great, in large part to a newfound attention to his health (his wife forced him to give up Skittles, but he still manages to sneak them here and there).

He recognizes that he's fortunate.

"You just have to remember what the end game is here. I'm playing, which is great. I mean it when I say this: I have an opportunity and a platform to make a difference now, something I've thought about the last four-to-five years," Boyle said. "Being in the position we're in, it's becoming more clear the angle I can take, especially this month. When I look at this that way, it's kind of a privilege for me to have a voice and to be able to help other people."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085564 Websites

The Athletic / Duhatschek: NHL players believe the slashing crackdown is changing the game for the better

By Eric Duhatschek 14 hours ago

ANAHEIM – In the opening game of last year's Western Conference final, James Neal – then of the Nashville Predators – took a slash across the hands that broke a bone in his right hand. This being the Stanley Cup playoffs, Neal played through the injury, scored the game-winning goal in overtime the night he was hurt, but managed just two more goals during the Predators' remaining 11 playoff games. Not being able to grip the stick properly will dampen the production of any NHL scorer.

Accordingly, no one was happier to see the NHL's new slashing crackdown than Neal – unless it was the Winnipeg Jets centre Mathieu Perreault, who had his thumb broken on a slash by the Ducks' Corey Perry last season that cost him 15 games. As for the Calgary Flames left winger Johnny Gaudreau, he is off to the best start of his four-year pro career, in part because he isn't constantly absorbing slashes to his hands

the way he was last season, when he missed 10 games recovering from a broken finger, thanks to a chop from the Minnesota Wild's Eric Staal.

When NHL general managers met last June to ponder rule changes for the upcoming season, they made reducing the amount of slashing in the game a major point of emphasis. One quarter of the way into the 2017-18 season, goal-scoring was up by 12.4 per cent, with an average of 6.1 goals scored per game – and many players and coaches believe there's a direct correlation between the slashing crackdown and the goal-scoring spike.

Only once in the past 12 years have more goals been scored through the first 318 games. That happened back in 2005-06 when a similar point of officiating emphasis – this one designed to eliminate obstruction – resulted in a significant increase in the number of power-play opportunities. What's interesting is that this year's scoring uptick wasn't strictly restricted to manpower advantages. It has occurred in all three areas of the game. Even strength goals (1,399) were up 10.9 per cent year over year; power-play goals (431) were up 17.4 per cent; and shorthanded goals (67) were up 24.1 per cent.

In the NHL exhibition season, rarely did a game go by without a parade of players to the penalty box, as they adjusted to the new officiating standard. Referees, in an effort to make a point, whistled down everything that was close.

"To me, the standard was way beyond what I anticipated and what the players anticipated," said Ducks' coach Randy Carlyle. "At the start, anything that went to the stick or was directed toward the stick, the penalty call was automatic. They've refined it since. They're doing a better job, the officials, of actually looking at it and saying, 'I know he slashed him in the hands; I didn't think he slashed him in the hands.' Those are the sorts of things that take time to refine."

Carlyle played 1,055 NHL games between 1976 and 1993 and considers himself something of a throwback. Anaheim plays an edgy style of hockey. At the quarter point of the season, they had taken the fourth most minor penalties in the NHL (91, trailing only Nashville, Washington and Pittsburgh).

"Whatever the rules are put in place, the players have to make the adjustment and we as coaches have to adjust, too," Carlyle said. "I'm an old-school traditional guy. I don't like it free out there. I think you've got to find your space out there. But I don't disagree that slashing was something they had to look after when you had so many players missing games with broken bones in their hands."

"But I also blame the players and the equipment managers for some of it – because the gloves are like paper. It's like wearing cardboard. I hate ever saying, 'when I played ...' but historically, gloves were made of leather and plastic backing, and some had metal inserts. They had some meat to them. Now, they're six ounces or eight ounces. You can eat a steak, wearing today's hockey gloves."

Other than the Ducks' Perry, who believes the standard has slipped so much in recent weeks that "it's gone back to where it was," most players and coaches polled by The Athletic say the pendulum is settling right where it needs to – in the middle, somewhere between the overkill of the pre-season, and last year, when it was open season on the hands of NHL scorers.

"I think it's a good thing," Neal, now of the Vegas Golden Knights, said. "It's good for our game. Whether you're a forward or a defenceman, you have to be cautious and aware of what you're doing with your stick. In the playoffs, it does get a little out of hand sometimes. But this helps."

Neal was speaking in the visitors' dressing room at the Honda Centre, in effect returning to the scene of last year's crime.

"I mean, it was tough," he said. "Game 1 here I got slashed and broke my hand. They're hard slashes that do that. This (crackdown) definitely helps goal scorers. The top guys, who are playing in high traffic areas, if you're getting that extra step on a guy, the defenceman has to be very aware of



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

what he's doing with his stick. He can't smack your stick or smack your hands to disrupt you. That's why goals are up."

Perreault's injury occurred on a slash from Perry in a Jets-Ducks' game back in January.

"It's definitely a lot better this year," Perreault said. "Last year I broke the thumb of my bottom hand on a slash coming from behind. He turned his blade over and he caught me right on the bone and it broke. No penalty, nothing. By the fact that they call it the way they have, guys don't do it as much anymore. You don't see as many penalties and you don't see as many slashes, which is good. I'm sure the league's happy about it, too."

The NHL's move to eliminate obstruction from the game after the 2004-05 lockout made the game significantly faster, but it also created one unintended consequence. If players couldn't slow opponents down by hooking, holding or interference, they collectively began to use their sticks more. In effect, slashing became a form of checking. Players couldn't use their sticks to obstruct bodies anymore. As Carlyle pointed out, because modern-day gloves are so fragile, designed to give players a better "feel" for the puck rather than protection, the net effect was a rash of hand injuries.

The Jets, after being one of the most penalized teams in the league for two years running, brought a retired referee, Paul Devorski, to their training camp in order to help their players unlearn the habits of old.

Jets' defenceman Josh Morrissey acknowledged that for his generation of smaller, lighter defencemen, slashing had become a means of "stopping someone in a corner, or preventing a player from getting off the ideal pass or shot they wanted. So yeah, it's definitely been a transition. For me, in the pre-season, you were actually thinking about it at times. And when you're thinking, that's obviously not the ideal thing to do during the game.

"Now, for most guys, the adjustment's been made and it's become more reactionary. I don't know the stats on it, but I would say there's far fewer of the hand slashing penalties lately. We've still seen slashes that create broken sticks, but those were called before anyways. In our games, probably the last five to 10 games, you've started to see fewer slashing penalties called."

Like Morrissey, Vegas defenceman Nate Schmidt is a slightly built six-footer, who has forged a career for himself in the post-obstruction NHL because of his excellent puck moving skills. But the position is still called 'defence' and as a result, there is a need for players who are no longer hulking brutes to somehow be able to play defence, too. They can't just play on the offensive side of the puck.

"Personally, I always liked to get my stick in on guys' hands," Schmidt said. "It didn't have to really even be a slash, but just a little touch to disrupt, or to upset his timing. Now you can't do that. Because I'm not that big a guy, I had to come up with new ways of baiting guys into going where you want them to go. For me, it was either a tap on the shin pad or a hand on the pants – just to get them to go where you want them to go, because you can't use your stick anymore.

"In the pre-season, they had to go to an extreme to set the precedent. When you saw that, it made you think, 'wow, you can't do anything anymore.' You really had to program yourself to change your game."

Blackhawks' defenceman Connor Murphy actually saw a silver lining in the slashing crackdown, however, noting: "The one thing it actually helps you do is make sure that you have your stick on the ice while you defend. It's such a reaction for some guys as they're going in on a guy to get their stick up in the air — to try to give them a whack or get physical on them — when really the most effective way of defending is having your stick on the ice at all times. Even though it is harder that they're crack down on penalties, it actually helps you with the details really."

Ducks' forward Andrew Cogliano says the slashing enforcement hasn't obliged him to change his penalty killing style much year over year.

"I feel as if there's a little more leniency from the refs if you're already down a penalty," Cogliano said. "When you're in the zone and it's a little more compressed, you can maybe get away with a little more. If anything, I think it's changed a little more in open ice. It feels as if the refs are watching you when you're on the hunt, because they're ready to call penalties if you use your stick. I feel like I'm a little more careful when I'm up the ice, chasing guys and trying to get a good stick on them and disrupt them. You have to be a little more careful than in previous years."

For offensive players, the primary benefit, according to Blackhawks' forward Patrick Sharp is "that body position and moving your feet is really the key to hanging onto the puck because you can still slash, but you've just got to slash at the puck. You can't really lead with your stick on the hands or shaft area. Otherwise, you're going to get called. It puts more emphasis on foot speed, skating. As a player, honestly, early on it was something you really had to think about — that slash — but now I just think it's second nature out there."

Jets' coach Paul Maurice says he is 100 per cent certain the slashing crackdown is tied to the scoring increase.

"The way these kids practice now, they make these little plays underneath – the little plays in between the stick and the skate – and you can't make those plays if someone's whacking at you with their stick," Maurice said. "Now that stick is on the ice and they can handle the puck better, so there are more plays to seams and more things happening off the rush.

"Matty Perreault had his thumb broken last year with a slash and it wasn't even a penalty. It's got to make it better, if we're not putting these guys in the hospital all the time."

Ultimately, who can say if a healthy Neal might have made a difference to Nashville's Stanley Cup aspirations last spring?

"But as a team, wouldn't you have liked to find out, what would have happened if he'd been healthy?" asked Maurice.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085565 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun: Q&A with Sergei Bobrovsky on expectations, workload, the Olympics, and his future in Columbus

By Pierre LeBrun 19 hours ago

There has not been a back-to-back Vezina Trophy winner since the all-time winningest goaltender, Martin Brodeur, won the third and fourth of his career in 2006-07 and 2007-08 a decade ago. Perhaps that's about to change this season with reigning Vezina Trophy winner Sergei Bobrovsky looking outstanding once again, sporting the league's top save percentage (.936) and goals-against average (1.91) on a Columbus Blue Jackets team that took a while to get going but now has won six in a row and once again looks the part of a contender. Bobrovsky's play may also get him some Hart Trophy consideration as league MVP.

The rolling Jackets are in Montreal on Monday night. I had a chance to chat with Bobrovsky on Sunday afternoon.

LEBRUN: Sergei, we have to start with a very, very serious question. Tell me about going out into the country this weekend and cutting down a Christmas tree?

BOBROVSKY: Yeah it was fun. We had a day off Saturday and we went for a Christmas tree. The weather was nice. So it was great.

LEBRUN: Did you really, actually cut down your own tree?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

BOBROVSKY: Yeah, yeah, it was cool.

LEBRUN: Are you sure you didn't break any laws?

BOBROVSKY (laughing): No, no, it was totally legal. It was a special place with a license, you don't have to worry about anything.

LEBRUN: That's something I would have expected more from Ilya Bryzgalov, perhaps, than you.

Tell me about your season so far, you are off to an amazing start individually and it seems every night on the highlights there's a save from Sergei Bobrovsky that no one can believe.

BOBROVSKY: It's been good for the whole team, I feel good so far but we have to keep in mind it's only November, there's lots of hockey in front of us. It is great to have some success in the beginning but there's lots of challenges in front of us.

LEBRUN: You're back in Montreal on Monday night. You were there a few weeks ago and made an unbelievable save on Jacob De La Rose. Where would you rank that save in your career?

BOBROVSKY: Ah, I don't know, honestly, it's definitely great to have those highlight saves but it's already in the past and tomorrow is a new day, new challenge, I don't really think about those things. I enjoy that kind of stuff more in the off-season when I'm free and I can let those good memories come in.

LEBRUN: I remember after you won your first Vezina Trophy in 2012-13, you came to New York for the Player Tour event the following September and walked into the room for your interview with us and I'll never forget what you said. It was your first Vezina Trophy, and I think many of us were still sizing you up, and you confidently said you were hoping to win multiple Vezina Trophies, not just one; you were dead serious, and it left quite an impression on me. Do you remember that?

