



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Crosby, Murray too much for Canes in Pens' 3-0 win

By Chip Alexander

There were any number of plays Saturday that summed up the Carolina Hurricanes' scoring frustrations and offensive consternation this season.

In a 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins, the Canes had:

Warren Foegele twice stopped on first-period breakaways by Pens goalie Matt Murray, who had 39 saves in his second shutout of the season.

Victor Rask looking at an open net on a power play only to have the puck hop over his stick.

Jordan Martinook with an open shot in the slot, only to miss the net wide right.

Then there was Dougie Hamilton. The Canes defenseman winged a first-period shot from the point. The referee signaled a goal. The goal horn came on. Canes fans cheered.

Not for long. The puck smacked the crossbar, then hit the post but never crossed the goal line. No goal.

The Pens (18-12-6), in contrast, were taking care of business. And especially center Sidney Crosby, who is very good at his hockey business.

Crosby had three assists, twice setting up Jake Guentzel for goals after first spotting Kris Letting open for a quick shot and score.

"They're a good team and they're going to get their chances," Martinook said. "They've got three lines that can score and arguably the best player in the world who makes plays kind of when you don't think he's going to make them.

"It's a game of inches. We're an inch away on a couple of them and then we're chasing the game a little bit."

The Canes' slide continued. Carolina (14-15-5) has lost five of the last six, with a game against Boston on Sunday.

It will be "Whalers Night" at PNC Arena as the Canes put on Hartford Whalers throwback jerseys. Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour will care more about putting together 60 solid minutes, or more if need be, and getting a win in the last game of a five-game homestand before the Christmas break.

The Canes could be without Jordan Staal. The center, who recently missed five games recovering from a concussion, left after the second period with an upper-body injury.

Brind'Amour said Staal "got another hit to the head" in the first period but did not know the extent of the injury. Staal delivered a hit to Pens defenseman Brian Dumoulin early in

the game, and later in the period had a collision with Canes forward Andrei Svechnikov and Guentzel in front of the Pens net.

After the game, the Canes recalled center Clark Bishop and winger Janne Kuokkanen from the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL.

On the Letang goal, Crosby carried the puck behind the Canes net before putting it on Letang's stick for a 1-0 lead.

In the second period, more of the same. Crosby with the heavy lifting behind the net and perfect setup pass, Guentzel with the finish.

"They get the second one and you can kind of see our group not deflate, but everybody starts gripping it a little tighter," Martinook said. "Our margin is so small right now that you're down by two and right now you feel like you're down by four."

Crosby and Guentzel clicked again with 51 seconds left in the second, Crosby with a lead pass off the right wing. Guentzel had his 14th and 15th goals of the season, the Pens had a 3-0 lead and the Canes had no answers.

Canes goalie Curtis McElhinney, in his first start since Dec. 5, made some nice stops against Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, finishing with 29 saves. But the Pens were too precise when Crosby had the puck on his stick, breaking down the Canes in the offensive zone and taking advantage of defensive mistakes and misplays.

"Our goalies have been fine. That's not the issue," Brind'Amour said. "if you don't score everything gets magnified."

A power-play goal would have helped Carolina. The Canes had three power plays in the first two periods. None of the first three resulted in a shot on net and the Pens easily killed off a fourth penalty in the third period.

After the 4-1 loss to the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday, Canes captain Justin Williams questioned the team's mental toughness. There was a closed-door meeting and some serious talk.

Brind'Amour switched up the lines. Micheal Ferland went back on Sebastian Aho's line with Teuvo Teravainen, and Andrei Svechnikov, with four goals in his past four games, played on Staal's line with Martinook.

"Great start for us," Brind'Amour said. "We were engaged. Unfortunately it was just like the other night. We deserved a little better in the first just based on the chances, but it didn't happen."



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"To me, the power play was terrible. That's our best players and that's the time they need to make plays. And zero."

Murray, who has had his injury issues, stymied the Canes again, improving his career record against Carolina to 7-2-0. He's 3-0 overall since returning from his lower-body injury.

'Whalers Night' to produce mixed emotions at Canes game

By Chip Alexander

It has been more than 21 years since the Hartford Whalers played their last NHL game and said their goodbyes.

Skip Cunningham remembers the day well, and not fondly.

"I was in denial," he said.

So many were. That said, Sunday will be an emotional day as the Carolina Hurricanes don the green Whalers sweaters for their game against the Boston Bruins, once their most hated rival. It will be "Whalers Night" and the trappings of the game at PNC Arena will have a throwback, retro feel as the Canes honor the franchise's past and its many years in Hartford, Conn.

Team owner Tom Dundon calls it a fun idea. The crowd should be large and lively and a lot of Whalers-related merchandise should be sold.

Cunningham, born in Boston and raised off Brookline Avenue not far from Fenway Park, is an equipment manager with the Hurricanes and a tireless worker, and his tenure with the franchise the longest.

He started his work in 1972 soon after graduation from Northeastern University, when the team was the New England Whalers, their league the World Hockey Association and their home rink the Boston Garden -- when the mighty Bruins weren't scheduled there, or the Celtics.

Cunningham was with the team when the National Hockey League granted the Whalers admittance in 1979 during the merger with the WHA. He once laid out the jerseys, with what became an iconic emblem and logo, for the likes of Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull, Dave Keon and a young Ron Francis.

On April 13, 1997, Cunningham was one of those who collected the Whalers jerseys for a final time after the game against Tampa Bay at the Hartford Civic Center. He washed them, boxed them up.

An era was coming to an end. They all knew it. Owner Peter Karmanos was moving the team, somewhere.

"You're in disbelief that 'This is our last game,'" Cunningham said.

Tears were plentiful in the arena that day. And anger. And resentment.

John Forslund was there. The Canes' television play-by-play man, he handled the last telecast, describing the action as an early goal by defenseman Glen Wesley and late one from Kevin Dineen, the team captain, gave the Whalers a 2-1 win.

Some had hoped the Whalers, coached by Paul Maurice, could extend their season by reaching the playoffs. But after

"He's an intelligent goaltender who reads the plays extremely well," Pens coach Mike Sullivan said.

Murray did that Saturday. He got some help from the iron a few times -- on Hamilton's shot, again in the third against Brock McGinn -- but earned the shutout.

a run of injuries and some losses in the final week of the season, they fell two points short of qualifying. That, too, stung.

"It was an extremely emotional time," Forslund said. "It was in many ways bitter. I understood all the ramifications, the political ramifications, the building leverage, the decision that was being made and the hurdles that the market had in terms of the business footprint and all that stuff. They had roadblocks they couldn't get through that led to the decision.

"But once the decision's made, that's when the heat of the emotion takes over."

Forslund joined the team in 1991. In 1994, a group headed by Karmanos, the Detroit software executive, bought the franchise, which many Whalers fans believed -- and many still believe -- was a death knell for the team remaining in Connecticut.

Karmanos did move the team. Unable to get a commitment for a new arena from Conn. governor John Rowland, he decided to relocate the franchise after the 1996-97 season.

"Mr. Karmanos came by one day and said we're moving, this is over, but we didn't even have a place to go," Cunningham said. "It's like we were on an island."

A prospective ownership group in North Carolina had made a bid for an NHL expansion franchise, with plans to share a new arena to be built near N.C. State's Carter-Finley Stadium. That fell short and the bid withdrawn, again with political haggling over the arena a stumbling block, but Karmanos liked all that he had heard about Raleigh, about the Triangle, about the largest TV market in the country without a major-league team.

While an official announcement about the relocation to Raleigh was not made until May 1997, everyone at that Whalers-Lightning game in April had the sad acceptance that history was being made. Homemade signs dotted the stands -- one said "You'll Always Be Our Team. We'll Follow U Wherever U Go."

Forslund, who lived in Springfield, Mass., said driving to the game that day was surreal, that it was overcast and that a black cloud appeared to be hovering over the Hartford Civic Center when he arrived.

"I remember going on the air that day and saying, 'Good afternoon everyone, it's the meaningless game with tremendous meaning,'" Forslund said. "I was proud how we did it. I was proud of the presentation we gave it, with some tough circumstances.

"It was pretty good game. At the end we had no idea how it would go with the fans. And the fans were celebrating. Celebrating the memories. Many of them were crying. But it



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was also joyous and the standing ovation went on for a long time.”

Dineen spoke to the fans. The players then left the ice for the locker room but returned after pulling off those Whalers jerseys one last time.

“I never thought I’d see them again in a game,” Forslund said. “I thought they’d been put away for good. Over time they’ve become a darling of collectors and a romanticism attached to it. I’m not 100 percent sure all of that existed then although we had passionate fans in Hartford.

“The colors are cool. They’re different. It’s a marketing thing here. I get it. I understand why we’re doing it but I have mixed emotions about it because I went through that -- the attempt to save it, working there from 1991 to 1997, then to see it change.”

Some Canes fans will have the same conflicted emotions: it’s a Carolina Hurricanes regular-season game and they should wear Canes sweaters. At the same time, it’s something different and a way of embracing the past with the retro uniforms.

Karmanos, while the Canes’ majority owner, forbade mentioning the Whalers or the past after the move. Team records were designated “since relocation” although that stance softened after Francis returned, first as a player and then a team executive, having set so many of the franchise marks.

Not everyone mourned the end of the Whalers. Canes coach Rod Brind’Amour, asked Friday about his Whalers memories as a player, said, “Beating them most of the time.”

And the Hartford Civic Center? “I didn’t really enjoy that place,” Brind’Amour said. “Kind of a dungeon, in the locker room.”

Nine years after the move from Hartford, Brind’Amour and the Carolina Hurricanes were lifting the Stanley Cup as champions.

Cunningham, on his day with the Cup, took it back to Boston. He carried it up to the Green Monster at Fenway Park. He

carried it to the three arenas that the Whalers once played in -- the Boston Garden, Springfield Civic Center, finally the Hartford Civic Center. He cherished the moment.

And now what once was unthinkable, a team wearing Hartford Whalers jerseys, the Hurricanes, his team, will take

the ice again Sunday in an NHL game.

Carolina Hurricanes equipment manager Skip Cunningham has been with the franchise since 1972.

Chip Alexander

“It should have been done a long time ago but there was so much animosity,” Cunningham said. “I think the players are excited about it. And the thing you can’t deny is how long the team was in the NHL. And all the Hall of Famers and all the future NHL coaches that were in the locker room.”

And Bob Gorman. Another of the Canes’ equipment managers, Gorman was with the Whalers, as well.

After more than two decades, the Canes’ ties to the community are deep. Francis, the Canes’ former executive vice president and general manager, remains an investor in the team. Chuck Kaiton, the unmistakable radio voice of the team from 1979 until this year, remains in Raleigh.

Brind’Amour, in his first year as head coach, has no problem with the team wearing the Whalers uniforms Sunday and again March 5 in the game in Boston, which should be another emotional setting.

“It’s a pretty neat idea and now that I see them, they’re pretty cool colors,” he said. “I certainly wouldn’t want to see it every day but it’s a neat thing, to bring back tradition. It’s not Hurricane tradition but it’s where this organization started.

“I really don’t have a lot of memories of the Whalers. I don’t remember the song, to be honest with you.”

The Whalers’ goal song was “Brass Bonanza.” It, too, will be played Sunday when the home team scores.

“If we hear it then, it’d be great,” Brind’Amour said.

THE ATHLETIC

More than 21 years after leaving, Hurricanes to pay homage to their Hartford roots

By Sara Civian

Some of the names escape him, but John Forslund remembers every single face. He could still tell you what he ate before the game, everything he saw, and all the people he talked to.

The sky opened up into a beautiful day on April 13, 1997, but first a literal dark cloud sat on top of the figurative one hanging over the Hartford Civic Center. The backdrop for the last game in Hartford Whalers history was fitting, though words like “angry” and “sad” don’t quite capture it. Forslund picks “surreal.”

He couldn’t have known the broadcast he was about to deliver would go down in hockey legend, but all of its other

implications weighed on him. He thought about everything he couldn’t screw up on his last 28-mile drive down Route 91, with that dark cloud on the horizon.

“How do you do it? How do you make it sound palatable? How do you not lose it? Stay professional, make sense, make it poignant. How do you carry the emotions of people at home who probably want to throw something at the television set?”

Truth be told, he had no idea. He didn’t even know what he was going to say until it came out exactly as he hoped it would.

“Good afternoon everyone, I’m John Forslund. As always, thanks for joining us.



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... Well, it's the meaningless game with tremendous meaning."

The Whalers had been eliminated from playoff contention in the final week of the season. The Lightning were done, too. It would've been a textbook throwaway hockey game, and something about that — this was it, this was going to be the last Whalers game no matter what anyone did — allowed for the Band Aid-ripping sendoff that occurred.

"Watching the people crying before and after the game was gut-wrenching," Forslund recalls 21 years later. "It's up there with my highlight moments broadcasting, though, because it came out really well and I was proud of what I said."

Forslund expected a bit of rightful anger in the atmosphere. Some of that was there, for sure, but it was more like a playoff game if a playoff game was more like a funeral.

"They went crazy when we scored," he said. "Then they went crazy when we took the lead."

The Whalers won in a 2-1 decision, with a storybook game-winner from captain Kevin Dineen.

"Then when it was all over we had nothing staged. No one would leave. We gave Kevin the microphone and said 'You have to talk to these people.'"

"It's been my pleasure to be associated with you, the fans for your support and the enthusiasm you've shown in this building," Dineen spoke, unscripted. "There's none other. On behalf of all the players who have loved Hartford and all the guys sitting on this bench, we just wanted to say thank you from all of us. God bless, and thank you very much."

He and his team, visibly emotional, headed to the locker room. Twenty-five minutes later, the thousands in the crowd were still on their feet.

So the Whalers came back out. They flipped pucks to the crowd, signed memorabilia, even reached out and held some hands.

"This is a human moment," Forslund's voice returned to the broadcast. "A moment you don't talk about very much because you talk about salaries. You talk about owners, you talk about relocating teams. You talk about politicians not getting the job done. You talk about players who maybe don't care about the city or the town they play in. But these guys do."

And clearly, so did he.

"Well, when you say hello, you have to say goodbye. It's very hard to say goodbye this afternoon and guess what — I'm not about to say so. We'll leave you with this thought: Thank you. Thank you for always being a Whaler fan."

There are a thousand ways to look at the history of this franchise, but through one lens Forslund never really had to say that goodbye. He's one of six current Hurricanes employees (along with Skip Cunningham, Bob Gorman, Sheldon Ferguson, Tony MacDonald and Bert Marshall) who moved from Hartford to Raleigh with the team.

Though the writing had been on the wall for the Whalers, official word of the move came as a surprise for many players and employees. After a 4-0 loss to the Avalanche on

March 25, 1997, Forslund turned the TV on, got into bed and flipped on the 11 o'clock news to something that would change his life.

"The next day (at practice) was weird," he admitted. "We had all the players out in the front office, and I remember Peter Karmanos explaining to the players, coaches, everybody within the hockey team that this had to happen, that we tried. But he said 'Remember guys, I'm not putting you or your families in a bad spot. You're gonna love where we're going.'"

Forslund took a breather in the middle of this bleak tale. Then he smiled a bit, because even if the team had no idea where it was headed at the time ...

"He was actually right about that."

It took a while, of course. The move to North Carolina was announced in May — they had four months to move a whole team to a new state. That, and playing in Greensboro for two years? It was a circus.

But then Karmanos was actually right. Despite how Forslund felt during that last broadcast, despite all he and many others did to "Save the Whale," despite that circus of a start, they loved where they went.

"I joined (the Whalers) in 1991 when everything was kind of going sideways," Forslund said. "We tried, in earnest, to save it. All of that stuff was real. (Karmanos) did not come in there like many people feel he did. They tried. They tried to market, they tried to build it back up, and I think (higher ups) enjoyed living there — it was growing on them. But no concessions, no parking, no suites. The governor was not cooperating and that's why the decision was made to come here. In hindsight, it's been fantastic, but getting here was not easy."

Whalers Night

You could write a novel on why it took 21 years to pay homage to one of the most iconic logos in NHL history, as the Hurricane will do Sunday. That rocky road to Raleigh, all those genuinely heartbreaking tears on that final broadcast and a former owner likely still guilty about the whole thing are a good place to start.

The club's first correspondence with the league about the idea was last December, according to Hurricanes VP of Marketing Mike Forman, and the first formal call was last February.

From there, the Hurricanes had a jersey mock-up done two months later and the physical prototype was in by July. Once that was approved, it was time to pick a date. Their hearts were set on debuting the jersey against old Hartford rival Boston, but the league initially said, based on jersey delivery timelines both for the on-ice jerseys and the retail jerseys, that they would have to debut them no earlier than mid-January, 2019. The Hurricanes pushed a little on the Dec. 23 date and it eventually got approval from Adidas and the league.

"There were plenty of discussions internally — and still are — that this night certainly won't be for everyone," Forman said, touching on the Whale in the room. "We have some of



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our biggest Canes fans who absolutely love it, while others don't necessarily like that we are honoring a team from another city when we've been rooted in North Carolina for 21 years. There are diehard Whalers fans who love that we are bringing back a little nostalgia and paying homage to the brand while others feel like we are reopening wounds that never completely healed. The truth to all of those opinions is that no one is right or wrong and we can never tell anyone how they should or shouldn't feel. We are trying to appeal to the masses and the overall feedback we've received, along with supporting data on ticket sales (we are anticipating a near sell-out) and how the merchandise continues to fly off the shelves are all strong indicators that this is a night that appeals to more people than not."

Echoing Forman's stance, Forslund doesn't blame any of the folks who aren't exactly looking forward to the night.

"For me, this is weird," he said. "I think it's great for fans, I think it's great for people up there who still celebrate it. There are people out there who are negative about it, and I understand that, too. The uniforms are beautiful, the game is going to look great, we've got graphics that are striking. It's going to be fabulous, but for me it's weird. I can take emotion out of it though because I see it as more of a marketing thing."

You best believe the marketing, PR and promo teams have put in the work to make this a really fun night, even if it'll never seem like that to some. Look out for little Easter eggs like different banners hanging on the priority lounge walls, what the ice crew is wearing and what the equipment staff is wearing on the bench.

Maybe Cunningham will wear the Whalers jersey he was just gifted:

There will be Whalers-themed social media, poster giveaways, even an appearance from Pucky the Whale.

With former Whalers GM and current Storm Surge critic Brian Burke nowhere to be found, of course the epic Whalers goal song "Brass Bonanza" will play when (cue the "if" jokes) the Hurricanes score.

"'Brass Bonanza' made an appearance a few times in the second half of last season, aligning with when we started selling Whalers apparel at The Eye," Forman said. "We somewhat used it as a victory song last year, only really played when we were up 2+ goals late in the game at the right whistle stop or TV timeout. This year, it will become our

goal song on Whalers Night, so we hope to hear it plenty of times on Sunday. Overall, the music on Whalers Night will take more of an '80s feel to provide a little more of the retro feel. Don't worry, "Raise Up" will be back on 12/31 as selected by our fans."

