



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 15, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Ovechkin hat trick helps Caps rally, top Canes in shootout

By Chip Alexander

Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson was the first to say it Friday about the Carolina Hurricanes.

"They always play us tough in this building," he said.

Caps coach Todd Reirden said the same, noting, "They're a dangerous team, especially here at home."

The Canes were dangerous at times, and especially Sebastian Aho, who had two goals and two assists. But the Caps, the defending Stanley Cup champions, have the ever-dangerous Alex Ovechkin, who had his second straight hat trick, and others who can find the net.

Caps forward Jakub Vrana did that in the sixth round of a shootout, beating goalie Scott Darling for a 6-5 victory at PNC Arena.

So ended a game that had the Canes take a 4-1 lead, Ovechkin and the Caps score four straight goals for a 5-4 lead, then Canes captain Justin Williams tie it on a power play with 6:12 left in regulation when Caps goalie Braden Holtby couldn't clear the puck from behind the net.

The Canes, who had scored three power-play goals, had 1:35 of a four-on-three advantage at the end of overtime but couldn't get the winner.

Defenseman Dougie Hamilton had the Canes' only shootout score, in the fourth round, but Nicklas Backstrom matched it for the Caps and Vrana won it.

"It hurts," Aho said. "It's one of the best teams in the world and we were right there. To be 4-1 up and then lose it ... again, again, again, we have to learn our lesson and just keep working."

Ovechkin never stops working or attacking and has been at his best as the Caps have won 11 of 13 games. He had a hat trick Tuesday against the Detroit Red Wings, then the 22nd of his career against the Canes, and now has 28 goals for the season.

Ovechkin scored his first on a bullet of a shot in the first that beat Darling to the far side and pushed his point streak to 13 games, matching his career high. His third goal, on a third-period power play for a 5-4 lead, also was on a blast from the left wing that glanced off defenseman Brett Pesce.

But his second goal, Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said, came on the most telling play of the game.

With the Canes leading 4-2 in the second after a Wilson goal, Ovechkin again had the puck on the left wing, with Hamilton positioned in front of him. But the Caps' Jonas Siegenthaler rubbed out Hamilton like an offensive lineman clearing the way to the end zone, allowing Ovechkin to skate in unencumbered, shoot and score.

Canes fans exploded with boos over the no-call. Brind'Amour was upset.

"I was frustrated because that was the turning point of the game," he said. "The game turned on that play for me. The momentum got going and they cranked it up."

The Caps' Travis Boyd tipped the puck past Darling 53 seconds later for a 4-4 tie and Ovechkin had some hats flying on the ice at 9:49 of the third.

But it wasn't over. Holtby misplayed the puck behind the net, allowing Williams to score an easy one.

Williams had been the vocal one on the bench, encouraging his teammates to stick with it. Then, he delivered a goal that at least earned a point in the first game of a five-game homestand.

The Canes (13-13-5) took the 4-1 lead as Aho had a shorthanded goal, power-play goal, assist and power-play assist.

"He's been good lately, driving the ship for sure," Brind'Amour said.

Jordan Martinook got the Canes started with a goal 43 seconds into the game, and Teuvo Teravainen whipped in a power-play shot for a 4-1 lead in the second.

Aho's shorthanded score, the Canes' second of the season, came on a breakaway after Teravainen, who had two assists, pushed the puck ahead to him. But Aho did not get a chance in the shootout.

"There are two ways to look at it," Brind'Amour said of the game. "You can say you came out and played against the Stanley Cup champs and you could have had a win, but the guys know they threw that one away in the second and let them get back in the game."

"I like that we didn't just cave in then because that could have been really devastating. But we didn't. We kept going. The shootout is a tough way to lose a game and great way to win, but it leaves a sour taste in your mouth for sure. A tough way to lose but you move on."



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## Baffling shootout choices one of many frustrations in avoidable Hurricanes loss

By Luke DeCock

Sebastian Aho sat slumped in his locker, like several of his teammates, including Justin Williams immediately to his right. His hat, tipped low, covered his eyes.

“Any reason you couldn’t have gone in the shootout?” Aho was asked.

He looked up, slowly. Then he shook his head, even more slowly.

There were a million frustrations large and small in the Carolina Hurricanes’ 6-5 shootout loss to the Washington Capitals on Friday, from the three-goal lead the Hurricanes managed to lose in less than six minutes to Alex Ovechkin’s hat trick to the blatant uncalled penalty that Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour later declared the turning point in the game.

The one that’s going to stick with everyone is watching six rounds of a shootout and not seeing Aho – who already had a breakaway goal on a two-goal, four-point night – or the better-every-day Andrei Svechnikov get a chance.

And just look at the list of players who did: Janne Kuokkanen, Jaccob Slavin, Phil Di Giuseppe, Dougie Hamilton, Justin Williams, Brock McGinn. Only Hamilton scored.

Meanwhile, the Caps ran out T.J. Oshie, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Ovechkin off the hop – instead of, say, Dmitrij Jaskin, Matt Niskanen and Travis Boyd.

“We do that drill in practice every day,” Brind’Amour said. “Same guys kind of generally are our better guys. We keep putting them out there because they score in practice. That’s all it was. ... To be honest, there’s not a lot of thought into it. Went with the flow on that one.”

Brind’Amour’s honesty is commendable, as is his commitment to what he sees in practice, but the six players Brind’Amour picked for the shootout have scored a combined 16 goals this season. Aho alone has 11 after Friday.

Even if Brind’Amour has three guys picked in advance because of analytics or practice results or eating habits or whatever, by the time it gets to Round 5 or 6, he might want to let his best player or his star rookie have a crack at it. A team that isn’t exactly blessed with natural goal-scorers

probably shouldn’t leave the two it actually has on the bench. Go with that flow.

Live and die with your fastball. You’ll sleep better.

Still, relitigating the selections for what is basically a slam-dunk contest anyway overlooks the fact that the Hurricanes led 4-1 at the midway point and were actually getting reasonably solid goaltending from Scott Darling in an unexpected cameo and never should have been in overtime in the first place.

“We certainly didn’t want the storyline of ‘Canes played hard but fell a bit short to the Stanley Cup champs,’” Williams said. “That’s not the storyline we wanted. We wanted ‘Canes persevere and get a big two points.’ That was the line we were looking for. Listen, I score in the shootout there, and we’re talking very differently right now, right? That’s the way it is.”

As much as the Hurricanes could have used a big save from Darling, and the eventual lack of one turned out to be fatal, the goals against him were hardly inexcusable, especially by his standards. He was too deep on Ovechkin’s first and third, but the Hurricanes also left Ovechkin alone in his preferred left-circle tee box for both. Tom Wilson was left unbothered to pick a rebound from between Darling’s legs and tuck it home, and the Capitals’ fourth took a double deflection.

But the game hinged on the Capitals’ third, Ovechkin’s second. As Ovechkin hovered at the left point, Jonas Siegenthaler plowed through Hamilton, clearing a lane to the net for Ovechkin, a clear and textbook interference penalty that was somehow inexcusably ignored by referees Chris Rooney and Brian Pochmara. Brind’Amour went berserk on the bench, and rightfully so.

Things changed quickly. Halfway through the game, settling for overtime would have been utterly deflating. By the time Williams knocked down a Braden Holtby clearing attempt behind the net and tapped the puck into the open goal to tie the score 5-5, the guaranteed point was practically invigorating.

At least until the shootout, when the crowd became more agitated with each passing selection as Aho and Svechnikov watched along with it as another point slipped away in infuriating fashion. They all add up, in the end.



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## The Hurricanes have played 30 games. What do we know about this team so far?

By Chip Alexander

Thirty games into the season, what do we know about the Carolina Hurricanes?

Looking at the season in 10-game segments, the Canes were 6-3-1 in the first segment, 3-5-2 in the second and 4-5-1 in the third after the 6-4 road loss Thursday to the Montreal Canadiens.

Andrei Svechnikov blew past the Habs' Shea Weber and beat goalie Carey Price with a quick backhander in the second period, scored again on Price early in the third and nearly had his first NHL hat trick. That blew up Twitter and Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour called it the rookie's "coming-out party" albeit with a few defensive mistakes.

"He looked like he was trying to win the game for us, and that's what we need more of," Brind'Amour said. "But he shouldn't be our leader on the ice. We've got older guys who need to step up."

Canes captain Justin Williams used the word "middling" this week to describe the Canes. Interesting, and apt. With losses in five of their past six games, "stumbling" is another as the Canes (13-13-4) host the Washington Capitals (18-9-3) on Friday.

Given the parity in the Eastern Conference, the Canes could edge their way back up the standings in the five-game homestand before Christmas. Or not.

Here's what we know:

Aho needs to stay in the middle

From the moment he was hired as head coach, Brind'Amour expressed doubts about using Sebastian Aho at center. Aho on the wing was fine his first two years in the league and he did score 53 goal in those two seasons. But he was drafted as a center, the Canes won't win the Stanley Cup this year, it's all about building for the future and Aho's future is at center.

Brind'Amour did move Aho to the wing but has him back at center since Jordan Staal went out with concussion. He should be there to stay. He's much more involved and active.

"All year he's been fine at center but we were trying to figure out if that's where he could be the most effective," Brind'Amour said.

The three-headed goalie situation

The Canes have gone nearly half the season and can't quite get the goaltending thing right.

There's a good reason for that: injuries. As Brind'Amour said, "One guy keeps dropping."

"We've only had three goalies who healthy for about a week, it felt like," he said. When healthy, Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney are the Canes' best options and Scott Darling No. 3. Or will Alex Nedeljkovic be No. 3?

A need for more offense

The Canes need more offense from Teuvo Teravainen, who has five goals in the first 30 games. Then again, the same can

be said for Victor Rask, Brock McGinn, Lucas Wallmark, Dougie Hamilton, Warren Foegele, Phil Di Giuseppe, Justin Faulk ... you can go down the list.

"We need our big players to win us games here and there, but the only way to have success is that everybody has to contribute," Brind'Amour said.

Canes owner Tom Dundon has said the team needs to acquire another proven scorer, a sniper. The Canes had one, Jeff Skinner, but traded him away. That has been good for Skinner, who has 22 goals in 32 games for the Buffalo Sabres, and bad for the Canes.

The D needs to be there every game

The defense needs to be a strength, night after night, game to game. Things were so loose, so inefficient Thursday that Brind'Amour could only say, "Holy moly" in talking about the play of the D-men.

"That's supposed to be the best part of our group," he said.

Dougie Hamilton had one of the worst games of his career Tuesday against Toronto, when he was minus-4. Justin Faulk struggled Thursday and was minus-3. Haydn Fleury went out with an injury against the Habs but Brind'Amour didn't use that as an excuse.

Penalties no longer killers

Credit to the Canes for continuing to improve the penalty killing. Looking at the 10-game segments, the Canes gave up 11 power-play goals on 33 attempts in the first 10 games, six on 32 in the second 10 and now just one on 31 attempts after killing off six power plays at Montreal.

The Canes, once last in the NHL, are now tied for 13th. They're pressuring well, moving well and getting sticks on pucks. There is a confident vibe to the two units that wasn't there early in the season.

A middling power play

The power play has been hit and miss all season, regardless of who's on what units. Too stagnant.

The Canes were 4-for-35 in the first 10 games, then 7-36 in the next 10. They were 5-for-30 in the last 10.

Svech, Fishy and Turbo

Just a thought but shouldn't Andrei Svechnikov get a shot at playing with the Finns? Aho, Teravainen and Svechnikov would be a young line -- average age 20.7 years old -- but one with speed, skill and in Svechnikov's case some added power.

Svechnikov's line, with Wallmark at center and Williams at right wing was dangerous and productive Thursday, but it might be time to take a look at the Russian and the Finns.

The captain gets it together

Maybe Justin Williams heard the whispers getting louder or maybe gave himself a talking-to but his play has picked up of late. Williams is 37 and was beginning to show his age, but the captain has five goals in the last 11 games and has provided a spark at times.



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## Hurricanes leave out hot Aho in shootout loss to Capitals

The Hurricanes allowed four straight goals, turning a three-goal lead into a deficit, but scored a fluke goal to force overtime and earn a point

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Carolina Hurricanes game against the Washington Capitals had a bit of everything. A hat trick for a future Hall of Famer? Yep. Three special teams goals for the Canes? Uh-huh. A blown three-goal lead? You got it.

But in the end, the big question was why Sebastian Aho — lighting up the Caps with a four-point night — wasn't one of six shooters the Hurricanes sent out in their eventual 6-5 shootout loss to the Capitals in front of 14,436 on Friday at PNC Arena.

"Well, I don't know if you look at their numbers. They just haven't scored. In practice, they don't score either," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Aho and emerging nightly threat Andrei Svechnikov not getting the opportunity in the shootout. "We do that drill in practice every day and the same guys kind of generally are our better guys that we keep putting out there because they score in practice. So that's really all it was."

In order, the Hurricanes sent out Janne Kuokkanen, Jacob Slavin, Phil Di Giuseppe, Dougie Hamilton, Justin Williams and Brock McGinn.

Hamilton was the only to score, but was matched in the fourth round by Nicklas Backstrom. Jakub Vrana, the game's 12th shooter, finished it by beating Scott Darling for the winner.

It probably never should have gone to the shootout, with the Hurricanes blowing a three-goal lead in the second period on a five-minute flurry by the Capitals that knotted the game at 4-4. They then took the lead on captain Alexander Ovechkin's third goal of the night — his second consecutive game with a hat trick — but Carolina tied it again with some help from Capitals goalie Braden Holtby.

Williams got Carolina's third power play goal of the night at 13:48 of the third when Holtby shot a clearing attempt off the back of his own net, leaving the puck in front of an empty net for an easy tap-in.

It was the 10th goal in a wild 60 minutes of regulation that saw the scoring begin in the first minute.

On the game's second shift, Aho rattled the puck around the boards and Jordan Martinook quickly collected it and executed a perfect backhanded wraparound to make it 1-0 just 47 seconds into the game.

Darling, playing for the Hurricanes for the first time since he was waived on Nov. 29, allowed a goal on the first shot he

faced, a rising one-timer by Ovechkin from near the boards to give the Capitals a goal on their first shot and a tie at 3:56.

Then after a Tom Wilson embellished a high stick, leading to a Dougie Hamilton penalty, the Hurricanes got some karmic relief.

Aho and Teuvo Teravainen capitalized on a bobbled puck by Washington defenseman John Carlson, breaking out on a 2-on-0 shorthanded rush. Teravainen stumbled but pushed the puck ahead to Aho, who stayed onside and beat Holtby to push the Hurricanes ahead at 13:18 of the first.

"I think we played a pretty good PK lately," said Aho, who seen more shorthanded ice time due to the absence of Jordan Staal. "It was easy to jump in. I'm kind of the new guy there, but there's three other guys too and the goalie. It's not just me."

The Hurricanes power play then padded the lead early in the second period.

First, Aho wired a one-timer past Holtby from the right circle to extend the lead to two at 4:39. Then just over two minutes later, Svechnikov found Teravainen in the slot and he beat Holtby stick side to make it 4-1. Aho got his fourth point with the secondary assist.

But the Caps weren't done. Ovechkin scored again, helped by an uncalled pick away from the play by Jonas Siegenthaler on Hamilton with less than three minutes left in the middle frame.

The non-call left Brind'Amour livid on the bench, and referee Brian Pochmara went to him at the start of the third to explain to the Hurricanes coach that he did not see the infraction.

"I was just frustrated because, obviously, that was the turning point in the game for me," Brind'Amour said. "The game turned on that play, for me. And then the momentum got going and they cranked it up. And we made a couple bad turnovers."

Then less than a minute later, Travis Boyd redirected a Carlson shot past Darling to tie the game.

The teams exchanged goals again in the third, with Ovechkin netting his third goal of the night at the midway point of the period on the power play.

Williams answered on Holtby's gaffe, but regulation ended in a tie.

Carolina drew an overtime penalty but was unable to score 4-on-3 — Brind'Amour said he would "take the blame on that," saying its ineffectiveness calls for it to be changed up.

That set up the shootout — where Aho didn't get a chance to add to his big night. When asked if he expected to get an



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opportunity, he paused briefly and said, "I haven't scored in the shootout out this year, so not really."

In the end, the Hurricanes felt they never should have been in that situation anyway.

"It hurts," Aho said. "Like you said, we had it. It's one of the best things in the world and we were right there. Four-to-one we're up and we lose it. Again, again, again, again we have to learn our lesson and just keep working."

Notes: Jordan Staal missed his fourth straight game with a concussion. ... Micheal Ferland missed the game, essentially his seventh missed game — he tried to return for Tuesday's game against Toronto, but played just 5:11 before sitting out the balance of the game. ... Haydn Fleury suffered a concussion Thursday in Montreal and did not play. ... Teravainen finished with a goal and two assists. ... Lucas Wallmark won 17 of a game-high 25 faceoffs. ... Carolina went 3-for-6 on the power play, marking the first time this season the Hurricanes have scored three power play goals in a game.



## Recap: Canes Get Point in Wild 6-5 Shootout Loss to Caps

Aho records four points, Ovechkin nets hat trick

by Michael Smith

Despite a four-point performance from Sebastian Aho, the Carolina Hurricanes fell to the Washington Capitals, 6-5, in the shootout.

Alex Ovechkin netted his second hat trick in as many games, and Jakub Vrana scored the deciding goal in the sixth round of the shootout.

Here are five takeaways from tonight's game.

One

Three combined goals in the first period. Five combined goals in the second period. A hat trick completion and another tie score in the third period. A six-round shootout.

This game had it all, except a win for the Hurricanes.

"It hurts. We had it, but that's one of the best teams," Aho said. "Again, again, again, we have to learn our lesson and keep working."

"I liked the effort, but the execution is where we lack," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "The shootout is a tough way to lose a game. It's a great way to win, but it leaves a sour taste in your mouth, for sure."

Two

Aho extended his point streak to four games with a four-point night, tying a single-game career high, as he led the way offensively for the Hurricanes.

The Canes scored four goals on their first 14 shots of the game, and Aho factored in on all four.

"He was great," Brind'Amour said. "He's been good lately, and he's been driving the ship, for sure."

Jordan Martinook got the Canes off and running just 47 seconds into the contest, as he scored on a wrap-around attempt. Aho recorded the primary assist.

Later in the period, Teuvo Teravainen left the puck for Aho at the blue line, and Aho beat Braden Holtby on a breakaway for the Canes' second shorthanded goal of the season.

Aho struck on special teams again in the second period, a one-time bullet from the near circle that zipped by Holtby's glove and into the top corner of the net.

That power-play goal put the Canes up 3-1, and two minutes later, Teuvo Teravainen's power-play marker (with a secondary assist to Aho) stretched the Canes' lead to three goals.

Three

Everything was coming up Canes in the second period - until it wasn't. With 12:27 left in the second period, Dougie Hamilton recorded a shot on goal. The Canes didn't put another puck on Holtby until just three seconds remained in the period, a drought that lasted 12:24. (To be fair, there was a puck put off the crossbar in that stretch, as well, but the point is that the Canes didn't have much going offensively.)

During that time, in a span of just 5:42, the Caps scored thrice to erase the three-goal deficit and tie the game at four.

"There's a reason they are who they are," Justin Williams said.

Tom Wilson potted a rebound to make it 4-2. Then, Alex Ovechkin's second of the game - more on that below - brought the Caps within a goal. With the rink tilted in their favor, it didn't even take another minute for the Capitals to tie the game on a Travis Boyd redirection in the slot.

"They got a couple chances and scored," Aho said. "They've got elite players on their team."

"The guys know they threw that away in the second with the turnovers and little things," Brind'Amour said. "We let them get back in the game."

Four

Ovechkin completed his second hat trick in as many games with a power play tally - a one-timer from the circle, of course



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- in the third period, and suddenly a 4-1 Canes lead turned into a 5-4 advantage for the Capitals.

But, give the Hurricanes credit. They don't quit, even after surrendering four straight goals to the defending Stanley Cup champions.

The Canes were gifted a fortuitous bounce four minutes later, when Holtby put the puck off the side of the net. Williams ensured that bounce didn't go to waste and potted it in the open net to tie the game at five.

"The guys kept playing," Brind'Amour said. "Even when they got a couple, it wasn't like we just sat back. We kept going and trying. The result is not what we wanted, but I was happy with the effort."

Five

So, about Ovechkin's second goal. Hamilton defended as Ovechkin handled the puck along the near wall. Out of nowhere, Jonas Siegenthaler floored Hamilton, the perfect

## Projected Lineup: Capitals vs. Hurricanes

Darling to make first start in net since Nov. 24

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes host the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals to begin a five-game homestand.

Scott Darling will make his first start in net since Nov. 24, and Trevor van Riemsdyk will draw back into the lineup, according to Canes head coach Rod Brind'Amour.

Here is the projected lineup for the Hurricanes.

Forwards

Martinook-Aho-Teravainen  
Svechnikov-Wallmark-Williams

pick to open up space for Ovechkin - except it was blatant, textbook interference. Ovechkin cut to the middle of the ice and scored on a wrist shot seconds later.

It was an egregious, game-changing non-call.

Brind'Amour, who was furious on the bench, said the official approached him before the start of the third period to say he didn't see the play happen, which is interesting considering the puck was in the vicinity.

"I was frustrated because obviously that was the turning point in the game," Brind'Amour said. "The game turned on that play. Then the momentum got going, and they cranked it up. We made a couple bad turnovers. We were trying to do the right thing ... but didn't execute it, and that's what happens. Good teams prey on that."

Up Next

The Arizona Coyotes make their first and only appearance in Raleigh this season at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

Foegele-Rask-Di Giuseppe  
Kuokkanen-Bishop-McGinn

Defense

Slavin-Pesce  
de Haan-Faulk  
van Riemsdyk-Hamilton

Goalies

Darling  
Mrazek

Scratches: Ferland (upper body), Fleury (concussion), McElhinney (lower body), Staal (concussion; injured reserve)

*Note: Lineup subject to change prior to opening faceoff.*



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## Ovechkin hat trick extends streak in Capitals win against Hurricanes

Forward has point in 13 straight games; Vrana decides six-round shootout

by Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Alex Ovechkin scored a hat trick to extend his point streak to 13 games, and the Washington Capitals defeated the Carolina Hurricanes 6-5 in a shootout at PNC Arena on Friday.

Nic Dowd and John Carlson each had three assists for the Capitals (19-9-3), who trailed by three but won their fourth in a row. Jakub Vrana scored in the sixth round to decide the shootout after Washington killed a penalty in overtime.

"Major credit to our guys for sticking with it and battling through and converting on the chances we got," Washington coach Todd Reirden said. "It was a big two points for us in not a perfect way."

It was Ovechkin's 22nd NHL hat trick and second in two games, including against the Detroit Red Wings on Tuesday. His point streak (16 goals, six assists) tied his longest in the NHL.

"I just try to do my job," Ovechkin said. "Everybody wants to score goals. In this league, it's hard to do that. I'm lucky I play with pretty good players who set me up, and I just have to do my job."

Sebastian Aho had two goals and two assists for the Hurricanes (13-13-5), who have lost three in a row and are 1-4-2 in their past seven games.

Ovechkin's third goal gave the Capitals a 5-4 lead at 9:49 of the third period on a power-play one-timer, but Justin Williams scored on a Hurricanes power play after an errant clearing pass by Braden Holtby to make it 5-5 at 13:48.

Jordan Martinook gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead 47 seconds into the first period on a wraparound at the left post.

Ovechkin's one-timer from the left face-off circle tied it 1-1 at 3:56. Jonas Seigenthaler set up Ovechkin for his first NHL point in his sixth game.

"It takes a weight off everyone else," Nick Dowd said of Ovechkin. "If you've got one player who scores six goals in two games, that's more than some of us have in a whole season. He's just a threat from everywhere. That first goal, he shot it from pretty far out. It gets our team going."

Aho scored on a shorthanded breakaway to put Carolina ahead 2-1 at 13:18 of the first and on a power-play one-timer from the right circle to make it 3-1 at 4:39 of the second. Teuvo Teravainen's power-play wrist shot put Carolina up 4-1 at 6:41.

Tom Wilson got Washington within 4-2 at 12:37 on the rebound of Evgeny Kuznetsov's shot. Ovechkin's short-side wrist shot made it 4-3 with 2:35 remaining, and Travis Boyd redirected John Carlson's shot with 1:41 left to tie it 4-4.

"I got left all alone in front and John gave me a puck I could tip," Boyd said. "Luckily it worked out."

Carolina lost 6-4 at the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday.

"The guys know they threw [this] one away in the second with the turnovers," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We let them get back in it. I like that we didn't just cave in because that could have been really devastating."

Holtby allowed only a fourth-round goal to Dougie Hamilton in the shootout. On the game-tying goal, Holtby's clearing attempt from the end boards hit his net and deflected to Williams.

"It was a game where I really didn't feel that horrible," Holtby said. "I thought I was seeing things well, especially as the periods went on. The shootout is something we've worked at. I've felt pretty comfortable all year. I was just trying to battle as hard as I could to give us a chance to make up for my error."

They said it

"[Ovechkin] came back after winning the Stanley Cup and he was ready to go from Day One and he hasn't stopped since. I have so much credit and praise for him for what he's done. His leadership on the bench halfway through the second period was really good. He's doing it game after game obviously. It's very impressive. He's been outstanding." -- Capitals coach Todd Reirden

"Once [Washington] got down, they started playing a different game and scored some goals because of it. There's a reason they are who they are. They had guys flying the zone, and they figured they were either going to lose it 7-1 or tie it up. That's kind of what they did." -- Hurricanes captain Justin Williams

Need to know

Ovechkin also had a 13-game point streak from Dec. 30, 2006-Feb. 1, 2007. He has 88 points (39 goals, 49 assists) in 74 games against Carolina. ... The Capitals have a point in 15 of the past 20 games against the Hurricanes (14-5-1). ... Washington has scored at least three goals in 13 straight games. ... Aho has seven points (four goals, three assists) in a four-game point streak. ... The Hurricanes scored three power-play goals for the first time this season.

What's next

Capitals: Host the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday (7 p.m. ET; NBCSWA, MSG-B, NHL.TV)



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Hurricanes: Host the Arizona Coyotes on Sunday (1 p.m. ET; FS-CR, FS-A, NHL.TV)



## Ovechkin, Vrana lead Caps over Hurricanes 6-5 in shootout

By Joedy McCreary

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Alex Ovechkin scored goals in bunches once again — until the shootout. Then it was up to Jakub Vrana to clinch an important victory for the Washington Capitals.

The three-time MVP had his second consecutive hat trick, Vrana scored in the sixth round of the tiebreaker and the Capitals beat the Carolina Hurricanes 6-5 on Friday night.

Ovechkin's three goals gave him an NHL-best 28 this season and nine in his last five games. His 13-game point streak matched his career high set in 2006-07.

"I don't know what to say — I just try to do my job," Ovechkin said. "Everybody tries to score goals, everybody wants to score goals. In this league, it's hard to do that. I feel like I play with great players. They set me up, and I just have to do my job."

Tom Wilson and Travis Boyd also scored for the defending Stanley Cup champions, who have won 11 of 13. The Metropolitan Division leaders got three goals in a 5:42 span of the second to tie it at 4, a burst capped when Boyd redirected in John Carlson's shot with 1:41 left in the period. It was the Capitals' largest deficit overcome in a victory this season.

"You still have to figure out how you're going to win with the group that we presently have in the locker room, and obviously the majority of our roster was part of what we were able to accomplish last year, so you have a little bit of I'd say equity on that one," coach Todd Reirden said. "At the end of the day, you have to find ways to do it with a new group in there, and we're doing it with a four-line attack."

Justin Williams scored the tying goal with 6:12 remaining, and Sebastian Aho had two goals and two assists for Carolina.

Teuvo Teravainen had a goal and two assists and Jordan Martinook also scored for the Hurricanes, who had three power-play goals but have lost three straight and six of seven. They have allowed 15 goals — not including the tiebreaker in this one — during their last three losses.

Dougie Hamilton and Nicklas Backstrom both scored in the fourth round of the shootout. After Braden Holtby stopped Brock McGinn in the sixth round, Vrana ended it with a wrist shot to Scott Darling's glove side.