BOBROVSKY: Yeah, yeah, I was serious, yes. But right now I'm more focused on team success than my personal success. That's the most important thing for me. It's a long and tough process, lots of ups and downs during a long season.

LEBRUN: How eager are you to get back to the playoffs and maybe enjoy some success? Perhaps the one frustrating part of your career so far has been the playoffs (3-10 in 18 appearances with a 3.63 GAA and .887 SP)?

BOBROVSKY: Yeah definitely, I agree with that. But I can't be too excited about that, it has to be step by step, I have to build up my performance and be ready for the playoffs. And just play my game. It is important to not put too much pressure on myself as the next playoffs begin and just play my game and enjoy the atmosphere.

LEBRUN: I'm sure you want to play every single game all season long if you had your choice. But in today's NHL, is it harder than ever physically for goalies to play in terms of how quick the game is and the pressure that it puts on you guys, on your hips, your knees, and having to move around so much and so quickly? Is there more strain on today's goalies than there was maybe 10 years ago?

BOBROVSKY: I agree with you that it's very demanding on the body to play goaltender right now. As you say, the hips, the knees, lots of demands on your body; it is tough to play 82 games. You have to be smart on how you manage yourself during the season. I agree with your thought, I want to play 82 games but in reality, I want to play good, smart minutes.

LEBRUN: I've been thinking about this a lot recently, in thinking about guys like you and Carey Price and Jonathan Quick, and I think in recent years the Kings, internally, have talked about the amount of games Quick plays. He missed most of last season through injury, Price has just come back from injury. I guess what I'm getting to is, that balance that needs to be found with the top goalies in terms of workload, is that something you and (Jackets coach) John Tortorella talk about?

BOBROVSKY: I talk more with (Jackets goalie coach) Ian Clark about that. I agree, it is important to have the right balance. It is also like, you want to play a lot and you want to have a good season, but you need some time to rejuvenate your body and your mind. It's a long season. Every game puts stress on your body and your mind. There's like seven months of the regular season plus the playoffs. It's very demanding. So you have to be smart with your workload.

LEBRUN: Well there might have been even more games for you this year had the NHL been at the Olympics. How disappointing is that for you, especially Russian players seem so eager and so proud to play for their country, how hard is it that it's not happening this time?

BOBROVSKY: Yeah, I've been saying this so many times, but it's very disappointing. The Olympic Games is the best competition in the world. You play once every four years. To be Olympic champion is the best thing you can achieve as a sportsman. To take away one Olympics from us, it's very sad. You're not going to have many chances or opportunities to compete for your country. To take one away, it's painful.

LEBRUN: I know it's still far away in some regards, but your contract is up in the summer of 2019, any thoughts on your future and how happy you are in Columbus and are you hoping to re-sign?

BOBROVSKY: I think it's too far ahead of us, I don't even think about it yet. But I'm definitely happy with Columbus. We've got a good team here, a good organization, we've got a comfortable life in Columbus. We'll see what's going to happen, lots of time ahead of us, lots of hockey, we'll think about it when it's time to think about it.

LEBRUN: Spasibo for your time, Sergei.

BOBROVSKY: Alright, thank you, pozhalujsta.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085566 Websites

The Athletic / The Schwartz family's inspiring bone marrow drive, and one man who saved a life

By Jeremy Rutherford 12 hours ago

The first time I remember hearing the name 'Mandi Schwartz' was a few months before the 2010 NHL draft.

Mandi was a tenacious forward on the Yale University women's team, and the return of her cancer, acute myeloid leukemia, created a massive groundswell in the hockey community for bone marrow registry.

That June, the 22-year-old was in a hospital in Regina, Saskatchewan, undergoing chemotherapy, when her father, mother and younger brother traveled to Los Angeles for the draft.

Jaden Schwartz had just finished up a season with the Tri-City Storm of the United States Hockey League, where he solidified his spot as an NHL prospect and got on the St. Louis Blues' radar. The night of the first round – June 25 – was his 18th birthday.

"Grandma was nice enough to stay with Mandi while my wife Carol and I went to the draft," said Rick Schwartz, Jaden's father. "We didn't know if he was going to be drafted or not. We heard about teams that were potentially going to take him. But when they said, 'From Wilcox, Saskatchewan, the Blues select Jaden Schwartz ... what an awesome feeling that was! I know Grandma and Mandi, they just jumped up and had tears in their eyes. That day was a way for us to get something positive in our lives, right?'"



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

It was like the Blues had received two players for the price of one draft pick, as the Schwartz story became St. Louis' story. That night in LA, several members of the Blues' brass met the family for dinner, and "they talked about Mandi right away," Rick Schwartz remembers.

Before Jaden would ever suit up for his first NHL game, the Blues adopted his sister, promoting the need for bone marrow registry along with Yale University, which began hosting drives. Thousands of prospective donors in the U.S. and Canada stepped up, but with Mandi's condition worsening, finding a perfect match was still proving difficult.

"That's one of the hardest things a family has to go through, waiting and waiting, while her clock is ticking," Carol Schwartz recalled.

On Sunday, April 3, 2011, the dream of receiving that life-saving phone call for Mandi dissolved, when she passed away at age 23.

Honoring Mandi

The memory of the little girl who grew up to be team captain at Athol Murray College of Notre Dame before attending Yale didn't die that day, however. Among the many events in Mandi's honor, Yale, where she once played 73 consecutive games, hosted an annual "White Out," in which fans wore all white clothing to a Bulldogs game at Ingalls Rink.

In 2014, the Blues' road schedule allowed them to attend the fourth annual "White Out." They held a practice on campus during their visit and then watched as Jaden, who was in his second season in the NHL, dropped the puck before the women's game. He also was able to see his sister's locker, where her No. 17 sweater still hung.

"It was very emotional because it was an opportunity for Jaden to see where Mandi spent some of her college years," Carol Schwartz said. "I wanted him to be there, but to have the team come with him, I think it kept him stable and supported him through it. It was a very positive experience for him and he was very glad to have gone through it."

At the end of the 2013-14 season, Jaden decided to pay more respects in an even more visible way. When Blues teammate Vladimir Sobotka left for Russia to play in the Kontinental Hockey League, Jaden went to the club and requested to switch to No. 17 from No. 9. The team didn't blink, so he called his parents to inform them, and their eyes watered.

"He called us and said, 'I asked for No. 17. I'd like to wear that in Mandi's honor,'" said Rick Schwartz, choking up between sentences. "They said they were going to give it to him, so that was pretty special. That was a good day."

Six and a half years after Mandi's passing, there remain good days, like Saturday night at Scottrade Center. Rick and Carol were in St. Louis for a bone marrow registry drive hosted by BeTheMatch.org.

The organization says that every three minutes, someone is diagnosed with blood cancer and 70 percent of patients needing a marrow transplant do not have a matching donor in their family, leaving the hope of 14,000 patients per year in the hands of someone outside their family.

Rick Schwartz stood outside Section 114 between periods of the Blues-Minnesota game Saturday and watched as some 50 people signed up to be potential donors. Each were handed an UpperDeck trading card of Mandi in her Yale uniform, with the title "Heroic Inspirations."

"Mandi told us, one of her missions was that if you can't help me, let's help others," Rick Schwartz said. "We want that awareness and we're saving people's lives because of it."

Rich Schwartz says similar drives at Yale have attracted 6,500 potential donors since Mandi's death and there have been 30 matches. The family has been able to meet some of the donors and recipients and Rick and Carol call it "a special feeling."

Registering for the cause

As a Blues beatwriter who has covered Jaden since the day he was drafted, I have felt a closeness to this story. I spoke with the Schwartzes about Mandi's fight just hours after the draft, traveled with the team to

Yale and even bought a Bulldogs sweatshirt and watched in 2015 when Jaden, on the fourth anniversary of his sister's death, recorded a hat-trick in a 7-5 victory over Dallas.

So as I planned to write this story, I thought to myself: Why not register?

I didn't know what type of procedure was required to donate bone marrow, so I went to Google. It turns out there are two ways: peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC), which is non-surgical, and an actual marrow transplant operation. The PBSC can take a minimum of eight hours to complete, and the transplant can require travel. Both come with side effects and can take weeks to recover from.

I'll admit that I was a bit squeamish after reading that but understood that even if I registered, the chance of being selected is one in 430, and you can change your mind up until a week or so before the donation.

I made up my mind to do it, and after watching Jaden score a goal that left the Blues with a 3-1 lead over the Wild after two periods, headed for the concourse area where the drive was being conducted.

There I met Denise Mosley, who is a community engagement representative for Be The Match, and she helped calm any trepidation that I had by introducing me to several donors and recipients and nurses on hand.

"To have them here and to share their story makes people more comfortable," Mosley said. "All it takes is one more person to join that could save someone's life."

A few forms to fill out, four swabs of my mouth and I was out in 15 minutes, plenty of time to return to the pressbox and see Jaden score his second goal of the game and team-leading 13th of the season to help the Blues win 6-3.

I left the rink feeling good about what I had done, but also thinking, "What are the chances?"

A life saved

That's also what Michael Hellrich, 38, of Columbia, Ill., thought when he registered at a bone marrow drive prior to a Blues' game on March 28, 2013. The season-ticket holder and his wife Becky were expecting their first child, and after seeing a promotion for the event Hellrich decided to register.

"She was seven months pregnant when I signed up," Hellrich said. "The year before that, I don't know if I would have felt the same. But when you see these kids with cancer and now you're about to have one of your own, I really just wanted to help. There might be one person in the world who is a match and you want to be that person. You'd want somebody else to do it for your kid if you were in that same position."

Like me, Hellrich had done his homework and knew what to expect with the rigorous process of donating bone marrow, but he wasn't thinking about that when he walked away from the registry table.

"I was just thinking, 'Go get a beer!'" he said.

Four years and many Blues games later, Hellrich was with the child the couple was expecting, Adelaide, now 4, when he heard a beep on his phone last August.

"I had just picked Adelaide from day care, we were eating McDonald's and I got this suspicious email," Hellrich said. "It said, 'You are a potential match' ... and it said that it was pretty high importance and they needed my response immediately. The first thing I thought was, 'This is spam.' But for about an hour, I was doing research about it on my phone and it was legit."

Hellrich quickly texted his wife.

"I was like, 'Hey, I think I'm a match for somebody and they're asking me to donate bone marrow,'" he said. "To be honest, I was kind of 50-50 at that point. Now I've got a kid, a wife, I've never been under anesthesia



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

before, never had surgery, it's a risk. It's a very, very small risk, but it's a risk.

"Then my wife texted back about a half-hour later and said, 'You know what, I think that's really cool.' She didn't say it's something you should do. She just said it's very cool. But that's all I needed. I just needed that extra 0.1 to send me over. I was firmly planted in 'I want to help.'

After confirming his interest, Hellrich was asked to fill out a lengthy questionnaire and travel to a local lab in Waterloo, Ill., for blood work. The results were returned and they indicated Hellrich was "a perfect 10 out of 10 match for this person," he said.

Hellrich flew to Washington, D.C., for the first of two trips. The first was for a physical and then after returning home, he went back to D.C. for the actual donation in early October. Although a reported 80 percent of people in Hellrich's position are allowed to donate using the less-evasive PBSC, he was asked to undergo the surgical operation in which the marrow is physically extracted.

According to Be The Match, "Doctors use needles to withdraw liquid marrow (where the body's blood-forming cells are made) from both sides of the back of your pelvic bone. After donation, your liquid marrow is transported to the patient's location for transplant."

"It was tender for a while," Hellrich said. "You waddle around, like you slipped on ice. Right at your waistline. It's tender for a while, but it's not that bad. I'm a wuss, but it wasn't a big deal for me. I would imagine that's how the hockey players feel every day."