Burke maintains he got rid of "Brass Bonanza" because players complained it was "embarrassing." It doesn't seem that way at all to Whaler alum Ray Ferraro...

Whalers great Mike Rogers will be in attendance, and a number of other former players gave the Canes "really positive feedback" and expressed a desire to attend if it weren't for the holiday season. Cup champ Glen Wesley isn't as warm about it.

None of the thousands of opinions on this night are wrong at all — and they generally come from the passion of loving a team and the realized fear that it can be ripped away from a city. Think what you want, just let the good that will come out of this night be the silver lining of that dark cloud.

"We wanted to find the right organization back in Hartford that we could make a donation to that could make an impact," Forman explained. "After some research by Jon Chase and Shane Willis, the best fit seemed to be the Learn to Play program at the Champions Skating Center in Hartford, owned by former Whaler Bob Crawford. The Champions Skating Center's Learn to Play hockey day, which will be free to all participants, has been delayed due to the lack of equipment and resources. Money raised for the program will be utilized to purchase equipment, such as beginner sticks and helmets. A portion of the proceeds from our in-game Carolina Hurricanes Foundation auction that night, which includes game-worn Whalers jerseys as well as mystery Whalers/Hurricanes co-branded ornaments signed by current Hurricanes players, will go towards the program."

Forslund knows it's all in good fun, and he appreciates that the Hurricanes are giving back to Hartford. But forgive him for opting out of the nostalgia from the only night he remembers as distinctly as the Hurricanes' Cup win for all the wrong reasons.

"I just did a really nice interview with Skip (Cunningham), and that was kinda neat," he said. "That'll be about as much memory lane as I'm gonna do. I get why we're doing it and I understand all of that, but there's a game. And the game is the game. That's where I'm at."



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Crosby, Murray stifle Hurricanes

Jordan Staal leaves the game after two periods after taking another hit to the head

Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Pittsburgh Penguins have Sidney Crosby. The Carolina Hurricanes — well, they do not.

Crosby had three primary assists, Jake Guentzel scored on two of them and Matt Murray had 39 saves to lead the Penguins to a 3-0 win Saturday in front of 16,264 at PNC Arena.

“You look at the team we just played, they got a couple chances and you saw where the pucks went,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “It was the top of the net, the spots you’ve got to put it in. That’s just something we’ve got to keep aspiring to do.”

Compounding Carolina’s problems was an offensive attack that seemed as out of sync as it has all season. The power play, in 7:36 with an extra attacker, finished with two shots on goal.

“For me, tonight was just summed up: Our power play was terrible,” Brind’Amour said. “And that’s our best players. That’s the time they need to make plays. And zero. So that, to me, was where the game, the momentum just shifted.”

That included indecision from top scorer Sebastian Aho, who consistently gave up shooting opportunities to instead pass on both the power play and at even strength.

“It does happen. When we’re not scoring, you’re looking for that better play,” Brind’Amour said. “That’s something we’ve talked about a lot trying not to do, but it’s tough when you’re not scoring. So they look to make a little cuter than it probably needed to be.”

The Penguins didn’t need to be cute — they just got down to work.

In the first, Crosby curled around the Carolina net, fended off Hurricanes defenseman Justin Faulk, and found Kris Letang at the left post to make it 1-0 at 8:41 of the first.

The Hurricanes appeared to tie the game late in the period, but defenseman Dougie Hamilton’s shot that was called a goal on the ice was negated because the puck hit the crossbar and did not go in.

“You look at our first period, we go out and we get, whatever, three, four Grade-A scoring chances. We don’t get it in,” winger Jordan Martinook said.

At the three-minute mark of the second, Crosby set up another goal from behind the net, finding Jake Guentzel for a one-timer past Carolina goalie Curtis McElhinney for a 2-0 lead. Guentzel then got another, again from Crosby, in the final minute of the period to extend the lead to three.

It could have been much worse without McElhinney (29 saves) who, starting his first game since Dec. 5, made several big stops that kept the score respectable.

Murray, meanwhile, earned his second shutout of the season and eighth of his career.

“He anticipates and squares up and makes difficult saves and makes a lot of instances look routine,” Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. “They’re really not, but he makes them look that way when he is at his best, and I thought he did that tonight.”

Notes: Jordan Staal, in his second game back from a concussion, did not play the third period due to an upper-body injury. Brind’Amour said Staal took a hit to the head in the first period. ... The Hurricanes recalled Clark Bishop and Janne Kuokkanen from Charlotte of the AHL following the game.



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Preview: Bruins vs. Hurricanes

Canes host Bruins on Whalers Night

by Michael Smith

On the eve of Christmas Eve, the Carolina Hurricanes close out a five-game homestand by hosting the Boston Bruins.

The Hurricanes, now in their 21st season in North Carolina, will don green Whalers sweaters in a game for the first time since the franchise relocation prior to the 1997-98 season, the centerpiece throwback element of Whalers Night.

Dear Santa

This holiday season, the Hurricanes would like Santa to bring some goals to PNC Arena. Despite firing 39 shots on goal, the Canes were shut out, 3-0, by Matt Murray and the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday.

The Canes' best scoring opportunities came in the first period. Warren Foegele had two breakaway attempts. Dougie Hamilton hit the post (a play that was originally signaled as a goal, but quickly overturned upon review). In the third period, Brock McGinn found the iron on a quick shot from the slot.

It was that kind of night, but there have been a few too many of those.

"I thought we were all over them in the first. I thought we could have had a few of them in the net," Brett Pesce said. "The bounces just aren't coming for us. We've just got to stick to the program, trust each other in this room and believe in each other."

"I know every guy in this room wants to score goals," Jordan Martinook said. "We're not trying to not score. It's just not going in for us right now."

The power play didn't do the Canes any favors on Saturday. Carolina finished 0-for-4 on the man advantage and didn't record a shot on goal on the power play until the third period.

"Our power play was terrible," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That's our best players. That's the time they need to

make plays, and zero. That, to me, is where the momentum shifted."

Injury Concerns

Jordan Staal was shut down for the third period on Saturday after suffering a hit to the head earlier in the game. It's an obviously concerning situation for the Canes' center, who was just activated on Thursday after missing the previous five games with a concussion.

The Canes recalled forwards Clark Bishop and Janne Kuokkanen from Charlotte following Saturday's game.

The Opposition

The Bruins are riding a three-game winning streak and have been victorious in six of their last eight games. Patrice Bergeron returned to the lineup after missing 16 games due to injury and collected two goals and two assists to help the Bruins top the Predators, 5-2, on Saturday afternoon in Boston.

AT THE RINK

It's Whalers Night in Raleigh. The Canes will honor their heritage with a number of throwback elements, including vintage Whalers sweaters, a commemorative poster giveaway, Pucky the Whale, special alumni appearances, Brass Bonanza and more. It should be a fun night at the rink, so be sure to check out all that's going on.

It's time for the third cash drawing of the 50/50 Raffle. A total of \$5,170 is being carried over from last night, as the jackpot continues to build. All patrons who purchased tickets on Saturday are still eligible to win this jackpot, too. Ticket prices and all raffle details can be found here.

WATCH, LISTEN & STREAM

Watch: FOX Sports Carolinas, FOX Sports app

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

Recap: Canes Blanked by Penguins

Canes can't solve Murray in 3-0 loss

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes were shut out, 3-0, by Matt Murray and the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Murray made 39 saves, Jake Guentzel scored twice and Sidney Crosby recorded a trio of assists, as the Pens

handed the Canes their fourth regulation defeat of their last six games (1-4-1).

Here are five takeaways from tonight's game.

One



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In a vacuum, this 3-0 defeat is a tough loss to a very good team with one of the best players in the world having a really good night on the ice.

But, this isn't a vacuum, and it's the latest entry in what has been a tough month of December for the Hurricanes (2-6-1).

"No one feels sorry for us, and we certainly don't feel sorry for ourselves," Brett Pesce said. "The bounces just aren't coming for us. We've just got to stick to the program, trust each other in this room and believe in each other."

Two

The Hurricanes' shortcomings on offense are obviously magnified when they fail to score, and tonight's first period was no different.

After a dud of a power play, Warren Foegele skated in alone. A Penguins defender got a stick in on Foegele's skates, but he remained upright and was denied by Murray. A short time later, Foegele was turned away again by Murray on a partial breakaway.

Between those two scoring opportunities, Dougie Hamilton rang a shot off the iron. It quite clearly had not gone in the net, but the official signaled for a goal. A short review, of course, reversed the call on the ice, but ending the play was a detriment to the Canes, who could have very easily scored in the chaos that followed the shot off the post.

Alas.

"Guys are trying to make plays," Pesce said. "I thought we were all over them in the first. I thought we could have had a few of them in the net."

"I know every guy in this room wants to score goals," Jordan Martinook said. "We're not trying not to score. It's just not going in for us right now."

"It was a great start for us, I felt. Engaged, for sure," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Unfortunately it was just like the other night where we probably deserved better in the first period."

Three

Speaking of the power play, it was ineffective for the Canes all night (0-for-4) and didn't register a shot on goal until the third period.

"Our power play was terrible," Brind'Amour said. "That's our best players. That's the time they need to make plays, and zero. That, to me, is where the momentum shifted."

Since his shot in the first period rang off the post, Hamilton had also had not recorded a shot on goal through two periods. He erased the two shot zeroes about halfway through the third period, when Murray was forced to make a shoulder save. Hamilton now has an NHL-best shot on goal streak of 199 games.

Four

Jordan Staal was ruled out of the third period with an upper-body injury. Brind'Amour said after the game that Staal had taken a hit to the head, which is obviously concerning for a player who just returned on Thursday after missing the previous five games with a concussion.

The Canes recalled Clark Bishop and Janne Kuokkanen following the game.

Five

On the Penguins' first goal, Bryan Rust was extremely close to being offside, so close that he was completely offside at first, only to stretch his left skate back to the blue line to tag up.

My guess is that a reverse camera angle would have confirmed that he was indeed offside - from this overhead angle and the game camera angle, it's impossible to see his skate - but it was a close play. From there, Sidney Crosby worked his magic and continued to do so all night, as he recorded the primary assist on each of the three Pittsburgh goals.

Up Next

The Hurricanes close out their five-game homestand by hosting the Boston Bruins on Whalers Night.



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Hurricanes set to honor Hartford heritage at Whalers Night

Will wear throwback green sweaters, recognize Connecticut roots at home game against Bruins

by Tom Gulitti

Carolina Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon had a simple reason for wanting to recognize his team's Connecticut roots by bringing back the Hartford Whalers jerseys for their game against the Boston Bruins at PNC Arena on Sunday (5 p.m. ET; SN1, FS-CR, NESN, NHL.TV).

"The motivation was primarily around [the fact that] it's interesting, it looks great and it's a way do something different," Dundon said. "It's a long season and we're in the entertainment business and this is going to make this night different and enjoyable and connect with fans whether it's in Hartford or anywhere else. So, I hope they enjoy it."

The Whalers Night game will be the first time the Hurricanes wear the Whalers' logo and the green jerseys with blue and white trim since the team moved from Hartford to North Carolina following the 1996-97 season (to Greensboro for two seasons and then to Raleigh in 1999). The Hurricanes will wear them again when they visit the Bruins at TD Garden on March 5.

To add to the retro mood for the game in Carolina, the Whalers' mascot, "Pucky the Whale," will sound the Hurricane Warning siren before the game, and the Hurricanes will use the Whalers' theme song, "Brass Bonanza," as their goal song.

Mike Rogers, a center who led the Whalers with 105 points in each of their first two NHL seasons after they were absorbed from the World Hockey Association in 1979, will drop the puck for a ceremonial face-off. The Carolina Hurricanes Foundation will auction select game-worn sweaters and other Whalers items Sunday, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting the Learn to Play Program at the Champions Skating Center in Hartford, which is owned by former Whalers player Bob Crawford.

"I'm was so excited when I got the phone call," said Rogers, who was captain of the Whalers in 1980-81. "It's nice that they're going to recognize the Whalers and what we did in the past. For them to do that, I look at it as an honor that I'll be there and it's going to be an exciting time."

Hockey Hall of Famers such as Gordie Howe, Ron Francis, Paul Coffey, Bobby Hull, Mark Howe, Dave Keon, Chris Pronger and Brendan Shanahan played in Hartford and are

part of Whalers history. But after the move to North Carolina, the Hurricanes wanted a fresh start and left behind the logo, the jerseys and almost everything that had to do with the Whalers.

When Dundon completed the purchase of a majority interest in the Hurricanes from Peter Karmanos on Jan. 11, he began looking for ways to increase fan interest and thought there was no longer a reason to ignore the Hartford history.

"It just felt like something that time has passed and it's probably not something to avoid, but maybe enjoy," Dundon said. "It happens to be an iconic jersey and logo and to me it's more about that."

The Whalers logo, a "W" with a whale's tail on top that connect to create an "H" in the negative space in the center, hasn't been worn in an NHL game for more than 21 years, but it's developed a kind of a cult following since then. Rogers, who retired in 1986 after playing seven NHL seasons with the Whalers, New York Rangers and Edmonton Oilers, often sees people wearing it during his travels and in his hometown of Calgary.

"Last week, I was doing some Christmas shopping and saw a guy wearing a Whalers jersey," Rogers said. "I think that logo was so unique that people kind of rallied around that more than the Hartford Whalers team. They just thought it was a cool logo, and when people remember the Hartford Whalers a lot of it has to do with that jersey."

Whether it's the draw of the logo and jersey, the novelty for the fans or it being their final game before a three-day break for Christmas, the Hurricanes are expecting their best crowd since they sold out their season opener against the New York Islanders on Oct. 4.

"Part of that is it's a great date, a good team coming in and the team has started to generate more excitement," Dundon said. "We've got some good players, and this is sort of the icing on top to have a good night there."

Having experienced the Whalers' departure from Hartford, Fox Sports Carolinas play-by-play announcer John Forslund has mixed emotions about seeing those jerseys again. A native of Springfield, Massachusetts, Forslund, 56, joined the Whalers as their public relations director in 1991 before becoming the play-by-play announcer on their telecasts on SportsChannel New England in 1995.



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He called the Whalers' final game at the Hartford Civic Center, a 2-1 win against the Tampa Bay Lightning on April 13, 1997, and remembers how gut-wrenching it was for the fans.

"It's nice that they're going roll back and try to recapture some of the heritage," Forslund said "I think for some of the people up north, it's celebrated and they're happy. And I think there are some people up north that are bitter about it still. Down here, I think it's a novelty. The uniforms are striking. It's cool. It's going to be a lot of fun."

Dundon noted that North Carolina had a shore-based whaling industry for more than 250 years before it closed down in 1916. So although Raleigh is about a two-hour drive from the coast, there is a North Carolina connection to the Whalers name.

"It probably makes more sense than the Los Angeles Lakers," said Dundon, referring to the fact that the NBA's Minneapolis Lakers, whose name reflected Minnesota's state nickname, "Land of 10,000 Lakes," opted not to change when the franchise moved to Los Angeles in 1960.

That doesn't mean Dundon is considering changing the name back to Whalers. But having another Whalers Night next season is a possibility.

"We probably haven't gotten that far about next year. But so far, based on how there's been interest, it's been talked about," Dundon said. "I think people have enjoyed, it, so if it goes the way it's going so far, then we would definitely strongly consider doing it again."

Murray makes 39 saves, Penguins shut out Hurricanes

Guentzel scores twice, Crosby has three assists to help Pittsburgh win third straight

by Kurt Dusterberg

Murray denies Teravainen's try

Matt Murray extends his right leg to make a great pad save on Teuvo Teravainen and keep the Hurricanes off the board

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Matt Murray made 39 saves for the Pittsburgh Penguins in a 3-0 win against the Carolina Hurricanes at PNC Arena on Saturday.

Jake Guentzel scored twice, and Sidney Crosby set up all three goals for the Penguins (18-12-6), who have won three in a row and are 8-2-1 in the past 11 games.

"We definitely wanted this one to end it on a good note (before the holiday break)," said Murray, who is 3-0-0 since missing nine games with a lower-body injury. "This break comes at a good time for us. We've been playing a lot of hockey lately so we'll take advantage of this little break here."

Curtis McElhinney, who missed six games with a lower-body injury, made 29 saves in his return for the Hurricanes (14-15-5). Carolina is 2-6-2 in the past 10 games.

"Our margin is so small right now that when you're down by two it feels like you're down by four," Hurricanes forward Jordan Martinook said. "I know every guy in this room wants to score goals. It's not going in for us right now."

Kris Letang's eighth goal of the season gave the Penguins a 1-0 lead at 8:41 of the first period. Crosby held off Justin Faulk as he circled the net before making a backhand feed to Letang.

Guentzel made it 2-0 at 3:00 of the second period when he pinched into the slot to convert Crosby's pass from behind the net.

"He sets you up so many times a game that you feel a little disappointed when you don't get to put it in," Guentzel said. "It's definitely nice when you can score from him."

Pittsburgh pushed the lead to 3-0 at 19:09. Crosby took a pass from Phil Kessel and fed Guentzel coming down the slot for his 15th of the season.

"The thing about [Guentzel] is he shoots the puck well but he's not afraid to go in and get those tough goals around the crease and take cross-checks," Crosby said. "What allows him to be consistent is finding different ways and using his shot when it's there."

The Hurricanes had four power plays but did not have a shot on the first three.

"It was terrible. That's our best players, and zero," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That to me was where the momentum just shifted. In the second period we had a couple power plays and it just sucked the life out of everybody."

They said it

"[Murray] is an intelligent goaltender. He anticipates and squares up and makes difficult saves and makes a lot of instances look routine. They're really not, but he makes them look that way when he's at his best. I thought he did that tonight." -- Penguins coach Mike Sullivan

"The bounces just aren't coming for us. We've got to just stick to the program, trust each other in this room and believe in each other. That's how we're going to get out of this." -- Hurricanes defenseman Brett Pesce

Need to know

Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal left with an upper-body injury after the second period. Brind'Amour said Staal, who recently missed five games with a concussion, suffered a hit to the head in the first period. ... Every Carolina skater had at least one shot on goal. ... The Hurricanes have scored fewer than two goals in 14 games. ... Murray has two shutouts this season and eight in his NHL career. ... Guentzel has seven points (three goals, four assists) in the past six games. ... Crosby has nine points (one goal, eight assists) in his past six games. ... Penguins forward Riley Sheahan played his 400th NHL game. ... The Penguins are



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10-3-1 against the Hurricanes under Sullivan. ... Murray improved to 7-2-0 against Carolina.

What's next

Penguins: Host the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; ESPN+, ATTSN-PT, FS-D, NHL.TV)

Hurricanes: Host the Boston Bruins on Sunday (5 p.m. ET; SN1, FS-CR, NESN, NHL.TV)

John Isner, tennis star, joins 'NHL Fantasy on Ice' podcast

Top 10 player in world is avid Hurricanes fan, fantasy hockey enthusiast

by Fantasy Hockey Staff

Isner, one of the best tennis players in the world, is also a Carolina Hurricanes fan and fantasy hockey player. He sits down with hosts Pete Jensen and Rob Reese in the latest episode of "NHL Fantasy on Ice," which is available on NHL.com and multiple iOS and Android podcast Apps.