Holtby finished with 22 saves for the Capitals. Darling made 24 stops in his first start with Carolina since Nov. 24.

Ovechkin put Washington up 5-4 with 10:11 remaining, blasting a one-timer from the left circle past Darling on the power play, before his former teammate with the Capitals — Williams — tied it nearly four minutes later with a backhand.

Ovechkin also scored on Washington's first shot of the game, another one-timer from the circle at 3:56 of the first. His second goal came with some controversy, with the Hurricanes unsuccessfully clamoring for an interference penalty on Jonas Siegenthaler for his hit on Hamilton that cleared the way for the Capitals' captain.

"The game turned on that play," said Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour, who said an official told him he didn't see interference. "Then the momentum got going, and they cranked it up."

Aho, who scored on a short-handed breakaway in the first, had his third career four-point game and extended his point streak to four games. He has 15 points (seven goals, eight assists) in nine career games against Washington, and he and Teravainen scored power-play goals 2:02 apart in the second period that seemingly put Carolina in control.

Aho scored his second goal on a one-time rocket that got by Holtby, making it 3-1 at 4:39, and Wilson — in his first game back from a concussion that cost him three games — took an interference penalty for blind-siding Andrei Svechnikov with his shoulder 24 seconds later. Teravainen then made it a three-goal game with his wrist shot from the circle at 6:41.

"We had plenty of time," Ovechkin said. "We just had to play our game."

NOTES: Washington C Nic Dowd had a career-high three assists, and Carlson had two. ... The Capitals have scored at least three goals in 13 straight games. ... Carolina has allowed at least four goals in four of its last five games. ... Wilson and Ovechkin both rang the post. ... Siegenthaler set up Ovechkin's first goal for his first NHL point.

UP NEXT

Capitals: Visit Buffalo on Saturday night.

Hurricanes: Host Arizona on Sunday.



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## SPORTSNET™

### Quick Shifts: John Tavares won't sleep on Toronto endorsements

By Luke Fox

A quick mix of the things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep.

1. Just because the chief of Canadian Tire wasn't pitching John Tavares on Toronto during his free agency interview period doesn't mean the Maple Leafs star hasn't seen endorsement deals multiply with his move out of New York, where the Islanders play second fiddle to the Henrik Lundqvist and Rangers — and, in publicity terms, hockey plays fourth fiddle behind the city's other major sports franchises.

You try going head-to-head with Derek Jeter for endorsement dollars.

In recent weeks, Tavares has lent his name and likeness to promotions for Rogers Ignite and Casper mattresses. (Auston Matthews and Mitchell Marner, too, have seen a bump in off-ice exposure. And now Zach Hyman is doing radio ad reads.)

"We know what the Maple Leafs mean to the city, the history here and how much people in Toronto love the game of hockey. Throughout Canada, really. So there's a connection there," Tavares explains.

"They just had me lying in a bed, so it wasn't very taxing at all. When they showed me what they were going for, it gave me a good chuckle. I thought it relates really well for an athlete, the importance of sleep and getting a good night's rest."

The Zamboni driver steals the Casper spot, but it's a clever little clip that plays off Tavares's all-hockey, no-nonsense persona. (Sadly, Tavares did not wear his Leafs PJs for the ad.)

While he has a history of tweeting out support for various brands to his 209,000 followers, Tavares told me he wasn't getting nearly as many requests to shoot commercials during his nine years on the Island as he has in his five months as a Leaf.

"For whatever reason, I've had a few of those opportunities come my way since coming here," he says.

"What's important is aligning myself with things that are authentic to me, that represent who I am. I'm not trying to do too much, but just what I feel is the right opportunity and something that makes sense."

That money left on the table? It could arrive from different sources.

2. Patrick Marleau could build an inukshuk with all the milestones he's piling up. A couple weeks back, the Maple Leafs winger became just the 11th NHLer to play 1,600 games, and on Thursday he surpassed Jay Bouwmeester and moved into sole possession of the seventh-longest ironman streak.

Marleau will skate in his 739th consecutive game Saturday in Florida, dating back to April 9, 2009, and is neck-and-neck

with the longest active ironman (and sixth overall), 32-year-old Florida defenceman Keith Yandle, who hasn't missed a game in nine-plus seasons and played 84 games in 2014-15 like sleep is the cousin of death.

"He's a machine. He really is a machine," says Marleau's friend and longtime teal teammate, Joe Thornton. "It really is a feat. And without those lockouts, [Marleau's games played total] would be even higher. He takes care of himself. Just a true professional."

Since Marleau made the decision to leave San Jose, he and Jumbo have remained in regular contact but not so much about hockey.

"We really don't talk about it to be honest with you," Thornton says. "We just talk about family and stuff like that. The good stuff."

Marleau says he stretches more than he used to, and he also makes a point to arrive earlier at the rink — a habit he picked up from Big Joe when the two were roommates.

"He's a linebacker on skates," marvels former coach Peter DeBoer. "He's physically so gifted, with his skating ability but also his body. He's a big, heavy, strong guy. People don't realize how big a man he is, how powerful he is. He doesn't shy away from getting into corners and doing dirty work too, which makes it all that more impressive. It's not like he's a perimeter player who's gone that many games without getting injured."

"I'm a big fan. Everyone in Toronto is starting to get an appreciation for what people in San Jose have seen for over a decade. It's a great accomplishment."

In the coming weeks, Marleau will pass Ray Bourque and Larry Murphy on the all-time games played list. He needs 37 more games to pass Craig Ramsay, next on the ironman hitlist.

3. At some point, William Nylander will be promoted back to Auston Matthews' right wing.

While he's yet to show flashes of Peak Willy and is still looking for his first goal through four games, the newly rich young man has already amassed the best underlying possession numbers among Leafs skaters (tiny sample size, granted). Nylander excels at zone exits and entries.

What will be interesting is how head coach Mike Babcock juggles the left wing piece around the Nylander-Matthews duo. The Patrick Marleau experiment looked better on paper than in reality.

Although Kasperii Kapanen also plays the right side, we'd like to see him try skating on the off wing when Nylander gets bumped up.

Marleau and Kadri can take advantage of third-line matchups and excel in defensive situations.



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Since being promoted to the top six on Oct. 7 in Chicago, when he replaced Tyler Ennis, Kapanen has put up 12 goals and 22 points in 30 games — and Matthews is a fan.

“Especially Kappy joining us a couple games in, we all had some good chemistry. We all bring some different things to the table. All of us want to play fast and use each other as much as possible and play in the offensive zone,” Matthews said.

“He’s playing with a lot of confidence. He’s got the puck on his stick all the time. I think people don’t know how fast he really is until he’s blowing right by you. Everybody’s seen that now. They respect his speed, so that gives him and us as linemates more time and space.”

Babcock won’t tip his hand, but he has plenty of time to tinker with the ideal lineup.

“The beauty of it as you get more depth, you can move people around,” Babcock said.

Let’s see what Kapanen-Matthews-Nylander can do, with flyin’ Finn as the first man on the forecheck. Y’know, before they trade him.

4. Whether he meant to or not, Carolina Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon publicly stripped GM Don Waddell of any presumed decision-making power this week.

“We won’t be drafting defence in the first round as long as I’m here,” Dundon said during a public speaking appearance sponsored by Triangle Business Journal. “I’ve got to have more offence. I want to lose 5-4, not 2-1. If we lose 5-4, I’ll have fun at least.”

The Hurricanes promptly lost their next two games 6-4 to the Canadiens and 6-5 to the Capitals. Double the fun!

It’s no secret Carolina had been stockpiling on elite blueline prospects up until the last two drafts, when they used their first picks on Martin Necas (2017) and Andrei Svechnikov (2018).

The pattern is the inverse of the high-flying Maple Leafs, with whom Waddell made no secret his interest in William Nylander. The difference is, while the offence-heavy Leafs started taking D-men with their first-round picks after 2016 (Timothy Liljegren and Rasmus Sandin) to address an organizational need, they didn’t broadcast it with such a handcuffing blanket rule.

Toss in the fact Carolina traded away Elias Lindholm (16 goals) and Jeff Skinner (22 goals) this summer and is now hunting for “a sniper”? Not a good look.

The Hurricanes’ highest goal-getter is Michael Ferlund with 11. Fifty-six players have more goals than Carolina’s best shooter.

Yes, we criticize, but part of us loves Dundon’s aggression. He has the Hurricanes wearing red on the road because he doesn’t like the white unis, and he’s bringing back “Brass Bonanza” and Whalers throwbacks.

Good or bad, the man disrupts.

5. Every single one of Matt Dumba’s 12 goals — the most among all defencemen this season — has come on the power play.

6. It’s difficult to overstate the challenge the Bruins have faced with Patrice Bergeron (and Zdeno Chara) out of their lineup. The twin leaders of that group have started working out with skating and skills coach Kim Brandvold. Bruce Cassidy is hopeful they can return to practice next week.

The coach has tried three different replacements at No. 1 centre between Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak, but the void goes beyond that.

Bergeron’s absence affects both special teams and subtracts all those automatic face-off wins.

“When Bergy’s in the lineup, we start with the puck all the time,” Cassidy said. “Your PK becomes more goaltender-reliant.

“If we’re talking about options on the power play, he’s one of the first. How teams defend when Bergy’s in the lineup, they overplay it.

“He creates anxiety.”

Cassidy — an excellent quote when it comes to the details of the game — has noticed the opposition attacking the Bruins more since Bergeron’s injury and taking more physical liberties on young players.

There are silver linings here, as Boston slips to fourth in a heated divisional race. The Bruins are discovering if they have real players in centres Colby Cave and Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson.

“It forces you to deal with adversity,” Jake DeBrusk adds. “Especially this early in the year with how many new faces, I think it’s good for us — especially if we can come out on top.

“Any time you back’s against the wall, it helps. It shows your true character.”

7. Bruins rookie Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson, naturally, goes by simply JFK.

My favourite unintentionally deep quote of the year came from Cassidy ahead of the kid’s initial call-up:

“It’s a bit of an unknown with JFK.”

Too true.

8. As George McPhee remembers it, the Vegas Golden Knights were awarded an expansion franchise on a Wednesday, he sent his resume to owner Bill Foley on Friday, Foley called him on Sunday, the two met on Tuesday, and the ball was soon in motion.

The Seattle SomethingOrOthers, apparently, have more time and aren’t acting as quickly to put a GM in place, although they do have a list of a dozen or so candidates.

McPhee’s first order of business was to find the best people for each position — ticketing, scouts, coach, everything. Speaking at a recent sports management conference, McPhee said he sought hardworking candidates with zero ego.

The second order of business? Instilling a winning, positive culture from the top down.



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"I consider it to be an invisible difference-maker and the ultimate competitive advantage: The teams with the best culture prevail more often than not," said McPhee, who spent time around several MLB and NFL organizations to take notes on best practices.

"You know soon why they're winning or why they're losing."

9. When it came to preparing for the expansion draft — which he knocked out of the park — McPhee soon realized that weeding out the best selection from each of the 30 clubs was too cumbersome a task for one man to handle properly.

McPhee took 15 teams and charged assistant GM Kelly McCrimmon (a Seattle candidate, no?) with the other half.

Between the two execs, they pinpointed 10 teams that would need to do a side deal with Vegas or risk losing a coveted asset. Nine of the 10 were in.

McPhee slapped a condition on these "secret deals," however, telling the opposing GMs: "If you do something before the expansion draft, the deal is off."

To McPhee's surprise, they all kept mum.

"It really had the effect of freezing the market. Nothing happened. Tampa [dealing Jonathan Drouin to Montreal for Mikhail Sergachev] was the only trade that happened," said [Keyser-Söze](#) McPhee, still sounding surprised at what he pulled off.

"I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. There was a lot of tension and stress two days before the expansion draft because we were waiting for all these other things to happen

— and they didn't. We woke up the morning of the expansion draft and said, 'Wow, nothing happened.' "

10. One more note from McPhee that I hadn't heard.

Regarding 2017's mass shooting from the Mandalay Bay, McPhee said the Knights had played an exhibition game that night, Oct. 1, and were lucky the contest had been scheduled for a rare 5 p.m. start. A 7 p.m. puck drop would've taken the team and its fans right by the hotel at the time of the shooting.

"I've been too close to two of these now — one in Washington on 9/11 and this one. I don't want to get political, but there's lots of things that should be done, I believe," McPhee said. "It's a devastating thing to go through."

11. Attention: Quebec and Houston.

At least one NHL owner on the executive committee finds it hard to envision further expansion. If a new city is to secure a team, he believes relocation is much more likely.

"I don't see the league expanding beyond 32 teams," he said. "I have a hard time imagining that."

12. Makes sense that the swashbuckling Washington Capitals were Google's most trending NHL team among U.S. searches in 2018.

In Canada, however, the most Googled NHL team was the Winnipeg Jets. The most searched-for hockey players were William Nylander and John Tavares (and you thought all those Sportsnet articles were an accident).

The Humboldt Broncos, of course, ranked near the top among the most Googled news searches nationwide.



## Hurricanes collapse, blow 3-goal lead in crazy shootout loss to Capitals

A 4-1 second-period lead quickly turned into a devastating loss for the middling Hurricanes.

By Brett Finger

And just like that, the Carolina Hurricanes are on another losing streak.

This time, it's even more painful. After scoring goals but failing to keep the puck out of their net against the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday, the same thing happened on Friday against the Washington Capitals.

The first few minutes belonged to the Hurricanes. From the opening puck drop, Carolina pushed the tempo and made life incredibly difficult for Braden Holtby and the Capitals.

All of 47 seconds into the game, it was the Canes' first line that opened the scoring. Jordan Martinook surprised everyone in the building when he unleashed a ferocious wraparound and deposited the puck in the back of the net.

Sebastian Aho's assist on the goal extended his point streak to four games.

A few minutes later, after Carolina got several additional chances, the Capitals finally got their first shot on goal.

A one-timer from Alex Ovechkin from the left circle.

Spoiler alert: he scored. He usually does that. It was an unfortunate start for Darling, whose every movement was undoubtedly going to be watched closely.

The defending Stanley Cup champions picked up steam as the opening frame wore on. The Hurricanes started finding themselves pinned in their own end. An offensive zone high-sticking penalty on Dougie Hamilton didn't help matters... until it actually did.

The penalty-killing duo of Aho and Teuvo Teravainen pounced on a misplayed puck from John Carlson, sprung a breakaway, and gave the home team their second lead of the night. Teravainen was getting mauled down, but he was able to keep his footing, nudge the puck to Aho, and the Canes' scoring leader handled the rest.

Through 20 minutes, the Canes had a 2-1 lead.



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The first ten minutes of the second period were a lot of fun for the home team which, shockingly, took advantage of not one but TWO power play opportunities.

First, it was Aho who rifled a smoke trail-producing shot top shelf through a screen from Andrei Svechnikov in front of Holtby to make it 3-1. Then, after Tom Wilson did typical Tom Wilson things, the Canes struck again. It was the other Finn who came through as Teravainen lofted one by Holtby to increase the lead to 4-1.

Then, things were a lot less fun.

It took less than six minutes for the Canes to cough up their commanding lead. First, it was Wilson. Then, it was Ovechkin. Ovechkin's second goal was surrounded by controversy after what appeared to be a blatant interference call that was missed just seconds before the goal.

Rod Brind'Amour nearly shot through the roof as he yelled from the bench, but by that point it was a 4-3 hockey game and no amount of yelling was going to change that.

Less than a minute later, the game was tied for the first time since the first period. An unmarked Travis Boyd deflected a long-range shot by Darling. Tie game.

As if things couldn't get any worse, not only was the next goal scored by the road team, it was Ovechkin. Again. Hat trick. The great 8 tallied his second hat trick in as many games.

Then, of course, the game continued to be crazy.

On what was nothing short of an early Christmas present wrapped neatly with the tag reading "From: Braden Holtby :)", Justin Williams potted the game-tying goal. It was all too similar to one Rod Brind'Amour goal from June of 2006.

The game remained tied at the end of regulation. Five minutes of overtime couldn't change the score, either, despite a 95-second 4-on-3 power play for the Hurricanes to close out the overtime period.

Then, the skills competition decided the game, because why not, right?

After three scoreless innings, Dougie Hamilton did his best Jussi Jokinen impression to break the ice in the top of the fourth. Promptly, Nicklas Backstrom responded and beat Darling. Then, in the bottom of the sixth, Jakub Vrana put the Hurricanes out of their misery.

The final score: 6-5 Capitals.

It was nothing short of a heart-breaking loss for the Hurricanes. They had the Capitals all but beat and they allowed them to come back and beat them on their home ice.

The locker room was gloomy, as you'd expect, after the loss. The players want more. They demand more out of themselves. Friday night's debacle won't be forgotten any time soon.

But Brind'Amour kept a level head. His team could have - and should have - beat the defending Cup champs, but they didn't. It wasn't a matter of effort, though. It was a matter of a young team looking the part. And a young head coach looking the part.

Where the Hurricanes go from here is entirely up to them. This will be the turning point of the season, as they now sit at NHL .500. Will they feel sorry for themselves and fold, or will they be able to come back from this excruciatingly painful loss?

We'll get to see for ourselves on Sunday when the Arizona Coyotes come to town.

Postgame Quotes

Rod Brind'Amour

[On why he didn't use Aho or Svechnikov in the shootout] You can look at their numbers. They just haven't scored. In practice they don't score, either. We do that drill in practice everyday. The same guys kinda, generally, are your better guys. We keep putting them out there because they score in practice. That's really all it was. Sometimes, you just get a feel, too. (Justin Williams) got the big tying goal, so I thought he'd get (a goal in shootout). His numbers are probably the best on our team, career-wise. We don't have a go-to guy. It's not like we can say this guy, for sure, is a shootout specialist. (Dougie Hamilton) might be the closest, actually. In practice, he scores the most. So, when you get to that point, it's a specialty point for me. To be honest with you, I don't put a lot of thought into it. I just kinda went with the flow on that one.

[On his discussion with the referees before the third period] He came over to me and just tried to say that he didn't see it and I said thank you... It was nice that he came over and said something if that's what he was trying to do.

[On Scott Darling's performance] (He made a big save) on the power play (Caps' 2-on-1 shorthanded chance). That was big. Big for us, obviously, there near the end of the game. You can't fault him on those.

[On the power play in overtime] I don't think it was indecision. I think we just shot when we shouldn't have, probably. We got a couple to the net, but it wasn't right. I take the blame on that. I'm going to change that up. It's been too long with that same thing.

[On Aho's big game] He was great. He was playing against the other team's best players. Wallmark, too, he went head-to-head against their top-two guys and I thought they did a pretty nice job. (Aho)'s been good lately. He's been driving the ship, for sure.

[On if Williams' goal reminded him of anything...] (chuckle) no, but I know what you're getting at.

[On the effort] We came out well. I thought the effort was fine, honestly. The execution is where we lack. We gotta keep drilling that home. The management of the puck... that's probably the most disturbing thing, for me. We talk about it all the time. Maybe that's the problem. The more I see it talked about it, the more it seems to keep biting us in the butt. We gotta be better at managing the puck. That's our downfall right now.

Justin Williams

[On how the team responded after he scored the game-tying goal in the third period] After we scored the goal and it was the last three minutes, they were taking it to us. I feel like it should've been the other way around. We should have been gunning for that next goal, and not waiting to get it in overtime.



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I had a little sense of that. (We have to) Just go for it. We need wins. And then you have to win it in the skills competition

## About Last Night: A Backbreaking Defeat

While Andrei Svechnikov had a great night, defensive miscues at the most inopportune times cost the Canes dearly in Montreal.

By Cody Hagan

While the Carolina Hurricanes remained on the wrong side of the scoresheet, last night's 6-4 defeat at the hands of the Montreal Canadiens was at least entertaining. Fans were treated to a four-goal performance which saw Andrei Svechnikov's best game in the NHL, along with Sebastian Aho scoring on a goaltender for the first time since early November.

It was a back and forth game that easily could have ended with Carolina on top. Unfortunately, very bad defensive miscues at the absolute worst times cost the Canes once again, leading to Montreal coming away with the victory.

The Good

The final score likely says all that needs to be said about the good part of last night. The last time the Hurricanes scored four goals without the aid of an empty net was November 8th against the Chicago Blackhawks. While that stat seems hard to believe, the Canes have continuously struggled to score this year. So the ability to score four goals against one of the best goalies in the NHL has to be somewhat of a positive, right?

The night started off strong with a highlight reel goal from Svechnikov. The game was at 4-on-4 and he got a pass from Sebastian Aho then proceeded to do this:

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That's not just any defender either; that's likely future Hall of Famer Shea Weber. But Andrei wasn't done: he would net his second of the game very early in the third period to tie the game by knocking in his own rebound.

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Justin Williams did a great job getting him the puck from behind the net and Andrei stayed with it getting his own rebound and scoring from a tough angle.

The game would then take a slight turn for the worse but the Canes kept fighting back. Jaccob Slavin would pull the Canes to within one in the third period with a beautiful snipe from the top of the circles.

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What you can't see here is Slavin actually sets this goal up at his own blue line. He knocked down an entry attempt by Montreal at the Carolina line and got the puck up ice, only to follow the play and get himself wide open. It still feels like Slavin has even more to give offensively when you see plays like this.

The last Cane to join the fun was Sebastian Aho. Not to be outdone by Svechnikov's power move earlier in the game, Aho showed off his skill set with a nice move of his own.

(shootout). That's what happens. That's how the league is sometimes.

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No matter the end result of the game, seeing Carolina score four goals and continue to fight to the very end offensively is a good sign. Against Toronto you could tell the team gave up after Toronto went up by two but they did not do that last night. For a team that struggles to score as much as the Canes do, getting four goals against Carey Price - even given his own difficulties this season - has to go down as a good thing.

The Bad

For the first half of the game Petr Mrazek stood on his head and kept the Canes in it. Montreal dominated the first period and Mrazek kept the door shut. Then things started to go sour for him in resulting in five goals allowed by the end of the game. Not every goal was his fault by any means, but there were a couple where you felt like Mrazek needed to make a save and was unable to.

Brendan Gallagher's goal early in the third to put Montreal back ahead moments after Svechnikov tied it is a good example. The goal itself is a two part blame on the defense and Mrazek.

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Mrazek has to make that save. At that point in the game and with that close of a range, there is no way that goal should get past a goalie.

The Canes frequently need their goaltender to bail them out and keep them in the game. Mrazek did that in the first half versus both Montreal and Toronto but then failed to get the job done for a full 60 minutes. Point blank, the Hurricanes need a lot more from him. With so much uncertainty residing around the goaltending situation, it is clear they desperately need Curtis McElhinney to return very soon.

The Ugly

While the final score will not reflect it there is one major common theme between the Toronto game and the Montreal game. Giving up a goal right after scoring a big goal is likely the worst thing you can possibly do as a team in hockey. It sucks all momentum away and almost deflates a team to the point of no return.

It's exactly what happened against the Maple Leafs and it happened numerous times last night against Montreal, starting with Svechnikov's goal to tie the game only to give up a back breaking goal to Brendan Gallagher less than a minute later.

As bad as Mrazek played the puck, it never gets to him if Slavin is able to just clear the puck. Instead he turned it over and Montreal scores. It sucked the life right away from Carolina and then they gave up another goal to give Montreal a two goal lead.

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Artturi Lehkonen walked right around both Calvin de Haan and Justin Faulk on this play. Once again, at that point in a



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game you need your veteran guys to step up and make a play or save and they failed to do so.

But amazingly Carolina fought back when Slavin scored cutting it back down to a one goal game. Then the Canes gave up another back breaking goal to Andrew Shaw.

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With a team full of veteran defensemen, you simply cannot allow this to happen on multiple occasions when your offense has clawed its way back in to the game. We've now gone from multiple games where the power play has cost the Canes to two straight losses directly on the defense for allowing inopportune back breaking goals.

Moral of the Story

The Canes keep finding new ways to lose and it's as frustrating as ever. While it is more entertaining to see the team lose 6-4 versus 4-1, the end result is still the same. For once the offense wasn't to blame at least. Horrible defensive breakdowns and not getting saves when you need them cost Carolina last night.

The good news is they get a chance to redeem themselves tonight. The offense must show up again against the defending champs. There's tons of uncertainty in goal tonight, so the defense needs to figure things out quick. Another bad night of miscues and we could bear witness to Alex Ovechkin's second hat trick in as many games.



## Hurricanes blow 4-1 lead, lose in shootout

By Andrew Schnitker

The Carolina Hurricanes let one slip away Friday night. Despite leading 4-1 in the second period, the Canes fell 6-5 in the shootout to the Washington Capitals at PNC Arena.

The Canes (13-13-5) took a 4-1 lead in the second period, but the Capitals (20-9-3) stormed back for five unanswered and a one-goal lead in the third. Carolina tied it late with a gift-wrapped goal for forward Justin Williams, but could not muster anything else, despite an extended power play in overtime.

"I thought the effort was fine," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I liked the effort. The execution was where we lack. We've got to keep drilling that point home. The management of the really, that's probably the most disturbing thing to me, because we talk about it all the time. Maybe that's problem, maybe I shouldn't talk about it at all. The more I seem to talk about that, it keeps biting us in the butt. We've got to be better at managing the puck. That's our downfall right now."

Making his first start since being placed on waivers, goalie Scott Darling was, as odd as it sounds despite the score, solid in net for Carolina. There wasn't much he could have done on any of the goals, and he came up with a handful of big saves.

In the shootout, which went six rounds, defenseman Dougie Hamilton scored for the Canes, and forwards Nicklas Backstrom and Jakub Vrana scored to win it for the Capitals. Despite his big night (two goals, two assists), the Canes did not use leading scorer Sebastian Aho in the shootout.

"We do that drill in practice every day and the same guys generally are our better guys that we keep putting out there in practice," Brind'Amour said. "So that's really all it was. Sometimes you just get a feel too. ... It's a specialty point for me. It doesn't really, to be honest with you, have a lot of thought into it. I just kind of went with the flow on that one."

Defenseman Jaccob Slavin sent the Canes to a 4-on-3 power play with 1:35 left in overtime, coming up with a steal in the neutral zone and drawing a trip in the offensive zone. The

Canes, however, could not get anything going on the man advantage, sending the game to the shootout.

"I don't know if it was indecision, we just shot it when we shouldn't have, probably," Brind'Amour said. "We got a couple to the net. It wasn't done right. I take the blame on that. I'm going to change that up; it's been too long of the same thing."

The second period was the story of this game, a wild affair that saw the Hurricanes and Capitals combined for five total goals.

Early in the middle frame, Aho and forward Teuvo Teravainen (one goal, two assists) came up with back-to-back power-play goals to give Carolina 4-1 lead.

"It hurts," Aho said. "We had it, but it's one of the best teams in the world and we were right there, up 4-1. And then we lose. Again, again, again, we have to learn hard lessons and it's just not working."

The Caps made it a 4-2 game with a goal from forward Tom Wilson with 7:23 left in the frame, before goals from Ovechkin and forward Travis Boyd 54 seconds apart tied it at four.

The Canes were the victims of some questionable officiating on the Ovechkin goal; Capitals forward Jonas Siegenthaler knocked Hamilton down off the puck to allow Ovechkin to get open, but no call was made.

"The game turned on that play for me," Brind'Amour said. "Then the momentum got turned; they cranked it up. We made a couple bad turnovers. We were trying to do the right thing. Both of them, the guys had it on the stick and were trying to get it in and then didn't execute it. That's what happens. Good teams, they just prey on that. And then it was in our net."

About halfway through the third, Ovechkin gave the Capitals a 5-4 lead with his hat-trick goal, another one-timer from the faceoff circle.

The Canes got a gift with 6:12 left; at the tail end of a power play, Capitals goalie Braden Holtby fumbled a clearing



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attempt, left the puck sitting just outside the crease and Williams deposited it into the empty net to tie the game at five.

"After we scored the goal and maybe the last three minutes of the game, they were taking it to us," Williams said. "I feel it should have been the other way around. We should have been gunning to get that next goal, not waiting to get it in overtime. I had a little sense of that. Just go for it. We need wins, and we lose it in the skills competition."