After a two-day stay-over in D.C., Hellrich returned home and remained there for another three to five days. He says that he felt "really good" after two weeks and was 100 percent about one month after the operation.

"I don't want anyone to have a false sense of it's not going to be something that takes a little bit of time and a little bit of will-power to get through," Hellrich said. "But I would do it in a heartbeat again."

"It's kind of cliché to say, 'One person doesn't make a difference.' But you could be one person's only chance at living. My donor is a teenager, and if I wouldn't have come along, they may not be able to go to college. They should be thinking about those things, not about having cancer."

Hellrich can't meet the recipient of his bone marrow for at least a year after the procedure, and even after a year, both parties have to consent. But in the meantime, his family, including Becky and Adelaide, spent Saturday morning back at Scottrade Center, meeting Rick and Carol Schwartz.

"I went for the handshake with Rick and he went in for the hug and I was like, 'Alright, this is what we're doing,' so it was cool," Hellrich said. "After that, I was all-in on the hugs, so I gave Carol a hug."

Actually, after the choice Hellrich made to donate, Carol Schwartz didn't give him a choice on their greeting.

"I'd like to hug everybody that signs up," Carol Schwartz said. "I just know what the family on the other end would do and that would be they would give them the biggest hug of their lives. There's nothing more great a person can give."

"What a nice, young gentleman," Rick Schwartz said. "For him to do what he did is very special. Going through the bone marrow versus (PBSC), he went through a bit. But he knew what he was doing, he was saving a teenager's life, and as he said, he would do it again."

Jaden, who preferred not to be interviewed for this story, was not present when his parents thanked Hellrich for his good deed. Carol Schwartz said that her son has a difficult time discussing Mandi's memory.

"They were very close, and I know to be hockey players, they couldn't be together 24-7 like brothers and sisters would like to be," she said. "I think he's always a little sad that they didn't have more time together, but he also knows in his heart that they both kept busy lives and that's the way

that Mandi would've wanted it. She was very proud of him. Just like we live for her, I think he takes his energy and puts it on the ice because that's the game she loved most. I know it's hard, but that's his way of giving back to her."

Hellrich attended the Blues' game Saturday night, mingling with the Fox Sports Midwest crew, including Hall of Famer Bernie Federko and Scott Warmann, with whom Hellrich did a TV interview on set.

Scott Warmann (left) with Michael Hellrich.

"I've never expected it to get to this," Hellrich said. "I'm a relatively humble person. I never thought I was super special, but I really do think this is a special thing that you can do. I'm doing this because I want to get the word out. The drive for all of this was Mandi. It didn't work out for Mandi, but it might for the next Mandi — anybody that has a blood disorder that bone marrow can cure."

I hope one day, however long it takes, to receive the same email as Hellrich.

"All it takes is one person," said Mosley, the representative from Be The Match. "Like he said, he joined thinking that he would never match anybody. Then for him to get that call four years later, to think that he could donate for a teenager and possibly save her life ... he's given that child hope, that family hope, friends hope. It really is a miracle, the whole thing."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085567 Websites

The Athletic / Bourne's thoughts: On Kessel's stick flex, Duchene's track record, Bieksa's punch and more

By Justin Bourne 15 hours ago

After a busy weekend in the NHL, I figured I'd take some time to clear out the old notebook. Below are seven thoughts and notes from around the league.

11.28.2017=

Prior to the weekend Tyler Dellow wrote an interesting piece on the uptick in offence in the NHL, focusing on one particular area: O-zone faceoffs. He noted there's been a marked rise in the production from the most dangerous area of the ice following a draw, and gave some great examples of how teams today try to create in that situation.

During my time with the Toronto Marlies, this was an area I focused on for the staff. So while I can't exactly roll out the plays the team uses after wins and losses, I can share that the biggest general change I've noticed is most teams making the opposing defence extremely uncomfortable by pulling a winger back high with the D after the draw.

That allows teams to outnumber the two defending wingers up high, and likely get off an unscreened one-timer, while the other two players can either be at the net, or often, one more toward the corner and one at the net.

Defencemen typically like to stand one place in the D-zone: in front of their net. They know everything is coming there eventually. But off faceoffs, they're generally assigned the coverage of the opposing wings. So when one of them heads all the way out to the blueline, the D feels uncomfortable. They can leave their safety spot and provide tight coverage, or they can sag back and allow the outnumbered situation higher in the zone. Check out Tyler's post for a thorough look at how teams are doing this (the Oilers vs. Blues example is particularly good.)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

11.28.2017=

One of the most fascinating hockey things I've read in a while was a quote from Matt Murray on Phil Kessel in this great piece here. He was asked what makes Phil's shot so deceptive (emphasis mine):

I think it's a combination of things with Phil. First of all, he's got a really long, slow release. It's just different. He switches up his sticks quite a bit during games, too. He uses lots of different sticks. Depending on what stick he's using, it changes things up. He uses so much flex, you know? His hands come through the shot first, then the puck comes from a different angle. And when he uses a stiffer stick, it's a quicker release. Then you have to remember that he's moving so fast, so it makes it hard for a goalie to react. And he'll shoot off the wrong foot a ton. Put it all together, and it's tough.

It's one thing to use an insanely weird stick with a ton of flex and a super low kick point, as I've come to understand that Kessel does. That alone would be hard to master. But to switch up the flex of your stick in-game, that to me sounds nearly impossible. Like you have to know what you're using as you're shooting to maximize the force you can put on the puck. That he's able to process different flexes in-game is unreal.

Don't look now, but Phil is up to fifth in scoring in the NHL with 31 points in 25 games. That's 11 more points (in the same number of games) as his next-highest scoring teammate, Sidney Crosby. Damn.

11.28.2017=

The Penguins put up a nice 5-2 win on the weekend against the Tampa Bay Lightning, which inspired me to take a deeper look at their numbers, thinking they may be warming up. Man. Those few blowouts they had early in the season left them with what are still some weird numbers.

In goals for per 60 minutes? Still dead last, 1.72. Goals against per 60? Only better than Arizona, and barely (2.97). Yet they're in the top 10 in shot attempts per 60, and their expected goal totals – a stat that factors in distance and location – look good enough for sixth in the league.

So their offence should start to come around – it looked good last game – and they should start to get some more saves. Matt Murray is an excellent goaltender, and the Pens are currently dead last in team save percentage. They have the lowest PDO (shooting percentage plus save percentage) in hockey. These are crazy numbers that will inevitably come back to the pack. The Pens are gonna be just fine.

11.28.2017=

I cannot adequately express how bad I do not want to fight Kevin Bieksa. Remember earlier this year when he did this to Radko Gudas?

Well, this weekend he fought Andy Andreoff and did it again, albeit without the jump.

What do you think the odds are that Andreoff had seen the previous Bieksa/Gudas battle? I'm gonna say minimum 80 per cent chance. To still get caught with one, woosh, Bieksa must be getting those shots off awfully quick. No thanks.

11.28.2017=

It's gonna be interesting to see if Matt Duchene and the Ottawa Senators get it figured out. The Sens have lost six in a row, and their highly prized acquisition has a single point for them while being on the ice for 10 more goals against than for. Not that the ceiling was that high for Colorado, but they've had some high-end players there. And, you always have to wonder how much blame to assign to whom when a team with some star players underachieves. At some point, you're a little on the hook for your team's failings when you're getting the big minutes and dollars. Hopefully for Ottawa's sake, this is just a bad stretch and things bounce back for Duchene and the team. He's got a ton of individual skill, but the timing of the skid here is at the very least interesting.

11.28.2017=

I always have a lot of sympathy for teams stuck in good divisions. There are people who say "you gotta beat everyone to win the Cup," or "to be the best you gotta beat the best," but let's not act like all roads to the Stanley Cup final are equal. And in the Central this year, there's only one team that's not a positive goal differential team (Dallas, minus two). St. Louis, Winnipeg, and Nashville are borderline powerhouses. How brutal is it gonna be to slog through those first two rounds (hopefully healthy) to get a team who's just breezed through the Not That Great Pacific?

11.28.2017=

The skating by Mathew Barzal on this goal from the weekend was ridiculous. Once Erik Karlsson realizes he can't cut him off from going behind the net, it's funny watching No. 15 Zack Smith be like "Wait, so I guess I'm supposed to chase this kid around?" The best thing you can do as an offensive player is make the D ask themselves "Who's covering who?" Three or four different players took their stab at Barzal here, get pulled out of position, and his linemates capitalize.

11.28.2017=

And finally,

If you didn't see it, the nicest moment of the weekend might have been Alex Ovechkin's interactions with young cancer survivor Alex Luey. He told the kid that if he scores, it'll be for him, and went out and put up a hat trick.

The kid reading the starting lineup is special, but the hug with dad after the hat trick is even better.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085568 Websites

The Athletic / Russo: Something is seriously wrong with the Wild

By Michael Russo 4 hours ago

WINNIPEG — Something stinks to high heaven with this Wild team.

How's it humanly possible to play so well in the first 14 minutes of a game, defend so well, skate so well, battle so hard, build a 2-0 lead and then, in coach Bruce Boudreau's words, "just quit playing," en route to a humiliating 7-2 butt-kicking from the Winnipeg Jets two nights after getting outclassed by the St. Louis Blues?

But we're not only talking about the Wild's putrid, stench-filled effort Monday night north of the border.

How's it humanly possible that a team that set franchise records last season for wins, points, stature in the standings, goals, goal differential, power-play percentage, win streak, road points streak, number of double-digit goal scorers and many, many other prideful things can look so disjointed and lousy so often?

How's it humanly possible that a team known for playing quality defense can continually leave opposing forwards all alone in front of its goalie without a Wild player within six, 10 or, on the sixth goal against Alex Stalock on Monday, 20 feet?

How's it humanly possible that a team can record three consecutive shutouts and follow that up with ... THIRTY goals against in SEVEN games since?

Boudreau volunteered that it's "almost impossible" for him to understand how that last unbelievable nugget is achievable.

You want to know how absolutely sad the Wild were on this specific evening?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Down 4-2 early in the third period, Daniel Winnik took a high-sticking penalty on a play where the referee arguably incorrectly waved off a Jets goal. On the ensuing power play, the Wild still surrendered their fifth power-play goal in two games. So, right after, Boudreau called timeout in an attempt to implore his players to show an iota of heart.

What happened next?

The puck dropped, the Wild began to run around their zone once again, and seconds after Boudreau's impassioned pleading, Bryan Little scored with no defender in sight to make it 6-2, a goal that was followed by a 10-player melee incited by veteran defenseman Kyle Quincey nowhere close to the goal he probably should have been protecting.

Quincey was assessed two roughing minors and a 10-minute misconduct with under 14 minutes left, a method the zebras concocted in order to get Quincey out of the game and keep things from further getting out of control.

"(Nikolaj Ehlers) came up, and I gave him a shot," Quincey said. "And then he came at me, and I think the ref just had enough of me, to tell you the truth. I'm not sure why I got a 10. I definitely took him down, but Buff (Dustin Byfuglien) had me in a headlock."

Two months ago, while sitting in his suite, owner Craig Leipold declared that "anything short of winning the Stanley Cup right now would be a disappointment."

In that same interview, Leipold said of Wild General Manager Chuck Fletcher, "I think this was a really good offseason for Chuck."

Two months later, it sure doesn't feel that way.

There's no doubt the Wild had to maneuver around some challenging expansion and salary-cap problems last summer, but the reality is this: the result is a worse hockey team.

They get no balanced scoring, something that's undeniably due to the fact Erik Haula and Alex Tuch are in Vegas and Jason Pominville's in Buffalo, and the fact Marcus Foligno, Tyler Ennis and Matt Cullen have combined for eight goals.

With Marco Scandella in Buffalo, Christian Folin in Los Angeles and Nate Prosser in St. Louis, the Wild's blue-line depth is thin and their third pair, especially, has been a disaster.