Isner, the highest ranked male United States-born player (10th) by the Association of Tennis Professionals, was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, and has been following the Hurricanes since they moved to Raleigh in 1997. He discussed their 2006 Stanley Cup championship, the upcoming Hartford Whalers throwback night on Sunday and his NHL pregame watching routine. He praised Carolina's young core of players, led by forwards Sebastian Aho and rookie Andrei Svechnikov.

Listen: [NHL Fantasy on Ice podcast with John Isner](#)

The 33-year-old also discussed whether his talents, namely his renowned tennis serve, could translate to the NHL. The

6-foot-10 Isner drew comparisons to Boston Bruins defensemen Zdeno Chara for his size (6-9) and Montreal Canadiens defenseman Shea Weber for his slapshot.

Isner, who played in and won the longest tennis match in history at Wimbledon in 2010 (11 hours, 5 minutes over three days), said he has a level of appreciation for NHL players, especially when watching them play overtime games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

"That's what makes playoff hockey so cool," Isner said. "One-goal wins are very similar to tennis. It can take a very very long time. As we've seen in the playoffs, there have been some games that have been even four or five overtimes. These guys are playing 2 1/2 games in one night. That's why we love hockey. These guys lay it on the line every single night."

Earlier this month, Isner received a third jersey from the Hurricanes and showed off his Carolina pride on Twitter by posting pictures of his gameday setting with his television tuned into NHL Network.



Crosby, Murray lead Penguins to a 3-0 win at Carolina

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Pittsburgh Penguins are going one way in the Eastern Conference and the Carolina Hurricanes are going the other.

Sidney Crosby set up three goals and Matt Murray made 38 saves as the Penguins defeated the Hurricanes 3-0 Saturday night.

Jake Guentzel scored twice and Kris Letang added a goal for the Penguins, who won for the fifth time in six games. It was Murray's second shutout in 14 starts this season.

"The last little stretch here, we've been playing really, really well," Murray said. "The last 10 games or so, I would say our team has been trending in the right direction and getting better and better. We definitely wanted this one to end it on a good note."

The Penguins will get four days off before they have to get back on the ice for another game. After six games in nine days, it's a welcome break.

"We've played a lot of hockey in a short period of time," Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan said. "These guys they

continue to play hard night in and night out. I couldn't more happy for them. They deserve it."

Crosby, who has nine points in the past five games, has helped pick the Penguins up in the Eastern Conference standings. The Penguins had lost nine of 10 before catching fire near the end of November. They are 11-4-2 since Nov. 21, when they were in last place in the conference. With 42 points, the Penguins are in eighth-place in the Eastern Conference after Saturday's win.

Crosby wrestled with the value of taking some time off with wanting to keep the momentum going.

"A break is good in a way, you get some rest and you get to recharge," Crosby said. "When you're going like this, you want to keep going."

The Hurricanes lost for the fifth time in six games.

Crosby set up behind the Carolina net and fed Letang for Pittsburgh's first goal at 8:41 in the first period.



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The second goal, just 3 minutes into the second period, was nearly identical. This time Crosby found Guentzel in front of Carolina goalie Curtis McElhinney for the score.

Crosby set up Guentzel for his second goal with 50.3 seconds left in the second period. Guentzel was alone in front of McElhinney and netted his 15th goal of the season.

The Hurricanes, with 33 points, are two points out of last place in the conference.

Carolina winger Warren Foegele had two breakaway chances in the first period, but Murray stopped both.

The only goal that initially appeared to get by Murray came with 2 minutes left in the first. Dougie Hamilton's slap shot from the right point sailed past Murray's right shoulder and hit the inside of the crossbar. It was ruled a goal and then overturned.

The Hurricanes fell to 2-6-1 in December and have one win in five home games this month. The players had a long meeting after the 4-1 home loss to Detroit on Thursday night. They talked about resiliency and mental toughness.

Carolina was shutout for the third time this season and first time at home.

"Defensively, as a unit we're working pretty well," Crosby said. "It takes time to do that but it takes a lot of effort, too. I thought we did a good job, especially the last week or two, of just focusing on taking care of our own end."

NOTES: For the first time since moving to North Carolina in 1997, the Hurricanes will wear the old Hartford Whalers uniforms on Sunday in their home game with the Boston Bruins. Carolina owner Tom Dundon, who bought the team last January, has embraced the marketing opportunities with the popular green-and-blue Whalers logo. ... The attendance of 16,264 featured plenty of Penguins fans in black and gold. ... Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan improved to 10-3-1 against the Hurricanes during his four-year tenure with the Penguins.

UP NEXT

Penguins: Get a four-day break before hosting Detroit on Dec. 27.

Hurricanes: Host Boston on Sunday.



NHL teams we can expect to rise and fall in the new year

Andrew Berkshire

As we get set to wrap up the 2018 portion of the 2018-19 NHL season, the playoff picture seems to be clarifying little by little each night. However, with most teams having about 47 games left on the schedule, there's lots of time for roaring comebacks and huge falls from grace.

Calamity can strike most teams at any time, just look at the 2015-16 Montreal Canadiens, who at this point in that season were sporting the fifth-best record in the league at 20-12-3 with 43 points. Without Carey Price, they went 18-26-3 the rest of the season, the third-worst record in the league over that time.

Injuries can't really be predicted, but we can look at teams' performances, and make educated guesses based on past history of the league on which teams should be on the rise in the New Year, and which ones should tail off.

Let's get into it.

Likely to fall: Buffalo Sabres, Anaheim Ducks and Vancouver Canucks

The Sabres and Ducks are solidly in third place in their respective divisions, while the Canucks just outside the final wildcard spot in the West. All three teams are currently significantly higher in the standings than their play would warrant, especially the Ducks, who are getting just under 39 per cent of the high danger scoring chances at 5-vs-5.

Luckily for them, John Gibson has been heroic in goal, and they've managed to have a fortunate goal distribution, winning tight games while losing big when they let in a few goals, allowing them to win more than they've lost despite a -12 goal differential, the same as Arizona.

Posting a negative goal differential while your goaltender is giving you a .926 save percentage when the league average right now is a hair over .907 says a lot, and despite the Ducks getting better as they get healthier, I wouldn't be surprised at all if this team took a serious nosedive in the second half.

The Sabres have been a streaky team this season, and their hot start might be enough to keep them in the playoff picture, but this is still a team that gets woefully out-chanced at even strength.

The positive for Buffalo is that unlike Anaheim and Vancouver, they've kept up with their opponents in terms of shot attempts, or at least they almost have, getting about 49 per cent of them. That may not sound like a lot, but it's a big improvement for Buffalo compared to the last few years.

The duo of Jeff Skinner and Jack Eichel have been magic together, but there's a lot of noise in their production so far. Can the Sabres keep winning if they cool off? I'm doubtful.

Finally we have the Canucks, who are way beyond expectations this season with rookie sensation Elias Pettersson leading the way. There's lots of promise in the talent the Canucks are displaying, but they're still being



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outplayed heavily on most nights. I think we're still a year or two away from the Canucks being a real playoff team.

Likely to rise: Carolina Hurricanes, Minnesota Wild and Vegas Golden Knights

Look, Carolina, I know you're going to make me a liar, you do this every year. Why can't you win games? No matter what way we break it down, the Hurricanes are a dominant even strength team, perhaps even the NHL's best at 5-vs-5. Their shot volume is exceptional, the scoring chance volume is exceptional, the shots are coming from the right places, and the shots involve more than enough pre-shot movement.

On the defensive side, you're just as strong, limiting chances against, cutting down passes into the slot... Why is it that this keeps happening every year? Sure, there was the run of bad goaltending for years and years, but now at least Curtis McElhinney is giving you something to work with. Ride that hot streak into the sunset dear friends.

The rumours of the Hurricanes being interested in Vladimir Tarasenko are extremely interesting. A superstar scorer could propel them into finally getting the finish they deserve.

The Hurricanes always look like they're going to get better luck down the line, but I just don't trust them anymore.

Minnesota is a really interesting team, because ever since they hired Bruce Boudreau they've been pretty handily outshot on attempts and on goal, but they are remarkably good at controlling dangerous chances.

The higher volume the statistic goes, usually the worse the Wild look, and you expect the lower volume stats like high danger chances to regress towards the higher volume ones like shot attempts, but Boudreau has been doing this his entire career.

The Wild are the one team in the West that's currently out of the playoff picture that I expect to squeeze in.

Then we come to the Vegas Golden Knights, who by all measures are actually performing even better than last season, but they haven't been as fortunate, especially in goal.

Marc-Andre Fleury was an absolute force last season, and has just a league average save percentage this season, while facing easier shots against than most goalies do. Fleury's career has been wildly inconsistent from the start, so how he plays down the stretch is anyone's guess, but I expect the Golden Knights, who are one of the NHL's best shot and scoring chance controlling teams, to move up the standings, maybe even get home ice advantage



2019 World Juniors preview: Players to watch on the European teams

By Victoria Matiash

The Canadians and Americans aren't alone in bringing high-level talent to British Columbia for the 2019 IIHF World Junior Championship, set to begin on Dec. 26.

Here is a look at prolific playmakers from legit medal contenders Sweden, Finland, Russia and everyone's favorite wild card, the Czech Republic. Be sure to check out our Team USA and Team Canada team previews, as well.

Sweden

The reigning silver medalists are set to showcase arguably the most impressive defensive corps in the entire tournament. Even with Toronto Maple Leafs prospect Timothy Liljegren likely sidelined with a high ankle sprain, and Rasmus Dahlin absolutely not leaving the Buffalo Sabres, the Swedes boast four first-round draft selections on their blue line. But a lack of flash and experience up front is a concern. Only New Jersey Devils prospect Fabian Zetterlund and Isac Lundestrom of the Anaheim Ducks are back for another tour. Despite Sweden's elite talent on D, a return to the gold-medal game appears a tougher ask this year.

Preliminary round game to watch: vs. United States, Dec. 29, 10 p.m. ET

Isac Lundestrom, C/RW, San Diego Gulls (Anaheim Ducks): Selected 23rd overall by the Ducks in 2018, Lundestrom bolted Sweden this season to further his pro development in North America. After starting the teen off in Anaheim, the NHL club reassigned him to San Diego in mid-November. Recognized for his strong skating and top-end hockey smarts, he has six assists in 12 contests for the Gulls. Now permitted to join his compatriots by the Ducks, Lundestrom brings a much-welcomed spark up front.

Rasmus Sandin, D, Toronto Marlies (Toronto Maple Leafs): With Marlies teammate Liljegren likely absent, Sandin will be tasked to shoulder an even heavier load for his country. Drafted 29th overall in June, the 18-year-old is impressing everyone with his overall play in his first AHL season. The 10 points accumulated through 18 games serve as small hint of his eventual offensive upside. At his best, Sandin could be a difference-maker in the tourney's knockout stage.

Adam Boqvist, D, London Knights (Chicago Blackhawks): The future of the Blackhawks' blue line joins Sandin in driving play from Sweden's back end. This year's eighth-overall draft pick has 25 points in 23 contests in his first North American gig with the OHL London Knights.

Erik Brannstrom, D, Chicago Wolves (Vegas Golden Knights): This clever, puck-moving defenseman joins Sandin and Boqvist in rounding out Sweden's top-tier blue-line



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collective. Selected 15th overall in 2017, the future Golden Knight has 20 points in 24 games with the AHL Wolves. He could even claw his way up to Vegas before the season is through.

Philip Broberg, D, AIK (2019 eligible): Invited to camp once Liljegren suffered his injury, the imposing blueliner is poised to make life difficult for members of the opposition. Already a projected first-round draft selection next June, Broberg would further climb the ranks with a dominant showing in B.C.

Finland

Looking to rebound from last year's heartbreaking shootout loss to the Czech Republic in the quarterfinal round, Finland must manage without several top-tier teens who still qualify. Defenseman Miro Heiskanen is too busy quarterbacking the power play for the Dallas Stars to take part. Center Jesperi Kotkaniemi is filling a key role for the Montreal Canadiens down the middle. In the KHL, Winnipeg Jets prospect Kristian Vesalainen -- who led Finland in scoring at last year's tournament -- outright declined his invitation, choosing to skate through the holidays with Jokerit instead. Although impressively skilled, the Finns' lack of experience, particularly on the blue line, will serve as a factor this year.

Preliminary round game to watch: vs. United States, Dec. 31, 10 p.m. ET

Eeli Tolvanen, LW, Milwaukee Admirals (Nashville Predators): Recently sent back to the Admirals after a brief spell in Nashville, Tolvanen remains a possibility to join his national squad in B.C. After tearing it up as an 18-year-old with Jokerit in the KHL in 2017-18, Tolvanen has 12 points in 23 AHL games to date. His presence would serve as a huge boon for this Finnish team.

Henri Jokiharju, D, Chicago Blackhawks: A late addition for Team Finland, Jokiharju partly makes up for Heiskanen's absence. There's some upside in playing for the second-worst team in the West; no chance the Blackhawks loan one of their full-time defenders if the season isn't already a write-off. Jokiharju led Finland's blueliners with two goals and two assists in five games at last year's WJC.

Kaapo Kakko, LW/RW, TPS Turko (2019 eligible): He's big, he's skilled and he's already enjoying tangible success -- nine goals and 11 assists in 27 games -- playing with grown men in the Finnish Elite League at just 17 years old. Ranked second only to American forward Jack Hughes ahead of the 2019 NHL draft, Kakko merits appointment viewing in this competition, especially when up against Hughes and the rest of Team U.S.A. on New Year's Eve.

Aleksi Heponiemi, C, Karpat (Florida Panthers): After erupting for 118 points in 57 games with the WHL Swift Current Broncos in 2017-18, the diminutive forward is developing his game further as a pro skater in the Finnish Elite League. His eight goals and 18 assists in 29 contests proves he's adapting well enough. The experience of representing his country on the world stage last year will only help increase his scoring impact this round. However Finland makes out, Heponiemi is projected to finish atop Finland's scoring table.

Rasmus Kupari, C, Karpat (Los Angeles Kings): Heponiemi's linemate with Karpat, the 18-year-old has eight goals and 15

assists in the Finnish Elite League to date after being selected 18th overall this summer. He failed to dent the score sheet in Buffalo as a 17-year-old last winter, but expect a significantly more productive showing this time around.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, G, Sudbury Wolves (Buffalo Sabres): If Finland is to hold hope of advancing past the quarterfinal round, its goaltending will have to be top-notch. Enter Luukkonen, who's enjoying a better-than-solid season with the Wolves, riding a 19-5-1 record and sporting a .923 save percentage. The 6-foot-5 Sabres prospect, recently named CHL Goaltender of the Week, started all five games for the Finns in Buffalo last year.

Russia

Perennial medal contenders, the Russians will be additionally inspired to make amends after last year's loss to the U.S. in the quarterfinals. This roster is big, skilled and riddled with NHL-bound talent. While the Russians will no doubt miss 18-year-old Andrei Svechnikov, who is holding his own as a top-six winger with the Carolina Hurricanes, there are sufficient other X factors to ensure Team Russia remains in contention.

Preliminary round game to watch: vs. Canada, Dec. 31, 8 p.m. ET

Klim Kostin, C/W, San Antonio Rampage (St. Louis Blues): The only returning player from last year's roster, Kostin will be counted on to contribute often. A 2017 first-rounder, the imposing power forward has been better than his modest total of 11 points through 28 AHL games might suggest.

Daniil Tarasov, G, Toros Neftekamsk (Columbus Blue Jackets): Columbus supporters with a look to the future will want to monitor this raw and talented goalie from southwestern Siberia. Preliminarily projected as a first-rounder in 2017, Vadim Tarasov's kid fell to 86th overall after losing all of that season to illness. He's since rebounded in the Russian minor leagues with a .928 save performance through 2017-18, and 1.95 goals-against average so far this year. Fellow Blue Jackets prospect forward Kirill Marchenko is another figure to watch

Vitaly Kravtsov, LW/RW, Traktor Chelyabinsk (New York Rangers): This year's tournament provides a great opportunity for Rangers fans to get a solid look at the young lad selected ninth overall in June. So far, the towering teen is justifying the New York's draft reach by racking up 17 points in 33 KHL contests. Among men, that's an impressive total for any 18-year-old. This future top-six NHL winger has firecracker potential in Vancouver/Victoria.

Alexander Alexeyev, D, Red Deer Rebels (Washington Capitals): The Stanley Cup-winning Capitals drafted Alexeyev with the final pick of the first round in 2018. Mobile for a big guy, the 19-year-old is more than capable of contributing to the scoresheet, averaging more than a point per game (31 in 30) with Red Deer this fall.

Vasily Podkolzin, RW, St. Petersburg SKA (2019 eligible): A late addition, the 17-year-old loosely projects as a potential top-10 draft pick in 2019. If he survives Russia's final cuts, Podkolzin will attract plenty of attention in B.C. from scouts and hockey fans alike. As a winger, he's considered the full package with few obvious weaknesses.



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Czech Republic

Will he participate or won't he? The fate of young star Filip Zadina could factor heavily in the Czech Republic's success over the holidays, especially with Filip Chytil rendered unavailable while currently filling a top-six role for the Rangers. One way or another, this year's squad faces a steep hill to climb in repeating as semifinalists. They'll require above-average goaltending to venture beyond the quarters.

Preliminary round game to watch: vs. Russia, Dec. 28, 8 p.m. ET

Filip Zadina, LW/RW, Grand Rapids Griffins (Detroit Red Wings): Zadina is currently labeled as questionable for Vancouver/Victoria with a lower-body injury. His absence would sting considerably. A standout at last year's tourney with seven goals and one assist in seven games, Zadina was then drafted sixth overall by the Red Wings. Falling short of securing an NHL gig, the just-turned-19-year-old has eight goals and nine helpers through 26 contests with the AHL Griffins. The Czechs are significantly better with him on the roster.

Martin Necas, C/RW, Charlotte Checkers (Carolina Hurricanes): Drafted 12th overall in 2017, this is Necas' third go-around at the World Junior Championship. Following up his earlier brief taste of NHL action, the 19-year-old is establishing himself as a formidable two-way presence with the AHL Checkers (21 points in 25 games). The future Hurricanes star will be fun to watch with or without Zadina on his wing.

Martin Kaut, RW, Colorado Eagles (Colorado Avalanche): Rounding out an elite top line with Zadina (health permitting) and Necas, Kaut is looking to build on last year's output of two goals and five assists in seven games, his contribution to the trio's combined total of 26 points. Selected 16th overall in June, he has five goals and seven assists in 26 games to date with the Avalanche's AHL affiliate.

Jakub Skarek, G, Lahti Pelicans (New York Islanders): The Finnish Elite League netminder sports a 2.02 goals-against average and .920 save percentage through 16 games with the Pelicans in 2018-19. He appeared in five contests in Buffalo last winter, which should help with settling in this turn. If Skarek can steal a game or two, the Czechs could find themselves again members of the final four.