The Canes wasted little time jumping ahead in this one; forward Jordan Martinook made it 1-0 with a wraparound goal just 47 seconds into the game.

The lead was short-lived; Capitals superstar Alex Ovechkin tied the game at one 3:09 later with a patented one-timer from the right circle.

With the Capitals on a power play with six minutes and change left in the first, it was the Canes who took advantage. Teravainen got behind the Capitals' defensemen, sprung Aho for a breakaway and Aho beat Holtby on the backhand to make it 2-1.

The Canes will continue this five-game homestand with a visit from the Arizona Coyotes Sunday, looking to move forward from another tough loss.

"I think the guys know they threw that one away in the second with the turnovers and the little things," head coach Brind'Amour said. "I liked the fact when they got up 5-4 ... I liked that we didn't just cave in then. Because that have been really devastating, obviously. We just gave up four goals straight. But we didn't and we just kept going. And then the shootout, it's a tough way to lose a game. It's a great way to win, but it leaves a sour taste in your mouth for sure. It's a tough way to lose, but you move on."

## TriangleSportsNetwork

### Hurricanes overcome by Ovechkin and Capitals, fall 6-5 in shootout

Carolina loses grip on 3-goal lead

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – It was the type of game any hockey fan would want to watch.

Goals, goals, goals, and more goals.

That's what the 14,436 in attendance at PNC Arena got on Friday as the Carolina Hurricanes battled hard against the defending Stanley Cup-champion Washington Capitals, but lost 6-5 in a shootout.

The bipartisan crowd traded cheers, jeers and goal celebrations standing from the 47-second mark in the first period when Carolina's Jordan Martinook opened the game's scoring until the final puck bulged the twine on Jakub Vrana's winning shootout goal for the Capitals.

"Shootout's a tough way to lose a game, a great way to win," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

"But it leaves a sour taste in your mouth for sure."

Pucks were flying at both ends as goalkeepers Scott Darling and Braden Holtby made 24 and 22 saves, respectively, as Washington outshot the Hurricanes 29-27.

Led by a four-point performance from Sebastian Aho, the Hurricanes built up a 4-1 lead through the early part of the second.

Special teams play was significant for both sides as Carolina finished 3-of-6 with goals from Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, and Justin Williams, while Washington's lone power play goal came off a blast from Ovechkin.

With a hat trick finish, Ovi helped to wipe out the sizeable margin between the two sides.

Washington led 6-5 with 10:11 remaining in the third, until Williams' seventh goal of the season evened it up four minutes later.

It was an evenly played and grueling bout as both teams traded hits, giveaways, and takeaways for 65 minutes.

In the end, it was the Capitals who earned the extra point while the Hurricanes added another heavy, emotional loss to their psyche.

They've now lost six of their last seven games.

The load bearing on the shoulders of both Williams and Aho was visible in the dressing room afterwards.

Both players were slumped in their stalls before they straightened up to talk to the media.

"A lot of ups and downs," Williams pointed out.

"A lot of changes in momentum, and then once they got down, they started playing a different game and scored some goals because of it."

"Four-one up and then we lose it," Aho added.

"Again, again, again, again we have to learn our lesson."

Starting a five-game home stand with such a loss even had Brind'Amour re-thinking the team's routine heading into its next game against Arizona on Sunday.

"They need to probably get away tomorrow," Brind'Amour said.

"We talked about practicing. We talked about meeting. I don't know. I've gotta sit down and talk with the staff. They get a good feel for what we need to do. A tough couple of days really."



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# SportScan

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

1121024 Carolina Hurricanes

Baffling shootout choices one of many frustrations in avoidable Hurricanes loss

BY LUKE DECOCK

RALEIGH-Sebastian Aho sat slumped in his locker, like several of his teammates, including Justin Williams immediately to his right. His hat, tipped low, covered his eyes.

"Any reason you couldn't have gone in the shootout?" Aho was asked.

He looked up, slowly. Then he shook his head, even more slowly.

There were a million frustrations large and small in the Carolina Hurricanes' 6-5 shootout loss to the Washington Capitals on Friday, from the three-goal lead the Hurricanes managed to lose in less than six minutes to Alex Ovechkin's hat trick to the blatant uncalled penalty that Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour later declared the turning point in the game.

The one that's going to stick with everyone is watching six rounds of a shootout and not seeing Aho – who already had a breakaway goal on a two-goal, four-point night – or the better-every-day Andrei Svechnikov get a chance.

And just look at the list of players who did: Janne Kuokkanen, Jaccob Slavin, Phil Di Giuseppe, Dougie Hamilton, Justin Williams, Brock McGinn. Only Hamilton scored.

Meanwhile, the Caps ran out T.J. Oshie, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Ovechkin off the hop – instead of, say, Dmitrij Jaskin, Matt Niskanen and Travis Boyd.

"We do that drill in practice every day," Brind'Amour said. "Same guys kind of generally are our better guys. We keep putting them out there because they score in practice. That's all it was. ... To be honest, there's not a lot of thought into it. Went with the flow on that one."

Brind'Amour's honesty is commendable, as is his commitment to what he sees in practice, but the six players Brind'Amour picked for the shootout have scored a combined 16 goals this season. Aho alone has 11 after Friday.

Even if Brind'Amour has three guys picked in advance because of analytics or practice results or eating habits or whatever, by the time it gets to Round 5 or 6, he might want to let his best player or his star rookie have a crack at it. A team that isn't exactly blessed with natural goal-scorers probably shouldn't leave the two it actually has on the bench. Go with that flow.

Live and die with your fastball. You'll sleep better.

Still, relitigating the selections for what is basically a slam-dunk contest anyway overlooks the fact that the Hurricanes led 4-1 at the midway point and were actually getting reasonably solid goaltending from Scott Darling in an unexpected cameo and never should have been in overtime in the first place.

"We certainly didn't want the storyline of 'Canes played hard but fell a bit short to the Stanley Cup champs,'" Williams said. "That's not the storyline we wanted. We wanted 'Canes persevere and get a big two points.' That was the line we were looking for. Listen, I score in the shootout there, and we're talking very differently right now, right? That's the way it is."

As much as the Hurricanes could have used a big save from Darling, and the eventual lack of one turned out to be fatal, the goals against him were hardly inexcusable, especially by his standards. He was too deep on Ovechkin's first and third, but the Hurricanes also left Ovechkin alone in his preferred left-circle tee box for both. Tom Wilson was left unbothered to pick a rebound from between Darling's legs and tuck it home, and the Capitals' fourth took a double deflection.

But the game hinged on the Capitals' third, Ovechkin's second. As Ovechkin hovered at the left point, Jonas Siegenthaler plowed through Hamilton, clearing a lane to the net for Ovechkin, a clear and textbook interference penalty that was somehow inexcusably ignored by referees Chris Rooney and Brian Pochmara. Brind'Amour went berserk on the bench, and rightfully so.

Things changed quickly. Halfway through the game, settling for overtime would have been utterly deflating. By the time Williams knocked down a



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Braden Holtby clearing attempt behind the net and tapped the puck into the open goal to tie the score 5-5, the guaranteed point was practically invigorating.

At least until the shootout, when the crowd became more agitated with each passing selection as Aho and Svechnikov watched along with it as another point slipped away in infuriating fashion. They all add up, in the end.

News Observer LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121025 Carolina Hurricanes

Ovechkin hat trick helps Caps rally, top Canes in shootout

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH-Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson was the first to say it Friday about the Carolina Hurricanes.

"They always play us tough in this building," he said.

Caps coach Todd Reirden said the same, noting, "They're a dangerous team, especially here at home."

The Canes were dangerous at times, and especially Sebastian Aho, who had two goals and two assists. But the Caps, the defending Stanley Cup champions, have the ever-dangerous Alexander Ovechkin, who had his second straight hat trick, and others who can find the net.

Caps forward Jakub Vrana did that in the sixth round of a shootout, beating goalie Scott Darling for a 6-5 victory at PNC Arena.

So ended a game that had the Canes take a 4-1 lead, Ovechkin and the Caps score four straight goals for a 5-4 lead, then Canes captain Justin Williams tie it on a power play with 6:12 left in regulation. The Canes had 1:35 of a four-on-three power play in the overtime but couldn't get the winner.

Defenseman Dougie Hamilton had the Canes' only shootout score, in the fourth round, but Nicklas Backstrom matched it for the Caps and Vrana won it.

"It hurts," Aho said. "It's one of the best teams in the world and we were right there. To be 4-1 up and then lose it ... again, again, again, again, we have to learn our lesson and just keep working."

Ovechkin never stops working or attacking and has been at his best in recent weeks as the Caps have won 11 of 13 games. He had a hat trick Tuesday against the Detroit Red Wings, then the 22nd of his career against the Canes, and now has 28 goals for the season.

Ovechkin scored his first on a bullet of a shot in the first that beat Darling to the far side and pushed his point streak to 13 games, matching his career high. His third goal, on a third-period power play for a 5-4 lead, also was on a blast from the left wing that glanced off defenseman Brett Pesce.

But his second goal, Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said, came on the most telling play of the game.

With the Canes leading 4-2 in the second after a Wilson goal, Ovechkin again had the puck on the left wing, with Hamilton positioned in front of him. But the Caps' Jonas Siegenthaler rubbed out Hamilton like an offensive lineman clearing the way to the end zone, allowing Ovechkin to skate in unencumbered, shoot and scored

Canes fans exploded with boos over the no-call. Brind'Amour was upset.

"I was frustrated because that was the turning point of the game," he said. "The game turned on that play for me. The momentum got going and they cranked it up."

The Caps' Travis Boyd tipped the puck past Darling 53 seconds later for a 4-4 tie and Ovechkin had some hats flying on the ice at 9:49 of the third.

But it wasn't over. Caps goalie Braden Holtby misplayed the puck behind the net, allowing Williams to score an easy one.

Williams had been the one on the bench, encouraging his teammates to stick with it. Then, he delivered a goal that at least earned a point in the first game of a five-game homestand.

The Canes (13-13-5) took the 4-1 lead as Aho had a shorthanded goal, power-play goal, assist and power-play assist.

"He's been good lately, driving the ship for sure," Brind'Amour said.

Jordan Martinook got the Canes started with a goal 43 seconds into the game, and Teuvo Teravainen whipped in a power-play shot for a 4-1 lead in the second.

Aho's shorthanded score, the Canes' second of the season, came on a breakaway after Teravainen, who had two assists, pushed the puck ahead to him. But Aho did not get a chance in the shootout.

"There are two ways to look at it," Brind'Amour said of the game. "You can say you came out and played against the Stanley Cup champs and you could have had a win, but the guys know they threw that one away in the second and let them get back in the game.

"I like that we didn't just cave in then because that could have been really devastating. But we didn't. We kept going. The shootout is a tough lose a game and great way to win, but it leaves a sour taste in your mouth for sure. A tough way to lose but you move on."

News Observer LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121026 Carolina Hurricanes

The Hurricanes have played 30 games. What do we know about this team so far?

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Thirty games into the season, what do we know about the Carolina Hurricanes?

Looking at the season in 10-game segments, the Canes were 6-3-1 in the first segment, 3-5-2 in the second and 4-5-1 in the third after the 6-4 road loss Thursday to the Montreal Canadiens.

Andrei Svechnikov blew past the Habs' Shea Weber and beat goalie Carey Price with a quick backhand in the second period, scored again on Price early in the third and nearly had his first NHL hat trick. That blew up Twitter and Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour called it the rookie's "coming-out party" albeit with a few defensive mistakes.

"He looked like he was trying to win the game for us, and that's what we need more of," Brind'Amour said. "But he shouldn't be our leader on the ice. We've got older guys who need to step up."

Canes captain Justin Williams used the word "middling" this week to describe the Canes. Interesting, and apt. With losses in five of their past six games, "stumbling" is another as the Canes (13-13-4) host the Washington Capitals (18-9-3) on Friday.



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Given the parity in the Eastern Conference, the Canes could edge their way back up the standings in the five-game homestand before Christmas. Or not.

Here's what we know:

Aho needs to stay in the middle

From the moment he was hired as head coach, Brind'Amour expressed doubts about using Sebastian Aho at center. Aho on the wing was fine his first two years in the league and he did score 53 goal in those two seasons. But he was drafted as a center, the Canes won't win the Stanley Cup this year, it's all about building for the future and Aho's future is at center.

Brind'Amour did move Aho to the wing but has him back at center since Jordan Staal went out with concussion. He should be there to stay. He's much more involved and active.

"All year he's been fine at center but we were trying to figure out if that's where he could be the most effective," Brind'Amour said.

The three-headed goalie situation

The Canes have gone nearly half the season and can't quite get the goaltending thing right.

There's a good reason for that: injuries. As Brind'Amour said, "One guy keeps dropping."

"We've only had three goalies were who healthy for about a week, it felt like," he said. When healthy, Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney are the Canes' best options and Scott Darling No. 3. Or will Alex Nedeljkovic be No. 3?

A need for more offense

The Canes need more offense from Teuvo Teravainen, who has five goals in the first 30 games. Then again, the same can be said for Victor Rask, Brock McGinn, Lucas Wallmark, Dougie Hamilton, Warren Foegele, Phil Di Giuseppe, Justin Faulk ... you can go down the list.

"We need our big players to win us games here and there, but the only way to have success is that everybody has to contribute," Brind'Amour said.

Canes owner Tom Dundon has said the team needs to acquire another proven scorer, a sniper. The Canes had one, Jeff Skinner, but traded him away. That has been good for Skinner, who has 22 goals in 32 games for the Buffalo Sabres, and bad for the Canes.

The D needs to be there every game

The defense needs to be a strength, night after night, game to game. Things were so loose, so inefficient Thursday that Brind'Amour could only say, "Holy moly" in talking about the play of the D-men.

"That's supposed to be the best part of our group," he said.

Dougie Hamilton had one of the worst games of his career Tuesday against Toronto, when he was minus-4. Justin Faulk struggled Thursday and was minus-3. Haydn Fleury went out with an injury against the Habs but Brind'Amour didn't use that as an excuse.

Penalties no longer killers

Credit to the Canes for continuing to improve the penalty killing. Looking at the 10-game segments, the Canes gave up 11 power-play goals on 33 attempts in the first 10 games, six on 32 in the second 10 and now just one on 31 attempts after killing off six power plays at Montreal.

The Canes, once last in the NHL, are now tied for 13th. They're pressuring well, moving well and getting sticks on pucks. There is a confident vibe to the two units that wasn't there early in the season.

A middling power play

The power play has been hit and miss all season, regardless of who's on what units. Too stagnant.

The Canes were 4-for-35 in the first 10 games, then 7-36 in the next 10. They were 5-for-30 in the last 10.

Svech, Fishy and Turbo

Just a thought but shouldn't Andrei Svechnikov get a shot at playing with the Finns? Aho, Teravainen and Svechnikov would be a young line -- average age 20.7 years old -- but one with speed, skill and in Svechnikov's case some added power.

Svechnikov's line, with Wallmark at center and Williams at right wing was dangerous and productive Thursday, but it might be time to take a look at the Russian and the Finns.

The captain gets it together

Maybe Justin Williams heard the whispers getting louder or maybe gave himself a talking-to but his play has picked up of late. Williams is 37 and was beginning to show his age, but the captain has five goals in the last 11 games and has provided a spark at times.

News Observer LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121002 Arizona Coyotes

Chippy Coyotes complete comeback vs. Rangers

The Associated Press Published 8:33 p.m. MT Dec. 14, 2018

NEW YORK — Derek Stepan scored with 32 seconds left on the clock in overtime to lift Arizona to a 4-3 victory over the New York Rangers on Friday night, snapping the Coyotes' four-game losing streak.

Jordan Oesterle, Josh Archibald and Oliver Ekman-Larsson also scored as Arizona rallied from three goals down early in the second period. Adin Hill stopped 27 shots.

Kevin Hayes had a goal and an assist, and Pavel Buchnevich and Mika Zibanejad also scored to give the Rangers a 3-0 lead less than six minutes into the second. Henrik Lundqvist finished with 30 saves.

Stepan fired a wrist shot off the crossbar 4 1/2 minutes into the extra period as the Coyotes beat the Rangers for the first time in 10 meetings.

Oesterle got the Coyotes on the scoreboard at 10:42 of the middle period when his slap shot from the blue line deflected off Lundqvist's arm. Nick Schmaltz picked up his 99th career NHL assist on the play.

Stepan found Archibald cutting past the hashmarks with 6:49 left in the third to pull the Coyotes within one, and Ekman-Larsson fired a sharp-angled shot over Lundqvist's glove to tie it 3:48 later.

Buchnevich opened the scoring when he hammered a one-timer at 4:01 of the first period. The Russian winger missed the previous 13 games with a broken thumb. Jimmy Vesey had an assist on the play to extend his point streak to three games.

Hayes tallied his eighth of the season with 3:34 left in the opening period. Mats Zuccarello delivered a well-placed cross-ice pass to set up the goal. Hayes posted a multi-point game for the third consecutive contest, and has three goals and three assists in the that span.

Zibanejad snuck a wrist shot past Hill at 5:48 of the second as New York converted for the third time while up a skater. Chris Kreider was planted in front to provide a screen, and Neal Pionk recorded an assist. Pionk leads the Rangers in power-play assists (10) and power-play points (12) this season.



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New York was 1-15 on the man-advantage in the previous eight games and Arizona entered the game with the NHL's top penalty killing unit.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121003 Arizona Coyotes

Stepan scores in OT to lift Coyotes to win over Rangers

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS | DECEMBER 14, 2018

NEW YORK — The Arizona Coyotes had every reason to feel the deck was stacked against them. They had lost four straight and trailed 3-0 in the second period against the New York Rangers.

However, instead of accepting another loss, Arizona rallied back to tie the score and Derek Stepan scored with 32 seconds left on the clock in overtime against his former team as the Coyotes beat the Rangers 4-3 Friday night.

"I'd be lying to you if I told you that didn't feel good," Stepan said of getting winner back on his former home ice. "We never quit on it. We stayed with our system. I like this group's resiliency and character. Down 3-1 we could have easily coast through the third period but kept our foot on the gas pedal."

Stepan fired a wrist shot off the crossbar 4 1/2 minutes into the extra period as the Coyotes beat the Rangers for the first time in 10 meetings. Nick Schmaltz picked up his 100th career NHL assist on the play.

Jordan Oesterle, Josh Archibald and Oliver Ekman-Larsson also scored for Arizona, and Adin Hill stopped 27 shots.

Kevin Hayes had a goal and an assist, and Pavel Buchnevich and Mika Zibanejad also scored to give the Rangers a 3-0 lead less than six minutes into the second. Henrik Lundqvist finished with 30 saves.

"It's just tough to accept this one. It's a game that was right there for us," Lundqvist said. "That was a tough one, felt like we should have won this one."

Oesterle got the Coyotes on the scoreboard at 10:42 of the middle period when his slap shot from the blue line deflected off Lundqvist's arm. Schmaltz record his first of two assists on the play.

Stepan found Archibald cutting past the hashmarks with 6:49 left in the third to pull the Coyotes within one, and Ekman-Larsson fired a sharp-angled shot over Lundqvist's glove to tie it 3:48 later.

"Everyone is tired of losing," Ekman-Larsson said. "It could have easily gone the other way. I feel like we have a different group, nobody ever gives up on a play or in a game. That's what we want to keep building on. We want to get back in the playoff race and that's how you do it."

Buchnevich opened the scoring when he hammered a one-timer at 4:01 of the first period. The Russian winger missed the previous 13 games with a broken thumb. Jimmy Vesey had an assist on the play to extend his point streak to three games.

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"We have to figure it out," Rangers coach David Quinn said after his team squandered a three-goal lead at home for the second straight time. "We have to get better."

New York was 1-15 on the man-advantage in the previous eight games and Arizona entered the game with the NHL's top penalty killing unit.

NOTES: Rangers D Kevin Shattenkirk will be sidelined two-to-four weeks with a separated shoulder sustained in the previous game against the Lightning. ... The Rangers scratched F Lias Andersson for the first time since recalling the 2017 seventh-overall draft pick from Hartford of the AHL on Nov. 5. ... Rangers D Adam McQuaid did not dress but has been practicing in a regular contact jersey for the previous few days and is expected to return to the lineup in the coming days. ... Coyotes F Alex Galchenyuk missed a second straight game with a lower-body injury and is considered day-to-day.

UP NEXT

Coyotes: At Carolina on Sunday.

Rangers: Host Vegas on Sunday.

Arizona Sports LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121004 Arizona Coyotes

The Neutral Zone: Miracle at Madison Square Garden and a Jason Demers sighting

By Craig Morgan Dec 14, 2018

NEW YORK – When Derek Stepan woke up on Friday he imagined the best possible outcome for him in his second game back at Madison Square Garden against his former team, the New York Rangers.

"How about an overtime goal?" Stepan thought.

OK. How about it?

It was easy to walk away impressed by a team that was playing without six key players, had lost four straight games and found itself in a 3-0 hole 26 minutes into the game because its one constant this season, its penalty-killing unit, had failed it, allowing three Rangers power-play goals.

Despite nine penalties and a 3-1 deficit with seven minutes to play in their second game in as many nights, the Coyotes rallied for a 4-3 overtime win when Stepan beat Henrik Lundqvist high to the glove side with 32 seconds left in the extra period.

"I'd be lying to you if I told that didn't feel good," said Stepan, who was far more composed than in his return to MSG last season when nerves got the better of him.

Jordan Oesterle scored on a power play at 10:42 of the second period to start the rally. Josh Archibald scored at 13:11 of the third, and Oliver Ekman-Larsson beat Lundqvist far side with a wicked shot at 16:59 to tie the game.

"The puck was bouncing so I was like, 'I'd better shoot this one,'" Ekman-Larsson said. "I got lucky. It kind of rolled off my stick. It's always nice to score on Hank, too."

There is plenty of work to be done. The Coyotes are still shorthanded and they are eight points off the playoff pace, but they have games in hand on key teams and they headed to North Carolina on Friday night with a day of hope.



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"We stuck to the program, we were getting our chances and we were starting to believe," coach Rick Tocchet said. "That overtime was great. It was fun to watch."

### Scoring woes

Defensive gaffes grabbed the spotlight during a four-game losing streak that the Coyotes snapped Friday, but a season-long issue magnified the importance of those mistakes on the first two games of this four-game road trip.

Arizona hasn't been able to score consistently.

After the win against the Rangers, the Coyotes are tied for 28th in the 31-team NHL in goals per game at 2.58. There were scoring issues when the season began, but with some time to get the new pieces in sync, the Coyotes started clicking at a more respectable rate.

That hasn't been the case as much recently, and it hasn't helped to have the three biggest offseason acquisitions injured: forward Michael Grabner with an eye injury, forward Vinnie Hinostroza with an ankle injury and forward Alex Galchenyuk with an undisclosed lower-body injury. Those three players were acquired via trades or in free agency to boost a team that struggled in the scoring department last season.

"It's tough to evaluate with so many guys out of the lineup," Coyotes president of hockey operations John Chayka said. "Our philosophy in building our team is clear. We're trying to build a team that is strong through the middle of the ice, has good, 200-foot centermen that can play both ways, a strong defensive core and elite goaltending. The injuries we have had have hurt premium positions and that has hindered our ability to drive possession and drive the game in the offensive zone. We were never going to be the most naturally gifted goal scoring team anyway, but we felt we'd have enough production to be a competitive group."

The Coyotes made their play for free-agent forward James van Riemsdyk, but Chayka also acknowledged there were other players the Coyotes considered; a list that may have included Mike Hoffman and Jeff Skinner. Skinner scored his 22nd goal of the season against the Coyotes on Thursday in Buffalo. Clayton Keller and Brad Richardson lead the Coyotes with eight goals.

Without gifted snipers, coach Rick Tocchet has suggested that the Coyotes need to generate a greater volume of shots while employing a smarter approach.

"There were eight times we counted that we just missed the net from a Grade-A chance," Tocchet said of a 3-1 loss to the Sabres. "They're not Grade-A chances when you don't get a shot on net. Those are prime shots that we have to get something."

"Buffalo had a few Grade-As early and they're in the net; they're seeing-eye shots. We're getting the same and they're going over the net. It's tough to chase a game. We don't have the type of team to chase a game."

Tocchet would like to see his team vary its shot selection and at least get the puck on net.

"One of my worst pet peeves in practice is when guys shoot high all the time. The odd time you can pick the corner but I'm a deceptive guy. Sometimes you have to roll your wrist over and go low. You've got to show different looks to a goalie."

"Sometimes, too, you're not in a shooting position. You're outside the dot. You're not shooting to score, you're shooting for the next play. Try to hit the goalie's pad. How many second-effort goals are there in the league? There's a lot of them. Very rarely are you going to score from outside the dot. I'd like to see us shoot for the next play. It's just a prudent shot. You miss the net and it starts the other team's breakout."

A pair of NHL sources have indicated that the Coyotes have been shopping for a scorer. Chayka said Friday he is always looking to improve the team, but said no moves are imminent and he acknowledged

that a bona fide scorer would be costly, both in acquisition cost and salary for a cash-strapped team.

"If I felt we were one scorer away from being a Stanley Cup team I could go get it and I would get it," he said. "I'm not sure we're at that stage of our life cycle."

### A chance encounter

As I made my way back to the Madison Square Garden press box for the start of the second period, a stranger in a knit hat stopped me. It was injured Coyotes defenseman Jason Demers, who sustained a knee injury at the tail end of a game against the Nashville Predators on Nov. 15.

Demers, who was walking remarkably well, said he took the train up from Philadelphia where he has been working with Bill Knowles, the director of reconditioning and athletic development at HPSports in Wayne, Pennsylvania. Knowles has also worked with Coyotes Jakob Chychrun, Nick Merkley and Alex Galchenyuk.

"He has his niche that he does well and our guys (medical and training staff) do a great job with the rest of the process," Chayka said.

Demers didn't offer too many details on his work there or his injury, but he did offer Coyotes fans this promise: "I'll be back this season."

### Schmaltz's face-off struggles

The numbers aren't pretty. In eight games with the Coyotes, and entering a game against the New York Rangers on Friday, center Nick Schmaltz had won 21 face-offs and lost 64 for a 24.7 percentage – by far the lowest on the team. It may be just a small sample size because Schmaltz won 52 and lost 68 (43.3 percent) in 23 games with the Chicago Blackhawks before the trade that brought him to Arizona for forwards Dylan Strome and Brendan Perlini.

That possibility aside, his lack of success in the circle has created a problem for the Coyotes' top offensive line, which features Clayton Keller (45.2 percent) and Lawson Crouse, who has taken only seven draws this season. Who takes the draw?

"It's concerning," Coyotes coach Rick Tocchet. "We've obviously got to get better at face-offs."

Brad Richardson is the only current Coyotes center with a face-off percentage better than 50 percent. Before the Rangers game, Richardson had won 252 and lost 212 (54.3 percent), the 21st-best mark in the NHL among players who have taken at least 300 draws.

"He gets really low; he digs in for those face-offs," Tocchet said.

"Sometimes, you almost have to have your nose over the puck to win those draws. He's a veteran guy. These are big draws and he's willing to get his face down on those pucks."

Schmaltz said it is something to which he is paying attention. He won six of 15 draws against the Rangers.

"I've been trying to improve on it for a while now," he said. "I think I can just do a better job of creating more 50-50 pucks instead of trying to win it clean all the time. Sometimes, the bounces aren't going your way, but I think I could do a better job in that area and then we can have the puck more."

"Richie's really good at creating 50-50s. On the (penalty kill), it's just making sure he's not losing it clean and giving the winger and D-man at least a chance to get it back for him. Usually it's not the first whack, it's the second and the third, sometimes the fourth to win it back."

It's debatable how important face-offs are to the overall success of a team. Philadelphia, St. Louis and Detroit are among the top teams in the league by face-off percentage, but they are among the bottom third in the standings. Colorado, Buffalo and Washington are among the worst teams in the league on face-offs, yet they were among the top eight in the standings.