Monday, even with Jared Spurgeon sidelined with what's actually a strained groin and not the illness initially reported, minor-leaguer Ryan Murphy still debuted and Mike Reilly, who played poorly in recent games against Buffalo and Colorado, was scratched for a second consecutive game.

The byproduct of Spurgeon's injury and a Gustav Olofsson-Murphy pair? The Quincey-Matt Dumba pair was exposed big-time.

Both players were minus-3 and Quincey, one game after a turnover arguably turned the Blues game, took a penalty that led to the tying goal in the first period. Quincey has taken six minors in the past five games and the Wild have lost seven of their past nine with Quincey in the lineup.

They've won their past five without him.

Asked if he can continue to play Quincey, Boudreau said, "I'm not going to call out players in front of the media or anything, but we'll have to re-evaluate where we're at."

What's more, while the fourth line of Foligno-Cullen-Chris Stewart connected for a first-period goal (Stewart's first point in 17 games, Cullen's first point in 13), they were on the ice for Winnipeg's third, fourth and sixth goals.

This came after Boudreau met with his fourth-liners earlier in the week and said the persistent goals against is not acceptable.

"We, as a line, can't be giving up goals," Cullen said. "And it hasn't been good. We've got to solve it."

Cullen, 41, coming off back-to-back Stanley Cup championships with Pittsburgh (frankly, he could conceivably end up back there if this season goes pear-shaped), has to be better.

With the score tied 2-2, Cullen's drop pass to Foligno put the grinder in a bad spot along the wall high in the Jets' end. The Jets took the puck, and a 2-on-2 became a 2-on-1 when Quincey stepped up, Olofsson had to go to the puck-carrier Mark Scheifele and defenseman Jacob Trouba was all alone after Stewart didn't skate hard enough on the back-check.

Then, with the Wild running around their own zone down 3-2, Cullen inexplicably left the eventual goal scorer Mathieu Perreault to skate behind the net.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO EXTEND THE LEAD, MIGHT AS WELL CRANK THAT ONE-TIMER. #MINVSWPG PIC.TWITTER.COM/AMAZI2VTLA

— NHL (@NHL) NOVEMBER 28, 2017

"Great first 10 minutes in the game, and it was like we just didn't want to play anymore," veteran defenseman Ryan Suter said. "We were just terrible. Second and third periods, it was not good."

What's scary is the Wild seem to have no answers as to why their play fluctuates not just game to game or period to period, but shift to shift.

"Too early to find the reasons right now," captain Mikko Koivu, goalless on 46 shots in the past 15 games, said in his oft-repeated, customary quote after losses. "You don't want to say something you don't mean. Wait for a bit, and find a reason."

Koivu agreed the periods of great play and awful play is the problem right now though, but again, he said, "I'm not going to start to be a coach here and tell you what's wrong. Obviously there's more than just one thing."

The Wild have played "meh" hockey all season. It's that simple.

They talk about the Stanley Cup hangover phenomena when you win it all (Wild fans will have to do their best to imagine that fact), but the Wild may be suffering something similar. It's almost like they just can't get up for this season following yet another disappointing early exit last spring after finishing with the second-most points in the West.

It's like the Blues ripped out their soul. This is a far cry from last season when they were for large chunks an exciting, hard-working, fast hockey club.

But not even that valiant third-period comeback Nov. 16 against the Nashville Predators has changed anything with this team's choppy, sometimes unsightly and uninspired play.

"We've got to figure it out," Suter said. "In the past, we've always been able to keep it kind of level-headed. You win a game, not a big deal. You lose a game, not a big deal, but you compete every night. We're getting away from that. We're showing up when we want to. Half of us show up."

"It's too hard, especially in our division. Teams are too good. We need everybody showing up every night."

The heat is on Fletcher.

The Wild don't look right. They're 11-10-3, and things have the potential of really going haywire in a hurry with games against the Golden Knights and Blues this week, then an always-tough trip out to California.

What's frightening: The Wild seem boxed in.

The core players are on long-term deals, Fletcher has traded away lots of draft picks, the team's not overflowing with prospects and he has almost no cap space, especially because he has to make sure he has the room to fit Zach Parise onto the roster once he's ready to come off long-term injured reserve.

It seems like the Wild made their bed last summer, so to speak, and now it's up to the guys in the room to figure this out.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

"We just have to get back to work," Cullen said. "We've got a ways to go. Our team, I think we'd all agree, we're not where we need to be yet. As a group, we all need to make a decision on the way we're going to play. We've got to turn things around. We have the pieces to do it."

The Wild have recovered from dire straits before. But again, this version of this team has a very different makeup.

"Well, they've done it in the past and I've gotta go with that," Boudreau said when asked about his confidence that this team can recover. "I believe that when they want to play, they're as good as most teams in the league. But we need 20 guys — and I've said this all year. We're a team that needs 20 guys playing, not 18, not 15, not 12, certainly not eight or nine."

"And we get eight or nine playing, this league is too tough. Nothing good's going to happen if you only get that many guys playing."

Yup, something stinks, alright, and it'll take some serious leadership inside that locker room and some serious coaching to pull this team together.

"It's people not doing their jobs. We can see it," Boudreau said of the constant defensive breakdowns. "There's a disconnect somewhere. It's a reason why you need a practice. We haven't practiced in two weeks, and we have to get back to Square One when we do. If (Tuesday) wasn't a scheduled day off, we'd be working."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.28.2017

1085569 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / A huge Canadiens win, delivered by Price, Petry and Gallagher

Eric Engels

November 28, 2017, 12:12 AM

MONTREAL — One goal from Brendan Gallagher, two saves from Carey Price and two blocked shots from Jeff Petry gave the Montreal Canadiens a 3-1 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets Monday.

They were five plays that showed what kind of investment the Canadiens were willing to make to get two precious points in the standings, five plays that made the difference, five plays made at critical junctures of the game.

It started with Gallagher, who rushed down the right wing early in the fourth minute of the game and uncorked his team's first shot on net. The winger hummed at knee-level and beat Sergei Bobrovsky on the blocker side, giving the Canadiens a 1-0 lead.

The plucky winger has been the team's most impactful player this season after struggling through the 64 games he played in 2016-17. Night after night he's brought the Canadiens into the fight, when a year ago he spent most of his time on the ice fighting to gain any semblance of the player he had been through the first four seasons of his career.

Gallagher's goal on Monday was his 10th of the season, equalling his total from last year. It was also his 200th NHL point.

"He's been huge," said Canadiens winger Andrew Shaw, who scored into an empty net with 1:24 to go. "He's scoring big goals, he's battling, he's going to the net, he's going to those dirty areas and winning those pucks. We're loving it from him right now, and you know he's going to keep doing it for us."

The contribution from Price since he returned from a lower-body injury this past Saturday has been enormous. He shut out the Buffalo Sabres that night and made 37 saves on 38 shots against the Blue Jackets Monday.

But his saves, while the Canadiens were up 2-0 and killing a penalty early in the second period, were his biggest of the night.

Price slid over and stopped a point-blank shot from Pierre-Luc Dubois. The rebound came right back to Dubois, he had Price down and out on his belly, and the goaltender stretched out with his left pad and his glove and shut the door.

"Those stops build momentum," said Shaw. "He made big-time saves, fought through the traffic and he earned us that win tonight."

That hadn't been the case through a 3-7-1 start to the season for Price, who struggled to come up with easy saves — let alone tough ones like the two that came off Dubois' stick from in tight.

It was a rough start to the season for Petry, too.

With Andrei Markov leaving via free agency, taking his puck-moving skills to the KHL in the process, a lot of the onus was going to be on Petry to pick up the slack.

For whatever reason, he couldn't find his game.

"I'd get a goal scored on me and beat myself up over it," he said after logging a team-high 29:05 in Monday's game. "I think I just needed to get back to doing something good early in the game, throw a hit or make a good breakout pass, and then just build off that."

At the 8:10 mark of the first period, Petry threw a perfect pass over to Jonathan Drouin, who scored Montreal's second goal on the power play. He did plenty of good after that, helping his team stem Columbus' persistent forecheck, helping them break out of their zone, and generating three shot attempts.

But the two plays he made — while the Canadiens were shorthanded halfway through the game — stepping in front of successive shots from Zach Werenski and Oliver Bjorkstrand brought life to the Canadiens bench and made this what had to be considered his most complete game of the season.

Tape II Tape

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.

"The things that he did tonight are things we've been talking about for a while with him," said Canadiens coach Claude Julien. "It's not a secret he's been having a difficult season, and confidence doesn't just come back right away once you've lost it, but it seems as though he's regained his confidence over the last three games in a row."

"We talked to him about moving his feet, about moving the puck quickly, about being capable of skating with the puck and about playing on his toes."

Message received, and just at the right time — considering No. 1 defenceman Shea Weber's absence due to a lower-body injury over the last four games.

It was a bonus to have Petry throw four hits in the game and block another shot on top of those two big ones on the penalty kill.

It was huge for the Canadiens to get that early goal from Gallagher, too. And the saves from Price early in the second are further evidence he's back to being the guy they need to see.

As a result, the Canadiens are now only two points out of third place in the Atlantic, with three games coming up this week against division rivals Ottawa and Detroit.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

1085570 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Virtanen needs to find consistency to become everyday NHLer

Iain MacIntyre

November 27, 2017, 6:37 PM

NEW YORK — The best and worst thing about being Jake Virtanen is all the support he receives from fans, bloggers and reporters.

This support is unsolicited, unstoppable and unyielding. Basically, most people think he's getting screwed on ice time by the Vancouver Canucks.

"Yeah, you can't avoid it," Virtanen said Monday, smiling. "It's always there. Just because I'm a hometown guy, even just going grocery shopping, people are always telling me that. They're like, 'What's going on? I'm not going to say anything.' But they don't really know what's going on in the room. Greener (Travis Green) is the coach. He's a great coach. He knows how all of this works."

Of course, there are worse things than being told by strangers how great you are, how you should be playing more, how you should be on the power play. (Full disclosure: I said after the Canucks lost 4-3 in a shootout Sunday to the New York Rangers that Virtanen should have been somewhere among Green's seven shooters).

It would be worse if everyone told you that you sucked. And it would be worse still if you actually believed anything outsiders, no matter how well-meaning, had to say.

Just 21 years old, and after spending nearly all of last season in the American Hockey League, two years after the Canucks selected Virtanen sixth overall in the 2014 entry draft, the winger from Abbotsford, B.C., has enough going on in his head without cluttering it with counter-productive ideas about being discriminated against.

If Virtanen ever truly believes that his own coach or the Canucks are out to get him — yes, the idea does seem a little absurd when you distill it in print like this — he hasn't a hope of becoming a successful NHL player in Vancouver.

This doesn't mean Virtanen shouldn't play more often in some games. Against the Rangers, for example, he was one of the best Canuck forwards. Virtanen scored once, led Vancouver with five shots on net and nine shot attempts, registered two hits, and even-strength shot attempts were 16-10 in favour of the Canucks when Virtanen was on the ice. He shouldn't have been the low man in ice time at 10:01.

But Virtanen has scored only three goals in 20 games this season, generated nearly half of his total shots on net in just three games, and been inconsistent enough that Green has twice pulled him out of the lineup in order to re-ignite the player's intensity.

Virtanen has looked much more involved, physically and on the puck, since he returned to Canuck lineup five games ago after sitting in the press box for three. Virtanen looks like he's going to be an NHL player. And last season, when he was scoring just nine times in 65 games for the Utica Comets and being lectured weekly by Green — yes, one and the same coach — Virtanen looked like he might be a colossal bust.

"There's a lot of teaching that goes into developing players," Green said Monday after the Canucks practised in New Jersey for today's game in Brooklyn against the New York Islanders. "There's lots of communication, talking. When to be hard on a player, when to sit a player, that all is part of development. What's best for the player? What's best for the team? It's different for different organizations.