Other nations

Switzerland: Traditionally conservative and trap-reliant, the Swiss will once again rely on stingy goaltending in the hope of enjoying success. Players to watch: Akira Schmid, G, Omaha Lancers (New Jersey Devils); Philipp Kurashev, C, Quebec Remparts (Chicago Blackhawks)

Denmark: Once again coached by Olaf Eller, the Danes have 10 players returning from last year. They could squeak into the knockout round if fellow Group A member Switzerland falters. Player to watch: Jonas Røndbjerg, LW, Växjö Lakers (Vegas Golden Knights)

Slovakia: In his third turn at the WJC, Calgary Flames prospect Adam Ruzicka leads a fairly experienced crew that includes nine returning players. While a berth in the quarterfinals is likely -- Group B also includes Kazakhstan -- additional success will be hard to come by, barring a miraculous effort in net. Players to watch: Adam Ruzicka, C/W, Sarnia Sting (Calgary Flames); Martin Pospisil, C, Sioux City Musketeers (Calgary Flames)

Kazakhstan: Largely made up of players from Snezhnye Barsy Astana of Russia's MHL (Junior Hockey League), Kazakhstan will be in a tough spot to even win a game against such superior competition. Maybe the Slovakia game, if all their chips fall perfectly. Player to watch: Valeri Orekhov, D, Astana Barsy



Recap: Guentzel, Penguins easily dispatch unconfident Hurricanes; Bishop, Kuokkanen recalled

The Hurricanes are lost inside their own heads, and it showed in every facet of the game.

By Brian LeBlanc

RALEIGH — The recap on this one will be short. Jake Guentzel scored two goals, and Sidney Crosby added three assists as the Pittsburgh Penguins easily dispatched the Carolina Hurricanes 3-0 on Saturday night at PNC Arena. Matt Murray earned the shutout, his second of the season and first since blanking the Toronto Maple Leafs on October 18.

The Penguins got going early as Sidney Crosby fought off Justin Faulk behind the net with one arm and used the other

to set up Kris Letang for a doorstep tap-in to open the scoring 8:41 into the game. Carolina thought they had tied it with two minutes to go when Dougie Hamilton's shot hit the crossbar, and despite referee T.J. Luxmore emphatically signaling a goal, a short replay overturned the referee and kept the score at 1-0.

A bright spot in the first period was the play of Warren Foegele, who earned two breakaways and could have drawn a penalty on either of them, but Murray shut them both down. The first was especially impressive, as Foegele harrassed Evgeni Malkin into a turnover at the blue line, and forced Murray into an impressive save at the other end.



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In the second, Guentzel took over, taking advantage of a sleeping Phil Di Giuseppe to make it a 2-0 game three minutes into the period, then adding his second with 51 seconds left. By that point, the Hurricanes fans were at their wits' end, Bronx-cheering the minute-to-go announcement.

Less than two games after returning from a concussion, Jordan Staal exited the game at the second intermission with what the team was calling an upper-body injury.

The Hurricanes' power play reverted to its struggles from earlier in the season, going 0-for-4 while generating just one shot - naturally, it was Dougie Hamilton, who extended his streak to 199 consecutive games with a shot on goal - and while the penalty kill was a perfect 3-for-3, the Canes got no momentum off their man disadvantages.

And now for a bit of an editorial.

This is my twelfth year chronicling the Hurricanes for various and sundry outlets. I can't remember a time when I was more disillusioned watching the team. Yes, we have a press box seat, and yes, there's no cheering in the press box, but it's fun to watch good hockey. This isn't fun anymore. It's excruciating.

Twice in the first period, Sebastian Aho passed up two grade-A scoring chances, opting to pass into lower-percentage situations. Yeah, the shots that Teuvo Teravainen and Micheal Ferland took would be classified as high-danger scoring chances, but there's no creativity to the Canes' play anymore. Everyone in the building knew that Aho was going to pass the puck. Including Matt Murray, who made two easy saves as a result.

The Hurricanes outshoot teams nightly. In fact, they have outshot the opposition in 72 of 102 periods this season. Yet here we are, imploring the team to shoot more. It's not a shot volume thing; it's a decision-making thing, and the Canes are making inexplicably awful decisions both with the puck and on defense. They can say all they want about doing the little things and playing the right way, but none of that means diddly squat if they can't make decisions at the level required of NHL players.

This shouldn't be something that needs to be coached, and I hesitate to criticize Rod Brind'Amour because of it. If you're an NHL coach, why would you need to motivate your players to do what they know they need to do to succeed at this level? But whatever it is, it isn't working.

The Canes are who they are: a middling defensive team that too easily gets frustrated and knocked off their game when things aren't falling on offense. The lack of confidence shows, and grows with every passing opposition save, every turnover behind the net, every missed assignment, every one-pass-too-many. It's altogether too much at this point. The Canes are lost inside their own heads, and the front office needs to dispatch a search party to find them.

They Said It

Rod Brind'Amour:

A great start for us, I felt, we were engaged for sure. Unfortunately it was just like the other night, where we probably deserved a little better in the first period based on

the chances, but it didn't happen. Our power play was terrible, and that's our best players. That's the time they need to make plays, and — zero. That, to me, was where the momentum shifted. In the second period we had a couple power plays, and it just sucked the life out of everybody.

They're pass-first players. When you're not scoring, you're looking for that better play. That's something we've talked about to try not to do, but it's tough when they're not scoring. They look to make it a little cuter than it probably would need to be.

We're at game 35, and it's been like this the whole year. It hasn't happened overnight that they're losing their confidence. I think it's dejecting, for sure, when you have a couple breakaways and a couple posts in there, some pretty good looks. I can see it. I've been there. I know it's frustrating. There's no real answer to that. Putting pucks in the net - you can say you've got to get to the net, but at the end of the day you've got to go bar down, not to the middle of the net.

You can't manufacture it. You have to just keep doing it right. That's what we've been trying to do. We had a couple breakdowns, obviously, and that's going to happen in a game. The difference was that they capitalized on those chances, and when they had their breakdowns, we didn't.

Brett Pesce:

We can't feel sorry for ourselves. We have a game tomorrow against a really good team. We just have to look forward to it.

[Are you overthinking it?] I don't think so. To be honest I thought we were all over them in the first. I thought we could have had a few there in the net. The bounces just aren't coming for us. We just have to stick to the program, trust each other in this room and believe in each other. That's how we're going to get out of this.

I don't think [our confidence] is that low. Guys are trying to make plays, which is obviously key. Rod is stressing just sticking with it, which is what we have to do.

Jordan Martinook:

We didn't deflate at all, you can see everyone starts gripping it a little tighter. Our margin is so small right now that you're down by two and it feels like you're down by four. We have got to get our mindset that if they score on us, don't worry about it, just go out the next shift and try to score.

I know every guy in this room wants to score. We're not trying not to score. It's just not going in for us right now.

What did we hit, three posts too? Not like we're getting a ton of puck luck either. When you're in these situations, when you're struggling to score, it's that much harder. We had a stretch earlier in the year where we weren't scoring, and you can just see how much harder it is to score. You aren't getting those easy ones where you block a shot and a guy gets a breakaway and it's a nice, easy goal.

The margin of error is a lot smaller, and we just have to keep bearing down, keep coming, come back tomorrow. It's against a good Boston team and we just have to stick with our game plan: go in, forecheck, put pucks on the net, and go after second chances.



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Game Notes

I kind of said earlier what I'd typically put in the game notes section, just to get it off my chest, so this won't be long.

I don't know if I should be impressed or concerned that the Hurricanes to a man are toeing the company line of "work hard and good things will come." What else can be coached into them at this point? Brind'Amour obviously has a finger on the pulse of the locker room, and hasn't lost the team, which just reinforces the fact that the mental stuff isn't fixable through coaching. It will just need to come organically, but who knows how long that might take?

Just imagine what this would be like if the Canes didn't have acceptable goaltending on top of all the other stuff they're going through.

The Hurricanes won't take a morning skate tomorrow. Warm-up at 4:30, faceoff just after 5. Enjoy the Whale.

Following the game, the Hurricanes recalled Janne Kuokkanen and Clark Bishop from the Charlotte Checkers. Bishop will presumably replace Staal in the lineup tomorrow night, and there's no word on another injury so we'll see who, if anyone, Kuokkanen will slot in for. The release from the team is below.

CANES RECALL BISHOP AND KUOKKANEN FROM AHL

Kuokkanen ranks second on Charlotte in points

Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that the team has recalled forwards Clark Bishop and Janne Kuokkanen from the Charlotte Checkers of the American Hockey League.

Bishop, 22, has posted five points (3g, 2a) in 15 AHL games with the Checkers this season. The St. John's, N.L., native has recorded two points (1g, 1a) in 15 games with the Hurricanes. Bishop made his NHL debut on Oct. 20 vs. Colorado and tallied his first NHL points (1g, 1a) on Dec. 7 at Anaheim. The 6'1", 199-pound forward was drafted by the Hurricanes in the fifth round, 127th overall, of the 2014 NHL Draft.

Kuokkanen, 20, ranks second on the Checkers with 27 points (11g, 16a) in 29 games, and has appeared in three NHL games with the Hurricanes this season. The Oulunsalo, Finland, native has registered 67 points (22g, 45a) in 89 career AHL games with Charlotte. The 6'1", 193-pound forward was drafted by the Hurricanes in the second round, 43rd overall, of the 2016 NHL Draft and represented Finland at the 2017 and 2018 IIHF World Junior Championships.



Canes Recall Bishop and Kuokkanen

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Ahead of Sunday's game against Boston, the Hurricanes have recalled forward Clark Bishop and Janne Kuokkanen from Charlotte.

After debuting earlier this season, Bishop has logged 15 games for the Hurricanes this season while picking up a goal and an assist along the way. With the Checkers the third-year pro has five points (3g, 2a) in 15 games as well.

This marks the second recall of the season for Kuokkanen, who appeared in three games for Carolina earlier this month. The second-year pro currently ranks second on the Checkers with 27 points (11g, 16a) in 29 AHL games.

The Checkers are off for a quick holiday break before embarking on a six-game road trip through Canada that starts Dec. 28 in Laval.

Checkers Head into Holidays on High Note with Win Over Bridgeport

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

It was a tightly contested affair but the Checkers are heading into the holiday break on a high note thanks to a 3-1 defeat of Bridgeport.

The first 40 minutes belonged to the netminders, with Alex Nedeljkovic and Christopher Gibson going save-for-save to keep the score knotted at zero. It wasn't until the Checkers earned themselves a two-man advantage near the midway point of the third that the offense broke through, first with Nicolas Roy pounding home a loose puck out front and then

less than 30 seconds later when Morgan Geekie threw a wrister past Gibson to double the Charlotte lead.

Bridgeport would finally find the back of the net late in the third but Nedeljkovic's 27-save performance was enough to secure a crucial victory over their division rivals.

QUOTES

Mike Vellucci on The game

I thought it was very good. I thought the guys competed extremely hard and were ready to go right from the get go.



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We had a ton of chances and I thought their goalie played really well and made some big saves. We didn't give them a lot, but when they did they were big ones and Ned made some huge saves.

Vellucci on Alex Nedeljkovic

He played really good. He was smart with the puck, didn't overhandle it and was very smart in the net.

Vellucci on finally breaking through with the game's first goal
We had two extra guys, so that helped, but we had a lot of chances. You have to stay calm. We were doing things the right way and getting chances and they weren't going in, but if you start panicking and complaining about it on the bench that's no good. We stayed calm and knew it was going to come.

Vellucci on the break

Some of the guys are tired and we've played a lot of hockey, so it was a good chance to get a break. What I love is that the game before Christmas is never usually that good. Everyone usually has one foot out the door, but we competed hard and we played the game the right way. After the second I told (assistant coach Ryan Warsofsky) that if we can learn how to play in these games, this is playoff atmosphere. This is what a young team needs to learn how to win.

Alex Nedeljkovic on the win

It's huge. You want to go in feeling good about yourself, and in last night's game we were pretty poor. We weren't ourselves and we didn't play our game, but tonight we really came out and took it to them. It was a tough win, but you've to win those close ones. This feels really good.

Nedeljkovic on the upcoming break

It's a great refresher. It's a long season with 76 games, and for some guys it's a little longer going up and down between leagues. It's nice to get away from the game for a couple of days now. Refresh, get some rest and come out of the gates swinging when we come back.

NOTES

The Checkers defeated Bridgeport for the first time in three tries this season, extending their Atlantic Division lead to seven points in the process ... The Checkers avoided going winless in three straight for the first time this season ... Geekie's goal was his third in four games ... Aleksii Saarela picked up two assists, extending his career-long point streak to eight games (2g, 7a). It is the longest streak by a Checker since Greg McKeeg scored in 12 straight in March-April of last season ... Andrew Poturalski extended his point streak to three games (2g, 2a) ... Nedeljkovic maintained his AHL wins lead with his 15th of the campaign ... Defenseman Josiah Didier missed the game due to injury ... Forwards Steven Lorentz and Cliff Pu and defenseman Josh Wesley were healthy extras.

Hartford Courant

For the first time since 1997, an NHL hockey team will take the ice Sunday wearing the colors, uniforms and logo of the Hartford Whalers.

Of course, to the chagrin of Hartford fans, that team won't be the Whalers themselves but rather the Carolina Hurricanes, who left Connecticut more than 20 years ago and now seek to reconnect with the franchise's history — and maybe sell some replica merchandise along the way.

Whalers Night at PNC Arena in Raleigh will feature a full array of Hartford-inspired accouterments, including green-and-blue sweaters, the "Brass Bonanza" theme song and the Pucky the Whale mascot. Former Whalers captain Mike Rogers will sign autographs for fans and participate in a ceremonial puck-drop before the Hurricanes face the Boston Bruins, a former Whalers rival. Afterward, game-worn sweaters and other Whalers items will be auctioned off to benefit the Learn to Play Program at the Champions Skating Center in Cromwell, which is owned by former Whaler Bob Crawford.

Fans at the arena will be able to buy Whalers jerseys at multiple team store locations. The Hurricanes' website currently sells a wide range of Whalers memorabilia,

including shirts, hats, iPhone cases and Gordie Howe signed photos.

Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon first indicated in January that Carolina might play a game in Whalers jerseys, prompting Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy to suggest hosting that contest in Hartford.

The Hurricanes then announced in September that they planned to hold Whalers Night on Dec. 23 in Raleigh and wear the iconic jerseys again for a game in Boston on March 5.

"We're proud of the history and traditions that we've built in 21 years in North Carolina," Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. "But we've never thrown away the records established during this franchise's 18 NHL seasons in Connecticut. This is a chance to celebrate our team's heritage."

The idea of another team donning Whalers logos has inspired mixed feelings from Hartford hockey fans, some of whom are glad to see the team represented on ice and



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others of whom (the more vocal portion, by far) feel betrayed all over again by what they interpret as a ploy to sell jerseys.

Mark Anderson, membership chairperson of the still-thriving Hartford Whalers Booster Club, says at first he was frustrated and disappointed when he heard the Hurricanes planned to wear Whalers jerseys. Eventually, though, he found some silver linings. Whereas other relocated teams have faded away, Anderson said, the Whalers remain relevant.

"The logo and the jersey still packs a lot of punch, to where not only did the team want to do it but the league signed off on it," Anderson said, pointing out that few other relocated teams have honored their predecessors in this way. "It's big that they're wearing them from a nostalgia standpoint, but it's [also] big that they're wearing them because we can claim something that other relocated teams can't claim."

The Whalers famously left Hartford following the 1997-98 season, with owner Peter Karmanos citing weak attendance and poor corporate support. More than two decades later, the Whalers continue to enjoy strong support in Connecticut, with the team's famous whale-tail logo (which is jointly owned by the Hurricanes and the NHL) still popping up on

memorabilia across the state. Hartford has hosted both men's and women's hockey teams named the Connecticut Whale, in homage to the Whalers, and the Hartford Yard Goats baseball team has hosted an annual Whalers Alumni Weekend, complete with Whalers-inspired uniforms.

Beyond Connecticut, Whalers imagery remain a cultural touchstone, seen over the years on celebrities from Snoop Dogg to Adam Sandler to Megan Fox.

But despite efforts from Malloy and Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin to court another NHL team, a Whalers return remains unlikely. That means Sunday's Hurricanes-Bruins game (as well as the rematch in March) will be the closest Hartford fans come to seeing their beloved team in action anytime soon.

"It's only two nights, but that logo is going to be on the ice again. That logo is going to show up on every sports show," said Anderson, who will watch Sunday with other Booster Club members at a local Buffalo Wild Wings. "That's big for us because it reminds not just people around here, but it reminds everybody else that watches the sport, 'Hey we're still here.'"

TODAY'S LINKS

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SportScan

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

1122434 Carolina Hurricanes

Crosby, Murray too much for Canes in Pens' 3-0 win

CHIP ALEXANDER

DECEMBER 22, 2018 09:32 PM

RALEIGH

There were any number of plays Saturday that summed up the Carolina Hurricanes' scoring frustrations and offensive consternation this season.

In a 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins, the Canes had:

-- Warren Foegele twice stopped on first-period breakaways by Pens goalie Matt Murray, who had 39 saves in his second shutout of the season.

-- Victor Rask looking at an open net on a power play only to have the puck hop over his stick.

-- Jordan Martinook with an open shot in the slot, only to miss the net wide right.

Then there was Dougie Hamilton. The Canes defenseman winged a first-period shot from the point. The referee signaled a goal. The goal horn came on. Canes fans cheered.

Not for long. The puck smacked the crossbar, then hit the post but never crossed the goal line. No goal.

The Pens (18-12-6), in contrast, were taking care of business. And especially center Sidney Crosby, who is very good at his hockey business.

Crosby had three assists, twice setting up Jake Guentzel for goals after first spotting Kris Letting open for a quick shot and score.

"They're a good team and they're going to get their chances," Martinook said. "They've got three lines that can score and arguably the best player

in the world who makes plays kind of when you don't think he's going to make them.

"It's a game of inches. We're an inch away on a couple of them and then we're chasing the game a little bit."

The Canes' slide continued. Carolina (14-15-5) has lost five of the last six, with a game against Boston on Sunday.

It will be "Whalers Night" at PNC Arena as the Canes put on Hartford Whalers throwback jerseys. Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour will care more about putting together 60 solid minutes, or more if need be, and getting a win in the last game of a five-game homestand before the Christmas break.

The Canes could be without Jordan Staal. The center, who recently missed five games recovering from a concussion, left after the second period with an upper-body injury.

Brind'Amour said Staal "got another hit to the head" in the first period but did not know the extent of the injury. Staal delivered a hit to Pens defenseman Brian Dumoulin early in the game, and later in the period had a collision with Canes forward Andrei Svechnikov and Guentzel in front of the Pens net.

After the game, the Canes recalled center Clark Bishop and winger Janne Kuokkanen from the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL.