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There are at least situations like the penalty kill, draws late in games or late in shifts when players are trying to get off the ice that are important face-offs. So are power play draws. If you lose them, Tocchet noted, "you've got to start by breaking out every time. Those are 30 valuable seconds."

### Food for thought

When the Coyotes left Boston, I had a discussion with another media member in which I posed this question. Is Oliver Ekman-Larsson the new Keith Yandle? In other words, is he the new lightning rod for criticism?

It was relevant at the time because Ekman-Larsson was on the ice for the final three goals Boston scored in the second-period blitz that erased a 2-0 deficit and produced a 4-3 Bruins win. Fans blamed Ekman-Larsson for all three goals. In reality, one was his fault.

On David Pastrnak's tying goal — on which Clayton Keller was slow, perhaps lackadaisical in getting back to defend assist man Brad Marchand — Ekman-Larsson failed to cut off the pass across the slot to the far post. That allowed Pastrnak an easy tap-in.

On the Bruins' third goal, Marchand's first of two in the game, Nick Schmaltz was with Marchand as he skated into the slot while Ekman-Larsson was defending the wide man. Schmaltz let Marchand go with nobody to pass him off to and Marchand went to the far post for an easy goal. That, as Tocchet later confirmed, was Schmaltz's man.

On Boston's fourth goal, also by Marchand, Schmaltz turned the puck over in the neutral zone and, as Tocchet noted, Ilya Lyubushkin played a pass too aggressively across the slot and ended up on his butt, leaving Marchand alone in front for another goal.

There is no question that Ekman-Larsson needs to elevate his game, and he helped matters with the tying goal Friday as the Coyotes rallied for a win. The Coyotes need more production and more take-charge leadership from him, but if you're going to criticize him for goals against, you had better know the defensive structure the Coyotes employ, you had better know who has which assignments and you had better pay attention to the forwards' role on those goals against.

### Injury updates

— Chayka on the status of injured forward and former New York Ranger Michael Grabner (right eye):

"He is progressing. We've had positive news there which is a relief because you never know with an injury like that. I wouldn't say anything is in the clear until he's back on the ice but at least it's progressing. What does that mean for a timeline? I have no idea."

— Chayka on the status of injured forward Vinnie Hinostroza (ankle):  
"Hopefully we can get him back before Christmas but it will be tight."

— Tocchet said Galchenyuk (lower body) is still day-to-day, but there is hope that he will play in Carolina on Sunday, or at home against the New York Islanders on Tuesday.

### PK finally falters

The Coyotes' penalty-killing unit has been a shining light all season. It entered Friday's game as the top-ranked unit in the league (90.7 percent), but it did not end the night in as comfortable a position on that perch. New York scored three power-play goals, the first time the Coyotes have allowed three in a game since Dec. 23, 2017, against the Colorado Avalanche.

Arizona's 11 power-play goals allowed are still the fewest in the NHL and its 88.2 percent success rate is still tops in the NHL.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121049 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings fall to Senators, 4-2, on two third-period goals

Dana Garuder, Special to Detroit Free Press Published 10:28 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018

The NHL's worst road team came to town but the Detroit Red Wings didn't have enough firepower to beat them.

The Wings fell to the Ottawa Senators, 4-2, on Friday. The Senators scored twice in the third period to break a 2-all tie, including an empty-netter.

Ottawa had collected a league-low seven points on the road prior to handing the Wings their third loss in four games.

Luke Glendening and Dylan Larkin scored for Detroit, while Jimmy Howard made 27 saves. Chris Tierney scored two goals for Ottawa.

It was a rough day for the Wings, who announced earlier in the day that defenseman Mike Green would miss 3-5 weeks with a lower-body injury.

The upcoming schedule won't do them any favors. They play six of their next seven on the road, beginning with a trip to New York to face the Islanders in Nassau Coliseum on Saturday.

### Power play remains dormant

The Wings once again came up empty with the man advantage, going 0-for-2 on the power play.

They're now 2-for-33 over the last 15 games on the power play.

Ottawa ranked 30th in penalty kills at 72.8 percent entering the game, but that didn't make any difference.

Their only power play in the first period was cut short when Andreas Athanasiou went to the penalty box for grabbing Zach Smith's stick.

Smith was whistled for a delay of game infraction with 33 seconds left in the second but the Wings once again came up dry.

### Larkin keeps streaks alive

Larkin scored for the third straight game and extended his consecutive points streak to six games in the second period.

He exited the penalty box after serving a hooking penalty and found himself behind the defense when Frans Nielsen advanced the puck out of his zone. Larkin slipped the shot just inside Craig Anderson's right skate, tying the score at 2-all.

Larkin has 24 points over the last 23 games.

### Rasmussen bares his knuckles

Rookie forward Michael Rasmussen notched another career first, this time by dropping his gloves.

Rasmussen received a five-minute fighting penalty for duking it out with Ben Harpur during the second period. Rasmussen was sticking up for Glendening, who got shoved into the boards by Harpur.

Harpur hobbled off the ice early in the third after blocking a shot.

Fisticuffs have become a routine part of Wings' games this month. Rasmussen's fight was the sixth involving the Wings this month and 11th this season. According to Hockeyfights.com, they came into the night tied with the New York Rangers for the second-most fights this season, trailing only Boston with 12.

### Review spares penalty kill

The Wings have given up 17 power play goals at home, the most in the NHL, and nearly allowed another in the first period.



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The red light went on after Mark Stone shoveled a rebound toward a sprawled Howard. Following a lengthy review, the replay showed that the puck was resting on the goal line after the whistle blew and Howard started to get up.

Stone scored the go-ahead goal at 7:08 of the third period off a rebound. A Stefan Elliott shot trickled through Howard's pads and into the crease, where Stone jammed it into the vacated net.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121050 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings' Mike Green (lower body injury) out 3-5 weeks

Dana Gauruder, Special to Detroit Free Press Published 1:20 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018 | Updated 1:27 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018

The Red Wings took another major hit on the injury front when coach Jeff Blashill announced on Friday that veteran defenseman Mike Green would miss 3-5 weeks with a lower-body injury.

Green, 33, has three goals and 16 points in 23 games this season. He suffered the injury during the 6-2 loss at Washington on Tuesday, registering a minus-1.

The team will call up defenseman Filip Hronek from the Grand Rapids Griffins to fill in for Green. The Wings host the Senators on Friday night (7:30 p.m., Fox Sports Detroit).

The defenseman missed most of training camp, all of preseason and the first nine games of the regular season with an illness. He made an immediate impact upon his return, stabilizing the defense while also providing an offensive spark.

He signed a two-year, \$10.75-million contract with the Wings in the summer.

Hronek, 21, has played six games with the Wings this season, his first with NHL experience. He has a goal and two assists and a minus-2 rating.

Fellow defenseman Jonathan Ericsson is questionable for Friday's game with an undisclosed injury. The Wings are also without defenseman Danny DeKeyser (hand) and forwards Anthony Mantha (hand), Darren Helm (shoulder) and Wade Megan (upper body).

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121051 Detroit Red Wings

Game recap: Detroit Red Wings fall to Ottawa Senators, 4-2

Helene St. James, Detroit Free Press Published 10:03 a.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018 | Updated 10:09 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018

Detroit Red Wings (14-14-4, 32 points) vs. Ottawa Senators (13-15-4, 30 points)

When: 7:30 p.m.

Where: Little Caesars Arena.

TV: Fox Sports Detroit.

Radio: 97.1 FM (Red Wings radio affiliates).

• Box score

More: What the Red Wings are doing to reignite their power play

Second meeting: The Wings lost, 2-1, when the teams met Nov. 15 in Ottawa. The Wings should look better after having had two days to recover from playing seven games in 11 days. They had a good third period against the Capitals, and will look to build on that.

Sizing up the opponent: The Senators average 3.31 goals per game and allow an average of 3.91 (which ranks last in the NHL). Their power play (21.8 percent) ranks 13th and their penalty kill (72.8 percent) ranks 30th. Mark Stone leads the team with 15 goals and 35 points. Defenseman Thomas Chabot is third with 33 points. Matt Duchene is among the injured.

Winged wheel WATCH: Defensemen Mike Green (foot/ankle) and Jonathan Ericsson (undisclosed) are questionable. ...Defensemen Danny DeKeyser (hand) and forwards Anthony Mantha (hand), Darren Helm (shoulder) and Wade Megan (upper body) are out.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121052 Detroit Red Wings

Shorthanded Red Wings slow too soon, lose 4-2 to Senators

Ted Kulfan, The Detroit News Published 10:25 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018 | Updated 11:42 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018

Detroit — The injuries are beginning to mount for the Red Wings, and one wonders if the losses will, too.

The shorthanded Wings fell behind early Friday, rallied to tie, but ultimately fell 4-2 to the Ottawa Senators.

Ottawa's Mark Stone swept in a loose puck underneath goaltender Jimmy Howard at 7:08 of the third period, breaking a 2-2 tie.

Howard made the initial save on defenseman Stefan Elliott, but the puck squeezed through him and sat uncovered underneath Howard's body.

Stone came in untouched from the side and slammed the puck into the open net for his 16th goal.

"One of those I have to do a better job there boxing out," defenseman Niklas Kronwall said. "Everyone thought he (Howard) had it but obviously he didn't. If we just do our job and box out, that doesn't happen."

Chris Tierney scored his second of the game, an empty-net goal, with 17.1 seconds left to give the Senators the two-goal lead.

Luke Glendening and Dylan Larkin scored for the Wings (14-15-4).

Thomas Chabot scored for Ottawa (14-15-4).

The Wings were without defensemen Mike Green (lower body) — ruled out for the next 3-to-5 weeks by coach Jeff Blashill after the morning skate — and Danny DeKeyser (upper body), and forwards Darren Helm (upper body) and Anthony Mantha (hand), all still weeks away.

Whether it was because of injuries, or the rugged schedule of late, except for the second period the Wings played slow for most of this game.

"The second was our best period by far, we played way faster," Blashill said. "In the third, we didn't play as fast, all of a sudden guys who had pushed the pace slowed their games down a little bit for no reason."



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"They (the Senators) scored and they got momentum and were able to muddy the track at that point."

Ottawa does an effective job of trapping teams once it gets a late lead, and was able to suffocate the Wings.

"They don't give you much at all and sit back and hold onto the lead," Blashill said. "We got some chances once we got the puck in the zone, but again, for me we played too slow in the neutral zone once they got the lead."

Dylan Larkin tied the score at 2 at 12:08 of the second period.

More: Red Wings' Mike Green out 3-5 weeks; Filip Hronek recalled from G.R.

Larkin was in the box for hooking and just as the Wings had killed off the penalty, Frans Nielsen found Larkin alone near the blue line, Larkin breaking in alone for his 14th goal.

Glendening cut the Senators lead to 2-1 with a late first-period goal.

The Wings capitalized on Ottawa miscommunication near the net, and Glendening pounced on a loose puck, backhanding the puck over Anderson's shoulder at 18:20 of the first period.

Ottawa controlled the opening 20 minutes, taking a 2-0 lead against a Wings team that looked slow and lethargic.

"With two days off we were expecting a better start for sure," Glendening said. "With the way we played the last two games, but we battled back, but we let it go and that's frustrating."

Detroit News LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121053 Detroit Red Wings

USA Hockey develops players by facing Michigan State

Gregg Krupa, The Detroit News Published 9:44 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018

Plymouth — As it aims to play for gold at the Olympics, World Championships and World Junior Championships, while increasing the number of NHL players born in the United States, USA Hockey makes its kids play adults.

It is good for them.

The under-18-years-old United States team from the National Team Development Program, which trains in USA Hockey Arena, will travel to East Lansing Saturday, to play the 18-and-above Spartans of Michigan State University.

A few weeks ago, when the United States guys played Bowling Green, they skated against a 25-year-old, who can play intercollegiate hockey under NCAA eligibility rules.

Playing older opponents encourages what hockey folks call "taking the next step."

"It's kind of like an early advantage for us because most of us are going to college next year," said the forward Trevor Zegras.

Zegras is committed to Boston University and, on a recent weekend, he played for the United States against BU, Harvard and Dartmouth.

"They're bigger and heavier," he said. "So, kind of just have to find where you can use your skill, in terms of how big they are and how much space you have out there."

Both Zegras and the forward Matthew Boldy are rated highly by scouting services for June's NHL draft. Some scouts believe the league could select the entire United States U18 roster.

"It definitely helps with getting yourself to the next level, knowing what you'll have to do and what you're going to see at the next level," Boldy said. "I mean, it's a big advantage for us."

Not many hockey coaches understand the benefits of the situation, for the NTDP players or the collegians, better than the Michigan State coach, Danton Cole.

Cole coached previous classes of the NTDP guys, before returning to his alma mater as head coach.

"The first year when we've got all 16-year-olds, and they turn 17 after Christmas, playing in the USHL is a really big jump," Cole said, of the major junior hockey schedule the younger U17 NTDP trainees play, annually.

"So, they play 28 to 36 games against guys that are two or three years older than them. And then, they come back to their age groups for the international tournaments.

"The second year (U18), the USHL is still a very good challenge for the guys, but it's not quite the same as the year before," Cole said. "So, we scheduled 17 to 20 college games.

"That's a pretty big spread strength-wise and intelligence-wise, and it just enforces the things you've been learning.

"You don't learn a lot when you have zero success. And, you don't learn a lot when you have 100-percent success, it's not enough of a challenge," he said. "By playing the older guys, you want to be in that sweet spot where you have enough success."

For the Spartans, Cole said, it affords a good exhibition game against a high-quality roster during the annual semester break.

Plus, Cole said, he can give ice time to players down roster who could use it.

"This time of year, if we don't play a game this weekend, that would give us three weeks off before the GLI (Great Lakes Invitational Tournament)," he said.

"So, I'd rather play and give some of the other guys a chance to get some ice time."

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1121054 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Mike Green out 3-5 weeks; Filip Hronek recalled from G.R.

Ted Kulfan, The Detroit News Published 12:45 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018 | Updated 12:45 p.m. ET Dec. 14, 2018

Detroit — Remember that ugly start to this regular season for the Red Wings? All those key, impactful injuries?

It's beginning to look like that again.

Coach Jeff Blashill announced after Friday's morning skate that defenseman Mike Green will be out three to five weeks with a lower-body injury.

The Wings sent down defenseman Brian Lashoff to Grand Rapids, and brought up defenseman Filip Hronek — whose skill set is more similar to Green's.



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Hronek was to be in the lineup Friday against Ottawa.

Green's injury is the latest of some tough losses throughout the lineup.

Defenseman Danny DeKeyser (upper body), and forwards Darren Helm (upper body) and Anthony Mantha (hand) still are out for multiple weeks.

Defenseman Trevor Daley just returned to the lineup after missing five games.

"You just keep moving," Blashill said. "You can't control injuries at all. So we'll just continue to focus on what we can control. It sounds like cliché but it's life. Whether it's hockey or anything else, you better just focus on what you can control and that's the group we have available to us.

"And without a doubt, tonight, tomorrow, and so on moving forward, we'll have a group to win. We have to compete at a high level, a great attention to detail, and we have to outwork (opponents).

"If we do all those things, we'll put ourselves in a great position to win a hockey game."

Losing Green is a difficult loss, as he was playing, arguably, some of the best all-around hockey of his career. Green, who didn't get into the lineup until Oct. 26 because of complications from a virus, has 16 points (three goals) in 23 games, with a team-best plus-10 plus-minus rating.

"He's been excellent," Blashill said. "Anytime a guy is playing excellent, it's unfortunate for him and the team (when he's injured), and certainly for all of us. He was really grooving. He was playing well, and our record reflected the time he spent with us compared to the time spent without him to us.

"It's unfortunate for sure, but how much it hurts or doesn't hurt depends on how the other guys play. Not just Filip but the other five (defensemen). If they play great in (Green's) absence, all six play great in his absence, you don't feel the loss nearly as much. By no means is it a barrier to success."

Hronek had 18 points (five goals) in 20 games with the Griffins, with a plus-6 rating. With the Wings at the start of this season, Hronek had three points (one goal) in six games, with a minus-2 rating.

"He's steadily progressed," Blashill said of Hronek's time in Grand Rapids. "He's had a number of good games, so his progression has been good. There are certainly things he can get better at. We need Filip to come up here and play with confidence. Early in the year, he struggled a little bit and got overly hard on himself. That's a good quality and bad quality. Being self-accountable is good, but when you cross the line and being to hard (on yourself), sometimes that's bad.

More: Red Wings to focus on limiting opponents' chances

"He just needs to come up and play. He's a good hockey player. His game is probably better than his skill set. He's not 6-foot-4 and skates like the wind, but he has a lot of hockey smarts, and I also think he's a real good competitor. Just do the things you're real good at and if he does that, he's an NHL player. It's just a matter of when, and hopefully it's right now."

Red Wings at Islanders

Faceoff: 7 Saturday, Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, N.Y.

TV/radio: FSD+/97.1

Outlook: The Islanders (14-12-4, 32 points) have 20 games at their former home (Nassau Coliseum) until their proposed new rink is ready, and this is one of them. ... The Islanders defeated the Wings 3-2 last week in Detroit. ... C Mathew Barzal (22 assists, 25 points) and RW Josh Bailey (24 points) are leading offensively.

Detroit News LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121114 Pittsburgh Penguins

Casey DeSmith's saves, Jake Guentzel's goal fuels Penguins win over Bruins

Jonathan Bombulie

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018, 9:51 p.m.

Thanks to a strong performance in net from Casey DeSmith and a clutch goal from Jake Guentzel, the Pittsburgh Penguins were able to avoid a potentially painful loss to the Boston Bruins on Friday night.

They are hoping they can avoid a potentially painful loss of defenseman Kris Letang to injury as well.

DeSmith made a career-high 48 saves, and Guentzel scored a tie-breaking goal with about nine minutes left as the Penguins bounced back from a brutal loss in Chicago two days prior with a 5-3 win over the Bruins.

Letang was injured moments after assisting on Guentzel's go-ahead goal. His left leg bent awkwardly as he skated into hunched-over Bruins forward Joakim Nordstrom.

Letang had difficulty making his way to the locker room. After the game, coach Mike Sullivan said he had no update on the star defenseman's condition.

Filling Letang's spot in the lineup wouldn't be difficult for the Penguins, who are carrying eight defensemen. Juuso Riihola or Chad Ruhwedel is the next man up.

Replacing the contributions of Letang, who is having an outstanding season, would prove nigh impossible if he is out for a long time.

"With his absence, if he is, we've done it before," defenseman Brian Dumoulin said. "We've got to keep it simple. No one's going to replace Tanger and pick up the minutes that he does, but collectively, if we can all play a couple extra minutes, I think that's something we can do, especially with the Christmas break coming up here."

The Penguins played with a lot more competitive fire than they did in a 6-3 loss to Chicago on Wednesday, but sloppiness left them chasing the Bruins more than they would have liked.

The Bruins held a 51-28 shots advantage and erased a two-goal deficit with goals by Chris Wagner and David Krejci 54 seconds apart in the third period.

Given those ugly facts, how were the Penguins able to come out with a victory?

- First and foremost, DeSmith turned in a brilliant performance. Most notable was a first-period stop on a Brad Marchand backhand that will live on his highlight reel for the rest of his career.

Sliding to his right, DeSmith reached back and gloved down a Marchand shot that seemed destined for the back of the net.

"I just kind of fell over and stuck something over there," DeSmith said. "Thankfully, it went in my glove. That was not technique. That was get something over there, get a little bit of luck. Battle to keep the puck out of the net. There was a lot of that tonight."

- Guentzel's goal stopped Boston's momentum. On a set play off an offensive-zone faceoff, Sidney Crosby won a draw back to Letang for a shot from the point. In the high slot, Guentzel got just enough of the puck to deflect it past Jaroslav Halak.

"Sid kind of gave the nod, so we knew it was coming," Guentzel said.

- Beyond DeSmith and Guentzel's heroics, Zach Aston-Reese, Evgeni Malkin and Derek Grant made significant contributions.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Aston-Reese scored a short-handed goal in the third period, turning the tables for the Penguins, who have allowed a league-high eight goals while killing penalties this season.

Malkin, coming off a poor showing in Chicago, made a nifty pass to set up a Phil Kessel goal early in the second period.

Grant scored the always-popular fourth-line goal late in the first.

"You didn't sense any panic or any frustration," Aston-Reese said. "It was kind of a quiet confidence that we had that we needed to manage the puck a little better."

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121115 Pittsburgh Penguins

Penguins' Casey DeSmith makes unreal glove save vs. Bruins

Jonathan Bombulie

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018, 8:24 p.m.

Penguins goaltender Casey DeSmith made a save against the Boston Bruins on Friday night that will occupy a prominent place on his career highlight reel no matter how long he plays.

With about four minutes left in the first period, DeSmith, sliding to his right, reached back and gloved down a Brad Marchand backhand shot that seemed destined for the back of the net to keep the game scoreless.

Yo @SportsCenter ... #SCtop10 pic.twitter.com/iwAFFzK3IB

— Pittsburgh Penguins (@penguins) December 15, 2018

Making the save all the more impressive, Marchand leads all NHL players in backhand goals since 2009 - scoring even more than Sidney Crosby.

Less than two minutes after the save, the Penguins took a 1-0 lead on a goal by Derek Grant.

Penguins coach Mike Sullivan had a difficult decision to make when choosing a starting goalie Friday night. He could have gone to Matt Murray, who has been out since Thanksgiving with a lower-body injury but was medically cleared to return to the lineup Tuesday. He gave DeSmith his seventh straight start instead.

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121116 Pittsburgh Penguins

Penguins come to defense of slumping Evgeni Malkin

Jonathan Bombulie

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018, 12:54 p.m.

The Pittsburgh Penguins will come into Friday night's game with the Boston Bruins with a slumping superstar center on their second line.

Evgeni Malkin has one goal, three assists and a minus-9 rating in his past nine games. He has scored one even-strength goal in his last 20 games. He was a minus-4 in Wednesday's 6-3 loss to the Chicago Blackhawks.

"Geno tends to be a streaky guy, and sometimes all it takes is one goal and then he's off to building momentum again," coach Mike Sullivan said optimistically. "I think part of it is just simplifying his whole overall game. If he does that, he's going to be fine."

What does Sullivan mean when he says Malkin needs to simplify his game?

"Slowing his skating down and supporting the breakout. Stopping on pucks. When he has an opportunity to shoot the puck, shoot the puck. Don't look for the next play," Sullivan said. "We think he'll come out of it."

Malkin's longtime teammates came to his defense after morning skate as well.

Sidney Crosby said there's no point singling out any particular player for the team's struggles. He also noted that Wednesday's loss stopped a run of improving play that's been going on for a few weeks.

"We're all in this together. I don't think you can point the finger at one guy," Crosby said. "We're right there. We're two points from a playoff spot. I don't think it's time to hit the panic button. I think we've got some important games here. We've got to do something with them."

Kris Letang said Malkin shouldn't be defined by his stats.

"He's playing hard," Letang said. "He's facing a tough matchup every night. It's the same for all our top guys. They're all facing (significant) adversity every night. It's not about the scoring sheet sometimes. It's what you bring in the room and on the ice."

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121117 Pittsburgh Penguins

Matt Murray will have to wait one more day to return to Penguins net

Jonathan Bombulie

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018, 12:39 p.m.

The Pittsburgh Penguins are taking a patient approach to getting No. 1 goalie Matt Murray back in the net.

Casey DeSmith will make his seventh straight start when the Penguins host the Boston Bruins on Friday night.

Murray, who hasn't played since Nov. 17 in Ottawa but has been up to speed in practice since Tuesday, will then be the scheduled starter Saturday night at home against Los Angeles.

"The reality is we're playing back to back, so they're both going to get games," coach Mike Sullivan said. "When we looked at it as a coaching staff, it was more about, 'How do we get the best out of both of them, so we give those guys the best opportunity to be successful and we also give our team the best chance to win?'"

"When you look at the schedule, both in the short term playing back to back but also in the bigger picture, where we play six games in nine nights, both of these guys are going to get plenty of time."

Although Sullivan didn't say so, quality of opponent has to be factored into the decision-making process.

The Bruins are on a three-game winning streak. The Kings have lost three straight overall and five in a row on the road. A matchup with Los Angeles would theoretically give Murray a chance to slide back into the lineup more easily.



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"We're trying to put Matt in the best possible position to be successful," Sullivan said.

DeSmith stopped 23-of-27 shots in a 6-3 loss at Chicago on Wednesday.

While the goalie will stay the same coming off a bad loss to the Blackhawks, the forward lines look to be changing.

At morning skate, Tanner Pearson was working with Sidney Crosby and Jake Guentzel on the top line. Zach Aston-Reese joined Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel on the second line.

Derick Brassard moved back into his third-line center role between Riley Sheahan and Bryan Rust. Garrett Wilson took Jean-Sebastien Dea's place on the fourth line with Derek Grant and Matt Cullen.

Pearson has been on Malkin's wing almost exclusively since joining the Penguins in a trade with the Kings last month.

"Playing with G is pretty nice too. Two really, really high-end skilled centermen," Pearson said. "Playing with guys like that, you get open and they'll find your stick somehow or someway or another. Just gotta be ready when it comes to you."

Aston-Reese has spent most of his NHL time this season in the bottom six. He said he could bring some of that approach to the second line.

"When Geno and Phil play together, they tend to like to play in motion. They're dynamic off the rush," Sullivan said. "(Aston-Reese is) a guy that's going to go to the net, maybe bang a rebound in. He's also got a good, solid 200-foot game. He's got good awareness away from the puck. He's a good 200-foot player, so he'll help them in that regard as well."

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121118 Pittsburgh Penguins

PPG creates hockey puck that changes color as it warms up

PAUL GUGGENHEIMER

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018, 9:54 a.m.

Hockey and beer have always gone together.

But beer could actually make hockey better.

Similar technology that turned the mountains blue on a bottle of Coors Light showing the beer was cold enough to drink will be used to tell officials when a hockey puck is cold enough for play.

PPG developed color changing puck coatings for the NHL that provide an indication to game officials when the puck needs to be replaced.

"We've been able to offer a smart and elegant solution to a problem that can significantly impact game play," said Alicia Cafardi, PPG senior marketing communications manager in industrial coatings.

The Pittsburgh company teamed up with LCR Hallcrest, a maker of temperature-sensitive thermal labels and indicators, on the technology. LCR Hallcrest designed the color-changing labels on bottles of Coors Light.

"The concept is very similar to what we developed back in the day to when we did the Coors Light bottles," said Scott Szafraniec, LCR Hallcrest national sales manager. "Because of that project, we had knowledge of what we could do. We can make a variety of different coatings."

NHL pucks are frozen before the game. They glide smoother and faster when they are cold. Since hockey pucks are made of vulcanized rubber, they have a tendency to bounce like tennis balls when slapped with a stick. A warm puck tends to go airborne and players end up swatting them like they're using baseball bats.

That's fine if you're Sidney Crosby, one of the few players who seems to have mastered that skill, but most skaters prefer to have a puck lying flat before they shoot it.

"Freezing a puck eliminates bouncing, and game officials closely monitor the puck for temperature changes that affect performance while in play," said Dan Craig, NHL vice president of facilities operations. "A coating that changes color when the puck is above freezing will more accurately alert the officials that it's time for a replacement."

Referees pick up and feel a puck that they notice bouncing too much. If the puck feels too warm, they swap it out for another that is chilling in a mini, rinkside freezer.

"But it's always been a subjective process on when to do that," said Bryan Iams, PPG vice president of corporate and government affairs.

PPG and LCR Hallcrest created official game pucks featuring a thermochromic coating that changes from purple to clear when a puck's temperature is above freezing. A purple pigment is applied to the NHL logo and commissioner's signature that appears in white on every official game puck. When the label turns back to a white shade, officials will know that the temperature of the puck has risen above 28 degrees Fahrenheit, and it's time for some fresh, frozen vulcanized rubber.

The new puck will be in play at the 2019 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic between Boston and Chicago at Notre Dame Stadium on New Year's Day. It has been tested at Penguins practices and NHL exhibition games, Iams said.

"The benefit for us is because of our partnership with the Penguins, they're always willing to help in these areas," Iams said.