"I think (Virtanen is) playing better. He had some things slip into his game that we didn't like, but that's part of development. He's a little more engaged. He's starting to make some more plays with the puck. It's not just about hitting; it's about becoming the best player he can become.

"When is he going to be the best player? I don't know. Is this the best he's got? I don't think so. I think he can become a lot better player. We have to make sure we bring him along the right way. I like the way he's developing."

It is difficult, however, to get past Virtanen's consistently low ice time. His nightly average of 9:45 is last among the 14 Canuck forwards who have played multiple games this season. But analyze the ice times and any injustice being done to Virtanen does not seem as great.

All of Virtanen's ice time is at even strength. Eleven of those 14 Canucks forwards have averaged 9:45 (Virtanen) to 13:31 (Markus Granlund) of playing time at even strength. It's the extra minutes some players get on the power-play and penalty-killing units that make Virtanen's total TOI seem so small.

In the NHL, there are 430 forwards who have played more than six games this season. Nearly 300 of them are logging 9-14 minutes per game at even-strength. So Virtanen's ice time is near the bottom of the scale, but it's hardly off the scale for a player trying to establish himself as an everyday NHLer.

"Greener has talked to me about that," Virtanen said. "I think anyone on this team could be a power-play guy or penalty-kill guy. But (Green) has guys he wants in certain spots. I want to build up to that, for sure. I don't want to be strictly a five-on-five guy my whole career."

But for now, he's concentrating on proving he can be a five-on-five guy. Which is exactly what Virtanen should be thinking about.

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Sportsnet.ca / Penguins' Murray leaves game vs. Flyers with lower-body injury

Andrew Bottomley

November 27, 2017, 9:05 PM

Pittsburgh Penguins goaltender Matt Murray left Monday's game against the Philadelphia Flyers after colliding with forward Jakub Voracek.

After the game Penguins head coach Mike Sullivan revealed that Murray suffered a lower-body injury and will be evaluated on Tuesday.

Coach Sullivan on Murray: "Matt will be evaluated tomorrow. He obviously has a lower-body injury. We will probably have more answers tomorrow."

— Pittsburgh Penguins (@penguins) November 28, 2017

The incident occurred late in the second period when Voracek came streaking towards the net before falling feet first and making contact between Murray's open legs.

Murray had to be helped off the ice by teammates and 22-year-old Tristan Jarry came in to take over for the Penguins' No. 1 net minder. Jarry remained in the net when the teams returned for the third period.

Jarry has four games of NHL experience, three of which occurred this season. He has one win with a 2.57 goals-against average and .918 save percentage.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

The Flyers were leading 2-1 at the time of the injury, but the Penguins rallied to win 5-4 in overtime.

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown Weekend Wrap: Senators' Duchene era off to poor start

Sean McIndoe

November 27, 2017, 10:55 AM

Every Monday, Sean McIndoe looks back at weekend play in the NHL and the league's biggest storylines. You can follow him on Twitter.

Opening faceoff: Sens of urgency

So it's probably time to talk about the Senators again.

The first time we led with Ottawa, it was two weeks into the season and they'd just rolled through western Canada, looking an awful lot like a team that was picking up where last year's conference finalist had left off. A few weeks later, they were bringing in reinforcements, pulling off a blockbuster three-way deal for Matt Duchene. Both times, optimism was the word of the day in Ottawa.

Today, not so much. The Senators followed the Duchene trade with a trip to Sweden, where they swept two against the Avalanche. But since returning to North America, they've been a disaster, losing six straight and picking up just a single point in the process. It's their worst stretch by far of the Guy Boucher era, and it's dropped them into the ranks of the Eastern Conference also-rans, nestled in between the Hurricanes and Flyers. Today, the Sens are sitting three points out of an Atlantic playoff spot, and six back of a wild-card berth.

Even worse, the Duchene trade seems to have thrown a wrench into the offence, which hasn't scored more than twice during the losing streak after scoring three or more in seven of eight games before the deal. And Duchene himself certainly hasn't helped the cause, contributing just a single point since arriving while posting an ugly -10 rating.

The good news is that Duchene is coming off his best game as a Senator, which came during Saturday's loss to the Islanders. He had a power-play goal late in the game, and didn't post a minus rating for the first time (he was even):

That's not exactly a breakthrough, but at this point you start with baby steps.

More important, the underlying numbers suggest that Duchene's lack of production is more due to a swing of bad luck than anything in particular that he is or isn't doing. He's putting almost twice as many shots on net as a Senator than he was in Colorado, but he's getting PDO'd to death at both ends of the ice. That kind of stuff can happen to anyone over the course of a year, and if it's buried in the middle of a season we may not even notice it. But when it comes in a player's first few games after a monster trade, it gets people talking. (Kyle Turris has six points in eight games in Nashville, in case you were wondering.)

But while you might be able to shrug off Duchene's struggles as a temporary blip, there's at least some reason for concern with the Senators as a group. Their record is already inflated by loser points, with just eight actual wins to show for 22 games. That's a stat that can go both ways, since some better luck in overtime and shootout coin flips would mean a few extra points. But they're already well back of just about everyone else in the ROW tie-breaker, which could come into play if the playoff race is close.

So what's wrong? It's not about injuries; with the exception of Erik Karlsson's delayed start to the season, they've been reasonably healthy. They are getting hurt by goaltending, with Craig Anderson posting a .895 save percentage. Normally we might write that off as a slump by a guy who's usually among the league's best, and it probably is, but you get a little nervous when a guy who's 36 starts to stumble.

No team is ever as bad as they look during a losing streak, so we have to go bigger picture when trying to figure out the Senators. And there's a good chance that Anderson settles in, Duchene adjusts to his new home, Karlsson wins a few games singlehandedly and everything turns out OK. But it's also possible that the Senators we've seen so far this season are an accurate reflection of what this team should be — in other words, one that loses more than they win, keeps it relatively close in the process, and hangs around the outside of the playoff picture.

And of course, they've already played most of their trade chips, at least in terms of future assets. We often hear about how crucial it is for Ottawa's bottom line that the team always at least make the post-season. If things don't turn around soon, we might be about to find out just how crucial.

The five teams that look like they're headed towards Stanley Cup-favourite status.

5. Nashville Predators (14-6-3, +7 true goals differential*): Last year's conference champs had won nine of 10 before yesterday's shootout loss in Carolina.

4. Winnipeg Jets (14-6-3, +10): They didn't impress during Saturday's showcase game in San Jose, but two of three in California ain't bad.

3. Columbus Blue Jackets (15-7-1, +12): They've won six straight. Hmm, feels like we've seen this script before.

2. St. Louis Blues (17-6-1, +19): Yes, there are too many Central teams in the top five. We'll need to sort this out over the next few weeks.

1. Tampa Bay Lightning (16-5-2, +24): They've hit their first losing streak of the season, dropping road games to the Caps and Pens. That's not enough to knock them out of top spot, but they're coming back to the pack.

(*Goals scored minus goals allowed, without counting shootouts like the NHL does for some reason.)

The Blues didn't pass the Lightning in our power rankings this week. But in a marginally more important development, they did pass them for first place in the standings. At 35 points, the Blues now own a one-point lead over the Lightning for top spot.

We won't get overly excited about — the Lightning still have a game in hand, and it's still too early to get worked up over a single point here or there. But the bigger story is that a Blues team that not many of us had among the top contenders heading into the year isn't fading. They might be getting stronger.

How good have they been? With 24 games down, they've already posted four winning streaks of at least three games, while never losing more than two straight. They rank third in goals scored, behind only the Lightning and Maple Leafs, and trail only Tampa in goals differential. And if you like your possession stats, you've no doubt already noticed that the Blues rank first in score-adjusted Fenwick.

The headlines have been coming from the first line, which could make a good case for being the league's best right now. Brayden Schenn, Jaden Schwartz and Vladimir Tarasenko have combined for 90 points, with each posting double-digit goals. We expect that sort of production from Tarasenko, but it's shaping up as a breakout season for both Schwartz and Schenn, neither of whom has ever hit the 65-point mark.

Schenn, of course, came over during the off-season in a trade with the Flyers. That deal didn't seem earth-shaking at the time, but now looms as the biggest move of the off-season. He didn't come cheap, costing Blues GM Doug Armstrong two first-round picks. But that looks like a steal right



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

now, as Schenn has helped transform a Blues team that's been missing Robby Fabbri and Patrik Berglund up front.

Can they keep it up? The top line has to cool off at some point, and backup Carter Hutton won't look like Dominik Hasek every time out. But you'd also figure that Jake Allen can play better, and a blueline led by Alex Pietrangolo could be even better as Jay Bouwmeester works his way back up to his usual ice time. The Central looks strong again this year, so there won't be much margin for error. But at this point, the Blues have to be the favourite to win it.

That's still four months away. In the shorter term, the Blues will get the Ducks, Kings and Wild this week. If they continue their winning ways against that group, there's a decent chance they're sitting on top of next week's power rankings.

The five teams that look like they're headed towards watching Rasmus Dahlin highlights and playing with draft-lottery simulations.

5. Detroit Red Wings (10-9-5, -2): Make it four straight losses, although three came in overtime. They're still holding down a playoff spot in the top-heavy Atlantic, but that suddenly feels very temporary.

4. Philadelphia Flyers (8-9-6, -3): Make it seven straight losses for the Flyers in a season that's so far been a massive step back for a team that had seemed headed in the right direction.

3. Florida Panthers (8-12-2, -14): Another week without a ROW, but they've put up an impressive 133 shots in their last three games.

We interrupt these power rankings for an important conversation.

For basically the entire season, there hasn't been much suspense when it comes to rock bottom in these rankings. The Avalanche took the No. 1 spot in week one because we were two games in and they were coming off a 48-point season. But ever since, it's been an easy call each and every week. It's been the Coyotes all the way.

That wasn't exactly staking out a controversial position. The Coyotes struggled through what was quite possibly the worst start in NHL history, losing their first 11 games and failing to register a regulation win until there were already 20 games in the books. Not only were the Coyotes the obvious pick as the league's 31st-best team, but it was hard to imagine anyone else even getting close.

But a lot can change in a week or two, and a recent three-game win streak has the Coyotes close to clawing their way out of the league's basement. So it's time to ask a question that seemed unthinkable even a few games ago: Is it time to anoint a new team as the league's very worst?

Buffalo Sabres, we are looking in your direction.

The Sabres headed into the weekend on a seven-game losing streak. Combined with the Coyotes' quasi-hot streak, that left Arizona just one point back of passing Buffalo for 30th spot. Granted, the Sabres had games in hand, but when the Coyotes are breathing down your neck it's fair to say the season isn't going well.

Even worse, while the Coyotes were finding some reason for optimism, the Sabres sounded like a team that was ready to implode. Jordan Nolan had some strong words, saying that "we've got to start holding guys accountable," and it wasn't hard to guess that he may have meant some of the team's bigger names.

Unlike most of those guys, Nolan has actually won before in this league, so his comments landed with some impact in Buffalo. And they were quickly echoed by some of those big names, including Jack Eichel, who spoke about the need to stop making excuses and start working harder.

The Sabres followed that by splitting a pair of games against struggling teams, earning a win over the Oilers but then getting shut out by the Canadiens. Meanwhile, the Coyotes kept pace with an overtime win over the Kings and a loss to the Golden Knights.

Add it all up, and the Coyotes have nearly caught the Sabres for 30th overall. They're just one point back, and while the Sabres still have that pair of games in hand, the Coyotes clearly have the momentum right now.

So is it time? Is this the week that the Coyotes finally escape the bottom of the power rankings?

Well...

2. Buffalo Sabres (6-14-4, -27): ... no. Not quite.

1. Arizona Coyotes (6-17-3, -31): But it was close.

By the way, that's about where the good news ends for the Sabres heading into this week. They'll face the Lightning, followed by a home-and-home against the Penguins.

Tape II Tape

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.