Karl B DeBlaker AP

On the Letang goal, Crosby carried the puck behind the Canes net before putting it on Letang's stick for a 1-0 lead.

In the second period, more of the same. Crosby with the heavy lifting behind the net and perfect setup pass, Guentzel with the finish.

"They get the second one and you can kind of see our group not deflate, but everybody starts gripping it a little tighter," Martinook said. "Our margin is so small right now that you're down by two and right now you feel like you're down by four."

Crosby and Guentzel clicked again with 51 seconds left in the second, Crosby with a lead pass off the right wing. Guentzel had his 14th and 15th goals of the season, the Pens had a 3-0 lead and the Canes had no answers.



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Canes goalie Curtis McElhinney, in his first start since Dec. 5, made some nice stops against Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, finishing with 29 saves. But the Pens were too precise when Crosby had the puck on his stick, breaking down the Canes in the offensive zone and taking advantage of defensive mistakes and misplays.

"Our goalies have been fine. That's not the issue," Brind'Amour said. "if you don't score everything gets magnified."

A power-play goal would have helped Carolina. The Canes had three power plays in the first two periods. None of the first three resulted in a shot on net and the Pens easily killed off a fourth penalty in the third period.

After the 4-1 loss to the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday, Canes captain Justin Williams questioned the team's mental toughness. There was a closed-door meeting and some serious talk.

Brind'Amour switched up the lines. Micheal Ferland went back on Sebastian Aho's line with Teuvo Teravainen, and Andrei Svechnikov, with four goals in his past four games, played on Staal's line with Martinook.

"Great start for us," Brind'Amour said. "We were engaged. Unfortunately it was just like the other night. We deserved a little better in the first just based on the chances, but it didn't happen.

"To me, the power play was terrible. That's our best players and that's the time they need to make plays. And zero."

Murray, who has had his injury issues, stymied the Canes again, improving his career record against Carolina to 7-2-0. He's 3-0 overall since returning from his lower-body injury.

"He's an intelligent goaltender who reads the plays extremely well," Pens coach Mike Sullivan said.

Murray did that Saturday. He got some help from the iron a few times -- on Hamilton's shot, again in the third against Brock McGinn -- but earned the shutout.

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1122435 Carolina Hurricanes

'Whalers Night' to produce mixed emotions at Canes game

CHIP ALEXANDER

DECEMBER 22, 2018 12:19 PM

It has been more than 21 years since the Hartford Whalers played their last NHL game and said their goodbyes.

Skip Cunningham remembers the day well, and not fondly.

"I was in denial," he said.

So many were. That said, Sunday will be an emotional day as the Carolina Hurricanes don the green Whalers sweaters for their game against the Boston Bruins, once their most hated rival. It will be "Whalers Night" and the trappings of the game at PNC Arena will have a throwback, retro feel as the Canes honor the franchise's past and its many years in Hartford, Conn.

Team owner Tom Dundon calls it a fun idea. The crowd should be large and lively and a lot of Whalers-related merchandise should be sold.

Cunningham, born in Boston and raised off Brookline Avenue not far from Fenway Park, is an equipment manager with the Hurricanes and a tireless worker, and his tenure with the franchise the longest.

He started his work in 1972 soon after graduation from Northeastern University, when the team was the New England Whalers, their league the World Hockey Association and their home rink the Boston Garden -- when the mighty Bruins weren't scheduled there, or the Celtics.

Cunningham was with the team when the National Hockey League granted the Whalers admittance in 1979 during the merger with the WHA. He once laid out the jerseys, with what became an iconic emblem and logo, for the likes of Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull, Dave Keon and a young Ron Francis.

On April 13, 1997, Cunningham was one of those who collected the Whalers jerseys for a final time after the game against Tampa Bay at the Hartford Civic Center. He washed them, boxed them up.

An era was coming to an end. They all knew it. Owner Peter Karmanos was moving the team, somewhere.

"You're in disbelief that 'This is our last game,'" Cunningham said.

Tears were plentiful in the arena that day. And anger. And resentment.

STEVE MILLER AP

John Forslund was there. The Canes' television play-by-play man, he handled the last telecast, describing the action as an early goal by defenseman Glen Wesley and late one from Kevin Dineen, the team captain, gave the Whalers a 2-1 win.

Some had hoped the Whalers, coached by Paul Maurice, could extend their season by reaching the playoffs. But after a run of injuries and some losses in the final week of the season, they fell two points short of qualifying. That, too, stung.

"It was an extremely emotional time," Forslund said. "It was in many ways bitter. I understood all the ramifications, the political ramifications, the building leverage, the decision that was being made and the hurdles that the market had in terms of the business footprint and all that stuff. They had roadblocks they couldn't get through that led to the decision.

"But once the decision's made, that's when the heat of the emotion takes over."

Forslund joined the team in 1991. In 1994, a group headed by Karmanos, the Detroit software executive, bought the franchise, which many Whalers fans believed -- and many still believe -- was a death knell for the team remaining in Connecticut.

Karmanos did move the team. Unable to get a commitment for a new arena from Conn. governor John Rowland, he decided to relocate the franchise after the 1996-97 season.

"Mr. Karmanos came by one day and said we're moving, this is over, but we didn't even have a place to go," Cunningham said. "It's like we were on an island."

A prospective ownership group in North Carolina had made a bid for an NHL expansion franchise, with plans to share a new arena to be built near N.C. State's Carter-Finley Stadium. That fell short and the bid withdrawn, again with political haggling over the arena a stumbling block, but Karmanos liked all that he had heard about Raleigh, about the Triangle, about the largest TV market in the country without a major-league team.

While an official announcement about the relocation to Raleigh was not made until May 1997, everyone at that Whalers-Lightning game in April had the sad acceptance that history was being made. Homemade signs dotted the stands -- one said "You'll Always Be Our Team. We'll Follow U Wherever U Go."

Forslund, who lived in Springfield, Mass., said driving to the game that day was surreal, that it was overcast and that a black cloud appeared to be hovering over the Hartford Civic Center when he arrived.

"I remember going on the air that day and saying, 'Good afternoon everyone, it's the meaningless game with tremendous meaning,'" Forslund said. "I was proud how we did it. I was proud of the presentation we gave it, with some tough circumstances.

"It was pretty good game. At the end we had no idea how it would go with the fans. And the fans were celebrating. Celebrating the memories. Many of them were crying. But it was also joyous and the standing ovation went on for a long time."

Dineen spoke to the fans. The players then left the ice for the locker room but returned after pulling off those Whalers jerseys one last time.

"I never thought I'd see them again in a game," Forslund said. "I thought they'd been put away for good. Over time they've become a darling of collectors and a romanticism attached to it. I'm not 100 percent sure all of that existed then although we had passionate fans in Hartford.

"The colors are cool. They're different. It's a marketing thing here. I get it. I understand why we're doing it but I have mixed emotions about it because I went through that -- the attempt to save it, working there from 1991 to 1997, then to see it change."

Some Canes fans will have the same conflicted emotions: it's a Carolina Hurricanes regular-season game and they should wear Canes sweaters. At the same time, it's something different and a way of embracing the past with the retro uniforms.

Karmanos, while the Canes' majority owner, forbade mentioning the Whalers or the past after the move. Team records were designated "since relocation" although that stance softened after Francis returned, first as a player and then a team executive, having set so many of the franchise marks.

Not everyone mourned the end of the Whalers. Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour, asked Friday about his Whalers memories as a player, said, "Beating them most of the time."

And the Hartford Civic Center? "I didn't really enjoy that place," Brind'Amour said. "Kind of a dungeon, in the locker room."

Nine years after the move from Hartford, Brind'Amour and the Carolina Hurricanes were lifting the Stanley Cup as champions.



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Cunningham, on his day with the Cup, took it back to Boston. He carried it up to the Green Monster at Fenway Park. He carried it to the three arenas that the Whalers once played in -- the Boston Garden, Springfield Civic Center, finally the Hartford Civic Center. He cherished the moment.

And now what once was unthinkable, a team wearing Hartford Whalers jerseys, the Hurricanes, his team, will take the ice again Sunday in an NHL game.

Carolina Hurricanes equipment manager Skip Cunningham has been with the franchise since 1972.

Chip Alexander

"It should have been done a long time ago but there was so much animosity," Cunningham said. "I think the players are excited about it. And the thing you can't deny is how long the team was in the NHL. And all the Hall of Famers and all the future NHL coaches that were in the locker room."

And Bob Gorman. Another of the Canes' equipment managers, Gorman was with the Whalers, as well.

After more than two decades, the Canes' ties to the community are deep. Francis, the Canes' former executive vice president and general manager, remains an investor in the team. Chuck Kaiton, the unmistakable radio voice of the team from 1979 until this year, remains in Raleigh.

Brind'Amour, in his first year as head coach, has no problem with the team wearing the Whalers uniforms Sunday and again March 5 in the game in Boston, which should be another emotional setting.

"It's a pretty neat idea and now that I see them, they're pretty cool colors," he said. "I certainly wouldn't want to see it every day but it's a neat thing, to bring back tradition. It's not Hurricane tradition but it's where this organization started.

"I really don't have a lot of memories of the Whalers. I don't remember the song, to be honest with you."

The Whalers' goal song was "Brass Bonanza." It, too, will be played Sunday when the home team scores.

"If we hear it then, it'd be great," Brind'Amour said.

00002

Canes' fans Jennifer Miller, left, and her husband Lawrence Miller, right, and their daughter Avery Miller, 9, bottom, check out the Hartford Whalers tee shirts for sale at The Eye. They bought the first Whalers items.

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1122412 Boston Bruins

Charlie McAvoy is firing on all cylinders

Kevin Paul Dupont

DECEMBER 23, 2018

Charlie McAvoy played in his ninth straight game since returning Dec. 6 after a seven-week stay on the sidelines because of a concussion. He logged 21:47 in ice time during the Bruins' 5-2 victory over the Nashville Predators on Saturday at TD Garden, the seventh game since his return that he has exceeded 20 minutes.

"I think it's definitely coming along, I'm feeling really good, really confident," said McAvoy. "The group is in high spirits, too, getting guys returning — it's an exciting time of the year, too."

McAvoy, now 1-10—11 through 16 games this season after picking up two assists against Nashville, is at his best when making bold, sharp passes, be it on breakouts out of the defensive end or finding available shooters once over the offensive blue line. He logged only three assists over his eight games prior to facing Nashville, but his helpers should be more plentiful as he regains more confidence in his overall game.

"You want to come back and just be firing right away, you know, and it's hard to do," he said. "For me it has been a good process coming back and starting to make plays again, and play strong defensively. I am happy with the way I'm playing right now, and as a group we are starting to get some results."

McAvoy's first assist was a case in smart, confident play. High in the offensive zone, he lasered a feed to Patrice Bergeron, crossing low in the slot, and Bergeron pivoted and lifted it by Pekka Rinne for the 1-0 lead.

Coach Bruce Cassidy welcomed Bergeron back to the lineup and entered the day thinking he might have to budget the center's minutes, particular on a weekend with a game against the Hurricanes scheduled for Sunday at 5 p.m. in Raleigh, N.C. When it was over, Bergeron logged 16:25.

"Back to backs," said Cassidy, prior to faceoff against the Predators, "so you don't want him to empty the whole tank tonight and have nothing tomorrow. But listen, he has a tremendous competitive spirit so to try to take him out of certain situations is easier said than done."

For McAvoy's first game back in action earlier this month, Cassidy used him for full load, 21:02 vs. Tampa Bay.

"I thought the first game he had some rust," said Cassidy, noting that McAvoy has been "terrific" since his return. "Some rust with the puck. But I think from there he has played really well. He probably had one or two games in there where . . . maybe he was average . . . but I think he's been really good. He's really made our offense better in the zone, moving the puck, seam passes.

"He has helped with our chance output, for sure. He is a threat back there to make plays. I think the forwards like having him back because he always looks to make those plays — neutral zone and offensive zone, he tends to make it easier on those forwards.

Six draftees in IIHF

Bruins defenseman Urho Vaakanainen was added Friday to Team Finland for the upcoming IIHF World Junior Championship in British Columbia, bringing to six the number of Boston draft picks that will attend the teenage jamboree.

The others:

Canada — Jack Studnicka, C, No. 53 pick in the 2017 draft. Has been the Ontario Hockey League Oshawa's leading scorer much of this season.

Czech Republic — Dan Bukac, D, No. 201 pick in the 2017 draft. Towering (6 feet 6 inches, 210 pounds) backliner for OHL Niagara; Jakub Lauko, F, No. 77 pick in the 2018 draft. "Good energy," noted Cassidy, "and a little bit of a rat in him."

Russia — Pavel Shen, C, No. 212 pick in 2018 draft. Sprite of a pivot (5-9/185), playing in KHL this year.

United States — Kyle Keyser, G, signed as a free agent after not being chosen in two drafts. OHL Oshawa's top goaltender this season with a 16-5-0 record.

It was only two Decembers ago when McAvoy helped lift the Yanks to a World Junior gold medal while a sophomore at Boston University.



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Hard to put in words, said McAvoy, the pride one feels in wearing the red, white, and blue. Draping a gold medal over the Yanks sweater made it all the better.

"That's my greatest accomplishment in hockey to this point," said McAvoy, noting how the tournament acted as a measuring stick for his game — and how he stacked up against the world's other elite teenagers. "Playing against those guys for the first time and saying, 'Oh, wow, he is really good . . . I've got to elevate and try to match that.'"

DeBrusk may be back

Cassidy said after the win that Jake DeBrusk skated on his own earlier in the day and could return Sunday in Raleigh. Likely a game-time decision . . . Injured defensemen Zdeno Chara and Kevan Miller did not make the trip, though one or both could be ready as early as Thursday when the Bruins return from Christmas break to face the Devils at the Garden . . . Bergeron won 13 of his 25 faceoffs . . . Brad Marchand led all shooters with six shots on net. He now has 12 goals for the season, seven on the power play.

Kevin Paul Dupont

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1122413 Boston Bruins

Patrice Bergeron returns to Bruins lineup

Kevin Paul Dupont

DECEMBER 22, 2018

The Bruins reclaimed another large piece of their game plan Saturday with the return of top center Patrice Bergeron, sidelined the last five weeks after sustaining a nasty rib/collarbone injury Nov. 16 in Dallas.

Bergeron's next milestone: career game No. 1,000.

Among the best 200-foot players in the NHL, Bergeron is the franchise "glue guy," essential not only to their offensive attack but also all parts of their defense — typically teaming with linemate Brad Marchand on the No. 1 penalty-killing unit.

Headed into the 1:08 p.m. faceoff vs. Nashville at the Garden, coach Bruce Cassidy figured he might dial back Bergeron's time on ice, which is normally in the range of 18-20 minutes. Cassidy was taking a conservative approach, in part, because the Bruins play again Sunday, a 5 p.m. matinee in Raleigh, N.C.

"Back to backs," said Cassidy, prior to faceoff, "so you don't want him to empty the whole tank tonight and have nothing tomorrow. But, listen, he has a tremendous competitive spirit so to try to take him out of certain situations is easier said than done."

Bergeron, closing in 1,000 regular-season games, entered the afternoon with a 9-17—26 line in 19 games this season. He began the day on a line with Marchand on his left wing and Danton Heinen on right wing, and finished with two goals and two assists in the Bruins' 5-2 win.

Bergeron connected for career goal No. 299 with 4:50 remaining in the first period, delivering the Bruins to the 1-0 lead. Skating low in the slot, Bergeron collected a high-slot pass from Charlie McAvoy, twirled around near top of the crease, and popped a forehander by Nashville goaltender Pekka Rinne.

Bergeron's second, No. 300, came on a power play only 1:44 into the third period.

Now with 983 games on his résumé, he could play Game No. 1,000 as soon as Feb. 4, a 7 p.m. faceoff vs. the Islanders at the Garden.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1122414 Boston Bruins

Bruins notebook: Danton Heinen shows potential with top line

MARISA INGEMI

December 22, 2018 at 9:06 PM

With all the ups and downs Danton Heinen has experienced this season, yesterday was a good reminder why the Bruins had such high expectations for him in the first place.

Bumped up to play on the top line alongside Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand, the right winger took three shots and had a couple of high quality chances, earning an assist as well in the B's 5-2 win against the Nashville Predators.

He hasn't had a permanent home this year, and there's a decent chance his experience at the top of the lineup isn't terribly long-lived with Jake DeBrusk returning. But, at least for one game, Heinen showed off his skills with quality talent around him.

"I felt like there was a little bit more (space)," he said. "I feel like me, I try to get on the forecheck and create space for them because they should have the puck in their hands. I just try to get to the net and do things from there."

With just four goals, Heinen hasn't produced the way he did last year with 40-plus points. He hasn't scored since Dec. 11, but has two goals this month and seems to have turned a corner. Maybe having elite linemates can bring out even more.

"I thought he got to the top of the crease, was annoying the good defensemen in front of the net, that's part of the job on that line," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "He walked off the wall a couple of cycles and got some shots. I liked it, I liked his work ethic."

Not going their way

The Bruins haven't had much luck with official reviews this season, and that trend continued with a Ryan Donato goal coming off the board due to David Backes being called for goalie interference.

Even though Nashville goalie Pekka Rinne was down on the ice and had ample time to get back up, Cassidy said that might not come into play.

Where the call gets tricky is the language, looking for just "egregious" interference. If Backes committed it to that degree — or at all — is debatable.

"How much time you give that guy to get up, I was surprised this one came back," Cassidy said. "My understanding is they want goals to count unless it's egregious. I took a quick look at it, it certainly wasn't egregious to me."

Injury updates

DeBrusk (concussion) has a chance of getting back into the lineup today against the Carolina Hurricanes.

"Jake skated today, he's getting close," Cassidy said.

Kevan Miller won't be medically cleared until at least Thursday when the Bruins face New Jersey at home. Zdeno Chara will also not play today.

World Junior fever

Urho Vaakanainen (Team Finland) isn't the only member of the Bruins organization heading to Western Canada for the World Junior Championships. Four of his teammates will represent their countries in the annual event.

Kyle Keyser (United States), Jack Studnicka (Canada), Pavel Shen (Russia), Jakob Lauko (Czech Republic) and Daniel Bukac (Czech Republic) will all participate.

Keyser has backstopped the Oshawa Generals this season and steadily improved to be a strong goalie prospect, while Studnicka was close to making the Bruins roster out of camp.

"I thought he had a nice camp I just didn't think for a junior age player he was ready to play ahead of (Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson) and (Trent Frederic)," Cassidy said of Studnicka. "Making that decision that quick, who knows with half a year under him but that's neither here nor there. Hopefully he does a good job there."

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1122415 Boston Bruins

Marchand eager to hit the Great Outdoors

STEVE CONROY

December 22, 2018 at 6:27 PM

Even just last Thursday, less than two weeks away from the Winter Classic at Notre Dame Stadium, Brad Marchand did not want to get too caught up in the hype.

"I won't get excited till we actually get to game day, based on what happened last time," said Marchand. "I didn't think after last time that I'd ever get another chance to play again in one so hopefully it works out this time."