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121119 Pittsburgh Penguins

Zach Aston-Reese delivers two goals, a bunch of hits in big win over Boston

MATT VENSEL

DEC 14, 2018 11:43 PM

After practicing on a line with Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel during Friday's morning skate, Zach Aston-Reese knew what he needed to do to stay on it for more than a period or two later that night.

"Just play a hard, strong game and try to get those guys the puck and create some traffic in front."

Aston-Reese did that – and then some – in a hard-fought 5-3 victory against the Boston Bruins.

New faces in key places help Penguins finally topple Bruins, 5-3

For starters, he led the Penguins with nine hits, including a tone-setting four of them during the first period. On one play, he wrecked Bruins winger Chris Wagner in the defensive zone. On another, his hard hit near his blue line created a 3-on-2 that Aston-Reese nearly finished at the other end.

In the second period, he got the puck to Malkin and made a beeline to the net while Malkin faked a slapshot at the blue line and slid it to Kessel.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Kessel had some space because Aston-Reese drew a Bruins defender, and Kessel beat Jaroslav Halak between the legs to make it 2-0.

Oh, yeah, and Aston-Reese also scored a pair of goals, one of which was his first career short-handed goal and the other was a last-second empty-netter that sealed the win at PPG Paints Arena. His three points were a career high.

"It was his best game of the year. I thought he was physical. I thought he went to the net. He was shooting the puck. He defends hard. He was real good on the penalty kill," coach Mike Sullivan said. "I thought it was his best game of the year. I really liked him playing with those two guys."

It sure sounds like Aston-Reese did enough to get another game with those two on Saturday.

Aston-Reese spent some time on a line with Malkin and Kessel during each of the last two training camps, which is why, he said, he wasn't overwhelmed by the big opportunity Sullivan gave him.

"I'm kind of over that. I had two camps with them where I was on a line with them," Aston-Reese said. "I kind of got all those feelings and emotions out of the way. I just wanted to play a simple game, made myself available for them and I thought we had a pretty good game as a line."

Penguins forwards Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel sit on the bench during training camp Friday, Sept. 14, 2018 at UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex.

Aston-Reese's energy had something to do with that. It was evident early on as the 24-year-old tried to hit pretty much everyone, which was a pre-game directive from the coaching staff after the Penguins played with little fire in Wednesday's loss in Chicago. He gave them a spark Friday.

Led by Aston-Reese, the Penguins had 52 hits, which is a lot but not necessarily good.

"We'd like to have less hits because that would mean we had the puck more," Sullivan said, then added, "But certainly we want to be a team that has an element of physicality to its game."

The Penguins hoped to see that from Aston-Reese. They probably didn't see the goals coming.

Aston-Reese on the short-handed goal showed the kind of poise that has eluded him at the NHL level and, quite frankly, is the biggest reason why he hasn't stuck on one of the top two lines.

On a slow-developing 2-on-1, Riley Sheahan came down the left wing, waited out the lone Bruins defender and feathered a pass to Aston-Reese, who put his shot under Halak's blocker to make it 3-1.

"Riley drew the defender over and just made a nice pass to me," Aston-Reese said. "I didn't want to give the goalie too much time to set up. I tried to get it off as quickly as possible."

The empty-netter, set up by Sidney Crosby, was about as easy as it gets. But the fact that he was trusted to be on the ice with 14 seconds left in a one-goal game is noteworthy, as was Sullivan using him on that 4-on-3 penalty kill in overtime during Monday's 2-1 win on Long Island.

"It's a good confidence boost that the coaches trust me in those situations," Aston-Reese said.

He earned a little more trust with his big game against the Bruins. And if he keeps throwing his body around, creating turnovers and chipping in with the occasion goal, he may need to buy a Rosetta Stone course.

"Geno's mostly in Russian, but I talk to Phil a bit," Aston-Reese said. "I think playing with those guys, it's more reading and reacting."

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.15.2018

New faces in key places help Penguins finally topple Bruins, 5-3

JASON MACKEY

DEC 14, 2018 11:18 PM

Seated at his dressing-room stall late Friday night, Casey DeSmith turned to his left, looked up and cracked a wide smile as he watched Zach Aston-Reese hold court in front of his locker.

Last season, DeSmith and Aston-Reese were teammates with Wilkes-Barre/Scranton of the American Hockey League, munching on postgame meals at chain restaurants and riding buses to road games.

In Pittsburgh, they seemingly have invigorated the Penguins with some new energy and competitive fire, traits that were on display in the Penguins' 5-3 win against the Boston Bruins Friday night at PPG Paints Arena.

Aston-Reese scored two goals and enjoyed his first three-point game in the NHL, while DeSmith made a career-high 48 saves to prevent the Penguins from doing something that would've really been hard to swallow — coughing up a two-goal lead at home 48 hours after laying a dinosaur-sized egg in Chicago.

"It's always fun when you're getting peppered," DeSmith said, "as long as you come out on the right side of things."

Those words were appropriate given the trajectory of this game. The Penguins took a few punches but ultimately scored the knockout.

Through two periods, the Penguins appeared destined for a solid win — complete with a fourth-line goal, a pretty Evgeni Malkin-Phil Kessel combo play and the club's first short-handed goal this season.

Combine that with DeSmith's highlight-reel stop on Brad Marchand early, have a celebratory cigar and call it a night.

The Bruins had other ideas, and the Penguins started handing out free coupons at the blue lines. The Penguins got sloppy with their puck management and paid for it in the third, allowing two goals in less than 60 seconds to turn a 3-1 game into a 3-3 tie.

"I felt throughout the game we had some mental lapses where we were turning pucks over on the blue line," Aston-Reese said. "On that first goal they had, I turned it over at the blue line. That was kind of the theme for five or six minutes of the third period. Unfortunately, they got two goals to tie it."

To add injury to insult, the Penguins lost Kris Letang at 15:06 of the third period to what appeared to be a lower-body injury. Letang was hurt in an awkward collision with Bruins forward Joakim Nordstrom and left the ice in a hurry, unable to stand on his own.

Coach Mike Sullivan had no update on Letang postgame, and the Penguins could be without their top defenseman — who's having a career year, no less — if the diagnosis is bad.

Without Letang, the Penguins MacGyver'd their way to protecting a one-goal lead, relying on DeSmith to make a couple of keys saves in a late scramble, two shot blocks from Bryan Rust and some gum and paper clips to preserve the final margin.

"They were putting a lot of pucks on net from the walls and everywhere," defenseman Brian Dumoulin said. "We battled hard. It's good to get that fourth one and hold the lead from there."

The deciding goal was scored in an interesting way, too, something that furthers a trend for the Penguins this season — faceoff goals.



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Before an offensive-zone draw midway through the third period, Sidney Crosby gave a subtle head nod to the other four skaters on the ice.

"Sid kinda gave the nod, so we knew it was coming," winger Jake Guentzel said of the set play. "Obviously, a great play by Sid to win the draw."

Opposing Bruins center David Krejci from the right dot, Crosby won the puck to Letang at the point. Letang wasted no time whipping a shot at the net, and Guentzel — wriggling free of Marchand and defenseman John Moore at the inner-edge of the circle — got the blade of his stick on the puck and tipped it past goaltender Jaroslav Halak.

"We've ran that play a couple times this year," Dumoulin said. "It seems like every other time it works out well."

The goal never should've been necessary, of course. But right winger Chris Wagner beat DeSmith from the inner-edge of the left circle, and Krejci followed the rebound of right winger David Pastrnak's breakaway chance to tie the score at 8:02 of the third period.

"You didn't sense any panic or any frustration," Aston-Reese said. "It was kind of a quiet confidence that we had that we think we needed to manage the puck a little better there."

Quiet confidence could easily describe DeSmith and Aston-Reese, neither of whom is at all cocky ... but both firmly believe they belong. And do.

DeSmith has proven it over this recent stretch with Matt Murray out. To the point that things should be very interesting with two healthy netminders.

Sullivan called Aston-Reese's effort "his best game of the year." The coach added that he "really liked [Aston-Reese] playing with those two guys," meaning Malkin and Kessel.

The play of that line was one of several good-news items for the Penguins in this game, as Malkin and Kessel worked a terrific passing play for Kessel's second-period goal. Earlier, the Penguins got a fourth-line marker from Derek Grant, the culmination of Garrett Wilson's hard hit and Matt Cullen's corner work.

While those things were important to beat the Bruins, a team beset by injuries still trying to find its way in the difficult Atlantic Division, the Penguins needed a bounce-back effort after that Chicago loss, perhaps the worst of the season.

They got it — and moved into playoff position — because of the efforts from a couple of important pieces, players who are injecting some new life into this group.

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121121 Pittsburgh Penguins

Casey DeSmith on his sparkling save: 'That was not technique'

JASON MACKEY

DEC 14, 2018 8:12 PM

Brad Marchand had Casey DeSmith licked.

With nearly all of the Penguins goaltender's momentum taking DeSmith to his right, Marchand — the Boston Bruins' left wing and No. 2 goal-getter with 10 — had a Grade A chance to DeSmith's left.

One that somehow didn't go in, either, as DeSmith saw Marchand at the last second and lunged back across the crease, his catching glove flailing in the air and nabbing the puck.

"I just kind of fell over and stuck something over there," DeSmith said. "Thankfully it went in my glove."

That was one of 48 stops DeSmith made on 51 shots on goal, a career-high for him in the Penguins' 5-3 win. At the next TV timeout, DeSmith went back to the bench and was greeted by Murray, very obviously geeked by his fellow goalie's ridiculous stop.

Yet with Murray set to come back Saturday, DeSmith has staked a claim to the Penguins' crease.

He improved to 7-2-1 in his previous 10 starts, with a 2.39 goals-against average and .923 save percentage. For the season, DeSmith ranks tied for eighth among qualifying goaltenders in goals-against average (2.43) and tied for ninth in save percentage (.921).

The Penguins will obviously give Murray every chance to re-establish himself as their No. 1 netminder, but it's hard to imagine them relegating DeSmith to traditional backup duty, either.

For his part, DeSmith said he plans on approaching things the exact same way whether Murray's there or not.

"That would be foolish to change my mindset in any way," DeSmith said. "When I get a game, I go out there and try to win, try to play my best. Keep working hard in practice, doing all the same things."

"That's the way to keep having success — not changing anything once you get a hold of it. I'm not going to change anything, especially my mindset."

New faces in key places help Penguins finally topple Bruins, 5-3

The save on Marchand was the latest in a series of timely saves DeSmith has given the Penguins, and it might be the least planned. It definitely showed off DeSmith's athleticism, a must for someone who's barely 6-feet tall.

As DeSmith would go on to say, there wasn't a lot of practice time allocated to what he did there. Just try to get something, anything in front of the puck.

"That was not technique," DeSmith said. "That was 'Get something over there.' Get a little bit of luck and battle to keep the puck out of the net. There was a lot of that [Friday]."

DeSmith said he knew he had the puck, even though the officials seemed to take a while to blow the whistle.

"I knew I had it," said DeSmith, who's 7-1-2 at home this season. "Or at least I thought I had it. The ref took a while to blow the whistle. He was trying to fool me, I guess. I just kind of laid there and hoped I had it."

Other side of life

The Penguins have made a habit of giving up short-handed goals this season, as their eight allowed are the most of any NHL club.

Against the Bruins, the Penguins realized what it feels like to score one.

Zach Aston-Reese scored the Penguins' first shortie of the season at 19:01 of the second period, taking a pass from Riley Sheahan and firing a shot under Bruins goaltender Jaroslav Halak's blocker.

"Gave it up to Riley, he drew the defender over, and he made a nice pass to me," Aston-Reese said. "I didn't give the goalie too much time to set up. I tried to get it off as quickly as possible."

"It was nice to get one," added Brian Dumoulin, who picked up a secondary assist on the play. "Our penalty kill has been pretty good all year, and it was good to get a shortie, especially that timely goal and that big of a goal."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Despite having the NHL's eighth-best penalty kill at 83.0 percent going into Friday's game, the Penguins had been one of only three clubs without a short-handed tally on the year, joining the Panthers and Sabres.

"It's huge," Jake Guentzel said. "Our PK has been good all year. Obviously it stepped up again tonight. Huge play by Zach and Riley."

Notable numbers

- The Penguins have won three consecutive home games for the first time this season.
- With a goal Friday, Phil Kessel (5-4-9) has a seven-game point streak against the Bruins, one of his two former teams.
- Some crazy numbers from the stat sheet in this one. The Penguins produced 52 hits, although coach Mike Sullivan said that's maybe not a great thing. Aston-Reese led the way with nine, and Jack Johnson was second with six.

"We were trying to be physical when we had the opportunities," the coach said. "We'd like to have less hits because that means we have the puck more."

The Bruins also attempted 81 shots, a crazy high number, compared to just 37 for the Penguins.

"We've got to be more willing to put pucks behind defense and establish a forecheck to create offense different ways," Sullivan said. "I thought there were a number of turnovers that we had when we just mismanaged the puck. As a result, we ended up spending more time in our end zone."

"I do think Boston does a good job of putting pucks to the net from the perimeter in trying to manufacture offense. I think it's part of the evolution of the game. A lot of teams are doing it. We're trying to encourage our guys to shoot the puck more. I do think it was an indication of the territory game."

- Although they've struggled in Boston, the Penguins have won four straight against the Bruins in Pittsburgh and eight of their past 11 against them here.

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121122 Pittsburgh Penguins

Per the Penguins: Don't waste time worrying about Evgeni Malkin

JASON MACKEY

DEC 14, 2018 12:48 PM

The numbers are not pretty, and the sample size is not small.

Evgeni Malkin, over the past 20 games, has not been anywhere close to the player he's been in the past.

Yet the Penguins insist they're not worried. The Malkin that went bananas from Jan. 1 through the end of last season could and should be right around the corner.

"We think he'll come out of it," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said after Friday's morning skate at PPG Paints Arena. "Geno tends to be a streaky guy. Sometimes all it takes is one goal, then he's off to building momentum again."

That the Penguins need Malkin is obvious. No NHL player had more than Malkin's 28 goals from Jan. 1 through the end of the 2017-18 regular

season, and only Edmonton's Connor McDavid had more than Malkin's 62 points. McDavid had 63.

This season, Malkin and Phil Kessel are tied for the Penguins' scoring lead with 33 points, but much of that has come via the power play and during the season's first month or so, when Malkin was red-hot.

After producing seven goals and 20 points through the first 11 games, Malkin has just three goals and 13 points over his past 19.

While expecting Malkin to contribute 1.8 points per game is ludicrous, his recent slump has not gone unnoticed by the fan base, the group often wondering, "Hey, what's up with Geno?"

Penguins players dismissed such talk but acknowledged it's inevitable when you struggle.

"When you lose, there's always going to be comments or opinions, things like that," Sidney Crosby said. "That's the crappy part about losing. That's what comes with it."

Crosby also said getting too worked up over Malkin specifically would be unfair.

"We've done some good things over the last weeks especially, and we're all in this together," Crosby said. "I don't think you can point the finger at one guy. We're right there."

"I don't think it's time to hit the panic button."

The most jarring stat as it relates to Malkin is this: He has just one even-strength goal in his past 20 games. But that's hardly the only thing.

There are several ugly numbers that Malkin has accumulated during that same stretch:

- Malkin is a team-worst minus-15 over the past 20 games.
- He's been on the ice for just nine five-on-five goals the Penguins have scored over the past 20 games compared to 13 during their first 10.
- That has led to a goals-for percentage five-on-five (40.91) that's better than only two regulars, Jack Johnson and Riley Sheahan, over the past 20. It's also a huge departure from Malkin's goals-for percentage over the first 10 (59.09).

"I don't read what people write or listen to they say," Kris Letang said, dismissing the idea that Malkin has been criticized by fans and media alike. "I just know that we have a top player in our dressing room. To win, we need him."

The criticism lobbed at Malkin has involved questions over whether he's healthy, fully engaged or neither. His teammates say worrying about such things are a waste of time.

"He's playing hard," Letang said. "He's facing a tough matchup every night."

"It's the same for all our top guys. They're all facing adversity every night. It's not about the scoresheet sometimes. It's about what you bring in the room and on the ice."

Malkin figures to have a new left wing — Zach Aston-Reese — against the Bruins on Friday, and Monday's 2-1 shootout win on Long Island saw a reunion of Malkin and Kessel.

The Penguins are hopeful those things will help Malkin get back to his normal level of production, while Sullivan would like to see Malkin take a simpler approach.

"Obviously Geno wants to be the difference-maker that he's been for us for so long," Sullivan said. "One of the things we've talked to him about is just simplifying his game, slowing his skating down and supporting the breakout, stopping on pucks. When he has an opportunity to shoot the puck, shoot the puck. Don't look for the next play."

The numbers support Sullivan's position there as well.



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During this recent 20-game sample, Malkin has registered four or more shots on goal just four times. Eleven Penguins skaters have attempted more shots than Malkin's 40 during five-on-five play, including four defensemen.

Couple that with an abysmal shooting percentage — 4.76 percent — and it all adds up. Malkin's production has taken a hit. But the Penguins simply don't believe the trend will continue for long.

"I don't think it's anything to worry about," Olli Maatta said. "We know what he means to our team."

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121123 Pittsburgh Penguins

Kris Letang leaves Friday's 5-3 win over the Bruins with a painful-looking injury

Matt Vensel

Dec 14, 2018 10:35 PM

All-Star defenseman Kris Letang left Friday's 5-3 win over the Boston Bruins with an injury.

Coach Mike Sullivan said immediately after the game that he had no update to share on Letang's condition. He will likely have one Saturday before the Penguins host the Los Angeles Kings.

Letang was injured in an awkward collision with Bruins forward Joakim Nordstrom a few minutes of action after Letang fired a shot that Jake Guentzel redirected for the game-winning goal.

With just under five minutes left, Letang faked a shot from the right point before passing in the direction of Bryan Rust. Nordstrom dropped to a knee to block what he thought would be a Letang shot attempt, couldn't stop sliding and his hip appeared to collide with Letang's left knee.

Letang appeared to be in serious pain as he could not regain his footing. He leaned on his stick to pull himself up but it snapped and he collapsed to the ice. He eventually got to his feet, slowly made his way to the bench and headed down the tunnel with the help of two Penguins staffers.

He never returned to the bench at PPG Paints Arena, leaving the Penguins with five defensemen to hold off the Bruins in the final five minutes. It certainly helped that they got a great game from Casey DeSmith.

It was a critical win for a Penguins team that is desperate to build momentum. But it could prove to be a costly one if Letang is out for an extended period. Letang often logs the most ice time among Penguins, runs their power play and has arguably been the team's best player this season.

"Not everyone can play all 82 games," defenseman Jack Johnson said. "You're going to have fluke injuries, bumps and bruises. The season's not going to stop. You have to carry on."

Sullivan expressed confidence in the rest of the team's blue-liners, particularly Juuso Riihola and Chad Ruhwedel, who have both been healthy scratches since the team acquired Marcus Pettersson.

"Juuso has played extremely well. Chad is an NHL defenseman. He's played for our team for a few years and he's played in the playoffs and he's won a Stanley Cup with us," Sullivan said. "These guys are NHL defensemen. Regardless of who's in our lineup, we believe we have enough to win."

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1121124 Pittsburgh Penguins

Pascal Dupuis is in Pittsburgh, but he can't stick around too long

The former Penguin says a return is "always in the back" of his head whenever he visits town

Jason Mackey

Dec 14, 2018, 1:56 PM

Pascal Dupuis arrived at his seat for the Penguins' morning skate Friday at PPG Paints Arena and immediately began harassing one of the players.

"Nice muffin," Dupuis stood up and shouted toward Sidney Crosby, invoking a piece of hockey slang that essentially poked fun at a poor shot from the Penguins captain.

It felt like home again for Dupuis, smiling as he retold the story.

"Real good to be back," said Dupuis, who's in Pittsburgh for a couple days with his son Kody's youth hockey team.

New faces in key places help Penguins finally topple Bruins, 5-3

This isn't the first time the 39-year-old returned here since he was forced to retire because of blood-clot issues in December 2015, but it has maybe been the most fun he's had visiting Pittsburgh as a former player.

While Dupuis insisted he wouldn't be showing his team around the bowels of PPG Paints Arena and pointing to every picture of him hanging on the wall, he did enjoy filling in a few blanks for the youngsters.

"Just to be here, to show them around ... these kids know me as their coach, as Kody's dad," said Dupuis, who lives in Blaineville, Quebec, about 20 minutes outside of his hometown of Laval. "Now they can see what I did and what kind of person I was here."

Being back in Pittsburgh also led Dupuis to reflect a little on the end of his career and why he left town the way he did.

It was absolutely intentional ... but not because he was unhappy or didn't love the city. More it was something he felt he had to do for his own health.

"I needed to get away," Dupuis said. "I still think to this day that I would've tried to make another comeback if I had stayed around here."

So Dupuis said he went to his wife, Carole-Lyne, with a request.

"It was hard to stay around, even when I was around the team and not playing," Dupuis said. "I told my wife, 'Let's move away from this.' When I have the itch to move back, we'll discuss. It's been good. Everybody's happy."

And healthy, too.

Dupuis joked that he tried to get fat to further deter him from playing. "It's not working," he said, bemoaning that he's actually still struggling to gain weight. (For what it's worth, Dupuis looks like he could suit up Friday, play 18 minutes and pick up a couple points on Crosby's right wing.)

The lack of weight is understandable, though, considering Dupuis' workout routine. With all four of his kids in school, the first place he goes a little after 7:30 every morning is the gym — to run, bike and lift weights, always ending with a trip to the sauna.

"To sweat out whatever booze I had the night before," Dupuis said. "That's pretty much what I do."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Dupuis remains active coaching all of his kids in various sports, often driving them from practice to practice, he's relished the role of playing dad, something he said he didn't get to do nearly enough of while he was playing.

Dupuis has also been doing some TV work for TVA Sports, and he's taken up cooking as a hobby.

After finishing his Penguins career as a part-time scout, Dupuis said he has started to think about a possible reunion with the organization. But he doesn't question for a second what he did a couple years ago, that intentional break to make sure he didn't try for another comeback.

"It's always in the back of my head, for sure, every time I come back here," Dupuis said. "But like I told you, I needed that cutoff. I needed to get away from this."

And now he gets to bring his son's team back for practice Friday, a couple games Saturday, to watch the Penguins play the Bruins and Kings and visit with a few former teammates.

"I'm happy," Dupuis said. "Really, really happy."

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1121125 Pittsburgh Penguins

Penguins shake up lines, give Casey DeSmith another start against Bruins

Matt Vensel

Dec 14, 2018, 12:44 PM

After the Penguins lost to the cellar-dwelling Chicago Blackhawks on Wednesday, a game when a Blackhawks team that had played the previous night still skated with more spunk than his squad, it was certainly no surprise that coach Mike Sullivan shook things up Friday.

At the start of Friday's game against the Boston Bruins at PPG Paints Arena, Tanner Pearson joined Sidney Crosby and Jake Guentzel on the top line, Zach Aston-Reese was bumped up to play with Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel and Derick Brassard was back centering the third line.

"Yeah, I think it's pretty obvious" that Sullivan was sending a message, Aston-Reese said, and trying "just to shuffle things up and try to create some fire and some energy."

Aston-Reese opened training camp as the left wing on a line with Malkin and Kessel and had some bright moments with that skilled duo. He started the season in the AHL and since being recalled last month had been used on the bottom two lines.

While Aston-Reese is getting a chance on a line that is theoretically a scoring one, he says his game can't change.

"[That's] not trying to be a skill guy or play out of my limits. Just play a hard, strong game and try to get those guys the puck and create some traffic in front," Aston Reese said.

Pearson, meanwhile, got a chance to click with Crosby after playing almost exclusively on Malkin's left wing since he was acquired from the Los Angeles Kings last month. That second line, starting with the slumping Russian center, had played poorly of late.

Entering Friday, Pearson had gone eight games without a goal since getting three in his first six games in Pittsburgh.

"I think I'm getting my shots, which is still the key thing," he said. "I've got to capitalize."

Pearson was excited to skate with Crosby, but "playing with [Malkin] is pretty nice, too."

"Two really, really high-end skilled centermen," Pearson said. "Playing with guys like that, you kind of get open and they'll find your stick somehow. You've just got to be ready."

Evgeni Malkin shows his frustration during a loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning in mid-November.

Jason Mackey

Per the Penguins: Don't waste time worrying about Evgeni Malkin

The third line featured Brassard between Riley Sheahan and Bryan Rust, who halted his 21-game scoring skid with a hat trick in that disappointing 6-3 loss in Chicago. Sullivan used that combination often early in the season, though it didn't produce many goals.

Murray must wait again

Casey DeSmith got his seventh straight start Friday. Matt Murray backed him up for a second straight game, in large part due to the fact that he has gotten in only one team practice and a pair of morning skates since returning from his three-week absence.

"We're trying to put Matt in the best possible position to be successful," Sullivan said.

It probably is no coincidence that instead of facing a dangerous Boston team on Friday, Murray is expected to start Saturday for the first time since Nov. 17. The lowly Kings are last in the league with 72 goals in 33 games.

The Penguins, after these back-to-back games against the Bruins then Kings, then have four games in a six-day span, including another back-to-back, before the NHL's holiday break.

"When we looked at it as a coaching staff, it was more about, 'How do we get the best out of both of them so we give those guys the best opportunity to be successful and give our team the best chance to win?'" Sullivan said. "Both of these guys are going to get playing time."

Simon, Hornqvist remain out

Dominik Simon has still not resumed skating since suffering a lower-body injury Dec. 4. At that time, Sullivan said Simon was day to day. He has since been placed on injured reserve.

Patric Hornqvist, meanwhile, has not been seen on the ice since Monday's morning skate.

"Dominik is week to week and Horny is day to day with an upper-body injury," Sullivan said Friday. "Neither circumstance has changed. They're both making progress."

Pearson to face old team

Pearson on Saturday will face his former team, the Kings, for the first time. A first-round pick of Los Angeles in 2012, he scored 69 goals and recorded 144 points in 325 regular-season games there – and won a Cup, too – before they traded him to the Penguins for Carl Hagelin.

"It's gonna be kind of weird, for sure, [after] playing six years alongside those guys," the 26-year-old said. "To line up across the ice from them, it's going to be definitely, definitely weird. But I'm here now. We're friends off the ice, but we've got to get on a roll here."

Pearson has stayed in touch with many of his former teammates the past few weeks.

"I think it's a bit easier being in a difference conference," Pearson said. "You're not battling with them as much. I keep tabs on guys and a few texts here and there, for sure."

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.15.2018



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1121126 Pittsburgh Penguins

The Penguins may find out how valuable Kris Letang truly is once again

Seth Rorabaugh

Dec 15, 2018

As has been the case far too many occasions to quantify over the past 13 seasons, Kris Letang was once again vital to an important victory for the Penguins against the Bruins at PPG Paints Arena on Friday.

Late in regulation, with the game tied at three thanks to a two-goal rally in the third period by the Bruins, the Penguins lined up for an offensive zone faceoff in the right circle. Sidney Crosby won the draw with ease and cleanly played the puck to Letang, who was lined up in the high slot. Settling the puck for barely a second, Letang gripped and ripped a wrist shot that was deflected by the backhand of Jake Guentzel. The puck bounced off the ice, deflected off the pants of Bruins goaltender Jaroslav Halak and into the cage.

That goal at 10:47 of the third period proved to be the game-winner in a 5-3 triumph against one of the Eastern Conference's top squads. While hardly perfect, the conquest was one of the Penguins' most impactful games of a largely disjointed 2018-19 campaign. If nothing else, Friday's contest salvaged the team's wounded confidence after a bumbling effort in a putrid 6-3 road loss to the wretched Blackhawks on Wednesday.

To be concise, the Penguins needed this win.

They may get a reminder of how much they need Letang as well.

The Penguins' franchise defenseman left the contest at 4:54 of the third period. After faking a shot, Letang dealt a pass from the left circle to the right circle for Bryan Rust. Bruins center Joakim Nordstrom reacted to Letang's fake and knelt for a block. As Letang released the pass, his left knee collided awkwardly into the back of a crouching Nordstrom, and he tumbled to the ice.