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Quick shifts: 10 more notable moments from around the league

- Carey Price is back, and just in time to help the Canadiens to a much-needed shutout win on Saturday night. Sure, it came against the sad-sack Sabres, but right now the Habs will take what they can get.

- Speaking of teams that needed a win, the Oilers picked up a big two points with yesterday's decision over the Bruins. A couple of slumping players had a hand in the win, as Cam Talbot was solid and Ryan Strome scored the third-period winner.

- In other Strome family news, Dylan is on his way back to the NHL. The Coyotes called up the third-overall pick from the 2015 draft; he'd been dominating the AHL.

- Assist of the week goes to Mathew Barzal, whose tour of the Senators' zone ended with a 2-0 Islanders lead:

- Alex Ovechkin's Saturday night hat trick helped beat the Maple Leafs, and delighted at least one fan in the building.

- Some milestones: Ovechkin has now moved past Mike Bossy on the all-time goals list, while Joe Thornton passes Joe Sakic in career assists.

- Make it five straight for the Golden Knights, who beat the Sharks and Coyotes over the weekend to move past the Kings and into top spot in the Pacific. William Karlsson is emerging as one of the stories of the early season; he's got 13 goals on the year, after posting just 18 in his first three seasons.

- Note to anyone fighting Kevin Bieksa: Maybe work on being ready for that quick first shot. Andy Andreoff became the second victim so far this year.

- Brent Burns's goal-scoring slump is over; he finally got on the board on Friday:

- Finally, yesterday marked the official 100th anniversary of the NHL's founding at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal back in 1917. If you missed any of the last century, or could use a refresher, you can get all caught up here.

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TSN.CA / Containing red-hot Gaudreau key for Leafs



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

By Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The Maple Leafs practised at the Scotiabank Saddledome on Monday.

A big challenge for the Maple Leafs on Tuesday night will be finding a way to contain Calgary's red-hot top line of Johnny Gaudreau, Sean Monahan and Micheal Ferland.

"They work to get the puck back," centre Nazem Kadri said. "They're really dangerous off the rush. We got to try and get above guys. I know they like to skate the puck in with possession so we got to try and hold the blue line and make them dump in as many pucks as possible."

"We're spending less time in our defensive zone, which is great," Gaudreau noted. "We're making plays off the rush. I think we're playing well in the offensive zone, getting pucks to the point at times. You know, Ferly's got a big body, he's getting in front and he's skilled as well so just making plays. When we're getting our chances we're finding the net so it has been good."

In recent years, Kadri and linemate Leo Komarov have found a way to level the shifty Gaudreau with a big hit. In their last meeting last season, Komarov hammered Gaudreau during a Flames power play catching the winger admiring a pass.

"Obviously, you're trying to be physical out there," Komarov said, "but nowadays the game is so fast it's tough to hit guys that hard anymore so, I mean, I don't think anyone is trying to hit hard anymore. You just try to be a little physical. If you get a chance, you battle."

It was two seasons ago that Kadri got Gaudreau with a big hit in the corner and the Flames winger retaliated by slashing the back of Kadri's leg.

"Yeah, of course, it's something you remember," Kadri admitted. "But it's an emotional game, sometimes people do things they regret and I'm the most understanding of that."

The Leafs and Flames will face-off twice in the next eight days so the potential for the games to get feisty is certainly there. But, for his part, Gaudreau insists this is all water under the bridge. He's more interested in the recent history.

"I think we've done a great job the past week, two weeks playing against top lines, playing against shutdown lines who've been matching against us so I think we've done a good job with that," he said.

Gaudreau is up to 34 points on the season behind only Steven Stamkos, while Monahan is fourth in the NHL with 14 goals. And after registering just one point in the first seven games, Ferland is coming on strong having scored in seven of the last 10 games.

"Obviously, that line's on fire," said head coach Mike Babcock. "Two real heavy guys and a guy who's flat-out fun to watch and actually fun to pre-scout. He's doing a lot of good things out there."

While Babcock would like to get Kadri and Komarov out against Gaudreau and company, it will be Glen Gulutzan who enjoys the advantage of last change on Tuesday. The Flames head coach noted he's pretty comfortable with his top guys getting matched against anybody these days.

"They're committed to playing both ways," Gulutzan said, "and when you have competitive guys, they accept that challenge. And I did challenge them to start playing against the top guys. They had to play better defensively and when you're playing against the top players and you're playing better defensively there's more chances out there for you ... They're out there with the other sharks and whoever's more committed to the 200-foot game wins."

Can Kadri, Komarov get under Gaudreau's skin?

Nazem Kadri and Leo Komarov are most effective when they're playing on the edge. In recent games against the Flames they both found ways to level Johnny Gaudreau with big hits, and they'd certainly like to find a way to get under the skin of the Calgary sniper on Tuesday night. Mark Masters has more.

Kadri and Komarov are pests, even in practice. The pair of long-time linemates and good friends have been chirping each other for weeks now about who's the faster skater. Babcock often runs a pretty tight practice with little deviation from a set schedule and certainly no time for tomfoolery, but at Monday's workout he made an exception calling for a one-lap race of the rink to settle this once and for all.

Kadri against Komarov. The flashy Canadian against the soft-spoken Finn. The showdown at the Saddledome. And the winner was: Komarov.

"It has been building for a while," said Komarov, who was grinning ear to ear. "A couple weeks ago we started talking about it. He thinks he's faster than me so I just had to prove it. If I had lost it would've been tough. Thank God I won."

Kadri, never short on confidence, was left to ponder what went wrong. "Thin air, thick ice," he noted, "next time we'll do it with a puck and my chances will go up."

After Komarov's win he was greeted with hoots and hollers and head taps from teammates who had cleared the surface to watch the race play out.

"They're hard on each other," noted Babcock when asked about Kadri and Komarov. "They abuse each other, which is good entertainment and that led to more entertainment and a little entertainment never killed anybody."

The Great Race: Komarov proves he's faster than Kadri

Mike Babcock usually runs a very tight practice with little room for breaks or tomfoolery. But Monday the coach made an exception. Long-time linemates and good friends Nazem Kadri and Leo Komarov have been chirping each other for weeks about who's the faster skater and they finally got to settle the debate with a race at the Saddledome.

The Leafs travelled to Alberta on Sunday so they could hold a workout in Calgary before Tuesday's game.

"Today was a good practice for us to get in here altitude-wise," Babcock said, "and the ice wasn't great so it was good work for our guys and we'll be better tomorrow."

The extra time on the road is nice from a team-bonding perspective as well.

"Just getting used to the rink and air and the time change is a bit different," Kadri said. "Sometimes it's tough to fly in and play the next day. It's nice to come out early and obviously the guys get to spend a little more time together and it's good for the team."

The Leafs will also play games in Edmonton (Thursday) and Vancouver (Saturday) this week.

Congratulations goes out to @TorontoArgos what a year! #bigrings

— Mitchell Marner (@Marner93) November 27, 2017

One downside of the Sunday evening flight was missing out on watching the Grey Cup. This was less than ideal for Mitch Marner, who has become close with several Argonauts players this season.

"Tough on the plane, but kept updating in the fourth quarter," Marner said. "You can't stream it on the plane so checking Twitter and the app. Crazy how it panned out in their favour. Very exciting for the city."

Marner said he texted running back James Wilder Jr. to congratulate him on the win.

"The last game (East Final) against Saskatchewan, we were kind of near their sideline and all the (Saskatchewan) fans were walking by and said,



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

'Well, it doesn't matter when you guys lose the Grey Cup,' and now we have it in our hands so pretty funny how things turn," Marnier said with a smile.

Gulutzan, meanwhile, had a different reaction. He's gotten to know Stampeders head coach Dave Dickenson over the years, but opted not to reach out in the wake of this painful defeat.

"I think any sports guy feels for Calgary," Gulutzan said. "I thought they were in complete control of that game and then it just shows you how one small play – it's so close in that league, in our league – one play can tip the scales the other way so you feel for a team that was in control all game and saw it slip away."

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TSN.CA / Canucks' quest for consistency continues on the road

By Jeff Paterson

NEW YORK – The Vancouver Canucks are like a car on the highway with the wobbly wheel. They may be able to keep up with traffic for a while, but the only way to reach their desired destination – the playoffs – will be to get on a true roll.

After a month of one step forward, one step back, the Canucks have changed their pattern a little on this six-game road trip, but the team's quest for consistency and any kind of traction in the standings continues.

While they managed to collect a single point in Sunday's wildly entertaining 4-3 shootout loss to the Rangers in a Madison Square Garden matinee, the game was a glimpse at the Canucks' season in 65 minutes. There were strong stretches mixed with glaring defensive lapses and although they controlled play against a good New York team, they couldn't scrape together one more goal or one more save.

The Canucks have now dropped back-to-back games after posting consecutive victories for the first time in a month. It's a dangerous dance for a team trying to stay with the playoff pack in the Pacific Division and Western Conference. Single points are better than nothing, obviously, but they won't allow the Canucks to stay in the mix much longer. For that, the team must find some traction and figure out a way to string wins together.

But maybe that's easier said than done for this group which appears good enough to avoid any lengthy losing skids, yet is still so often inconsistent from period to period and game to game. The Canucks haven't lost more than three in a row (Oct. 10 to 14) yet they've managed just one sustained win streak (four games from Oct. 20 to 26) in their first 24 games of the season. Even last year's team, which finished 29th overall, somehow cobbled together six straight victories after the Christmas break.

To their credit, the 2017-18 Canucks have managed to get two of their past three losses beyond regulation time, so they are finding ways to pick up points in a losing cause – something they didn't do with any regularity in the first five weeks of the season. So, perhaps, it's a matter of perspective. The Canucks have one outright loss in their past five games, but have managed to win just two of those five. They are 11-9-4 on the season, which is 11 wins and 13 losses with a fistful of single standings points added to the team total.

They have split their first four games on this trip, which continues Tuesday at Barclays Center against the Islanders and are 4-4-2 in their last 10 games. Without finding a way to string wins together, the Canucks are destined to spend most of the season lurching along in the National Hockey League's slow lane watching as better teams go whizzing by.

"We've played three out of four pretty good games here – I don't look at it like there have been two good games and two bad games," head coach Travis Green said after practice Monday. "We played maybe our best game of the road trip yesterday (Sunday). A lot of times you play well, you don't win. A lot of times you don't play well and you do (win). You have to win a game that you probably don't play your best in order to get those kinds of streaks, but very easily I think we are capable of getting on a streak here."

More performances like the Canucks displayed against the Rangers will go a long way in that regard. Their start Sunday was among their best of the season as they outshot New York 11-4 and took a 1-0 lead to the locker room after the opening 20 minutes.

The issue came late in the second period after Jake Virtanen had extended the Canucks lead to 2-0. Instead of getting out of the period with that cushion, the Canucks surrendered a goal to Jesper Fast with 2:20 remaining in the second. That gave the Rangers some life and they struck again just 19 seconds into the third.

It's those little lapses that happen too frequently that have cost the Canucks on too many nights this season.

"It really is just playing a full 60 minutes," said defenceman Chris Tanev, back in the lineup for two games now after missing seven with a thumb injury. "It seems we have three of four minutes sometimes – or even a couple of stretches – where the other team takes over the momentum and scores a few goals. The game in New Jersey wasn't our best, but there was a lot to like in the way we played the Rangers and hopefully we build off that effort tomorrow."

Wins against the Islanders Tuesday and in Nashville Thursday would make this an overwhelmingly successful road trip. But there's no point worrying about the Predators and stringing wins together until they have the first one to build on. So their quest to start a new streak begins Tuesday and Michael Del Zotto knows the only way the Canucks will make up ground in the standings is by eliminating the kinds of mistakes they made at Madison Square Garden.

"I've been on some teams that have put good streaks together and you have to have everything clicking," he explained. "If we're going to win on a consistent basis, we need everyone going and it can't be just one or two guys that are going to carry the team. I think we're getting to that point. I think we're playing pretty good hockey on a day-to-day basis and if we continue to do that we'll gain a little confidence."