And as he says this, he knocked on the wall a couple of times. It doesn't appear to be made of wood, but you get the picture. We all know what happened the last time the Bruins participated in the Winter Classic. In the game before the huge spectacle against archrival Montreal Canadiens at Gillette Stadium on New Year's Day 2016, the bad angel on Marchand's shoulder took over for a couple of seconds. In a game against the Ottawa Senators on December 30, 2015, Marchand was picked by Sens' defenseman Mark Borowiecki. Marchand then low-bridged Borowiecki, flipping him dangerously.

The result? A three-game suspension, which included the Winter Classic.

"That was tough, especially because I had a lot family and friends in town" said Marchand. "A lot of people were really excited about it. It was my first opportunity to play outside in a football stadium with that many people, the hype around it all, against Montreal with the rivalry. It would have been a lot of fun. So it was frustrating to miss it, especially on a play like that. I also didn't necessarily agree with the call that was handed down. It was tough to miss."

As a Canadian, Marchand doesn't have much connection to Notre Dame or college football in general, so the house that Rockne built won't shake down the thunder for him. But playing in the elements surely will.

Fewer and fewer of today's NHLers have grown up playing the game on frozen ponds, but the Nova Scotia-raised Marchand is a throwback. All he had to do was throw on a pair of skates and go out back to the frozen lake that his family lived on. The neighborhood kids — including one-time Bruin Andrew Bodnarchuk, drafted in the same 2006 draft that Marchand was taken — would skate for hours.

"Growing up, you don't think about how bad the ice is out there or how cold it is. You're just going out to play, excited about finding that ice. It'll be fun to get back to that," said Marchand.

Some of Marchand's patented dekes may very well have come from playing outdoors.

"It definitely makes it more fun," said Marchand. "You're out there playing one-on-one or two-on-two, so you're working on all those little skills and trying to embarrass your buddy with your dangles. You're dodging holes in the ice and snow and a lot of times its very bumpy and uneven and the cattails are sticking out on the ponds. It all adds to the outdoor experience."

It wasn't all old school for Marchand, even when he played outside. He had a pal whose father built his own pond in the backyard that also had some 21st century luxuries.

"It was a little bit bigger than the size of this dressing room and he had a shack right off of it and we'd hang out in there," said Marchand. "He had a coach and TV, fireplace, so we'd go out there and play for hours and walk in, warm up, whip some ho chocolate and g back out and play for a

while. That would always freeze over before anything else because it was so shallow. His Dad built it specifically for playing hockey in the backyard, so I spent a lot of time out there."

Now he just has to be on his best behavior between now and New Year's Day. Marchand has actually been pretty good this year. Aside from a couple of misconducts for rather colorfully arguing calls — on one he repeatedly mocked an opponent he thought embellished a high-sticking call, another he waved the white flag from the penalty box — he's been good. At the end of last season, Marchand said he was going to take a deep dive on some of his on-ice behavior after he received harsh criticism over the infamous licking incident with Tampa's Ryan Callahan (even though we're still confounded that, of all the things Marchand has done in his career, that was what put people over the edge.)

Marchand said staying out of the trouble this year has had a little to do with that self-examination, but also added that his transgressions have not exactly been products of thoughtful deliberation, either.

"In the situations I've gotten into the last couple of years, it takes one split second," said Marchand. "A couple of years ago it was two games left in the season (the spear of Jake Dotchin), last time (with the Winter Classic) it was about this time when it happened. It only takes a split second for things to go the wrong way. You can be good all year and again it takes one little play to change all that and the perception of everything. Yeah, it's something that I'm trying to be conscious of but until that day comes when it's completely gone, I'll cross my fingers for now."

Hart beats pair

I will choose to remain skeptical for now, but those in the Flyers organization who believe playing 20-year-old goalie Carter Hart in the NHL right now are at least having the first laugh. With the Flyers in upheaval after the firing of GM Ron Hextall (replaced by Chuck Fletcher) and later head coach Dave Hakstol (replaced by Scott Gordon), Hart was thrown into the inferno last week and he sprayed some quality H2O on the flames. In his first two games with the Flyers. He stopped 51-of-54 shots from the Red Wings and Predators in nailing down his first two NHL wins. No, it was not what this observer expected after he posted a .901 save percentage and a 3.05 GAA in 17 games with Lehigh Valley.

But if anyone knows if Hart is ready or not it would be Gordon, his coach down on the farm. And after eight years down since his last head coaching gig with the Islanders, we're confident that the former Boston College goalie and Providence Bruins coach ready for his second chance.

Boychuk lauded

Islander coach Barry Trotz had this to say about Johnny Boychuk: "There are two types of guys. There are hockey players and there are businessmen. He's a hockey player."

Sounds about right.

The surprising Isles went into the weekend just four points behind the B's with a game in hand, and Montreal in between them battling for the two wild card spots right now.

Offensive 'Canes

The B's play one more game before the Christmas break on Sunday in Carolina, where the bloom is off the rose a bit. The Hurricanes went into the weekend with a 3-5-2 record in their previous 10 and were receding from the playoff picture, eight points out of the playoff structure. After trading Jeff Skinner in the offseason, the Canes are ranked 28th in goalscoring (one rung below the B's).

In that context, team owner Tom Dundon offered up this doozy of a quote to the Triangle Business Journal a couple of weeks ago.

"We won't be drafting defense in the first round as long as I'm here. I've got to have more offense. I want to lose 5-4, not 2-1. If we lose 5-4 at least I'll have fun," said Dundon.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Apparently, the next Ray Bourque or Paul Coffey need not apply in Raleigh.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1122416 Boston Bruins

Patrice Bergeron scores twice in return, Bruins rout Predators

Bruins win third in a row

MARISA INGEMI

December 22, 2018 at 9:09 PM

It couldn't have been a better narrative if it was scripted.

In his return from a rib injury suffered in early November, Patrice Bergeron scored two goals, including the 300th of his career, and added two assists to send the Bruins to their third straight win Saturday, 5-2 against the Nashville Predators.

"I was very excited before the game," Bergeron said. "It's one of those things you get the adrenaline and nervousness right before and it's actually a good thing. I was looking forward to that for a while."

The Bruins had a goal called back in the second period while up 1-0 that gave Nashville the chance to tie, but with a 5-on-3 to start the third frame, Bergeron banked in a rebound to put them ahead again.

Even when the Predators tied it at 2-2, Bergeron got back on the scoresheet with an assist on the game-winner from Brad Marchand.

"He had real good composure on the last power-play goal to give us some breathing room," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "That's where you worry a little bit, you have some time and the rust and speed of the game and you rush plays, but he looked like he didn't miss a beat."

Bergeron took a pass from Charlie McAvoy just inside the blue line, pivoting to bank it in the top of the net and give the Bruins a 1-0 lead with 4:50 left in the opening period.

Luck didn't go the Bruins way again on the coach's challenge in the second period. It looked like Ryan Donato had tipped a McAvoy shot past Pekka Rinne with 11:48 to go for a 2-0 lead, but the Predators challenged for goalie interference and the goal was called back.

David Backes was hauled down just to the side of the crease and Rinne fell, but it didn't appear any contact had been made.

"I was surprised with this one when it came back," Cassidy said.

Bergeron found the net again in the third. On a power play due to a late hit from Calle Jarnkrok on David Pastrnak as the clock ran out in the second period, Bergeron corralled a rebound in front of Rinne and flipped it top corner for the 2-1 lead at 1:44.

With Matt Grzelcyk in the box for a slash, Bergeron had a chance to get his second hat trick of the season as he crossed the blue line shorthanded, but was pushed off the puck before he could generate a quality shot.

With 8:31 left, the old top line got back together for a game-winning goal.

Marchand took a feed from Pastrnak and Bergeron for his 12th goal of the season, his seventh on the power play, to put the Bruins back ahead just 13 seconds into the man advantage.

Less than three minutes later, Pastrnak beat Rinne five-hole on a pass from Marchand for a 4-2 lead. Sean Kuraly iced it with an empty net goal with 1:59 to go. Jaroslav Halak picked up his second assist of the season on Kuraly's first goal since Oct. 13.

Heinen seemed to have good chemistry playing with Bergeron and Marchand, firing off three shots and having more time and space to shoot. On the flip side, Joakim Nordstrom already had some chemistry

established with David Krejci earlier in the season, and it returned with a couple of good chances with Pastrnak also on the line.

In his third straight start, Halak made 28 saves, and has allowed just three goals in that span.

The Bruins haven't trailed in those contests and head to Carolina today before the holiday break playing their best hockey of the year.

"We're confident in our group and our abilities," Marchand said.

"Especially now with guys getting healthy and having most of our team back. ... We're excited about our group."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122417 Boston Bruins

Bruins pregame notes: Bergeron's back against the Preds

NO GOAL: David Backes tries to get a shot on Predators goalie Pekka Rinne during the Bruins' loss Monday night.

MARISA INGEMI

December 22, 2018 at 12:59 PM

Last time the Bruins faced the Predators it went about as one might expect; a 1-0 contest between two of the best defensive teams in hockey.

The Bruins have allowed 89 goals and the Predators 90, making it a battle of two teams who aren't used to high-scoring affairs on the regular. Nashville has the 14th most goals in the league while the Bruins have struggled a bit more at finding the back of the net.

With one of the best offensive weapons back in the lineup on Saturday in Patrice Bergeron, however, the Bruins might have a spark.

"He's such a great player and teammate," said Joakim Nordstrom, bumped up to the second line while Bergeron is back in his regular slot. "He's irreplaceable, it's obviously huge for him to be back. We're extremely happy."

Even with the potential for more scoring oomph, the Predators defense isn't easy to solve. Mattias Ekholm and PK Subban have been out, but Roman Josi, Ryan Ellis, and Yannik Weber make up one of the strongest groups in the league.

It's a good challenge for a Bruins team that, Bergeron or not, has been slowly starting to find its way out of its scoring struggles.

"They have some of the best defensemen in the league," said Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy. "All of them are special players."

The Bruins head to Carolina on Sunday following Saturday's game before the three-day holiday break and facing the Devils on home Thursday.

It's the end of a busy stretch before a needed break with the injured guys returning, but if there's any extra motivation against a tough opponent with a key piece back, it wouldn't be surprising.

Game Notes

Bergeron will return to the lineup after being injured at the start of November, and he slides back in on the top line with Brad Marchand while David Krejci will stay with David Pastrnak.

Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson will sit as the forward out with Bergeron back in the fold.

Jaroslav Halak earns a third straight start for the second time this season after shutting out Montreal and holding down the Ducks until late in the third period on Thursday. Tuukka Rask will start in net tomorrow in Carolina in the second game of the back-to-back.

About the Predators

The Predators (22-12-2) have allowed the second fewest goals in the NHL with 90, just one more than the Bruins.

Ryan Johansen leads the team with 30 points while Josi trails him by four with 26. Goalie Pekka Rinne has posted a 2.07 goals against average with a .927 save percentage.

Subban is injured reserve with an upper body injury while Viktor Arvidsson and Filip Forsberg (the Predators leading goal scorer with 14) are out long-term.

Their power play has struggled at 14.5 percent as the fifth weakest in the league. Their opposing penalty minutes per game are the most in the league at 10.9.

Boston Herald LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122418 Boston Bruins

Patrics Bergeron once again performs miracles in return to Bruins lineup

Joe Haggerty

December 22, 2018 9:23 PM

BOSTON – Patrice Bergeron has always been known for the extraordinary during his 15 years with the Boston Bruins.

That was the case again on Saturday afternoon as No. 37 returning to the B's lineup after missing the last 16 games with a chest injury, and proceeded to score a pair of goals and factor in three B's goals while helping them roll to a 5-3 win over the Nashville Predators at TD Garden. Bergeron kicked off the scoring in the second period when he roamed through the slot, took a Charlie McAvoy drop-down pass and then threw a double-move on a Vezina Trophy-winning goalie, Pekka Rinne, before snapping a wrist shot into the net for his 10th goal of the season.

Talking Points: Happiest of returns for Bergeron

For just about anybody else in the NHL it would have been impossible to have a game like that after missing the previous five weeks, but it was simply Bergeron being Bergeron.

"[Bergeron] is one of the best players in the league. You know, it shows a lot. The fact that he is able to come back and just jump into the game and get four points against a team like Nashville who is one of top teams in the league [is impressive]," said Bergeron's longtime partner-in-crime Brad Marchand. "They play very fast. Probably one of the faster games we have had all year. It's tough to jump in after five weeks and feel good. He is an incredible leader and player and he showed that again tonight.

"Just the chemistry that we have had and the amount of time we have played together. Sometimes there can be a hole when one of us goes down. But, it's a lot of fun, he is an incredible player. He makes so many great plays. He is so easy to read off of, so it's a lot of fun having him back."

It would have been a full day for many returning players to simply have the one goal, but Bergeron scored again in the third period while scooping up a loose puck in front of the Boston at the tail end of a B's power play. Then Bergeron assisted on each of the next two goals to finish off with two goals, four points and a plus-2 rating in a busy 16:25 of ice time.

He was dominant on the power play with the offense flowing through him at the bumper spot, and was as dogged on the penalty kill as ever. He also took 25 draws over the course of the game, so it was the same old Bergeron on so many different levels in the best way possible.

And what about the icing on top of the Bergeron sundae?

That would be the fact that his second goal of the game was also the 300th of his NHL career, which is another in a line of milestones that should include playing in his 1,000th NHL game at the beginning of February. True to Bergeron fashion, he said he had no idea about the significance of the goal when the referee skated over to him with the puck after he scored.

"I actually didn't know," said Bergeron. "The ref came with the puck on the bench, and he was like, 'Oh it's 300', and I had actually no idea. I was like, 'No, I don't think it's me, [maybe] someone else.' Then he was like, 'Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's you.' So, that's how much I keep up with my stats."

As much as Bergeron brings the noise as a game-breaking offensive performer and a defensive shutdown guy that put the clamps on Ryan Johansen on Saturday, it's also about the energy and leadership that

comes along with his presence. It was clear to see over the last few days that the familiar No. 37 brought a little extra life into a B's group that had been grinding for a while, and that was apparent on the ice against a strong Nashville team.

"It felt great. That's what I told the guys. Sometimes when you're in it, you play for a while – it's game whatever, 35 of the season – and you don't appreciate it as much," said Bergeron. "I told them to be thankful because I've been missing it for so long.

"It's one of those things that I was just trying to talk to the guys and be vocal that we've got to enjoy it, and just go out there and have fun."

So now Bergeron is back in the fold and once again rolling with Marchand on his left, and giving Danton Heinen a try on the right side. Zdeno Chara and Kevan Miller are not far behind with next week as a realistic time for their return, and Jake DeBrusk is poised to make a return sooner rather than later as well.

So the B's are getting fully healthy pretty quickly.

But none of the others figure to have the kind of team-altering performance like Bergeron did on Saturday when he made it clear the best player in Black and Gold was back at full strength for his appreciative hockey club.

Not that it should have surprised anybody given the way Bergeron makes the spectacular look routine just about every time he takes the ice.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122419 Boston Bruins

Talking Points: Happiest of returns for Bergeron

Joe Haggerty

December 22, 2018 5:08 PM

GOLD STAR: After missing 16 games and the past month-plus, it was Patrice Bergeron's turn to shine as he scored a pair of goals and added up four points in Boston's win over Nashville. The first goal was pure Bergeron on the power play as he pulled a double move in the slot and completely faked out Pekka Rinne. The second was a shoveled rebound while crashing the net for a loose puck. Bergeron played a little less than usual with only 16-plus minutes of ice time, but he was still playing in every situation and out there for all the big face-offs - taking 25 of them. Getting your best player back is a big difference-maker for every team, and Bergeron proved it once again he's the B's best while showing virtually no rust out there.

BLACK EYE: Ryan Johansen did score a goal for the Predators, but otherwise he was completely held down by the Bruins defense. It was to the point where Nashville was trying to get him on the ice when Bergeron's line wasn't out there, and it showed with a minus-2, just the one shot on net that accounted for the goal and only 7-for-16 performance in the face-off circle. As much as anything else, the proof of Bergeron's impact is being able to shut down the other team's elite players and eliminate the strength of an opponent. When Bergeron was out, the Sabres' Jack Eichel dominated the Bruins and ended up winning the game for Buffalo. When Bergeron was back in, he was able to turn Ryan Johansen into a ghost on the ice.

MORE BRUINS - Bergy's back big in 5-2 win over Preds

TURNING POINT: The Bruins had a 5-on-3 to start the third period thanks to a dumb play by Mattias Ekholm where he slammed David Pastrnak right in the chops as the buzzer sounded at the end of the second period. The Bruins already were on the power play, so they had 1:05 of two-man advantage to start the third with the score tied at 1. They didn't score in the 5-on-3, but did eventually score on the plain old power play to take a 2-1 lead less than two minutes into the final frame. That allowed them to pull away from a Predators team that had hung in there for 40 minutes. Nashville tied it once more, but then the Bruins scored three unanswered goals.

HONORABLE MENTION: Zac Rinaldo somehow manages to stay in the NHL without any discernible skill and played 7:41 of ice time for the Predators. He also managed to not cheap shot anybody or take any bad penalties in his brief stay on the ice in addition to being a complete non-factor. The fact that the Bruins actually gave up a third-round pick for that guy still astounds me. Certainly, you're willing assets and draft picks for a tough guy who can intimidate, be a good teammate and defend your team's best players. But Rinaldo was never that kind of animal and now basically plays a fourth-line role while bringing very little to the table.

HAGG BAG - More ideas for B's roster improvements

BY THE NUMBERS: 2 – the number of assists for Jaroslav Halak this season after he picked one up on Sean Kuraly's empty-netter late in the third.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "The ref came back to the bench with the puck and I said 'No, I don't think that one is for me.' That's how much I know my own stats, I guess." –Patrice Bergeron, on scoring his 300th goal and being presented the puck.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122420 Boston Bruins

Highlights of the Bruins' 5-2 win over the Predators

Joe Haggerty

December 22, 2018 3:31 PM

FINAL SCORE: Bruins 5, Predators 2

IN BRIEF: After missing 16 games with a rib injury, Patrice Bergeron returned and scored two goals, including the 300th of his career, and assisted on two others as the Bruins won their third in a row, defeating the Nashville Predators, 5-2 at TD Garden in a Saturday matinee. BOX SCORE

BRUINS RECORD: 18-12-4

1. You can't make it up. Patrice Bergeron misses 16 games and roughly a month with a chest injury and then pulls off an elite skill move to score in his first game back. It was a great look from Charlie McAvoy finding Bergeron flashing through the slot and he pulled off a backhand-to-forehand move that completely faked out Pekka Rinne before he ripped it into the net for his 10th goal of the season. Then for an encore, he scored a power-play goal in the second period after scooping up a loose puck in the front of the net and shoveling it past Rinne for his 300th NHL goal. Bergeron finished with the two goals, three points and a plus-2 in 16:25 of ice time and finished with seven shot attempts and 13-of-25 face-off wins. Man, he is something special.