Letang staggered his way to the bench and retreated to the dressing room with assistance from team staffers.

Mike Sullivan did not provide an update on his status following the game. Letang was seen leaving the arena without any crutches or brace on his knee. The Penguins will not hold a morning skate (or media availability) prior to Saturday's home meeting with the Kings. Sullivan, who typically offers injury updates with infinitesimal value, will presumably provide some sort of status with reporters during a media scrum scheduled for 5 p.m.

If the Penguins are forced to skate without the all-star, their options to replace him are limited, particularly with Justin Schultz sidelined until February due to a left leg injury.

The two candidates to assume his place in the 20-man lineup are journeyman Chad Ruhwedel, a healthy scratch for 12 games, and rookie Juuso Riihola, himself a healthy scratch over the past six contests.

In a combined 25 man-games, Ruhwedel and Riihola have conspired to collect a single point (a secondary assist by Riihola), 24 fewer than Letang, who is eighth among NHL defensemen with 25 points in 30 games.

An even more daunting figure to account for than Letang's base offensive numbers might be the ice time he commands.

He leads the team in average ice time per game in all situations (25:55), at even strength (20:39) and on the power play (3:15). Only his short-handed ice time (2:01) is tempered a bit. That is the team's eighth-highest average.

Additionally, he leads the team in the number of times he has been deployed for offensive zone faceoffs with 190 and is second in defensive zone faceoffs with 186, second only to defensive partner Brian Dumoulin (190), according to Natural Stat Trick.

If nothing else, Letang's presence offers a psychological boost to his teammates.

"He's a special player in this league," said Guentzel. "Whenever he's on our team, we feel bigger and better with him back there."

Why does Sullivan have faith in two players with resumes hardly as splendid?

"Because we think we have NHL defenseman," Sullivan said. "Juuso has played extremely well. Chad is an NHL defenseman. He has played for our team for a few years. He's played in the playoffs, and he's won a Stanley Cup (title) with us. These guys are NHL defensemen. Regardless of who is in our lineup, we believe we have enough to win."

Another layer to this predicament is a potential absence by Letang coupled with Schultz's unavailability leaves the Penguins with only one right-handed defenseman on the roster in Ruhwedel. During Schultz's convalescence, the team has relied on left-handers Riihola, Jack Johnson and Jamie Oleksiak to play on their off sides this season to varying degrees of success. Dumoulin, Olli Maatta and Marcus Pettersson are virtually exclusive to the left side.

"I take a lot of pride in being able to play both sides," Johnson said earlier this season when asked about his ambidexterity. "There's pros and cons to both sides. But I don't think it's a big deal, switching around."

"You see a lot of guys playing their off side whether it be (Oleksiak) and (Johnson)," said Dumoulin. "They're doing a great job so far. That's something that we've had to deal with the last couple of years. That's something those guys are comfortable with. It's obviously not easy but if you can do it, it can benefit you."

The Penguins have benefitted considerably from a rebound in 2018-19 by Letang, who struggled throughout 2017-18 in a slow recovery from a neck injury that cut his 2016-17 season short.

The Penguins managed to win the Stanley Cup in the spring of 2017 despite Letang's absence. His season was finished by Feb. 21 due to a herniated disk.

As evidenced by the most recent of their five Stanley Cup banners, there is a precedent for the Penguins being able to succeed without Letang for a prolonged stretch.

"We've done it before," said Dumoulin, who essentially became the team's No. 1 defenseman in the 2017 postseason. "We know we can do it. We've been carrying eight (defensemen) so far. We know everyone can play. ... I think we need to keep it simple as a (defensive) corps and try to pick up the slack if he is at all missing."

The caveat to any comparisons to the 2016-17 squad is that team had Schultz, albeit at less than 100 percent due to an undisclosed injury. It also had a mobile Trevor Daley, one of the NHL's more reliable off side defensemen, a reliable shot-blocker in Ian Cole and steady veteran Ron Hainsey.

The blue line for the 2018-19 edition of the Penguins has been a work in progress, to be generous.

"I know I'm not a Kris Letang player," Dumoulin said. "I know that about me. But I think as a (defensive) corps, we can piece it together here. We know guys coming into the lineup, whether it's (Ruhwedel) or Juuso, those are serviceable guys and guys that can play in this league. ... Obviously, we've done it before, and we've got to keep it simple. No one is going to replace (Letang). No one is going to pick up the minutes that he does. But collectively, if we can all play a couple of extra minutes, I think that's something we can do."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"I know I'm in good enough shape to play minutes, but it's all up to the coaches," Johnson said. "Who's rolling? Who's going well? What pairings are going well? What matchups do they want? A lot of things can go into that, but I think everyone's in good enough shape to play more."

Penguins get their first short-handed goal

Penguins center Zach Aston-Reese had three points (two goals, one assist) during Friday's game against the Bruins at PPG Paints Arena. (Charles LeClaire/USA Today)

One of the biggest failings of the Penguins' season has been their propensity for allowing short-handed goals. They lead the NHL with eight.

To amplify that issue, they had not scored any short-handed goals of their own through the season's first 30 games.

They finally leveled that disparity a bit in Game No. 31.

Late in the second period, Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy was forced into a turnover at the Penguins' right point by pressure from Riley Sheahan. Dumoulin swarmed over the loose puck on the half wall and swatted it forward into the neutral zone. Zach Aston-Reese collected the bouncing puck and fed a forehand pass to Sheahan charging up the left wing. Gaining the offensive zone, Sheahan drew in Bruins defenseman Torey Krug, who had vacated any notion of defending the slot.

That allowed Aston-Reese to drive to the net with minimal resistance. Sheahan dealt a pass back to Aston-Reese, who settled the puck and lifted a wrister past the blocker of Halak at 19:01 of the period.

"I gave it up to Riley," said Aston-Reese, who scored his first career short-handed goal. "He drew the defender over and just made a nice pass to me. I didn't give the goalie too much time to set up. I tried to get it off as quick as possible."

The Penguins' penalty kill is one of the NHL's steadiest with a success rate of 83.3 percent, seventh-best in the league. But the lack of short-handed offense had been weighing on the minds of some of the penalty killers.

"It was nice to get one there," said Dumoulin, who recorded a secondary assist on the goal. "Our penalty kill had been good all year, and it was good to get a (short-handed goal), especially that timely goal and that big of a goal."

Potpourri

Penguins center Jake Guentzel scored the game-winning goal during the third period of Friday's game against the Bruins at PPG Paints Arena. (Charles LeClaire/USA Today)

• Guentzel's goal was the product of a set faceoff play that was executed in seemingly perfect schematical fashion.

After the Bruins iced the puck, the teams lined up for a faceoff in Boston's right circle. Against Bruins center David Pastrnak, Crosby cleanly won the ensuing faceoff and set up the play that led to the score.

"It was kind of like a one-timer set up for (Letang)," said Guentzel, who fought off Bruins center Brad Marchand to gain positioning on the sequence. "I just tried to get in front of the net, and I was lucky enough to have it hit my stick."

"I was trying to give (Letang) enough time to make a play. I was fortunate to be in the right spot at the right time. It was a big goal. ... Sid kind of gave the nod so that we knew it was coming. Obviously, a great play by Sid to win the draw."

"I don't know how Sid reads it or anything like that, but he has (Letang) line up wide sometimes if he feels he can win it directly to him for a one-timer," said Dumoulin, who was lined up on the right point for the faceoff. "We've run that play a couple times this year. It seems like every other time, it works out well. It was good to get a key faceoff goal there."

The Penguins centers are given autonomy to line up their teammates before draws.

"It's the center icemen's job to call the play he feels is the best for the situation," Sullivan said. "Sometimes, it depends on which side they want to draw it on or who they're facing off against and how they can create a competitive advantage. But the center is the guy that calls the faceoff play based on what he sees."

• Aston-Reese was granted an assignment on the left wing of a line with Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel. He responded with a career-high three-point game thanks to two goals (including an empty-netter at 19:54 of the third) and an assist.

He dismissed the notion of any anxiety of playing with two all-stars.

"No, I'm kind of over that," said Aston-Reese. "I had two (training) camps with them where I was on a line with them, and kind of got all those feelings and emotions out of the way. Just kind of played a simple game and made myself available for them and I thought we had a pretty good night as a line."

"I thought it was his best game of the year," Sullivan said. "He was physical. He went to the net, he was shooting the puck, he defends hard, he was real good on the penalty kill. ... I really like him playing with those two guys."

Statistically speaking

- The Bruins dominated shots, 51-28.
- The Bruins also controlled shots attempts, 81-37.
- Bruins right winger Chris Wagner led the game with nine shots.
- Aston-Reese led the Penguins with five shots.
- Krug led the game with 24:38 of ice time on 26 shifts.
- Dumoulin led the Penguins with 22:25 of ice time on 33 shifts.
- The Bruins controlled faceoffs, 40-26 (61 percent).
- Bruins center Colby Cave was 8 for 10 (80 percent).
- Crosby was 14 for 25 (56 percent).
- Letang led the Penguins with five blocked shots.

• Cave and defenseman Matt Grzelcyk led the Bruins with two blocked shots each.

Historically speaking

- The Penguins snapped a 56-game streak without a short-handed goal dating to last season. Their last short-handed score was by Carl Hagelin in a 4-3 road shootout loss to the Stars Feb. 9.
- Casey DeSmith set a career high with 48 saves. His previous career high of 45 saves was established all the way back on Dec. 4 in a 6-3 home win against the Avalanche.

His most spectacular save came at 15:35 of the first period. With the game scoreless, he denied a backhander by Marchand on a wild goalmouth scramble:

DeSmith dismissed any notion of it being a fundamentally sound save.

"That was not technique, no," he said. "That was just 'get something over there.' Get a little bit of luck and just battle to keep the puck out of the net. There was a lot of that tonight."

The Athletic LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121127 Pittsburgh Penguins



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 15, 2018

Discussion – Bruins at Penguins

Seth Rorabaugh

Dec 14, 2018

A preview of the Bruins:

When and where: 7 p.m., EST, Consol Energy Center PPG Paints Arena

TV: KBL Fox Sports Pittsburgh Root Sports ATT Sportsnet

Record: 17-10-4, 38 points. The Bruins are in first place in the American Adams Northeast Atlantic Division

Leading Scorer: Right winger David Pastrnak, 38 points (21 goals, 17 assists)

Last Game: 4-3 home win against the Coyotes, Tuesday. Left winger Brad Marchand had two goals and an assist for the Bruins.

Last Game against the Penguins: 2-1 home overtime win, Nov. 23. Goaltender Jaroslav Halak made 23 saves for the Bruins.

The last time the Penguins played the Bruins, this happened:

Probable goaltenders: Casey DeSmith (9-5-1, 2.43 GAA, .921 SV%, 2 SO) for the Penguins. Halak (9-4-2, 2.30 GAA, .930 SV%, 2 SO) for the Bruins.

Injuries: For the Penguins, Patric Hornqvist (undisclosed), Dominik Simon (undisclosed) and Justin Schultz (left leg) are on injured reserve. For the Bruins, right winger David Backes (face) and center Sean Kuraly (nose) are probable. Left winger Jake DeBrusk (undisclosed) is out. Defenseman Zdeno Chara (left knee), Kevan Miller (throat), Urho Vaakanainen (concussion) and center Patrice Bergeron (rib and shoulder) are on injured reserve.

Potential lines and pairs: The Penguins' lines and pairs at today's morning skate were:

The Bruins' lines and pairs at today's morning skate were:

Pregame notes

- When Jack Johnson broke into the NHL during the 2007-08 season with the Kings, his first regular defensive partner was all-star Rob Blake.

What stood out the most about the future hall of famer to the rookie?

"I would just say his professionalism and how comfortable how he made me feel around the room. Here's a hall-of-famer, a guy that's done it all and I walked in as a 20-year-old kid and he took me in. I was living with him. He just made me feel so comfortable around the room, all those things."

More than a decade later, Johnson is doing the same for a new defensive partner in Marcus Pettersson.

After being acquired in a trade from the Ducks on Dec. 3, Pettersson has played all five of his games with the Penguins with Johnson as his primary partner in even-strength situations.

"Jack is a tremendous player to play with," Pettersson said. "You always know what you're going to get with him. He's just a steady rock to play with."

"He talks a lot. That's a big key. Coming to a new team, you don't know always know where guys are. I feel like I always know where guys are. I feel like I always know where he's at on the ice. I always know what I'm expected to do and where he is on the ice."

Johnson suggested he isn't chatting any more with Pettersson than he would a more established partner.

"You want good communication with your partner whether he's young, new, old, whatever. Communication is a big part of it."

"With a younger guy, you want to always make sure you're instilling confidence. Being positive with a young guy ... positive energy is key. But I think it's important whether you're young and old. But he's an NHL defenseman. I don't treat him any differently."

At 6-foot-3, Pettersson is the Penguins' third tallest defenseman (after 6-foot-7 Jamie Oleksiak and 6-foot-4 Brian Dumoulin. While few players in NHL history compare to a James Norris Memorial Trophy-winner such as Blake, Johnson suggested Pettersson's reach bares some resemblance to the stickwork the 6-foot-4 Blake deployed later in his career.

"Well he's tall," Johnson said. "He's really tall. So he can use his reach to his advantage and he should. He has been good at that, and I think he's taken advantage of his physical assets. He's a big guy."

- Colleague Jesse Marshall went into more analytical depth on how Pettersson has been deployed earlier this week.

- DeSmith is scheduled to make his seventh consecutive start. With the Kings in town on Saturday, Mike Sullivan explained why he chose to have DeSmith go with DeSmith tonight against the Bruins instead of the presumably healthy Matt Murray.

"We're trying to put Matt in the best possible position to be successful," Sullivan said. "As I said in Chicago at the time, he had only one team practice. So he's had one team practice and a morning skate. The reality is we're playing back-to-back (games) so they're both going to get games. When we looked at it as a coaching staff, it was more about how do we get the best out of both of them so we give those guys the best opportunity to be successful and we also give our team the best chance to win. When you look at the schedule both in the short term – playing the back-to-back (games) – but also in the bigger picture where we play six games in nine nights, both of these guys are going to get playing time. So that is part of the logic in why we decided to go the way we went."

Murray has not played since he allowed three goals on 10 shots in 20 minutes of action during a 6-4 road loss to the Senators, Nov. 17.

Sullivan was asked about the struggles of Evgeni Malkin who has scored one goal (to say nothing of six penalty minutes) over the past nine games.

"One of the things we've talked to him about is just simplifying his game, slowing his skating down and supporting the breakout, stopping on pucks, when he has an opportunity to shoot the puck, shoot the puck, don't look for the next play and we think he'll come out of it," Sullivan said. "(Malkin) tends to be a streaky guy and sometimes all it takes is one goal and he's off to building momentum again. Part of it is just simplifying his whole overall game, and if he does that, he's going to be fine."

- Phil Kessel is scheduled to play his 277th consecutive game with the Penguins. Only three players have played more consecutive games for the Penguins:

- Backes practiced Thursday after being struck in the face by a skate from Coyotes defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson on Wednesday:

- Kuraly underwent surgery on his nose Thursday and will likely be in the lineup tonight. He was injured during a fight with Senators defenseman Shane Harper on Sunday:

After today's morning skate, Kuraly, sporting quite a few bandages over his nose as well as a black left eye, detailed the damage to his schnoz:

"My nasal passageways were blocked, at least one of them," said Kuraly, who had some blood dripping onto his t-shirt. "So they kind of moved the bones back and fixed a deviated septum and kind of wanted it to heal where the scar tissue would give me my nasal passages back. I definitely feel like I'm breathing a lot better out of my nose now."

- Bruins defenseman Torey Krug has 198 career assists.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 15, 2018

• Speaking of the Kings, they already are in town. With the Bruins inhabiting the visiting dressing room, the Kings' equipment staff has taken up temporary residence in the auxiliary basketball locker rooms at PPG Paints Arena:

• The referees are Marc Joannette and Brad Watson. The linesmen are Brandon Gawryletz and Shandor Alphonso.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121177 Websites

The Athletic / DGB Grab Bag: Expanding the playoffs, personalized goal songs and the most terrifying hockey camp ever

By Sean McIndoe Dec 14, 2018

Debating the issues

This week's debate: Despite apparent opposition from Gary Bettman, it sounds like there's growing momentum toward expanding the playoffs by adopting a system in which each conference's seventh through 10th seeds would face off in a best-of-three or even winner-take-all wild-card round. Is that a good idea?

In favor: It is. A larger playoff field means more teams who are in the running later into the season. That equals more entertainment for fans in more markets. That's a good thing.

Opposed: Is it? This is an obvious cash grab by the league to create a few extra playoff gates, nothing more. Fans should only get excited about making the playoffs if it means something. Just qualifying to play a one-game wild card doesn't sound like much of a reward. You played 83 games instead of 82, congratulations.

In favor: But maybe you play more. If you make the wild-card round, you have a shot at winning that game and then moving onto the real thing. In today's NHL, anything can happen in a one-game showdown.

Opposed: Great, so we're asking teams to play a grueling six-month season and then flipping coins to decide who gets into the playoffs? No thanks.

In favor: Oh come on. Winner-take-all games are amazing. There's nothing better than a Game 7.

Opposed: Yes, because there have been six games of a back-and-forth series leading up to it. Skipping all of that to rush straight to an elimination game is just cheap drama for the sake of it.

In favor: Well yeah, the wild-card games wouldn't be as good as a real Game 7. But they'd be close. Consider them an appetizer before we start the real thing.

Opposed: Or we could just, you know, go straight to the real thing, without the gimmicks. Besides, do we really want to let bad teams anywhere near the postseason? Last year's 10th-place team in the East was the Hurricanes, who had 83 points. In 2016, we would have had the Jets and Coyotes tied with 78. In the loser point era, those are terrible records.

In favor: That's maybe not ideal, but it wouldn't be unusual. Hockey history is filled with teams with iffy records that still made the postseason.

Opposed: Right, because for a while we were letting in 16 teams out of 21, which was a joke. It took us years of expansion to finally get back to a system where making the postseason really meant something. And now we want to undo that?

In favor: But do you know what else used to mean something? Playoff seeding. Finishing as high as possible in the standings and getting home ice advantage used to be crucial. These days, with all this out-of-control parity, there's hardly any difference between winning a division and sneaking in as a wild card.

Opposed: So the answer is to let in even more teams?

In favor: Actually, yeah, it is. The proposed system would give teams an incentive to stay out of the wild-card spots, because like you say, those turn into coin flips. You'd want to finish in the top six in the conference to avoid that.

Opposed: OK.

In favor: And it would also create an incentive to win your division and secure a top-two seed, because then you'd get to play one of the wild-card round winners, and you'd have the advantage of being rested while they were playing extra games.

Opposed: So what does that gain us?

In favor: A lot. These days, there's basically one playoff race that matters: The top eight. That's it. Getting a higher seed or home ice advantage is nice but doesn't matter much. You just want to get in, and then everyone has close to the same chance. Under the new system, there would be pressure points at the top two, top six, and top 10. Just about every game of the season would matter to someone, pretty much right up until the end.

Opposed: That does sound pretty cool.

In favor: Right? It all adds up to more meaningful games for more teams, which means more excitement for more fans.

Opposed: At the cost of worse teams getting into the playoffs.

In favor: Which has been the case for most of hockey history.

Opposed: We still agree this is just a money grab by the league, right?

In favor: Oh for sure. But it's possible to make the right decision for the wrong reasons.

Opposed: Huh.

In favor: Huh.

The final verdict: I'm still honestly not sure where I come down on this. I'm an old school traditionalist, but also pro fun. I think I'm leaning toward the expanded format, but I could still be talked out of it.

The week's three stars of comedy

The third star: The Ottawa Senators – They're a team. Not a team that can stay upright in the defensive zone, mind you, but a team nonetheless.

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&MDASH; MATTHEW MCKENNA (@MATTMCK2419) DECEMBER 10, 2018

The second star: The Referee Groin Goal – It didn't count because of rule 78.5iii, which you can read more about here. I'd never heard of this rule actually being used. Well, thanks to Tim Peel's groin, here we are:

The first star: Tre'Davious White – That would be the Buffalo Bills cornerback. No, not technically an NHL player, but this was fantastic.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Obscure former player of the week

I don't know if it's just because of the holidays, or I've seen that Twitter meme a few too many times, but I've had that "Deck the Halls" song stuck in my head all week. So when it came time to pick this week's obscure player, I decided to check the Halls.

According to the Hockey-Reference database, the NHL has had nine players named "Hall." For a small group, it's a pretty impressive list, featuring one all-time legend (Glenn Hall), one MVP (Taylor Hall) and an obscure player alumnus (the other Taylor Hall). Let's add a member to that latter group today, as we feature winger Murray Hall.

Hall made his NHL debut with Chicago in during the 1961-62 season. He was 21 and only dressed for two games, but still played in that year's all-star game; this was back when the league's all-stars faced the reigning Cup champions, and that was Chicago. He spent 1962-63 in the EPHL, then returned to the Hawks the following year to play 23 games, scoring his first two NHL goals. He was claimed by the Red Wings in the intraleague draft in 1964 but played just 13 games for them over the next three years before being traded back to Chicago.

Like many fringe NHLers of the era, Hall found new opportunity in expansion. He was picked by the North Stars and played 17 games for them in their inaugural season. But he spent most of his time in the minors until 1970, when he returned to the big leagues with the debuting Vancouver Canucks. After nearly a decade, he finally played a full NHL season. And he played well, scoring 21 goals and 59 points to rank fourth on the team. But a slow start to the 1971-72 season saw him back in the minors and ended his NHL career. He'd jump to the fledgling WHA, playing four seasons with Houston and scoring 96 goals before heading to the CHL and then retiring in 1977.

Hall's NHL numbers are kind of fascinating. He appeared in seven seasons spanning 11 years, but scored 27 of his 35 career goals in that 1970-71 season. I'm not sure how many seven-season veterans scored 77 percent of their goals in one season, but I'm guessing it's a short list.

Be It Resolved

One of my favorite pieces this week was this one by Sara Civian on what various Carolina Hurricanes players would pick as their personal goal song. NHL teams don't do that yet, but some AHL teams are. It's starting to feel like it's inevitable that you'll see it done just about everywhere within a few years.

That's a good thing, because it's a great idea. Personal goal songs will be fantastic. I'm on board.

With one request.

The first time I ever got paid to go to an NHL game was back in college, when I worked a night as a freelancer for Hockey Night in Canada. I got to sit in the booth with Chris Cuthbert and Dick Irvin, and my job was to react to any goal by immediately writing down the name and number of the scorer and two assists and passing it over to them. That was basically it. It was a pretty sweet job.

It was also damn near impossible. Seriously, that ended up being one of the most stressful nights of my life. (The fact that the Senators and Habs combined for five goals in the first period didn't help.)

You see, sometimes when a goal is scored, it's immediately clear who's going to get credit. Somebody scores on a breakaway or a clean shot, it's easy. But sometimes there's traffic, or a deflection, or two guys swiping at the puck at the same time. It happens more often than you think.

And when it does, it's no big deal. We can almost always figure it out based on one replay. Sometimes we don't even need that – the players' reactions will give you a hint, or you can just wait and see who leads the high-five line at the bench. It's easy.

Unless you need to know right away, with 100 percent certainty, like I did that night. And like the game-day staff are going to need to do once we have personal goal songs.

So here's my request. When we do get personal goal songs – which again, is going to be great – let's spare a moment to think of that poor person who's going to be in charge of figuring out who just scored and cross-matching that against a list of songs before the goal horn stops. Because that person's job is going to suck.

When they inevitably play the wrong song, or even just take a little too long to find the right one, let's not freak out. Don't be that guy who goes on Twitter and posts "Ummmm wrong song LOL." Instead, spare a thought for that poor guy or girl staring down 18 different remixes of Imagine Dragons and hating their life.

We all agree? Cool. Then personal goal songs for everyone.

(And uh, Chris and Dick ... sorry I was slow on the Brian Savage goal.)

Classic YouTube clip breakdown

It's been a long year. But we're almost at the end of it, and the holiday season is here. As the year winds down, I thought it would be nice to drop the snark in this week's YouTube section, and just unwind with something genuinely nice. So today, let's travel back to a simpler time a generation ago, and enjoy the sight of innocent children learning how to play hockey from a nice old man.

It's March 21, 1979, and we're watching the intermission of a Red Wings/Maple Leafs game as our announcer explains that the Wings have been running some local clinics for young hockey players. It's a great initiative for the community, and this one comes with an added bonus: legendary player, coach and broadcaster Howie Meeker is going to stop by and offer up some tips for a gathering of star-struck 9-year-olds.

At the time, Meeker was perhaps the best-known advocate of youth hockey skills in the world. He had a show called Howie Meeker Hockey School that ran in Canada for four years, and later starred in instructional clips that ran on Hockey Night in Canada. You may remember him from the Grab Bag where Donnie Edwards skated around like a weirdo. If so, good news: that's all going to make a lot more sense in a minute.

Our reporter sets up the story by reminding us that the NHL, has never had an American superstar. That sounds hard to believe these days, as guys like Auston Matthews and Patrick Kane follow in the footsteps of Pat LaFontaine and Brian Leetch, but back then it was true. But hey, maybe one of these kids can be that breakout star!

"There's a desire here to learn the skills, but the coaching methods are poor." OK, that was maybe a little harsh. But we immediately cut to a sign welcoming Meeker to the rink. Say hi to your Adorable Hockey Grandpa, kids! Let's all go have some fun out there.

He's, uh, not looking like he's having fun out there. Huh. Maybe they hadn't started yet.

The Red Wings GM is the legendary Ted Lindsay, and he explains that American kids don't know basic fundamentals like passing and wrist shots. Again, kind of harsh. But the real key here is that the kids are having fun, right?

And sure enough, our next shot is a bunch of kids falling all over the place while trying to squat and skate at the same time. Looks at those rascals. Doesn't it warm your heart?

Lindsay explains that "You can not have a kid standing around learning something," at which point we cut to ... uh ... a bunch of kids standing around learning something. But they look happy. Kind of. They don't actually look very happy. But that's OK, because here's Meeker to offer some encouraging words.

"Before this evening's over, just in the skating drills and tomorrow with the puckhandling drills, we're going to embarrass the kids. We really are."

Uh... yay?

At 2:45, we get to the big moment when Meeker gets to address the kids. And he does it with ... a rant about how out of shape they are due to the poor quality of physical education in the United States. "You're getting



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robbed!" he yells, before breaking into a reenactment of the Ministry of Silly Walks sketch for some reason.

Is anyone else waiting for him to laugh and say "just kidding?" Because I'm really waiting for him to laugh and say "just kidding".

He does not say he's kidding. Instead, he starts yelling about taxes. Adorable Hockey Grandpa is scaring me.

We're back to the interview, where Meeker has mellowed out a bit. He just wants to place an emphasis on skills, which sounds reasonable. And he even thinks that the Americans could compete with Canada and the Soviets someday. That's positive, right? He'll probably even smile soon.

"But you don't do it. I can't understand, every time I run a coaches clinic in the States I come away shaking my head. I say, God, they're worse than we are!" I mean, it was an angry smile, but that still counts.

We get a glimpse of a certificate that every player will receive, which is nice because it will give them something to wipe their eyes with as they shake in a corner and sob uncontrollably for the rest of the winter.

And that's it for our clip. By the way, let's be really clear that all joking aside, Howie Meeker was the best. He's still with us today, and even at 94 I wouldn't be surprised if he can still skate better than you and your fat overtaxed kids. Here's a great interview from a few years ago in which he offers up his viewpoints on the state of the modern NHL and a) is right about pretty much everything, and b) uses the phrase "I might as well have been farting against thunder", which I am 100 percent working into every conversation I have with my family over the holidays.

Also, I'm just going to throw this out there: All these years later, who's the greatest American hockey player of all time? There's no right answer, but the NHL came up with a list and gave top spot to Mike Modano. Where was Modano from? Detroit. And how old would he have been when this camp ran? Almost nine. I mean, I'm not saying that a ranting Howie Meeker terrified young Mike Modano into becoming the greatest American player ever, but I'm not not saying it.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121178 Websites

The Athletic / How Vegas could be a thorn in the side of Seattle during the expansion draft process

By Pierre LeBrun Dec 13, 2018

One intriguing aspect of the Seattle expansion process is the fact that Vegas gets to sit this one out.