"The biggest thing I've found in my nine years in the league is when you have that confidence, you have to keep it. And when you don't have it, you have to try to get it back as soon as possible. And when you have it, the game comes easy to you and you're having that much more fun coming to the rink every day and that usually translates into wins."

The Canucks came close in New York Sunday. A similar effort against the Islanders night might very well be enough for a victory. But as a team they understand the math of alternating wins and losses and are well aware single points are merely a consolation prize for playing just well enough to fall short.

If the Canucks want to remain with the playoff pack at Christmas, the reality of the situation is they simply have to string some wins together. Like that wobbly tire, they need to tighten things up to get back into the fast lane.

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TSN.CA / Americans will be loaded with offensive talent at World Juniors

By Bob McKenzie



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

A week today, Hockey Canada will name 30 players, give or take a couple, to compete for the 23-man national junior team roster at the final selection camp that opens two weeks from today in St. Catharines, Ont.

So there'll be plenty of time to analyze what Team Canada may or may not look like when it takes to the ice for the 2018 World Junior Championship, Dec. 26 - Jan. 5, in Buffalo.

In the meantime, it's an interesting exercise to look at the pool of talent USA Hockey is in the final stages of assessing before it names the 28 young Americans who will be invited to Team USA's final selection camp, which opens Dec. 15 in Columbus.

The Americans, of course, are the defending WJC gold medalists, courtesy of the thrilling/heartbreaking — it's all a matter of perspective — gold-medal game shootout in Montreal last January.

This time around, the host nation and defending champion looks like it will once again be a top contender, if not perhaps the favourite on home ice.

The American program has been on something of a roll lately at the WJC.

Since ending Canada's run of five straight gold medals, when John Carlson scored in overtime in Saskatoon to win the 2010 tournament, the Americans have won three gold medals in the last eight years, as well as two bronze.

Canada also has won five medals in the last eight years, but only one gold to go with three silver and one bronze.

If you focus only on the last five years, the Americans have two golds and one bronze compared to Canada's one gold and one silver.

In head-to-head play at the WJC over the last four tournaments, the U.S. has won three of the five meetings. That includes a current three-game winning streak topped by the one that mattered most — last year's gold-medal game.

Team Canada and Team USA will meet once again this year, Dec. 29, when they take their preliminary round WJC contest to the great outdoors of New Era Field, home of the Buffalo Bills.

So what are we to make of this year's U.S. national junior team?

Well, Team USA head coach Bob Motzko, who guided them to gold last year, will have some firepower at his disposal.

The top offensive line is potentially projected to be Ottawa Senators (2016) first-rounder Logan Brown between Edmonton Oiler (2017) first-rounder Kailer Yamamoto and Buffalo Sabre (2017) first rounder Casey Mittelstadt. That trio would bring impressive extremes of size, skill and speed. Mittelstadt plays in the middle at the University of Minnesota but is viewed as a left winger for Team USA.

There appears to be the prospect of considerable strength down the middle.

Beyond Brown, strong contenders to lock down roster spots include Montreal Canadiens (2017) first-rounder Ryan Poehling; Boston Bruins (2016) first-rounder Trent Frederic and San Jose Sharks (2017) first-rounder Josh Norris. Now, it's important to note that any of these three centers could end shifting to the wing if needed, but if Team USA opts to go with them in the middle it looks to be a strong group.

If Mittelstadt, as expected, is the first-line left winger with Brown and Yamamoto, there'll be a tremendous amount of competition for the spots behind him.

WJC returnee Kieffer Bellows, the New York Islanders (2016) first-rounder, is a strong contender, but who isn't among a group that includes 2018 draft-eligible Brady Tkachuk, who's expected to be a top-five pick next June, Anaheim Ducks (2016) first-rounder Max Jones and Dallas

Stars (2016) first-rounder Riley Tufte. That's quite a quartet that blends a lot of size and above average goal-scoring ability.

On the right side, Yamamoto owns the top spot and WJC returnee and New Jersey Devils (2016) third-rounder Joey Anderson is bound to get one of the 13 forward spots. Will Lockwood, the Vancouver Canucks' (2016) third-rounder, is another strong consideration on the right side.

That's a dozen U.S. forwards who have been mentioned. Not every one of them is a lock to make it, but all are strong contenders and would have to either play their way off the team or be displaced by younger, in some instances first-year NHL draft eligible or more experienced but less (NHL) heralded talent.

Either is always possible.

It will be fascinating to see if USA Hockey is at all enticed by the notion of perhaps inviting some of their blue-chip under-17 players to the national junior team camp. USA Hockey's U-17 team is as strong as it's ever been and Jack Hughes (potential No. 1 pick in 2019 NHL draft), Cole Caufield and Alex Turcotte (son of former NHL player Alfie Turcotte) are dynamic offensive stars on that team.

Hughes, in particular, is an intriguing possibility. His older brother Quinn, a potential top-five pick in this year's NHL draft, is a strong contender to get one of the seven spots on Team USA's blueline. USA Hockey was said to be "assessing" Hughes, Caufield and Turcotte in the weeks leading up to the opening of the final camp, though it's a long shot any of them get the call.

Whatever the composition of the final 13 forwards is, there looks to be a nice blend of speed, skill and size.

On the blueline, the first two spots would appear to be spoken for.

Boston Bruins (2016) second-rounder Ryan Lindgren and Calgary Flames (2016) third-rounder Adam Fox are returnees from last year's gold-medal team. Lindgren will play the left side and get hard matchup minutes while Fox is expected to quarterback the power play and be the top offensive presence from the blueline.

There'll be a lot of competition for the remaining five spots on defence.

As mentioned, the dynamic speed and puck-moving ability of Quinn Hughes will give him a chance to land a spot on the final roster. Columbus Blue Jacket (2016) second-rounder Andrew Peeke was strong for Team USA at the Summer Showcase and should also contend.

Beyond that, there's a substantial pool of fairly large blueliners, including Winnipeg Jets (2017) second-rounder Dylan Samberg and Los Angeles Kings (2017) fourth-rounder Mikey Anderson, among others. Samberg and Anderson were teammates with Waterloo in the USHL before both moving to the University of Minnesota-Duluth this season.

In goal, Team USA will, technically, have two returnees. Joseph Woll, who is Toronto's (2016) third-rounder, and Jake Oettinger, who is the Dallas Stars' (2017) first-rounder, were both on the roster last season. But it was Tyler Parsons who starred in net, especially in the gold-medal game. Parsons played five of the Americans' seven games; Woll played the other two while Oettinger was the insurance policy at No. 3.

This year, Woll and Oettinger are expected to compete for No. 1 status.

On Dec. 5, the day after Team Canada unveils its final selection camp roster, Team USA is expected to name three goalies, 10 defencemen and 15 forwards to its final camp.

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TSN.CA / TSN Hockey's Top 10 Storylines of the Week



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

By Scott Cullen

Teams are scoring more, Boeser, MacKinnon, Schenn, Vegas, Oilers, Habs and more in TSN Hockey's Top 10 Storylines of the Week.

INCREASED SCORING

One of the most notable statistics through the first quarter of the NHL season is that goal-scoring is up, currently at 6.02 goals per game, after finishing last season at 5.53 goals per game and hovering around 5.5 for the past seven years, so this current goal-scoring rate stands out.

What's the reason? Overall save percentages are down from .910 to .907, so that's part of it, but shots per game are also up a bit, from 30.2 per team per game to 31.9.

Is this as simple as the crackdown on slashing having a positive effect? That's possible, if it means that players with the puck are able to get through the offensive zone a little bit easier and possibly create better quality shots.

At 5v5 this season, compared to last season, teams are shooting more, and from not-dreadful places. pic.twitter.com/HGim4ZcGC3

— Micah Blake McCurdy (@IneffectiveMath) November 24, 2017

BOESER

One of the reasons that the league has lots of goals is that there is an influx of young talent that can put the puck in the net, perhaps most notably among the rookies is Vancouver right winger Brock Boeser.

Boeser was the 23rd pick in the 2015 Draft and played two seasons at the University of North Dakota before joining the Canucks late last season, scoring four goals and five points in nine games, an encouraging start to his pro career.

After he was scratched for the first two games of this season, though, he's become a game-breaker for the Canucks, and he has scored six goals in the past four games to take the lead in both the rookie and team scoring races.

The 20-year-old winger can still round out his game, as the Canucks don't drive play with him on the ice, but his ability to fire the puck is going to make him an integral part of Vancouver's rebuilding effort.

MACKINNON

The first overall pick in the 2013 Draft, Colorado Avalanche centre Nathan MacKinnon won the Calder Trophy in 2013-2014 after scoring 63 points in 82 games. It looked like he was well on his way to stardom.

But a funny thing happened on the way to becoming a scoring star, and MacKinnon shot 7.4% over the next three seasons, numbers not really fitting for a big-time scorer, and he managed 143 points over 218 games. The thing is, that with his combination of speed, strength and skill, that felt wholly underwhelming, like he hadn't even scratched the surface on what he might be able to produce in the league.

It looks like he might be hitting his stride this season, however, as the 22-year-old has scored 10 points in the past four games, giving him 25 points in 20 games. He has the percentages going in his favour this year, so the numbers are there, even while MacKinnon generates a career-low 2.7 shots on goal per game.

This is a big deal for the Avalanche because, after trading Matt Duchene, MacKinnon is the clear No. 1 centre on the team, expected to lead this young team back from a disastrous 2016-2017 campaign.

VEGAS, BABY

Coming into the season, there weren't any expectations placed on the expansion Vegas Golden Knights. Their roster looked okay, like they

could be competitive, but it also looked like they didn't quite maximize the current value that they might have been able to extract from other clubs in the expansion draft.

Nevertheless, the Golden Knights got off to a great start and then their goaltenders started getting hurt. By the time the franchise had played 10 games, they were already on their fourth goaltender, and while they did start to drop some games, it was understandable given the circumstances.

But, they currently sit atop the Pacific Division with 27 points in 20 games, have won three in a row, are getting goaltenders back from injury – Malcolm Subban was first to get activated from injured reserve – and, perhaps most encouraging is that they are starting to control play. In November, Vegas ranks sixth in the league with 53.0% score-adjusted Corsi, and if that trend continues, they won't merely be a competitive expansion team, but they're going to make a legitimate run at the playoffs.

SCHENN

There is one player in the Top 40 in league scoring this season that changed teams in the offseason, and it's Brayden Schenn, who is tied for fourth with 30 points in 22 games since joining the St. Louis Blues in a trade from Philadelphia.

Skating on one of the premier lines in the league, with Jaden Schwartz and Vladimir Tarasenko, Schenn is driving play and generating shots in a way that he never did in Philadelphia, so even though his percentages are lofty right now, his improved production is not fueled solely by those percentages.

Getting the opportunity to play with Schwartz and Tarasenko is a great spot to be, but Schenn has earned his keep and the 26-year-old is already more than half way to his career-high of 59 points.

OILERS WOES

It's been a brutal start to the season for the Edmonton Oilers, a team that harboured Stanley Cup hopes entering the year but, before Wednesday's win at Detroit, the Oilers had one regulation win in their previous nine games and had been outscored 18-7 in three straight losses.

While the Oilers do have solid underlying numbers, including 53.2% score-adjusted Corsi, that suggest a turnaround is possible, that turnaround also depends on goaltender Cam Talbot recovering from a rough start to the season. He had a .922 save percentage in 186 games over the past four seasons, but is sitting at .901 through 20 starts this year, and the Oilers, who aren't getting enough complementary scoring, haven't been able to overcome those numbers.