2. Three shots on net and four shot attempts overall for Danton Heinen as it certainly looked like his offense has perked up a bit playing with Bergeron and Brad Marchand, as it should. By the end of the game, though, it appeared that Bruce Cassidy had gone back to Bergeron skating with Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak. That's probably as it should be as well. He did end up an assist added to his ledger when it was all said and done. It's nice to try to get Heinen going a little offensively after just four goals and eight points in 33 games, but the Perfection Line is called that for very good reasons.

3. A really bad job by the league to overturn a good goal for the Bruins in the second period. Pekka Rinne flopped to the ice after minimal contact with David Backes and stayed down on the ice for a good five-second count while never getting up to get back into the play. Charlie McAvoy fired a puck into the net vacated by the goalie. I would say that five seconds is more than enough time to recover and reset on a play like that. It's again an example of a goal the league shouldn't be trying to take away. The press release from the NHL reads:

"After reviewing all available replays and consulting with the Referee, the Situation Room determined that the actions of Backes impaired Rinne's ability to defend his goal. According to Rule 78.7, "The standard for overturning the call in the event of a "GOAL" call on the ice is that the NHL Situation Room (which shall include a former referee in the Officiating Department in the decision-making process), after reviewing any and all available replays and consulting with the Referee who made the original call, determines that the goal should have been disallowed due to 'Interference on the Goalkeeper,' as described in Rules 69.1, 69.3 and 69.4."

Therefore, the original call is overturned – no goal Bruins.

4. It's too bad that the McAvoy goal was overturned because he continues to play a really strong game. He fired a puck into the empty net while Rinne was flopping around like a fish in the second period and it was McAvoy that dumped a puck down low to Bergeron on the slot for his first-period goal. It appears that McAvoy is right in the middle of most everything the Bruins are doing offensively right now with his quick transition passes and seam passes deep into the offensive zone from his

point position. It's all a sure sign that McAvoy is playing some of his best hockey right now and is in midseason form after all the time missed with concussions.

5. Boy, it says something about Colby Cave that the Bruins chose to keep him in as the third-line center and instead scratch Jakob Forsbacka Karlsson. JFK can come and go in the assertiveness department, but he's far more skilled than Cave. He's also clearly not as consistently hard-working and dogged in hunting the puck. That's something that continues to be a thing for JFK.

HIGHLIGHTS:

BERGERON FIRST GOAL IN HIS RETURN:

Can't say we're surprised.#NHLBruins pic.twitter.com/hwHzW019Lk

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) December 22, 2018

BERGERON GOAL NO. 300, MAKES IT 2-1:

It's good to have ya back, Bergy.#NHLBruins pic.twitter.com/IDrYz6MKKZ

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) December 22, 2018

MARCHAND MAKES IT 3-2:

88 ➡ 63 pic.twitter.com/FLDkPMoo3T

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) December 22, 2018

MARCHAND-TO-PASTRNAK MAKES IT 4-2:

63 ➡ 88...also pic.twitter.com/ucuw141fV2

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) December 22, 2018

UP NEXT

At Hurricanes, Sunday, 5 p.m. (NESN)

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122421 Boston Bruins

Bergeron returns to Bruins lineup after 16-game absence

Joe Haggerty

December 22, 2018 12:48 PM

BOSTON – Patrice Bergeron returned to the Bruins lineup on Saturday afternoon for the first time in more than a month and scored two goals against the Nashville Predators, including his 300th career goal.

Charlie McAvoy finds Patrice Bergeron trolling through the slot, and Bergeron puts on a slick move going backhand to fore-hand to completely fake out Pekka Rinne. Bruins up 1-0 on Bergeron's goal in his first game back

— Joe Haggerty (@HackswithHaggs) December 22, 2018

Can't say we're surprised.#NHLBruins pic.twitter.com/hwHzW0I9Lk

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) December 22, 2018

Career goal No. 300! <https://t.co/K9Vt7yFqB0>

— NBC Sports Boston (@NBCSBoston) December 22, 2018

It's good to have ya back, Bergy.#NHLBruins
pic.twitter.com/IDrYz6MKKZ

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) December 22, 2018

He had missed 16 games due to a rib/sternoclavicular injury. Bergeron centered the top line between longtime linemate Brad Marchand and second-year winger Danton Heinen, who is looking for an offensive boost with just four goals and eight points in 33 games this season.

Clearly, the Bruins have done okay without No. 37 after going 9-6-1 in Bergeron's absence and there's certainly going to be some rust to his game. But the B's will be a better team in nearly every facet with their best player back. Bergeron's return signals the imminent return of a number of other B's who will make the roster healthy and formidable once again.

Here are the projected Bruins line combos and D-pairings vs. the Predators based on the pregame warm-ups:

Marchand-Bergeron-Heinen

Nordstrom-Krejci-Pastrnak

Donato-Cave-Backes

Kuraly-Acciari-Wagner

Grzelcyk-McAvoy

Krug-Carlo

Kampfer-Moore

Halak

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122422 Boston Bruins

Back with a vengeance, Patrice Bergeron continues to climb the ladder of Boston's greats

Joe McDonald

Dec 22, 2018

"It'll be special," he said. "Growing up you're dreaming about playing in the NHL. You don't dream about playing 1,000 games ... there aren't that many (players) who accomplished it in history, so it's a pretty special group to be part of and it'll be a pretty neat feeling."

There's still plenty ahead for Patrice Bergeron. When his career does end, he should be in the Hall of Fame and his No. 37 will hang from the rafters of TD Garden.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.23.2018

The list of the greatest Boston sports figures of this millennium ranks up there with any city, anywhere. The likes of Tom Brady, David Ortiz, Paul Pierce and Pedro Martinez are iconic figures in their sports, and at this rate, another name is arguing for inclusion: Patrice Bergeron.

The 33-year-old veteran forward is one of the best Bruins players in the last 25 years, right alongside Ray Bourque and Cam Neely. Bergeron was able to accomplish the one thing that eluded both Bourque and Neely during their careers in Boston – a Stanley Cup. Of course, Bergeron would never put himself in that category, but no doubt he deserves to be there.

"He's definitely the most complete (player)," said one former Bruin who played with all three when asked if he would rank Bergeron higher than Nos. 77 and 8.

Bergeron has also developed a reputation for legendary toughness, including an episode where he played through a punctured lung — making him stand out in a sport where lost teeth and broken noses are miss-one-shift, no-big-deal events. Bergeron's latest injury, a broken rib, caused him to miss 16 games, so it's little surprise that he made his presence felt in a big way in his return to the lineup Saturday.

Coach Bruce Cassidy said Bergeron gave the team an "emotional boost." He delivered more than that — dominating the scoresheet, as well.

Even though Bergeron admitted he felt a bit rusty during the game, and was nervous before the opening drop, he finished with two goals and two assists for four points in a 5-2 victory over the Nashville Predators Saturday afternoon at TD Garden.

"He's one of the best players in the league; this shows why," said teammate and longtime linemate Brad Marchand, adding that Bergeron is an "incredible leader and player."

A four-time Selke winner, Bergeron's never focused on individual accomplishments. He's seems genuinely humbled when he reaches milestones in his career, and he didn't realize his first goal of Saturday's game at 15:10 of the first period, an even-strength tally with assists from Charlie McAvoy and Brad Marchand, was the 300th of his 15-year career.

He was clueless until he was on the bench after the goal, and one of the officials skated over and handed him the puck.

"Actually, I had no idea," Bergeron said. "I said (to the referee the puck is) 'not for me. It's someone else.' That's how I keep up with my stats."

With that goal, Bergeron becomes a member of an elite group of Bruins players to reach 300 career goals, including Johnny Bucyk (545), Phil Esposito (459), Rick Middleton (402), Bourque (395) and Neely (344). All of those players have their numbers retired in Boston.

Bergeron's contract expires after the 2021-22 season, when he'll be 36. At this point, he's showing zero signs of slowing down and could follow Zdeno Chara's lead of playing into his 40s, so raising the possibility he could retire as the organization's third all-time goal scorer.

Next up for Bergeron – 1,000 games. Barring any more missed time, he should achieve that mark on Feb. 5 against the New York Islanders at TD Garden.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122423 Boston Bruins

A Boston hockey tradition that makes a difference at the holidays

Joe McDonald

Dec 22, 2018

Besides being a normal kid, the only thing Ani Ayanyan wanted to do was play hockey again.

She began skating at age 7 for the Edgewood Eagles in Cranston, R.I., and loved every minute on the ice. Whether it was the sound of her skate blades cutting through the ice, or the friendships in the locker room, Ani was hooked.

"She was a speed demon and loving every minute of it," said her mother, Deanna.

Suddenly, Ani faced an unexpected, fearsome opponent – brain cancer.

She was 9 when diagnosed in October 2013. Doctors discovered a fast-growing mass in her left eye and quickly scheduled surgery at Boston Children's Hospital. It took 12 hours to remove the tumor and, in the aftermath, she received 76 stitches. Because a portion of the tumor had spread to her brain, Ani quickly began chemotherapy treatment.

She was transferred to the Mass. General Hospital for Children Cancer Center, where she spent that Christmas.

"How will she ever play (hockey) again?" Deanna at that point asked herself.

Ani received treatments five times a week for six weeks. During that stretch, the family lived at Christopher's Haven, a home for families of children being treated for cancer in Boston. Ani would have chemotherapy each day and then an hour later would receive radiation treatment.

"She was a warrior," Deanna said. "She was amazing."

Deanna spent her days trying to understand how all of this could happen to her vibrant young girl. But amidst all the hard times, one particular day in December stood out in her mind. It's one story about her daughter's battle that she doesn't mind telling again and again.

It was the day that then-Bruins players Jarome Iginla, Johnny Boychuk, Reilly Smith, Shawn Thornton and David Warsofsky arrived at the hospital as part of an annual team tradition. Ani was nearly asleep, recovering from her treatments, when she heard just who was there.

"She was nodding off in my lap when she said, 'I'm here. I'm awake'," Deanna recalled. "We ran so fast from the treatment area to the oncology area where the Bruins came in with funny, cute Christmas hats on and they were pulling a wagon (of toys). They signed autographs. They were smiling. They were so amazing with hugs."

The annual tradition began with Hall of Famer Ray Bourque during his career in Boston in the 1990s. Since then, other team leaders have kept it alive. Patrice Bergeron looks forward to it every season.

"You appreciate the difference it makes and you want to keep that going," Bergeron said.

Now, the entire team delivers toys to patients at six local hospitals – Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts Medical Center, Boston Children's Hospital, Franciscan Children's, Mass. General Hospital for Children, Shriners Hospital for Children and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. This year, the gifts were delivered on Dec. 12 to over 600 children. The toys are purchased through donations from the Bruins and the Boston Bruins Foundation.

Heather Peach is a child life specialist at Mass. General. She's been involved in the program for nearly two decades and has witnessed first-hand the impact it makes on the children, their families and the players.

"It's always been such an incredible experience with the Bruins," said Peach, adding it's a "journey" for the players.

The annual process begins each fall. The hospitals send the Bruins a wish list based on the needs of the children and families. The players then go holiday shopping for the items and then finally deliver them, usually wearing Bruins sweaters topped by elf ears and reindeer antlers.

"The best thing for me is knowing where it's going," Bergeron said.

The players meet patients from all over the globe who come to Boston for its world-renowned health care facilities. There are one-on-one visits, along with group visits in the playrooms.

"They are incredibly humble to spend their own time and money to spread joy during the holiday season," Peach said. "They are so welcoming and warm. They're able to be in the moment."

There's more to these visits than talking hockey, Peach said. The players will chat about toys and their favorite holiday traditions with the kids. Some of the extra toys and items are used to stock the playrooms and toy areas at the hospitals.

The "journey" means something to the players, especially Bergeron, who recently became a father for the third time.

"It means a lot," he said. "You're in a position where you're able to give back. You see the difference it makes. It's not an easy environment to begin with and then to be there for the holidays — so for us to be able to go there and give them the toys and talk with them to brighten up their day is definitely something that goes a long way."

On the day Ani met the Bruins, she received a team blanket, a Pucks and Pups calendar, a Bruins teddy bear and a team poster.

"She still has all of it," Deanna said. "Oh, my God. I have chills all over my body just thinking about it. It was the most heartfelt thing. They weren't doing it just to do it. They really cared; you could feel it. These guys were all heart. I never liked hockey prior to Ani going through all that stuff and now I love hockey."

"There's something about these guys who are so rough and tough on the ice, but they're the biggest teddy bears with the biggest hearts off the ice. They're the most personable and down-to-earth."

Deanna remembers the players sitting on the floor and playing with the children — the conversations jumped from favorite colors to movies. There was never a feeling that celebrities were in the room. On those days, the "celebrities" were the kids.

"While you're going through everything, during that time (with the Bruins) you feel like it's a little celebration. It felt like we weren't in the oncology office. They brought so much cheer and were spreading so much love to all these kids, and their families. Honestly, for that time, we forgot what we were going through," Deanna said.

Throughout the visit, the giddiness and smiles continued.

"I talk about it all the time," Deanna said. "It made a life-long, everlasting impact. It was unbelievable. I'm having flashbacks just talking about it."

The best gift, however, were tickets to a Boston doubleheader on New Year's Eve featuring both the Celtics and Bruins at TD Garden.

"It was the best day – ever," Deanna said. "It was so cool."

Ani's all-time favorite player is former Bruin and current Edmonton Oiler Milan Lucic. After meeting Ani, Lucic took the family to his favorite Boston restaurant, Monica's, in the North End, while Ani was still undergoing treatment.

"Crazy," Ani said. "I'm smiling ear to ear."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

After Lucic was traded to the Los Angeles Kings on June 26, 2015, he sent Ani an autographed, game-worn Bruins sweater for her birthday.

"We were a little crushed when he left the Bruins," Deanna said.

Whenever she wants to brag about her daughter's victory over cancer, Deanna breaks out the photo albums.

"We overcame mountains," Deanna said.

Ani, now 14, had her last cancer treatment on July 17, 2014. She's a freshman at Cranston West High School, a regular kid again, at last. And she plays hockey on the girls' team.

"I love it," she said. "There are no words to explain how much I love it."

The Athletic LOADED: 12.23.2018

1122561 Washington Capitals

Capitals' role players take center stage in 4-0 win at Ottawa

Isabelle Khurshudyan

December 22 at 10:16 PM

OTTAWA — There are candy canes on the chin of Pheonix Copley's goaltending mask, a homage to his hometown of North Pole, Alaska, where the Santa Claus House is open year-round. With Christmas just three days away and the Washington Capitals eager to get on with their holiday break, Copley got an early present — his first NHL shutout.

The Capitals are most known for their superstars, such as captain Alex Ovechkin, center Nicklas Backstrom and top goaltender Braden Holtby. But against the Ottawa Senators on Saturday night, it was Washington's supporting cast that starred, from Copley making 35 saves to defensemen scoring two goals. That depth has propelled the Capitals to the top of the Metropolitan Division over the past month with wins in 14 of their past 17 games, and the 4-0 victory over Ottawa keeps Washington's cushion over second-place Columbus at four points.

With this game being the Capitals' last before a four-day break for Christmas, Coach Todd Reirden was hopeful his players would be able to focus for just a few more hours so the team could part on a happy note. Back-to-back sets of games were a bugaboo for the team to start the season, but Washington had swept its past two entering this stretch of two games in as many nights.

"It was an easy game to check out," Reirden said. "Everyone was invested right through our whole lineup tonight in playing the right way for each other. It was probably one of the games I could be happiest about this year."

Considering the Capitals had played the Buffalo Sabres less than 24 hours earlier, the start to Saturday's game was ideal. Just 92 seconds had elapsed when defenseman Jonas Siegenthaler's point shot was tipped by forward Brett Connolly in front for an early lead. That was Connolly's eighth goal, and while he plays on Washington's third line, he ranks fifth on the team in points. As far as supporting cast members go this year, he has been the most consistent.

With 22 points in 35 games, he is just five away from tying his career high of 27, set last season. If he maintains this pace, he could finish with nearly double that total, which would be good timing considering he is due to become an unrestricted free agent this summer.

With injuries thinning the Capitals' forward corps all season, the third line with center Lars Eller has been a revolving door. But now that everyone

up front is healthy for a change, Reirden has reverted to a trio that has had chemistry in the past. After skilled winger Andre Burakovsky was a healthy scratch for four straight games, he skated a second straight game with Eller and Connolly, and the strong play from that line to start the game allowed Reirden to play those three as much as he did his top-six forwards in the first period.

"The coaching staff has a lot of faith in every single guy," Connolly said. "So it's nice to know you're going to get your minutes and you're going to play. . . . We do have a lot of good depth, and that's definitely worked in our favor."

That line was on the ice for a goal in the second period, too. Connolly set up defenseman Michal Kempny's point shot, and the floater wove its way through traffic to find the back of the net 13:44 into the second period. It was Kempny's third goal this season, tying his career high from 53 games with Chicago and Washington last year.

Kempny wasn't the only blue-liner to make the scoresheet. Late in the first period, defenseman Matt Niskanen joined the rush, skating up toward the net as Backstrom sent a puck ahead. The pass hit Niskanen's blade and was redirected past Senators goaltender Mike McKenna with 2:04 left in the period. Niskanen has five goals and is on pace to surpass his career high of 10 set in 2013-14.

Forward Jakub Vrana extended the Capitals' 2-0 cushion 9:05 into the second period, when he swiped the puck off Ottawa's Mark Stone, then drove the net and beat McKenna for Washington's third goal. Though the 22-year-old isn't part of the Capitals' superstar core yet, he is solidifying himself as part of the franchise's future with this impressive second-year campaign. Vrana's goal was his 11th in 35 games, just two short of his rookie total of 13 in 73 games.

"That's good team stuff, when you get guys down the lineup contributing," Niskanen said. "I think that's good for team-building. It was a fun one on the road, and Cops was really good. They had a couple dangerous looks — at least half a dozen or maybe more — where he was really solid. It was a good road win, a good team win."

The Capitals discussed trying to preserve the shutout for Copley at second intermission. He was considered a potential liability going into this season, having played in just two NHL games before he was anointed Holtby's understudy. After the Capitals had enjoyed an experienced tandem the past few years with Holtby and Philipp Grubauer, they expected Copley to have to be eased into the role. But in 12 appearances he is 8-2-1, looking more poised and in command with each start.

Saturday's was his best so far, and on a night that the superstars took a back seat, Copley shone brightest.

"It's obviously a big moment for him," Connolly said. "He's played so well this year, and it seems like we play well in front of him, so that's good. We have a lot of confidence in him back there. He's proven that to our team that he can shut the door when needed. It was great to see a guy who works extremely hard every day get rewarded with a shutout."

Washington Post LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122562 Washington Capitals

Phoenix Copley blanks the Senators to send the Capitals into Christmas on a high note

J.J. Regan

December 22, 2018 9:40 PM

Phoenix Copley turned aside 35 shots to record his first NHL shutout in a dominant 4-0 win Saturday over the Ottawa Senators. The win sends the Caps into the Christmas break on a high note with 14 wins in their last 17 games.