Kind of.

Because I doubt very much the Golden Knights brass will be sitting idly by if there's a chance to make some trades derived from teams feeling the Seattle expansion squeeze.

Just how it all plays out with Vegas exempt from the Seattle draft will be beyond interesting.

"Yeah, it's hard to tell what will transpire," Golden Knights GM George McPhee said to The Athletic on Thursday. "But it will be nice to not have to worry about a protection list. I didn't think it would be fair for a new club like ours to lose players in expansion. I think the league has done the right thing, again."

It was McPhee, of course, who masterfully cornered some teams during his own expansion process and came out of it with a truck load of picks and favourable side deals.

Now he can double dip ahead of the June 2021 expansion draft.

Vegas might get calls from teams trying to navigate the Seattle blitz.

"Yeah, we may, we may. It's a long way off and we'll see," McPhee said, not convinced one way or another how it might all play out.

Take Nashville as an example of a team that could have benefited from having an organization that was exempt during the last expansion draft. Much to David Poile's frustration, the Predators GM was unable to work out a side deal with Vegas to keep James Neal (that's because the Golden Knights wanted him). But in this scenario, had there been an idle team exempt from the draft as an outlet, the Preds could have perhaps worked out a trade with that team and at least got something for Neal. In that sense, Vegas represents an option for teams that they didn't have during the most recent expansion draft.

There are certainly no rules against Vegas getting involved in that process; I checked with a league source to make sure. If it's a bonafide trade, it's a bonafide trade. There's nothing to say Vegas can't take advantage of an opportunity even if others might portray that as meddling with Seattle's optimum draft strategy.

The option of an expansion-draft exempt team as a trade outlet is a dynamic that Seattle will have to deal with and one that Vegas didn't have to consider in 2017.

Then you pile on the fact that teams have been saying to me for months that this time they won't overthink the process; that now that they've dealt with these expansion rules and actually have more time to prepare for this expansion draft, that they will be better prepared for it. Does that ultimately mean no overpayments to Seattle via side trades the time around?

All of which has fed the early narrative that Seattle will have to work harder than Vegas did.

It's a theory that McPhee doesn't buy.

"It's really hard to predict at this time. Who's to say they're going to have their work cut out for them?" McPhee said. "They may do better than we did. It's just an unpredictable thing. It's amazing that people are trying to come up with protected lists at this point (read, The Athletic). Because it just changes so much. Whatever they're coming up with now will be different a couple of years from now. We may have had four players on our initial (mock) list that ended up on our final list. And that was an eight months (span)."

Yeah, but our writers at The Athletic had fun doing it, OK? (By the way, I can confirm that the Seattle NHL folks have been reading up on the lists The Athletic writers have come up with).

But to McPhee's point, so much changes between the early mocks drafts and the real thing. This happens first and foremost because teams make roster decisions, contract signings and trades which greatly influence the available player pool. Furthermore, after conducting more and more scouting, the expansion team in question will change their minds on players.

With two and half years still to go before the Seattle expansion draft so much can change in that regard.

And even all those teams now saying they will just let Seattle take a player and not overthink it, well, OK. But how do you know what position your team will be in two and a half years' time? A contender today could be in transition in two-plus years. A rebuilding team today could be on the cusp in two years. Almost every team will modify their approach to the Seattle expansion draft between now and the then.

To McPhee's point, it is way too early to know for sure how any of this plays out.

Either way, the Vegas GM was more than happy last month to have lunch with Tod Leiweke, allowing the Seattle CEO to pick his brain. Yes



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they're going to be divisional rivals but the Knights wish Seattle well in all this.

The lessons learned from the Vegas expansion process?

"Get as much of a head start as you can in terms of building your organization," McPhee said. "Be prepared to work extremely hard, and be well organized. It really matters."

McPhee was hired as GM by Vegas some 15 months before puck drop. The debate right now within the Seattle group is whether there's merit in the idea of hiring as early as this summer, which would be two years out, or wait longer in case a great candidate emerges after being fired next season.

Of the two options, I think Seattle is leaning towards hiring early this summer.

Would being hired even earlier helped McPhee?

"Don't know the answer to that," he said. "We obviously executed well in the time frame that we had. It was enough time. But we worked extraordinarily hard. That was a difficult year. It was as tremendous amount of work to put an organization together. But it was some of the most fun you can ever have in this business."

According to a source, now that Seattle is officially an NHL franchise, it has begun the process of putting together a list of potential candidates for the GM job. It's also believed that they won't reach out to candidates who are currently working for an NHL team until after that team's season is completed.

While I don't know for sure which names are on that list, it would be shocking if Golden Knights assistant GM Kelly McCrimmon wasn't among those being considered. He just helped McPhee build an expansion team, which makes him uniquely qualified for the role.

If Pacific Division rival Seattle called for permission to talk with McCrimmon, McPhee said it would not be awkward in the least.

"No, not at all. If someone was interested in Kelly (for a GM job), whether it was that team or another team, I would never stand in his way," McPhee said.

Whether or not Vegas ends up being a thorn in Seattle's side during the 2021 expansion draft process could very well be a different story.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121179 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' Alex Chiasson has earned his place on Connor McDavid's wing

Mark Spector |December 15, 2018

EDMONTON — There are 13 pay periods inside a National Hockey League season. When Alex Chiasson got off the plane in Edmonton back in September, he was just trying to get to one of them.

He came out west on a professional tryout — a PTO — the second year in a row that he had gone through the summer unsigned and hungry for work.

"Not the position you want to be as a player," the 28-year-old Montrealer said in his second language, only a hint of an accent left after seven NHL seasons, a couple of years in the minors, and three seasons at Boston University. "But for me, I've never been allowed to sit back. I've always had to put in the work, and when you come in on a PTO there's no guarantee. You can stay, or you can go."

It took some time, but Chiasson earned a spot here. It seemed like his reward would be the one-year, \$650,000 deal the Oilers bestowed upon him.

As it turned out, that was just an appetizer.

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The real reward, as he drilled home his 14th goal of the season in a 4-1 win over Philadelphia Friday night, was a spot on the Oilers top line with a pair of top-10 NHL scorers, Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl.

And those pay periods?

Average out McDavid's \$15 million in earnings this season over them and it'll take just two weeks to record more cash than Chiasson will make all season long.

"We are really happy for him," said McDavid, after burying the Flyers with another three-point night, his fourth multi-point game in his past five outings. "When you win a Cup, it is a little surprising he didn't have a deal. He came in on a PTO and worked hard and earned a job and has been having a great year. I couldn't be happier for him, he is a fun guy to play with."

The metaphor for Chiasson's career comes in the fact he hoisted a Stanley Cup with the Washington Capitals last spring, and was cut loose by the Caps even before Alex Ovechkin had sobered up from the party. So he packed his gear, shopped for a contract that never came, and arrived in Edmonton as camp fodder, a dusty veteran trying to steal a job from shiny, young first-rounders like Jesse Puljujarvi and Kailer Yamamoto.

Those kids? They get all kinds of rope, because the organization invested in them.

The Dallas Stars spent a second-round pick on Chiasson, once. But that was nine years and five organizations ago.

Guys like Chiasson? They get zero rope.

"That's fair to say," he said. "I've never been able to stick around some team, but I think I've learned from that, grown into that.

"If you want to score 15, 20 goals in this league, unless you're a superstar, you've got to have different tools in your tool box to score. Whether it's around the net, one-timers ... those are things I've worked on the last two years, maybe I wasn't put in a position to use it before, but now ... I'm feeling confident."

Chiasson scored his 14th on a lovely feed from Draisaitl, and now has just 46 shots on goal. That's a shooting percentage of 30 per cent, the best among NHL players with 10 goals or more.

It is, as they say, unsustainable.

But they would say the same about the Cinderella story that has Chiasson playing next to McDavid, wouldn't they?

"He has a knack for scoring and is finding a way to get open," the Oilers captain said, his team freshly nestled into second place in the Pacific after its sixth straight win at Rogers Place. "He has that quick release, so he doesn't need to be open for long. Tonight he was just open for a second and he got it off his tape pretty quick."

The Oilers are now 9-2-2 under Ken Hitchcock, while goalie Mikko Koskinen (31 saves), is now 7-0 at Rogers Place.

As for Chiasson, he's passed his career-high in just 33 games. There are still 49 games left in his season — as in 6-49 — for the guy who won the McDavid lottery in Edmonton.

Is it easy, or hard to play with one of the best players in the world?



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"I think both," Chiasson said. "There's nothing easy, but when Connor gets skating, and the quality of player that Leon is, sometimes I look around and there aren't many players around me. So, that's kind of nice."

"At the same time, there is a lot more that's expected out of you ... with the minutes that you're playing."

Keep playing these minutes, scoring goals this way, and he'd better watch out. Chiasson might get a three-year deal.

So we asked him: Could he be the same player, on a multi-year deal?

"Of course," he counters. "I've had to grind it out, to stay. I reached 400 games the other day. I've won a Cup. There have been a lot of highs, and a lot of lows. That's never going to take away the pride I take in myself, or the work I put in."

Somewhere, Patrick Maroon lets out a sigh.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121180 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs Notebook: Hyman's suspension 'felt like a month'

Luke Fox | December 14, 2018

SUNRISE, Fla. — Zach Hyman prides himself on punching the clock and going to work.

So it took a suspension, not injury, for him to miss his first game since he established himself as an NHL regular three years ago.

"It felt like a month," Hyman told reporters of his two-game ban for a late check on Boston defenceman Charlie McAvoy.

"I miss playing hockey. I miss being out there with the guys, but they played two really good games, so it was fun to watch."

Hyman will resume his position on the left wing of John Tavares and Mitch Marner Saturday, bumping Connor Brown down to the fourth line and Frederik Gauthier likely out of the lineup. (Auston Matthews continued to centre Kasperii Kapanen and Andreas Johnsson at practice Friday.)

During Brown's two-game promotion to the top six, he registered four shots and failed to get on the scoreboard. Tavares scored once; Marner had an assist.

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In no uncertain terms, coach Mike Babcock reiterated Hyman's importance as a complement to his prolific scorers Friday.

"We get the puck all the time. So suddenly 91 and 16 have the puck all the time. I don't know if anybody here realizes that," Babcock said. "They haven't had it for two games. Why?"

Tavares, too, praised Hyman's dependability on the forecheck, and his knack for sustaining pressure at one end and relieving it at the other.

"Great to have Zach back," Tavares said. "There's just so much trust in his game and so much predictability."

What makes Hyman so integral to the Leafs' most productive line is that he's easy for Tavares and Marner to read off his next move and his determination to win 50/50 puck battles.

"Even those ones where you don't think he's going to come out with it, he finds a way," Tavares said. "He puts so much pressure on the D with his speed and his strength."

Which is exactly what got Hyman in hot water in the first place.

In Saturday's heated, lopsided loss to Boston Saturday, Hyman delivered an uncharacteristically late check on McAvoy, who was still fresh off a month-long concussion.

"I thought it was unnecessary," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said post-game. "Especially when it's Charlie, who just came back. So you're wondering, are they targeting him or not? You don't know that. I'd like to think it was just a guy playing hard and got there late and didn't pull up, but our guys responded well."

While far from a league villain, Hyman, who fought Matt Grzelyck after the hit, provides a measure of sandpaper lacking from a club built for speed and skill.

Toronto takes the fewer penalties than any club (6.8 PIMs per game) and throws fewer checks than any team in the East (17.9 per game).

Hyman leads all Leafs in hits per game (1.8), and although another show of recklessness would be surprising, we shouldn't expect the interference suspension to dull a critical facet of his game.

Maple Leafs' mighty power play hits the skids

Take a cursory glance at the NHL standings, with the Maple Leafs standing tall at second overall and the Panthers struggling to stay out of the Eastern basement.

Now guess which team operates the more effective power play.

Wrong. It's Florida, which for all its flaws is humming along at a 26.7 per cent clip with the man advantage, good for fifth in the NHL.

Toronto's much-discussed, top-heavy special team has slipped to eighth overall (24.1%) and fallen behind last season's pace (25%).

You can blame human highlight reel Andrei Vasilevskiy for playing a significant role in that, which he certainly did Thursday. Or you could subscribe to Babcock's theory that a team needs two dangerous units to be produce at a higher rate, as opposed to letting the Matthews-Tavares-Marner-Kadri-Rielly group roll around for two minutes.

Since William Nylander restarted his NHL career four games ago, the Leafs are 1-for-16 (six per cent) on the power play.

"Willy is working his way back," said Babcock. "Once Willy gets going, we'll have two groups as well."

More than one way to skin a Cat

Toronto is catching Florida at full swoon.

The Panthers (11-13-6) have lost four straight by a combined score of 19-10.

After Thursday's 5-1 beatdown in Minnesota, coach Bob Boughner said his top line, led by Aleksander Barkov, "looked slow all game" and called out his players' pride, noting that some gave up before the buzzer.

"I don't know what needs to change, but we'll figure it out at some point," Aaron Ekblad told reporters. "We need to."

A trendy off-season pick to climb back into the wild-card conversation, Florida has been forced to inject unproven youth into a forward corps set back with a trio of in-season surgeries (Vincent Trocheck, Derek MacKenzie, Jamie McGinn) and a day-to-day ailment for Nick Bjugstad, who could return Saturday.

#FlaPanthers have returned both Dryden Hunt and Anthony Greco to AHL Springfield. No word on who is coming back just yet. Could be a combination of Nick Bjugstad returning + perhaps Borgstrom; maybe Borg & Hawryluk. We shall see.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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— George Richards (@GeorgeRichards) December 14, 2018

The Cats' .467 points percentage ranks second-worst in the Eastern Conference (only the New Jersey Devils are worse off), but considering Toronto has lost three of its past four, don't expect the Leafs to take their opponents lightly. The moms are watching.

"They're in the National Hockey League. They're coming to play hard. They've got some real high-end players," Babcock said. "They're dangerous on the power play, so we've got to be ready."

Dubas chuffed with goaltending prospect

Before rewarding him with an entry-level contract Friday afternoon, two of the past three tweets on Leafs GM Kyle Dubas's timeline were in praise of goaltending prospect Ian Scott.

The 19-year-old Prince Albert Raiders netminder, selected 110th overall in 2017, is on pace for his best season, and it's not even close.

In his past three WHL campaigns, Scott failed to get his save percentage above .897. This year, he's rolling at a .943 clip, leading to a sparkling 23-2-1 record with four shutouts — and a goal.

The Raiders are the toast of Western circuit, with a ridiculous .922 points percentage, and Scott has had a big hand in that success.

He shoots, he scores! @MapleLeafs prospect @IceScott99 scores his first career WHL goal tonight for the @PARaidersHockey!  
pic.twitter.com/NeGYJgectN

— The WHL (@TheWHL) November 17, 2018

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121181 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Q&A: Oilers' Ken Hitchcock on how coaching has changed over his career

Mark Spector | December 14, 2018

EDMONTON — Ken Hitchcock is the Puck Whisperer, a man who can tame the 20-player horse that bucked the last coach off better than any coach of his generation.

Suddenly, an Edmonton Oilers team that had just stopped functioning under Todd McLellan — who we maintain is among the upper echelon of NHL coaches today — is back in the playoff picture and cruising along at 8-2-2 under Hitchcock.

We had a chance to sit in with a couple of Philly writers, who visited with the former Flyers coach on the morning of Philadelphia's only visit to Edmonton this season. Hitchcock, who also explains the game to a hockey fan perhaps better than any coach we've ever met, was in a mood to talk.

If you're coaching a hockey team, you'll want to read this. Here's what we learned. (Answers have been edited for brevity.)

Sportsnet NOW gives you access to over 500 NHL games this season, blackout-free, including Hockey Night in Canada, Rogers Hometown Hockey, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey, the entire 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs and more.

Q — Usually when teams make in-season coaching changes there's a two to three week period where teams begin to catch on. You got them playing right away. How come?

A — A lot of the work was done by Todd and his staff. We're part of the same coaching tree. Todd, Bill Peters, Mike Babcock, myself. So the terminology was easy... and then I do what I do. It's just concepts, it's not X's and O's. A lot of concepts (that were), quite frankly, in place. And I think we had some things that went on early that allowed us to have some confidence. We won a game in a shootout. We won a game in overtime. We won in a rink in San Jose that has not been nice to us right off the bat. So we were able to grow kind of quicker. But... I didn't have to touch anything. I've had three full hockey practices since I started. It's been what was already in place.

Q — They say that simply having the players hear a new voice can be the difference. Is that true?

A — No. I think it's the same stuff, but a different approach. I've learned over time that the pregame preparation is one of the most overrated things in our sport. Because you're saying the same things over and over again. But postgame preparation is not. It's really important. And how you move the train along the tracks is all in your postgame review. So I drill down hard on things (the day after a game) that I know are going to come up the next day when we play. We're very brief on our pregame presentations, very brief on our preparation, but we're not brief on our review. It's very detailed.

Q — Do you speak to players right after a game?

A — I stay away from them until the next day. I might go into the locker room every third or fourth game, but otherwise I don't go into the locker room. But when we're in there the next day before we practice, or before we do anything, there is a lot of detail that gets dealt with. My job is to keep the train on the tracks and keep the players out of the ditch for a long period of time, and I believe you do it with hard review. Most of it's positive. But if you really review the details then they start to become absorbed. Because there isn't much that gets absorbed on the day of a game.

Q — You've carried that over from Dallas and Philly. What do you think you have changed? Is there a lighter side since your days in Philly?

A — I don't believe there's a lighter side. But I've learned over time in generations... when I first started in this game, you told players what to do and that was it. Then you got to what and how to do it. And that became relevant. And now it's what, how and why. And what's in it for them. And you better be prepared to go the distance in explaining all of those in detail or you're not going to get a buy-in.

(You can't just say because I say so) No. And you can't just give them the information because they have thoughts. The athletes now are better prepared than they've ever been. They're more physically, mentally prepared. But they've got strong opinions. And you better be prepared for the dialog and the debate. And you better have the patience for it. And that's a daily conversation that you need to have with guys all the time and you better have that time. Because if you don't it gets away on you.

Q — You've coached some great players over the years. What makes Connor McDavid unique?

A — The thing that's unique to him is that he's a fearless, reckless player. He's a tremendous athlete, a tremendous player but he's fearless — willing to pay any price to score a goal. To attack. He goes into places that make me nervous just being on the bench. Absolutely reckless and fearless, in order to get into scoring areas.

Q — Is every coach hired to be fired? Is it a 'tick, tick, ick,' kind of job?

A — You know it (going in). My job is to get players to do things that are really uncomfortable, and find value in that. Your job is to get them through the wall and out the other side. That's very difficult to do. The feel you have as a coach is, when it's inconsistent, you know that there is some resistance in the room. That's when you need the general manager (to have your back). When they do it, and they don't do it, and they do it, and they don't do it... The feel that you have is, somebody or something is stopping them. I don't find it makes that big a difference to change the



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coach. I think you have to go a lot deeper than that ... and find out what, who, or whatever is stopping them from going deeper.

Q — Are the Oilers, then, the perfect team for you? They must be very receptive, after what happened here last season, no?

A — Sometimes teams are in the position where they're ready to listen. This team was already on its way, way ahead of the curve before I got here. Sometimes teams aren't ready to listen. Doesn't matter who's the coach. Maybe my approach is a little different than Todd's, but they were already on their way here, for me.

Q — Why aren't you on a beach in Florida right now? (He's 66.)

A — I just had coffee with (Flyers assistant) Rick Wilson, and we both said, 'Are we friggin' nuts?' We were the mayors of the coffee club. I've got to tell you, both of us miss one thing: we both love having a stake in the game. Whether it's a coach or as a consultant or whatever, we love having a stake in the game. That's the fuel that is our fire. It's not like I have to be the head coach. I know what makes me feel fulfilled. I'm part of a group that has a stake in the game.

I can't watch hockey as a fan. When I was watching games when I wasn't coaching, I'd watch until I had the information, then I'd turn the TV off and watch the History Channel. Or Discovery. It's not like I need to be the boss or the head coach, but I need to be part of an organization where my opinion matters and (I'm) involved in an outcome.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121182 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / McDavid, Draisaitl net three points each to lead Oilers over Flyers

Canadian Press December 14, 2018

EDMONTON — Rogers Place has been a much more lucrative location for the Edmonton Oilers recently.

Connor McDavid had two goals and an assist and Leon Draisaitl had three assists as the Oilers defeated the Philadelphia Flyers 4-1 on Friday.

Edmonton goalie Mikko Koskinen made 31 saves to improve to 7-0-0 on home ice this season, while the Oilers have won their last six games at Rogers Place to improve to 10-4-1 at home.

"You always want to make your own rink a tough building to play in," Draisaitl said. "We have struggled with that a little bit the seasons before that. We have been really good at home of late and hopefully we can keep that going."

Alex Chiasson and Adam Larsson also scored for the Oilers (18-12-3), who have won five of their last six and have gone 8-1-1 in their last 10 games.

The Oilers are now 9-2-2 under head coach Ken Hitchcock.

Sean Couturier was credited with Philadelphia's goal before it was given to Jakub Voracek post-game. The Flyers (12-14-4) have lost three in a row and six of their last eight.

"We weren't playing bad hockey, just a couple of mistakes here and there and it's in the back of the net and you're chasing again," said Flyers captain Claude Giroux. "The third period we played great again, but we're just chasing every game."

Edmonton got on the board first, with seven-and-a-half minutes remaining in the opening period when Draisaitl fed it in front to Chiasson,

who beat Flyers goalie Anthony Stolarz for his career-high 14th goal of the season in his 27th game. Chiasson's previous career high came in the 2013-2014 season over a 79-game span with the Dallas Stars.

The 28-year-old Montreal native won a Stanley Cup with the Washington Capitals last season, but came to the Oilers on a training camp audition.

"When you win a Cup, it is a little surprising he didn't have a deal or nothing," McDavid said. "He came in on a PTO and worked hard and earned a job and has been having a great year. I couldn't be happier for him, he is a fun guy to play with. He has a knack for scoring and is finding a way to get open."

The Oilers added to their lead at exactly the same point in the middle period when McDavid banked a shot from behind the net off of Stolarz's rear for his 18th goal of the season.

Just over a minute later, it was 3-0 when Larsson scored his first of the season on a shot from the top of the circle following a give-and-go with Ryan Spooner.

The Flyers broke Koskinen's shutout bid midway through the third on a Voracek shot that was originally believed to have hit Couturier and caromed into the net. Koskinen came into the game having recorded shutouts in three of his six home starts this season.

McDavid put the game away with an empty-netter.

Both teams will head to Vancouver for their next game, as the Flyers close out a five-game road trip against the Canucks on Saturday and Edmonton plays them on Sunday.

Notes: It was the first of two meetings between the two teams this season. The Flyers won both games last year; Stolarz got the start in net as a pair of other goalies were unavailable for consideration as Michal Neuvirth returned to Philadelphia for the expected birth of his child and Brian Elliott (lower body) also headed east for a scheduled medical appointment; Oilers defenceman Caleb Jones made his NHL debut. He is the younger brother of Columbus defenceman Seth Jones.

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Sportsnet.ca / Truth By Numbers: How much would Pietrangelo help the Maple Leafs?

Andrew Berkshire December 14, 2018

Alex Ovechkin is currently leading the NHL in goals, but with his shooting percentage as high as it is regression is due. When that comes, do the way he's getting his chances suggest 50 goals is still likely? If he hits that mark, it would be an historic season for him.

Plus, with trade rumours around Alex Pietrangelo linking him potentially to the Maple Leafs, just how much of an upgrade would he be on what they have in place, and what would his addition mean to the team?

That, and more, in this week's column.

SPOTLIGHT PERFORMANCE

Somehow, some way, Alex Ovechkin continues to defy his age and score like he's in his mid-20s.

With young players such as Patrik Laine and Auston Matthews threatening to become the new goal scoring kings of the NHL — along with hot starts from Jeff Skinner, David Pastrnak, and Brayden Point — it's Ovechkin who is once again leading the league with a whopping 25 goals in 30 games.



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That puts Ovechkin on a 68-goal pace if he were to play all 82 games this season, which is fairly unsustainable when you see he's scoring on 21.6 per cent of his shots on goal. That's way above both his career average of 12.6 and the highest shooting percentage season of his career — 14.6 per cent, which he managed in 2007-08 when he scored 65 goals.

I don't think an article on Ovechkin's performance being unsustainable is all that interesting. I think most people with a basic knowledge of statistics would see this is a hot streak. What interests me is that he's already half-way to making history.

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.

Ovechkin is already one of only 13 players in NHL history to score 50 goals or more after the age of 30, and only four players have done so twice: Phil Esposito, Marcel Dionne, Bobby Hull, and Mario Lemieux. But even more impressive, only three players in history have scored more than 50 goals at the age of 33 or older: John Bucyk, Bobby Hull, and Jaromir Jagr.

Ovechkin finished 2017-18 just shy of another 50-goal season with 49, and at this same point of the season he was at 21 goals. So the question is whether he is producing enough offence to make up for the incoming regression — he still needs another 25 goals over the next 52 games.

Considering Ovechkin's lowest-scoring season of his career would still be a pace of 21 goals in 52 games this seems a probable achievement. But the best way to figure out how likely it is he'll get to 50 is to compare him to himself.

Ovechkin's power play scoring isn't much different than it has been the past few years, so we'll focus on 5-on-5 hockey.

Last season, Ovechkin saw a pretty significant increase in his percentage of chances that came off the rush, which had much to do with playing alongside Evgeny Kuznetsov. This re-invigorated Ovi's ability to shoot through defenders off zone entries and beat goalies unexpectedly.

He also moved his shots closer to the net than in years past, which compensated a little bit for his dropping shot rates as he ages.

This year that same trend is holding, but his scoring chance numbers are down slightly from last season, except for chances off the forecheck where he seems to be pouncing on mistakes more often.

If this pace keeps up, we can probably expect Ovechkin to score at a lower pace than last season the rest of the way. But he only needs to score at a 39-goal pace the rest of the way in order to hit 50 on the season, which is absolutely within reach given how he's producing and the elite talent he has.

Scoring 50 goals is always a tough mark to hit, but betting against Ovechkin is never a great idea.

Can Ovechkin pass Gretzky? Can the Maple Leafs land Pietrangelo? And what's up with the Flyers and Blackhawks?@FriedgeHNIC and @JeffMarek discuss all that and more in the latest 31 Thoughts podcast presented by @GMCcanada.<https://t.co/Yd9r6jQqnA>

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) December 14, 2018

### THE QUESTION

We've gone a few weeks without Steve Dangle asking a question about the Maple Leafs, but eventually that dam had to break. So this week Steve got curious about the St. Louis Blues having a fire sale, so he asks...

"How much of an upgrade would Alex Pietrangelo be for the Maple Leafs if he replaces one of Ron Hainsey or Nikita Zaitsev in the top-four?"

Well... a big upgrade.

I'm going to lean a little bit on my positional ranking project from the summer here to do a broader comparison.

But you can pretty easily see the difference between Pietrangelo and Hainsey or Zaitsev.

Of the 193 defencemen who qualified for the project I did over the summer, Pietrangelo ranked 11th in total positive impact for his team, which makes him among the top-half of No. 1 defencemen in the NHL right now. That's on the doorstep of being elite depending on your definition of the word and certainly a franchise defenceman.

By contrast, Zaitsev ranked 139th and Hainsey 148th, so right away you know there isn't much of a comparison to make between these players. Pietrangelo would immediately become the Leafs' best or second-best defenceman, depending on your opinion of Morgan Rielly, who is clearly on a huge upward trend in his career.

While the Blues have imploded this season, they probably aren't as desperate to unload their stars as people are speculating, so the cost of acquiring a player like Pietrangelo would be high.

If the Leafs were able to do it in exchange for future assets though, it would propel them from legitimate contender status to the same echelon the Tampa Bay Lightning occupy as Cup favourites.