If the Oilers didn't have Connor McDavid, it would be tempting to write their season off now, because they are already five points out of a playoff spot having played more games than the teams immediately above them, but they do have Connor McDavid and that leaves open the possibility that he can drag this group back into the playoff picture.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING: Habs and Oilers have some similar problems. <https://t.co/oEGBZ9M4dF> pic.twitter.com/ORpUxNexsV

— Scott Cullen (@tsnscottcullen) November 22, 2017

HABS TROUBLES

The Montreal Canadiens didn't necessarily have the same kind of expectations as the Oilers coming into the year, but they surely thought they could be a playoff team, but they've gone seven straight without a regulation win and that's left them four points out of a playoff spot, which might not sound like much, but they've played three more games than Boston and Ottawa, the two teams directly above them in the Atlantic Division, so that four-point deficit has room to grow.

In any case, the Habs have had trouble scoring, which isn't a great surprise, but star goaltender Carey Price tried to play through an injury, was ineffective, and now he's set to return to action Saturday, with the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Canadiens desperately needing Price to play like he's played in recent seasons. The Canadiens know, as well as any team, that their performance would look dramatically different with a goaltender stopping 93% of the shots that he faces, as Price has over the past four seasons.

Like the Oilers, it would be tempting to write off the Habs at this point, but if Price is able to play to his customary level when he returns, there is still time for Montreal to get back into the playoff hunt.

SABRES SINKING

Winless in seven, the Buffalo Sabres look like they are headed for the bottom of the standings, again, and frustration is starting to boil over.

Jack Eichel, the second pick in the 2015 Draft, has taken heat for a lack of production, and has been dropped in the lineup, but it's worth noting that Eichel had 24 power play points among his 57 points in 61 games last season, but this year has just one power-play point among his 18 points in 22 games. Fix the Sabres power play and Eichel's production will follow. Maybe getting defenceman Rasmus Ristolainen back from injury will help.

That won't be enough to save the Sabres, though. They're getting outshot on a nightly basis and don't have good enough goaltending (or a potent power play) to overcome that deficit.

TOUGH TIMES FOR RASKS

There are two Rasks playing in the NHL and both are going through tough stretches.

Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask had been dominant from 2011-2012 through 2014-2015, posting a .927 save percentage in 187 games, but has fallen to a .915 save percentage, much closer to league average, over the past two seasons.

Well, he's down to .897 through a dozen starts this year and is losing playing time to Anton Khudobin, who started his fourth straight game on Friday afternoon.

Hurricanes centre Victor Rask, who missed four games total in his first three seasons, and ranked fourth on the Hurricanes in ice time last season at 17:18 per game, has been a healthy scratch in the past couple of games. He had no points and 10 shots on goal in the previous seven games.

Q1 AWARDS

With the first quarter of the season in the books, I checked in with NHL award picks.

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USA TODAY / NHL power rankings 5.0: Lightning on top, but Blues are pressing

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 6:17 p.m. ET Nov. 27, 2017

The Tampa Bay Lightning have lost two games in a row for the first time this season, but they have not lost the top spot in the USA TODAY NHL Power Rankings.

The Lightning are still the NHL's most dangerous team when you consider all areas, although their hold on the top spot seems less secure than it was two weeks ago.

Here is our ranking:

1. Tampa Bay Lightning

The Lightning have a premium offense, led by Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov, a premium defensive group led by Victor Hedman and an elite goalie in Andrei Vasilevskiy. Bullish on coach Jon Cooper as well.

2. St. Louis Blues

They're almost at a dead heat with the Lightning. Even their goal differential is close. The Blues have one more regulation loss. Coach Mike Yeo is pulling the right levers.

3. Vegas Golden Knights

With almost 30% of the regular season in the books, isn't it time to accept that coach Gerard Gallant's Golden Knights are a quality team? They are 9-1 at home.

4. Nashville Predators

With all of the moves general manager David Poile has made, the Predators are much stronger offensively than they were when they reached the Stanley Cup Final last season.

5. Columbus Blue Jackets

Goalie Sergei Bobrovsky has given up two or fewer goals in each of his past seven starts and in 13 of 19 appearances overall.

6. Winnipeg Jets

The Jets' strength is their offense, but they rank fifth with 363 blocked shots.

7. New Jersey Devils

Rookies Will Butcher (2-16—18), Nico Hischier (4-13—17) and Jesper Bratt (6-8—14) hold down three of the top five positions in the Devils scoring statistics.

8. New York Islanders

Could the Islanders trade potential free agents John Tavares or Josh Bailey with the team playing this well? Don't see it happening.

9. Toronto Maple Leafs

The Leafs were good, then bad, then sharp and now sloppy. Consistency is always the last piece to the puzzle.

10. Los Angeles Kings

Anze Kopitar remains on an 85-point pace. He has reached 80 points once, and that was in 2009-10.

11. New York Rangers

With Kevin Shattenkirk sitting at 18 points in 24 games, the Rangers are getting exactly what they needed to get from their primary offseason acquisition.

12. Washington Capitals

The Caps rank 20th in team goals-against average (3.00) and that isn't what you expect from a Barry Trotz-coached team.

13. Calgary Flames

Sean Monahan (6-4—10) and Johnny Gaudreau (3-5—8) have combined for 18 points in their past five games. And we didn't think anyone could look as dangerous as Stamkos and Kucherov did early in the season.

14. Chicago Blackhawks

You are lying if you say you expected that Artem Anisimov would be leading the Blackhawks in goals (10) at this point in the season.

15. Pittsburgh Penguins



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

Big win against Tampa Bay. Sidney Crosby has seven points in past five games. Signs that the Penguins are finding their game.

16. San Jose Sharks

With a 5-2-1 record, the Sharks have been the best road team in the Pacific Division

17. Minnesota Wild

Even losing Zach Parise to injury, the Wild are averaging three goals per game, ranking them 13th. The issue has been a 2.87 goals-against-per-game average.

18. Dallas Stars

Jason Spezza's three goals in 23 game ranks among the biggest disappointments at quarter pole of this NHL season. He's only receiving an average of 13 minutes, 18 seconds of playing time from coach Ken Hitchcock now.

19. Vancouver Canucks

Brock Boeser has 11 goals, tying him with Clayton Keller for the NHL rookie goal-scoring lead.

20. Colorado Avalanche

After finishing as the NHL's worst team last season, the Avalanche rank sixth in scoring this season (3.27 per game) and 24th in goals-against average (3.18). They'll be without captain Gabriel Landeskog (suspension) for four games.

21. Carolina Hurricanes

Defenseman Justin Faulk has scored 15 or more goals in each of the past three seasons and this season has one goal in 22 games.

22. Boston Bruins

No. 1 goalie Tuukka Rask is having a miserable season (3-8-2 with 2.91 goals-against average and .899 save percentage) while backup Anton Khudobin has been sharp (9-7-2, 2.22, .932).

23. Detroit Red Wings

With 11 goals, Anthony Mantha has one fewer goal than Auston Matthews, Tyler Seguin and Vladimir Tarasenko and the same number of goals as Patrik Laine, Phil Kessel and Gaudreau.

24. Anaheim Ducks

With six goals, 13 points and a +6 rating, defenseman Brandon Mantour deserves a place on the NHL's most underrated list.

25. Ottawa Senators

Since the Senators acquired Matt Duchene, he has one goal in eight games. He's also minus 10. They desperately need Duchene to find his way.

26. Edmonton Oilers

As disastrously as the Oilers have performed, they are six points out of a playoff position.

27. Montreal Canadiens

Can a healthy Carey Price be the spark the Canadiens need to turn around their season?

28. Philadelphia Flyers

The Flyers have won twice in regulation over the past 10 games, but they have earned nine points.

29. Florida Panthers

The Panthers' situation would be far worse without goalie Roberto Luongo's .928 save percentage.

30. Buffalo Sabres

The Sabres rank last in goals per game (2.29) and 29th in goals-against average (3.42). That explains everything.

31. Arizona Coyotes

We've seen an indication that the Coyotes can be competitive if Antti Raanta can stay healthy. He's out again.

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USA TODAY / John Scott 'a natural' for tough guy role in acting debut: 'Most nervous I've ever been doing anything'

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 10:22 a.m. ET Nov. 27, 2017

When former NHL tough guy John Scott was asked to play the role of a vilified professional hockey player on an episode of the S.W.A.T. television show, he didn't need research to get into character.

He was able to draw on personal experiences — like the time he was walking down the streets of Boston and a passerby started screaming obscenities at him. Or the scene in Vancouver when he was confronted by an elderly woman.

"Walking to dinner with a couple of guys in Vancouver," Scott told USA TODAY Sports. "And some nice old lady honks her horn at us, and we look, and she flips us the bird as she drives by nice and slow. She had an oxygen tank tube stuck up her nose. It was a classic."

The plot of the S.W.A.T. episode, "Imposters," airing Thursday at 10 p.m. ET on CBS, has Scott playing Bobby Strock, a player who needs SWAT protection because of death threats he receives when he returns to town for the first time since injuring a popular local player on a dirty hit.

According to the script, SWAT member David "Deacon" Kay, played by Jay Harrington, doesn't like the player he is protecting. Harrington had fun with Scott on the first day of filming by telling him that this was art imitating reality. Massachusetts native Harrington, a Bruins fan, told Scott how much he detested him for a TKO he recorded against popular Bruins role player Shawn Thornton years before.

"I told him there was a time I wasn't a big fan of his," Harrington said.

But that changed as soon as he spent time with Scott. "He has such a big personality to go with his size," Harrington said. "He was a natural. He took to (acting) real quickly."

Prior to accepting the part, Scott's only previous acting stint was a ninth-grade performance in a high school play.

"This was the most nervous I've ever been doing anything," Scott said.

Scott, a veteran of 286 games across eight seasons, said his wife couldn't understand why he was nervous because he has played in front of large crowds many times and he has performed in the spotlight. In 2016, when fans embraced a campaign to get the tough guy into the NHL All-Star game, he won a fan balloting spot and proceeded to play well enough to win the game's MVP.

"But it's a whole different animal when you are scripted and saying lines," Scott said. "I was outside my comfort zone."

He did, however, discover his comfort level quick enough to ad-lib one of the scenes involving chirping players.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 28, 2017

"I read (the script) and said I would never in a million years say this stuff," Scott said.

Scott said he doesn't recall all of the changes that were made at his request, although he remembers that some of the dialogue was "too matter-of-fact" for the heated situation he was supposed to be in. At one point, he recommended that he call an opponent "a donkey" to capture the realism of the circumstance.

Harrington said Scott offered several funny lines that he had actually heard during NHL games.

"That's what I mean about him being a natural," Harrington said. "He wanted it to be real."

Realness wasn't questioned in the hockey scenes, particularly the one involving the 6-foot-8 Scott crunching Harrington along the boards. Harrington played high school hockey, and he was thrilled to do his hockey scenes. He took shots from Scott. He said he "saw stars" on one of Scott's hits.

"He got me good," Harrington said.

But his brother Matt is his stunt double and he had it worse when he stepped in.

"I buried his brother pretty good," said Scott, who admitted he let up on Jay.

Harrington's brother opted to skate faster in the body-check scene along the boards, and that forced the 270-pound Scott to do the same to hit their mark at the right time. It was heavy collision each time. That scene was part of a 13-hour day on set.

"There were a few times when I thought I separated his shoulder or gave him a concussion," Scott said. "I must have hit him 15 or 20 times. I felt sorry for Jay's brother."

This was not a cameo appearance by Scott. He's in several scenes, more than he thought he would be in. He was on set eight days. Scott memorized his lines, but still managed to flub some when the cameras were rolling.

"It's funny how your brain works. You can say a line to yourself 100 times, but in the moment you will switch two words around," Scott said. "I don't know how actors do it every week with a full script. It's an incredible talent."

Scott is hosting a party for friends to watch his acting debut. Coincidentally, Jay Harrington is doing the same for his hockey buddies to watch him play on the rink.

Since leaving the NHL, Scott hasn't decided what he wants to do in the next chapter of his life.

"I am not actively pursuing (acting)," Scott said. "But I wouldn't turn it down if another opportunity came my way. It was neat."

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