### BUY OR SELL

- Nick Schmaltz has had a great start in Arizona with seven points in eight games, though he's actually been less involved in the offence at 5-on-5 than he was in Chicago. The difference has been on the power play where he fills a bigger role on the Coyotes, and is creating nearly 15 scoring chances per 20 minutes, as opposed to the nine per 20 he was involved in with the Blackhawks. Doubt he can maintain this scoring pace, but he should keep getting power play time.

- With the Kings as bad as they are Jeff Carter's name is floating in trade rumours, but how much is he worth these days? Carter has a wicked shot, but his scoring chance rates are dropping, and his involvement in creating offence relative to teammates has dropped for three straight seasons. I'd be cautious offering any big packages for him.

- Also reportedly available is Wayne Simmonds. He has a unique combination of scoring ability and physicality that makes him a highly sought-after player. He's had a bit of a rough start to the season, but is a high-quality finisher who ranked 44th in the NHL among left wingers in my positional rankings project, having a similar impact as the likes of Artturi Lehkonen, Travis Konecny, and Michael Frolik.

- The Islanders are giving up the third-fewest scoring chances in the NHL at 5-on-5 since mid-November, as opposed to the 18th-fewest before then, but they're actually giving up more high danger chances. So far it's working pretty well, though. They've cut down on chances off the rush as well, allowing the fewest in the league.

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TSN.CA / Undrafted Leason on cusp of writing unlikely breakthrough story

Mark Masters

TSN reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on Team Canada, which wraps up its World Junior Selection Camp with a scrimmage against the U Sports all-stars on Friday at the Q Centre in Victoria.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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After getting passed over in consecutive NHL drafts, did Brett Leason think this was possible?

"No," he said. "Never."

The Prince Albert Raiders forward is on the cusp of making Canada's World Junior team after a breakthrough start to the year. Before this season, Leason had played 135 Western Hockey League games, recording just 24 goals and 51 points. This season, he has 28 goals and 64 points in just 31 games to lead the WHL.

"I've surpassed my own expectations," Leason admits. "I was (not) thinking about this or realizing it could happen."

Leason wasn't invited to Canada's summer camp and really hasn't gotten a whiff of international competition over the years. He watched the last two NHL drafts closely, waiting and hoping for a moment that never came.

And all that disappointment lit a fire under him.

"It motivated me a lot," he said. "Realized, like, it's a dream of mine to get drafted and realized this is my last chance so I thought I'd do something and push for that."

During the first scrimmage of Canada's selection camp, Leason lined up beside returning player Alex Formenton and Montreal Canadiens prospect Nick Suzuki, two front-runners to make this Team Canada roster. Leason's spot on that line was an indication that the coaching staff views him not only as a candidate for the roster, but a player who can fill a significant role.

"It's a different Brett Leason from last year," said Canada head coach Tim Hunter, whose Moose Jaw Warriors eliminated Leason's Raiders in the first round of the WHL playoffs last season. "Brett was a big-body guy, skated well, moved the puck and could handle the puck well, but didn't have that second gear in his skating and, really, that compete and confidence. He's gained a step in his skating over the summer. He's worked on his skating tremendously."

In Friday's scrimmage, Leason started on a line with Barrett Hayton and Joe Veleno.

McKenzie: Leason tracking to be a first round pick

Brett Leason has been passed over at two NHL Drafts, but his numbers in the WHL this season earned him a spot at camp. Bob McKenzie joins Mark Masters to explain why he could follow in the footsteps of two former Canadian World Junior players who are currently in the NHL.

Leason didn't seek out any power-skating instructor in the off-season. It was all about pushing himself.

"Just really tried to build strength in my legs," he said, "and then towards the end of the summer was working on quick feet and agility to get that extra step."

A trade from Tri-City to Prince Albert last season also helped him get a "fresh start." With the Americans he was "buried" behind more experienced players. Meanwhile, he has felt an immediate kinship with Raiders coach Marc Habscheid.

"Had a strong summer and then when I came to camp just took off," Leason explained. "Coach trusted me and just let me play my game."

Hunter has made it clear that the hallmark of this year's Team Canada will be speed and the six-foot-four, 199-pound Leason is now able to fit that identity.

"He's very capable of being a fast player in this tournament," Hunter said.

"It's a little crazy that he was passed over twice, but definitely won't be this year," said Spokane defenceman Ty Smith, who faced Leason once in the WHL this season. "He's a fast forward. Lots of size. He's got lots of range to his game, sharp stick handles, good fakes, I mean, he's playing great this year."

There's a sense that Team Canada can capitalize on something special here. Leason started the year with a 30-game point streak. In fact, his only game off the scoresheet came on Sunday in his final WHL appearance before leaving for Victoria. And he still had five shots in that outing.

"We're riding that wave of a guy who's having a great year and trending in the right direction," said Hunter. "And those are the kind of guys that you really have to pay attention to and give a good opportunity to."

Leason determined to prove himself after he was passed over twice at NHL Draft

Prior to this season, Brett Leason had 51 points in 135 games in the WHL and had never been invited to a Hockey Canada camp. He was also passed over twice in the NHL Draft, and as Mark Masters explains, all that disappointment lit a fire within him.

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Hunter believes there was a valuable lesson for his players in Thursday's 5-3 loss to a team of U Sports all-stars.

"We have to get some of the CHL hockey out of our game and get more of the way they (U Sports) play," Hunter noted, "smart, tight, detailed game and we have to get that in our game. And it's all coachable stuff and stuff that will happen."

"We get a little bit more time in the CHL," forward Max Comtois said. "They did a really good job closing our gap and putting sticks in passing lanes and sometimes we were trying little fancy plays, soft plays, trying to make tape-to-tape passes when the (right) play was just to put it in and forechek."

Losing a game to the older university players at this camp isn't a huge surprise. It actually happened last year as well before Canada went on to win a gold medal.

"This is good for our team," insisted Comtois, one of two returning players in camp. "We saw it last year. We lost two games and it helped our team clean up our game and to be ready for the tournament. This is just a wake-up call for us."

WJC: Canada 3, U Sports All-Stars 5

Michael DiPietro, who's vying for the No. 1 job, allowed three goals on 17 shots as the Team Canada hopefuls fell to the U Sports All-Stars in the second of three exhibition games. Owen Tippett, who is looking to make the team after being cut last year, had a goal while Morgan Frost impressed with a goal of his own.

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Team Canada lineup for Friday's scrimmage against the U Sports all-stars:

Forwards

Comtois-Glass-Tippett

Veleno-Hayton-Leason

Frost-Suzuki-Entwistle

Ratcliffe-Bowers-Lafrenière

Foudy

Scratches: Formenton (knee), Vilardi (back), Anderson-Dolan (wrist), Studnicka

Defencemen

Phillips-Brook

Smith-McIssac

Beaudin-Bernard-Docker



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Joseph

Scratches: Bouchard, Dobson, Mitchell

Canada goalies: Scott, Villalta

U Sports goalie: DiPietro

TSN.CA LOADED: 12.15.2018

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TSN.CA / Leafs have 'sour taste' after losses to division rivals

Kristen Shilton

TSN Toronto reporter Kristen Shilton checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs. The team held a practice at the Panthers' Ice Den on Friday.

The Maple Leafs have seen a string of divisional opponents in the last week and a half, matching up against the Buffalo Sabres, Detroit Red Wings, Boston Bruins and Tampa Bay Lightning. Toronto's record has been average at 1-2-1, including a pair of three-goal losses to perennial playoff contenders in the Bruins and Lightning.

Those unfavourable outcomes sting a little more for the Leafs, who had high expectations for themselves in both meetings.

"It's a long season but, those are games you want to win and it's a sour taste and probably a little frustration when you don't get the result you want," said John Tavares after the Leafs' practice on Friday. "They are obviously big, important games. There is a lot of jockeying for position; all the teams have high expectations."

Overall, the Leafs are 4-4-1 against the Atlantic this season, and there's a chance they'll end up pitted against a division rival in the first round of the playoffs. The players aren't looking that far ahead when there are important lessons to learn from recent disappointments.

"Those points are important, we know that," said Morgan Rielly. "But that being said, it's a long year. There's time to make those up. I think when you look at those games, it's a good chance to kind of use as a measuring stick to judge where you are, and I think that's good."

Looking back on Thursday's 4-1 loss in Tampa, the Leafs felt like they had the game under control, but were stymied by Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy in a 48-save performance.

"I think when you look at the tape from last game, we did a lot of good things and there are things we can take away from that," Rielly said.

"We played with a lot of good tenacity, we were quick, I thought we were on top of them," added Tavares. "We didn't allow them to get as much sustained pressure that they're capable of with the talent and the depth. So we'll just stick with that, keep making plays."

For his part, head coach Mike Babcock is striving to not let his team get too caught up in the divisional race.

"Every game adds up exactly the same," he said. "...I think there are some teams that, because of their level, you're more interested in beating just because of the emotional side of it. In the end they all add up the same."

Leafs have a 'sour taste' in their mouth after losses to Lightning and Bruins

The Maple Leafs know the importance of games against the Bruins and Lightning and admit they're a bit frustrated after losing both of them. But

they know it's a long season and are looking to get back on track when they visit the Panthers on Saturday. Kristen Shilton has more.

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The Leafs went 0-for-6 on the power play in Thursday's loss to the Lightning, stoned by Vasilevskiy's impressive showing in net and some key blocked shots by Tampa penalty killers. Toronto being blanked in that area has been a common theme lately – in four of their last five games the Leafs have produced zero goals with the extra man, going 1-for-18 overall.

The loss of key power-play pieces from seasons past like Tyler Bozak and James van Riemsdyk forced adjustments by the Leafs, but Babcock is confident this year's units will get into a consistent rhythm.

"I don't think [those losses] affected one [power-play] group at all, it's just that we had two groups last year," Babcock said. "We're going to have two groups here too. Willy [Nylander] is working his way back; once Willy gets going, we'll have two groups as well. Those guys were important players on the power play for us, but we're just a different team. We've given different people more opportunity I would say."

Tavares has taken on a less familiar power-play role as Toronto's net-front presence in his first season with the Leafs. With four goals and three assists on the man advantage to date this season, Tavares is pleased with his impact, even as the Leafs are struggling to put pucks in the net.

"When you have the skill sets we have on our power play, it's a pretty good spot to be in," he said. "That's where the puck is going to end up going, where the goals are scored, so I know I'll be around it, and I'd like to continue putting them in when I get my chances. It's been good."

Being in that area of the ice on a power play does subject Tavares to more physicality than other positions might, but it has its perks too.

"I think you're going to be engaged a little bit more around the net by some of the defencemen," he acknowledged. "That's where goals are scored, but that's an easy price to pay when you're getting these kinds of opportunities."

Zach Hyman will step back into the Leafs' lineup on Saturday after serving his two-game suspension for interference on Bruins defenceman Charlie McAvoy.

It's only been a week since he last played an NHL game, but Hyman said it feels like it was a longer forced break.

"It felt like a month," Hyman said of the time away. "I miss playing hockey. I miss being out there with the guys."

Now that he's eligible to play again, Tavares is eager to add Hyman back onto his line with Mitch Marner.

"There is so much trust in his game, so much predictability, he's so strong on the puck, so good in those 50-50 battles there," said Tavares. "With those ones you think he's probably not going to come out of it, he just finds a way. Puts a lot of pressure on the D with his speed and his strength, so he's a presence around the net and you can really count on him defensively in our own zone."

Leafs Ice Chips: Hyman says suspension felt like a month

Zach Hyman has served his two game suspension and will be back in the lineup on Saturday in Florida. Hyman admits it felt like a lot longer than two games and his teammates are looking forward to his return.

Maple Leafs lines at practice:

Hyman-Tavares-Marner

Johnsson-Matthews-Kapanen

Marleau-Kadri-Nylander

Ennis-Lindholm-Brown



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Gauthier

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Ozhiganov

Marincin-Holl

Andersen

Sparks

TSN.CA LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121186 Websites

TSN.CA / Sens fans eager to turn the page on a bizarre 2018

Ian Mendes

It was exactly one year ago – on a chilly Friday night in mid-December – when Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk's frosty words plunged his relationship with the fan base into a deeper freeze.

Speaking to reporters just prior to his club hosting an outdoor alumni game on Parliament Hill on Dec. 15, 2017, Melnyk seemed to steal a lot of thunder from a marquee NHL event by openly musing about moving his franchise.

"I love the game of hockey. If it doesn't look good here, it could look good somewhere else. But I'm not suggesting that right now. What I'm saying is, I would never sell the team," Melnyk said.

When pressed on if he would sell the team, Melnyk laid out some scenarios where he could envision it happening.

"If it becomes a disaster? Yes. If you start not seeing crowds showing up? Yes."

The comments made by Melnyk that day – coincidental or not – kick-started one of the most bizarre 12-month periods any North American sports franchise has had in recent memory.

For many Sens fans, the last 365 days has been the most forgettable and frustrating period in franchise history, filled with scandalous storylines that had little to do with the on-ice product.

So, as 2018 mercifully draws to a close for the Senators and their fans, it's worth looking back one more time at just how bizarre the past calendar year has been in the nation's capital.

TSN Rewind: Melnyk reiterates he doesn't want to sell, but brings up potential relocation

Senators owner Eugene Melnyk says he's not looking to sell the Senators, but if it became a 'disaster' he would look to move the team, but says they're on the cusp of doing 'OK'. He also brought up the idea of relocation if things don't change.

Jan. 18 - Pierre Dorion opens the door slightly to an Erik Karlsson trade

With about six weeks until the trade deadline, pundits jumped all over general manager Pierre Dorion's comments to the media, with many interpreting his comments that day to mean that Erik Karlsson was potentially on the trade block.

"Our first priority with Erik is to sign him. He's a special player," Dorion said. "Last time we spoke I think I told you even Wayne Gretzky got traded. If a team makes an offer you can't turn down, you listen."

Things would only intensify leading up the trade deadline, as rumours constantly swirled around Karlsson from that point forward.

Feb. 9 - Tom Anselmi quietly vacates his position as team president

In a press release that was issued at 6:05 p.m. on a Friday evening, the Senators caught a lot of people off-guard by announcing that team president Tom Anselmi was vacating his position as president and CEO of the hockey club.

The news was buried at the bottom of a press release announcing a three-year contract extension for general manager Pierre Dorion. The release was the first hint that a rebuild was on the horizon, as it stated there would be a new focus on scouting drafting and development.

"It may require changes to our lineup," the press release stated. "Rest assured, we will only tolerate pain with an endgame in mind; building an organization that wins – at all levels – year in and year out."

Feb. 13 - Dion Phaneuf is traded to the Los Angeles Kings

In a trade that started the jettisoning of older players from the roster, the Senators sent Dion Phaneuf and Nate Thompson to the Los Angeles Kings in exchange for Marian Gaborik and Nick Shore. Ten days later, the club shipped Derick Brassard to the Pittsburgh Penguins as part of a three-way trade with the Vegas Golden Knights.

Feb. 26 - Trade deadline passes and Karlsson remains on the roster

As the 3 p.m. trade deadline approached, the trade speculation around Karlsson reached an all-time high. Talks with the Vegas Golden Knights – possibly in a deal that could include Bobby Ryan – reportedly went right up to the deadline. But alas, the Senators could not find a suitable deal and opted to keep Karlsson for the remainder of the season.

March 1 - Melnyk pens open letter to fans

Melnyk pens an almost 600-word letter to season ticket holders, in which he reaffirms his commitment to Ottawa – while also overtly signalling the start of a rebuilding process for the Senators.

"Enduring a tough year has given us a chance for a clear-eyed evaluation," Melnyk wrote. "This is an ongoing process but I can tell you one thing: we are not looking to just tweak our lineup nor mortgage our future for stop-gap solutions. The kind of change required to reclaim our standing needs a change in approach, requires difficult decisions and a commitment to a plan."

March 19 - #MelnykOut billboards appear

A group of disenchanting Sens fans raised \$10,000 to place four billboards up around the city with the simple message: #MelnykOut. The group wanted to draw attention to their opinion that the organization – and more specifically Melnyk – had lost touch with the pulse of its fan base.

April 2 - Karlsson plays his last home game and picks up the puck as a souvenir

As the 2017-18 Ottawa Senators home finale came to an end with an overtime loss to Winnipeg, Karlsson fished out the puck from his own net and put it in his pants pocket. Many interpreted this move as the captain picking up a souvenir – knowing this would likely be his last game in a Senators jersey at Canadian Tire Centre.

"I was down there and I saw it was in the net so I just picked it up and decided to keep it," Karlsson told reporters after the game, admitting he heard the chatter about this potentially being his last home game. "I'm a social guy. I read a lot of things and I'm not reading too much into it, but obviously the word is out there [from the media]."

April 10 – Melnyk, Dorion hold town hall meetings

In attempt to calm the masses, Melnyk and Dorion held three town-hall style meetings with Ottawa Senators season ticket holders. Fans were given an opportunity to ask the management team any questions in a no-



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holds-barred format. Many were upset with Melnyk's explosive comments at the outdoor game and the Sens owner addressed those fans directly.

"What was reflected in the press wasn't what I said," stated Melnyk, who urged the fans to go back to YouTube and re-watch his comments from December. "But if it makes everybody feel better, I do apologize for the mischaracterization."

Dorion, meanwhile, pleased those in attendance with a vow to make an aggressive and market-value, eight-year contract offer to Karlsson once he was officially allowed to negotiate with his superstar defenceman on July 1.

"At the end of the day, it will be his choice. If we offer him a fair contract and he doesn't want to sign here, then we have to look at other options," Dorion told the room. "The ball will be in his court."

TSN Rewind: Dorion insists he won't trade Karlsson at draft, will offer him eight-year deal

During a 90-minute town hall meeting with season ticket holders, Senators owner Eugene Melnyk and GM Pierre Dorion fielded over 15 questions, with no topic off limits. The main topic was the status of Erik Karlsson, and Dorion said the team will not trade him at the draft and will offer him an eight-year contract extension. Brent Wallace has more.

April 12 - Dorion puts Guy Boucher's future into doubt

Meeting with reporters in his season-ending press conference, Dorion refuses to confirm that head coach Guy Boucher will return for the following season. The general manager said there would be an evaluation process that took several weeks, but that he was disappointed in Boucher's unwillingness to play younger players and his penchant for giving the players days off.

"We're going to practice more," Dorion said of the approach moving forward. "Rest is a weapon – if I hear that one more time, I'll go crazy."

In early May, Dorion announced that Boucher and his entire coaching staff would return for the 2018-19 campaign.

May 27th – Alfredsson creates a stir with his off-the-record comment

Daniel Alfredsson was on hand at an event to launch the re-election campaign of Ottawa mayor Jim Watson. The former Sens captain and franchise icon reportedly told Ottawa blogger Sue Sherring that he was hopeful for a change in ownership in Ottawa.

"We've talked a lot, we've talked about the future of the Senators and of its ownership and we agree," Alfredsson said. "We hope we get a new owner."

Alfredsson later said he believed those comments were made off-the-record, but Sherring posted them to her blog anyway – creating a mini-firestorm in this market.

June 1 - Assistant general manager Randy Lee charged with harassing shuttle bus driver

While at the NHL draft combine in Buffalo, assistant general manager Randy Lee is accused of inappropriately touching and making lewd comments towards a hotel shuttle bus driver. Lee had his passport confiscated and was forced to spend a night in jail.

Upon returning to Ottawa, Lee resumed his regular duties with the Senators for the next two weeks. However, on June 15, the club decided to suspend him pending the outcome of his court proceedings in Buffalo.

June 12 - Cyberbullying story between Karlssons and Hoffmans comes to light

The Ottawa Citizen breaks a salacious story, which sheds light onto the Senators' dysfunction behind closed doors.

According to the report, on May 4, Melinda Karlsson – Erik's wife – filed for an order of protection against Monika Caryk – the fiancée of Mike

Hoffman. This was done after the Karlssons claimed to be the target of a vile internet campaign, allegedly orchestrated by Caryk.

According to court documents, there were over 1,000 examples of defamatory and negative posts dating back several months.

"Monika Caryk has uttered numerous statements wishing my unborn child dead," Melinda Karlsson's sworn statement said. "She has also uttered that she wished I was dead and that someone should 'take out' my husband's legs to end his career."

June 19 - Senators trade Mike Hoffman

One week after the story broke about his fiancée allegedly orchestrating a cyberbullying campaign against the Karlssons, Mike Hoffman is traded to the San Jose Sharks in exchange for Mikkel Boedker. A few hours later, the Sharks flipped Hoffman to the Florida Panthers for draft picks. Pierre Dorion made it clear that the organization made this move as a direct result of the fallout from the alleged cyberbullying scandal.

"Today's trade showcases our determination to strengthen the future of the team by improving chemistry, leadership and character in the locker room and on the ice," Dorion said in a statement.

Aug. 21 - Randy Lee resigns his position as assistant general manager

After being placed on administrative leave with his harassment charges pending, Lee announced his resignation from the organization with a statement issued by the club on his behalf.

"I have to think about my obligations to the hockey team. They need an assistant GM who can focus completely on the coming season. Until this matter is behind me, however, I'm not in a position to do that," Lee wrote. "For this reason – in consultation with the Ottawa Senators and my family – I have chosen to resign as assistant GM of the Ottawa Senators and GM of the Belleville Senators."

Sept. 10 - Club releases video featuring Melnyk and Mark Borowiecki

The Senators organization had been tight-lipped for several months, but finally broke their silence by issuing a late-night video featuring Melnyk in an extended conversation with defenceman Mark Borowiecki.

The video was immediately panned by critics for being awkward on multiple fronts, as it fell short of its intended mark. Less than 40 seconds into the video, Melnyk admits that "right now, we're kind of in the dumpster."

Sept. 13 - Senators trade Karlsson to the San Jose Sharks

After more than nine months of wild speculation and drama, the Senators finally decide to trade Karlsson to the San Jose Sharks on the first day of training camp. The club received defenceman Dylan DeMelo, forward Chris Tierney, prospect Josh Norris, a future first-round pick and two other prospects from San Jose.

Despite the fact he likely knew this trade was coming for months, Karlsson still appeared visibly shaken when addressing the media on the podium.

"I wish we were standing here in different circumstances. It's an emotional day and a sad day," Karlsson said. "I don't think that I've ever in my wildest imagination thought that I would ever leave this place. But unfortunately, we're here under these circumstances and that's not something I'm going to go into detail about."

TSN Rewind: Dorion - Karlsson being dealt was vital to continue rebuild

Ottawa Senators GM Pierre Dorion faces the media to break down Erik Karlsson being traded to the San Jose Sharks. He explains how dealing Karlsson was the main building block in order to have a successful rebuild in Ottawa.

Sept. 25 - Senators place Zack Smith on waivers

Though he doesn't have the stature of Karlsson, the decision to place Zack Smith on waivers seemed to have a significant impact inside the



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Senators dressing room. Players were upset with the way a loyal, veteran teammate was unceremoniously placed on waivers.

"I'll be honest, it's a kick in the balls for us," Matt Duchene said at the time.

Nov. 5 - Uber video surfaces featuring Senators players mocking coaching staff

Postmedia dealt the Senators another blow by releasing a video showing several members of the Ottawa Senators making disparaging remarks about assistant coach Martin Raymond. The video was shot during the club's road trip to Arizona at the end of October and the players were completely unaware their candid and disparaging comments were being recorded.

The players involved – Matt Duchene, Chris Wideman, Colin White, Thomas Chabot, Dylan DeMelo, Chris Tierney and Alex Formenton – issued a statement the night the story broke.

"We want to apologize publicly to Marty Raymond, our teammates and coaches for our comments in Phoenix, Arizona on October 29. Our private conversation was recorded without our knowledge or consent. We're passionate about our team and focusing on growing together. We are grateful for the support of our fans and organization. This is an important learning experience and we will do better."

What does Melnyk lawsuit mean for Sens?

Sens owner Eugene Melnyk is suing his business partner in a development deal that was meant to bring a new NHL arena to Ottawa. So what does that mean for Sens fans? Bruce Garrioch has more.

Nov. 23 – Melnyk launches lawsuit against Lebreton Flats business partner

With the development of Lebreton Flats bid seemingly hanging by a thread, Melnyk seemed to put an end to the idea of the Senators playing in a downtown arena anytime soon by launching a \$700-million lawsuit against John Ruddy, his business partner on the project.

Despite the uncertainty over the arena situation – and over the future for stars like Duchene and Stone – heading into 2019, the collective feeling around Ottawa is there is absolutely no way that the upcoming year can be any worse than the 2018 that this market just experienced.

TSN.CA LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121187 Websites

USA TODAY / Devils' winless Cory Schneider can't catch a break, is pulled after scoring on himself

Mike Brehm, USA TODAY

The New Jersey Devils want Cory Schneider to win.

Probably everyone in the NHL other than that night's opponent wants Schneider to win.

But Schneider, who was an All-Star in 2015-16, just can't seem to catch a break or get a regular-season win. He last won on Dec. 27, 2017, and is on a 0-15-3 slide.

Friday night, the one-time starter turned \$6 million backup tried to end that run of bad luck with his first home start of the season as he faced the Vegas Golden Knights.

But the hard luck struck again and he was out of the game before the midway point of the first period after giving up three goals on seven shots.

The kicker was the third goal, in which he essentially scored on himself. Vegas forward William Carrier lofted a shot that Schneider misplayed, and the goalie knocked the puck between his legs with his glove.

Keith Kinkaid, who took over the starter's role late last season and has a \$1.25 million salary, came in soon after. The Devils, trailing 3-0, rallied for a 5-4 overtime win.

"It wasn't so much about Cory at that point," coach John Hynes told reporters. "It was early in the game, there was zero energy in the building, you could see the players and have a feel that you just can't keep him in."

More: Lightning goalie makes save of year candidate in return from injury

Schneider did get a playoff win last season and played well in the postseason, but he didn't appear until Oct. 30 this season as he recovered from offseason hip surgery.

Schneider, who has career goals-against average of 2.39, is 0-5-1 this season with a 4.66 goals-against average and .852 save percentage.

He now has six opportunities left to avoid going a full year without a win.

USA TODAY LOADED: 12.15.2018

1121188 Websites

USA TODAY / Lightning's Andrei Vasilevskiy makes save of year candidate in return from 14-game absence

Mike Brehm, USA TODAY

Tampa Bay Lightning goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy didn't need long to get back in the groove in his comeback from an injury.

Returning from a 14-game absence, he pulled off a save of the year candidate in Thursday night's 4-1 victory against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Maple Leafs forward Patrick Marleau was the victim of his third-period thievery. First, Vasilevskiy stretched to get his arm on Marleau's backhand. When the puck popped up, landed and started rolling through the crease, he tried to sweep it out of harm's way with his left leg, but the post blocked that effort.

Vasilevskiy then changed gears, reached back with his right leg and somehow pulled the puck back with his skate before it crossed the goal line.

Teammate Victor Hedman then was able to clear it out of the zone.

Any miscalculation would have resulted in a goal. And this was done by a man who broke his left foot four weeks ago.

Vasilevskiy finished with 48 saves, including 23 in the second period, to beat the Maple Leafs and expand the Lightning's lead on their closest Atlantic Division rival.

"I tried to survive the first period, and the second, too," Vasilevskiy told reporters. "They're a good team, played very well and that was a pretty good test for us."

Vasilevskiy improved his record to 10-3-1 with a 2.20 goals-against average and a .933 save percentage.



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"It doesn't surprise me that he comes back and he's in that kind of form," Lightning forward Ryan Callahan told reporters. "He put in a lot of work to get back as quick as he could and to make sure he was ready. It showed tonight."

Vasilevskiy is just showing off now. [pic.twitter.com/XNKWeCGDUd](https://pic.twitter.com/XNKWeCGDUd)

— NHL GIFs (@NHLGIFs) February 11, 2018

Vasilevskiy is no stranger to great saves. In February, he made a no-look, behind-the-back glove save against the Los Angeles Kings' Anze Kopitar. And he made another behind-the-back save two weeks later to seal a shootout win against the Montreal Canadiens.

USA TODAY LOADED: 12.15.2018