Here are four reasons why Washington got the victory.

A fast start

Considering both teams were playing the second leg of a back-to-back in the last game before the Christmas break, this game could have had a very sleepy start. Instead, the Caps wasted no time getting on the board. It took all of 92 seconds for Brett Connolly to deflect in a Jonas Siegenthaler shot to put Washington up 1-0.

For an Ottawa team that lost 5-2 to the lowly New Jersey Devils on Friday, it sure seemed like Connolly's early goal had some of the Senators thinking more about Christmas than the game at hand.

Deflections

Despite the early goal, Senators goalie Mike McKenna looked very sharp. The Caps looked to add to their lead early on, but McKenna kept Ottawa in the game as he plucked a shot from Andre Burakovsky with a big glove save and robbed Nic Dowd on the very next shift after a flurry of chances from the fourth line. Not long after, McKenna turned aside a breakaway from Jakub Vrana.

So how do you beat a goalie who is stopping everything you shoot at him? Stop shooting at him.

In addition to Connolly's deflection goal, the Caps added a second tally in the first period as Nicklas Backstrom fed Matt Niskanen on the doorstep for a tip-in goal.

You won't see it in McKenna's final stat line, but it took some work for the Caps to get those first two goals. He was about the only thing the Senators had going for them at the start of the game.

Jakub Vrana's brutal steal

Vrana has tremendous talent, but it is his effort and compete level that makes him such a dangerous player.

Already up 2-0, Vrana added to Washington's lead when he picked the pocket of Senators forward Mark Stone in the offensive zone to set up his own goal.

Stone retrieved the puck in the Caps' offensive zone near the boards and spun around to avoid a charging Vrana. He took a few short strides and tried to fire the puck up and out, but Vrana never gave up on the play. He lifted the stick as Stone tried to pass the puck out, stole it away and found himself one-on-one with McKenna. With one deke, he had the netminder beat and put Washington up 3-0.

Phoenix Copley's best game of the season

Copley has shown flashes of strong play throughout the season, but the best way to describe his play this season is that he was doing just enough to win. Despite the 7-2-1 record he had heading into Saturday's game, Copley has shown some shaky play at times. That was not the case in Ottawa as Copley was rock-solid in a 35-save shutout, the first NHL shutout of his career.

After the Caps took a 1-0 lead, the Senators put some pressure on the Caps forcing some strong saves. Copley was particularly strong down low where he absolutely could not be beaten. He tracked the puck very well through traffic and shifted the pads beautifully to cut off everything Ottawa threw at him on the ice.

The Senators also had a few rushes where they came down the side and tried to turn the corner on the defense, but Copley held the post very well, giving no room for Ottawa to shoot on.

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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122563 Washington Capitals

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.23.2018

Alex Ovechkin has made a career of memorable games against the Ottawa Senators

Brian McNally

December 22, 2018 3:37 PM

Alex Ovechkin has had some memorable games against the Ottawa Senators. Once again leading the NHL in goals (29), Saturday night is another chance to add to the legacy when the Capitals head into the holiday break with a game at Ottawa (7 p.m., NBC Sports Washington).

Ovechkin will reach 30 goals for the 14th consecutive season, which would be one shy of tying Jaromir Jagr (15) for second all time in NHL history.

- Jan. 10, 2016:

A milestone night for Ovechkin at Capital One Arena. At the same time the Redskins were hosting the Green Bay Packers in an NFC wild card game at FedEx Field, Ovechkin recorded his 500th and 501st career goals in a 7-2 blowout of the Senators. No. 500 came on a power-play shot from the left faceoff circle. Because, of course. The pass came from Jason Chimera and made it a 5-1 lead. Ovechkin was the fifth fastest player to reach 500 goals. He did it in 801 games.

- Jan. 7, 2010:

Ovechkin had a goal and two assists in a 5-2 win over Ottawa at Capital One Arena. But what he was wearing when he did it mattered more. Ovechkin scored for the first time with the "C" on his chest. He'd been named captain on Jan. 5 after former teammate Chris Clark was traded. It was a day the Capitals had long expected since they took Ovechkin with the No. 1 pick in the 2004 NHL draft. After four-and-a-half seasons he had it. Only defenseman Rod Langway (726) has played more games with the "C" on his jersey than Ovechkin (680).

- Oct. 5, 2017:

The season opener of a campaign that would end with the Caps hoisting the Stanley Cup. No one knew that then, but Washington started with some good vibes after a gloomy summer that saw the loss of five key players to free agency or trade. Ovechkin recorded a hat trick in a 5-4 shootout victory. His first two goals erased a 3-1 deficit. Oh – and Ovechkin also scored in the shootout. It was a good start to a memorable 2017-18 season.

- Dec. 29, 2007:

Ovechkin's first four-goal game came against the Senators just a month after Bruce Boudreau took over as head coach and the Capitals were about to take off en route to a Stanley Cup playoff appearance for the first time since 2003. Ovechkin has scored four goals in a game four times. Washington needed them all that night in an 8-6 victory. Ovechkin capped it with an empty-net goal. It was also a rare five-point game. Ovechkin added an assist on a Nicklas Backstrom goal.

- Feb. 1, 2009:

Ovechkin recorded another one of his now 22 career hat tricks in a Sunday afternoon game against the Senators. That brought his career mark to 199 in his fourth season and at the time was his seventh career hat trick. The Caps won 7-4.

- Oct. 11, 2010:

Ovechkin had a rough night against the Senators – until he didn't. A bad game was all forgotten when he scored with 31 seconds left in overtime to lift the Capitals to a 3-2 win against Ottawa.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122564 Washington Capitals

Braden Holtby's wild blueline saves helps Capitals beat Sabres 2-1

Brian McNally

December 22, 2018 3:21 PM

WASHINGTON — Braden Holtby made his decision and did not look back.

Late in the second period of a 2-1 win against the Buffalo Sabres on Friday, a Capitals turnover led to a breakaway for defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen. Alone in his net, with Ristolainen and the puck speeding toward him, Holtby broke from his crease like a racehorse.

As he neared the top of the slot, 25 feet from his cage, Holtby did the only thing he could: He slid on his rear end. It worked — at first. Holtby knocked the puck toward the blueline, but right to Buffalo forward Connor Sheary.

On the ice and with no other option left to him, Holtby reached out with his stick and chopped the puck from Sheary, who recovered it anyway just inside the blueline and with an empty net yawning 30 feet away he took a shot. Holtby got that one, too, deflecting it into the crowd.

It was a huge series of saves in a 1-0 game with 2:23 left in the second period. Holtby finished with 36 saves and the Capitals are now 16-4-0 in their past 20 games.

"I thought I could get there. I was thinking I'd kind of have to get down to try and seal the ice and get it out of the blue line there," Holtby said.

"Once I went to go down, he kind of stopped skating which was strange. I didn't really see the second guy coming so after that you just try and do whatever you can to keep it up."

In 15 appearances since Nov. 7, Holtby has a .926 save percentage and a 2.34 goals-against average. But Friday might have been his best game. Against a rising, talented young team that could make the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since 2011, he helped kill all four penalties taken. Buffalo's power play had scored twice at Capital One Arena just last Saturday in a 4-3 shootout win for Washington.

"Turns out to be the right maneuver for sure," Caps coach Todd Reirden said. "But the second effort is the really impressive thing. To be able to have that wherewithal to come back around with the second swipe of the stick...Braden was tremendous. One of his strongest games of the year for sure."

Teammates gave Holtby credit for all of that. But the sliding saves with not one, not two, but three blocks made them smile the most, though.

"I mean Don Cherry Rock 'em Sock 'em like [edition] 12 or 10 maybe back in the old school days," Caps forward Tom Wilson said, referencing the highlight videos put out by Canadian hockey commentator Don Cherry in the 1990s and 2000s. "Goalies have bigger gear on now, they don't come out as much, but that was pretty fun to see. I was in the offensive zone so I was just hoping it stayed out of the net."

With Holtby out by the blueline wrecking havoc, teammates Dmitry Orlov and Jakub Vrana were manning the net just in case a puck got through. Their turnover in the offensive zone sparked the whole gong show so it was only fitting they helped cover for Holtby, who in the end didn't need them. He did it himself.

"I actually couldn't believe that," Caps forward Chandler Stephenson said. "I don't think I've ever seen a goalie that far out. It was funny watching all guys playing goalie, they just kind of went to the net, and he was playing out. Thought [Holtby] was going to get it and start forechecking."

Holtby looked to be hurt late in the game — though he insisted it was just cramps from an unseasonably warm arena. With 2:12 to go, after a wild scramble in the crease, Holtby stayed on a knee and continued to flex his left leg. He needed a visit from the trainer and about two minutes to collect himself but stayed in the game.

Buffalo had a 5-on-4 power play for almost the rest of the game and Holtby stopped five shots in the final 2:12 to preserve the win. But Holtby couldn't have felt too good when Sabres rookie defenseman Rasmus Dahlin jumped on top of him at the end of another crease scramble following two Buffalo shots on goal with 22 seconds left. Holtby and the Caps were just trying to survive — and they did.

"There's not much you can say. That's [Holtby]. He's the backbone of our team," Stephenson said. "I think he got injured there the last two minutes or so, and he stuck in there and made some more tremendous saves, so that's him. He's a warrior for us, a huge part of our team and why we win games."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122565 Washington Capitals

Another Capitals fan traveled hundreds of miles just to troll the Penguins

Nina Mandell

December 22, 2018 3:04 PM

A longtime Capitals fan carried on what seems to be a growing trend of Washington fans trolling the Pittsburgh Penguins while on vacation.

During her vacation to South Africa, Gracie Lunden saw a group of actual penguins (the animal, not the hockey players) and correctly decided it was the perfect opportunity to show off her Stanley Cup champion shirt.

For Lunden, whose story was first posted on the blog Russian Machine Never Breaks, being a Caps fan is something that runs in her family. Her grandfather, Peter O'Malley, was the president of the team in the 1970s.

"Unfortunately that was before I was born," she wrote in a direct message to NBC Sports Washington on Twitter, "but I kind of grew up on Caps hockey and now live one block from the arena in Chinatown!"

She missed the Caps' latest game against the Penguins - but she and her sister can often be found watching games and practices, she said. As for the photo?

"The reactions have been pretty hilarious, it definitely got bigger than I expected! Had lots of people say it made them smile which made me happy!" she wrote.

Earlier this year, another Capitals fan managed to troll the Penguins with his photos with penguins in Antarctica.

"Travelled all the way to Antarctica just to remind the penguins in person that we got the cup," that fan, Sampson Coe, wrote in his vacation photo posted to Facebook.

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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122566 Washington Capitals

Alex Ovechkin looking for way back in scoresheet when Capitals take on Ottawa

J.J. Regan

December 22, 2018 2:06 PM

The Capitals are back in action again on Saturday for their last game before the Christmas break. They head to Canada to take on the Ottawa Senators (7 p.m., NBC Sports Washington Plus).

Here are four things to know for Saturday's game.

Copley takes the net

Todd Reirden said at Wednesday's morning skate that the plan was for Braden Holtby to start Friday's game against the Buffalo Sabres and for Pheonix Copley to get the back end of the back-to-back in Ottawa.

Copley's last start came on Dec. 15 against Buffalo. He gave up three goals in the shootout victory. For the season, his numbers are OK – 2.93 GAA, .902 save percentage – but he always seems to do just enough to win with a record of 7-2-1.

As for who will be starting across from Copley, that remains in question.

Like the Caps, Ottawa played on Friday. Craig Anderson got the start for the Senators, but was pulled after two periods after giving up five goals.

Anderson has started 31 out of 37 games for Ottawa and the quick hook could give coach Guy Boucher an excuse to put him back in Saturday against Washington.

If not, then the Caps will face Mike McKenna who stopped all seven shots he faced in relief on Friday.

A quiet Ovechkin

After rattling off 14 straight games with at least a point, Alex Ovechkin has been very quiet in his last two games. On Friday he managed to get only one shot on goal, the lowest he has had in any game this season.

Two games without a point is hardly a slump, but it is the longest Ovechkin has gone without a point in what is turning into a remarkable season for the 33-year-old captain.

Even on a back-to-back, it is hard to see him leaving Ottawa empty handed.

Kuznetsov on the rise?

Speaking of quiet superstars, Evgeny Kuznetsov has been very quietly putting together a strong month...on paper.

In the month of December, Kuznetsov has one goal and nine assists in nine games. Even though he is putting up numbers, however, he is not playing at the same dominant level that we saw in October. Friday's game against Buffalo was the strongest game from Kuznetsov since he returned from a concussion. He nearly scored on several occasions and was better than the stats showed (one assist).

Special teams back on track?

Heading into Friday's game, Washington had given up at least one power play goal in three straight games with a paltry 53.8-percent penalty kill during those three games. Friday's win was a big step in the right direction as the Caps killed off all four of Buffalo's power plays. So which penalty kill will show up in Ottawa?

The power play for Washington has gone ice cold with no goals in three games and only three goals in the past eight. Saturday offers a get right

opportunity for the Caps as they take on the league's worst penalty kill. The Senators have managed to kill off only 73.6-percent of power plays this season.

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1122574 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Rielly, Marner make difference for Maple Leafs in win over Rangers

Luke Fox

December 22, 2018, 9:52 PM

TORONTO – Christmas is a time for giving.

So for the second consecutive December night at Toronto's Scotiabank Arena, giddy fans gleefully doffed their caps and tossed them on the ice late in another goal-loaded home victory.

The city is so antsy to celebrate a winner, the small detail of a hat trick not actually being scored is of little consequence.

"People are losing their hats for no reason here," said Mitch Marner, whose presumed third snipe of the night was downgraded to his second upon further review.

"I feel pretty bad for them. If they're Leaf hats, I'm guessing they're not cheap. Everything around here is pretty expensive. So, those poor people."

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"Poor people" feels like a relative term when referring to the 19,466 who rang in Santa SZN by partying as the NHL's hottest offence poured pucks past under-siege New York backup Alexander Georgiev and rolled the rebuilding New York Rangers 5-3.

Another victory over an inferior Eastern Conference opponent, another ankle injury to a role-playing winger, another showcase for stars Mitchell Marner and Morgan Rielly.

The Maple Leafs capped off a perfect 3-0 week in which they averaged six goals per win and pulled the rug out from under your silly "trap game" theories.

Unfortunately, as was the case in Tuesday's defeat of New Jersey, the two points came at the expense of a reliable winger's foot.

Tyler Ennis suffered a broken ankle when he took a Rielly point shot off his right instep and now joins Zach Hyman (ankle sprain) on the sidelines for weeks.

"He was coming on, right? His year didn't go as good as he wanted last year, and he was starting to come, so it's unfortunate," coach Mike Babcock said.

The Leafs will call up one of their deserving Marlies forwards (best bet: Trevor Moore) for Sunday's game versus Detroit.

Starting on time has been a focal point for the group, and the Leafs accomplished that feat when Patrick Marleau beat out an icing race, then deftly tipped home a Rielly point shot in the first period.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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By registering his 30th (!) pre-holiday assist and later sniping his 12th goal, Rielly now has nine points over his past four games, pushing his lead over Ottawa rookie Thomas Chabot in the defenceman scoring race to 42-37.

Rielly — a minus in each of his first five NHL seasons — now co-leads the NHL in plus/minus (+22) and his four penalty minutes are the fewest of any top-40 scoring defenceman.

Somehow, Toronto transformed from the team in desperate need of a No. 1 defenceman to the team with arguably the No. 1 defenceman.

"He thinks he's in Moose Jaw again now," said coach Mike Babcock, referring to a junior performance that thrust Rielly to the top of former Leafs GM Brian Burke's draft list.

"It's a little different," Rielly replied, flashing that wry smile, his trademark.

"I know what he means. It's just about being comfortable. We got a good group. We're all very comfortable. We know the system. We're happy with our teammates; we all get along. It's just a good situation. I think when that happens, players tend to be themselves and play a bit looser and a bit more confident."

Marner believes Rielly's confidence is at an all-time high.

"And that's great for us forwards. When he's jumping in the rush, it's usually a 4-on-2 or a 4-on-3. If he gets that puck, he's deadly right now, finding guys and shooting it. Either way, it makes the other team think about covering him more than a forward at the moment. It leaves someone open," Marner says.

Toronto's increasing emphasis on activating its defence has become a focal point of practice, and the dividends are paying off.

Rielly is the smartest at picking his spots and executing, but Jake Gardiner, too, is projecting for back-to-back 50-point campaigns. And rookie Travis Dermott is taking notes on the third pair.

Dermott told me recently that the coaching staff shows him clips of Rielly's decision-making as a teaching tool.

"His maturation process, I've been able to see it firsthand, and it's been quite the journey for him. Each and every year, he adds a little bit to the arsenal to make him the elite defenceman that he is," Nazem Kadri said.

"His skating ability is what sticks out for me. He's able to hop into the play so easily, so effortlessly—and that release with his wrist shot is impeccable."

Morgan Rielly's 12 goals this season equal the amount he had in 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined. It ain't Christmas yet.

— luke fox (@lukefoxjukebox) December 23, 2018

Toronto, as a whole, looked impeccable when it mattered, rolling around the New York zone and generating 13 high-danger chances and second-chance opportunities aplenty.

"They're definitely moving the puck well. High-speed hockey," Henrik Lundqvist said. "Especially if you're looking at the forwards, they probably have the most skilled group in the league."

The Rangers kept lingering around long past the point you'd think appropriate, like the family on your block that waits until May 2-4 to haul down the Christmas lights.

They killed off an Adam McQuaid double-minor penalty and the prolonged 6-on-5 that preceded it — a golden opportunity for all those Leafs on the all-star ballot to wrest the night away — and Georgiev, superb Tuesday in a victory over resurgent Anaheim, fended a barrage of shots from Auston Matthews and John Tavares.

Neal Pionk was the beneficiary of a classic "good road period" as he whistled an old-fashioned slapper high and clean far-side on Frederik Andersen with five minutes remaining in the second frame. Late in the

second, fourth-liner Ryan Strome whiffed on an open net that could've given the visitors a stunning lead.

Heading into the third period knotted at one, the pair of Original Six squads — one rebuilding, one mercifully not — gave play-by-play deity Bob Cole, calling a now-rare Saturday night national game in Toronto, a tight one to soundtrack.

For fans of a certain age, simply Cole's call alone felt like Christmas came early. Oh, baby.

Marner presumably snapped the tie early in the third period when he slammed home a rebound after a key John Tavares offensive-zone face-off win, but he pointed to new linemate, Andreas Johnsson, who would eventually be awarded the goal (hence the false-alarm hat trick).

Then Rielly pounced into the zone to snipe his 12th.

Just when the game appeared to be on ice, centre Kevin Hayes—the Rangers' most valuable trade rental—tucked a Filip Chytil rebound, his first of two on the night, narrowing but never closing the gap.

The Tavares-to-Marner connection struck once more, this time Marner dekeing Georgiev backhand on a gorgeous feed from his centreman.

The winger, making a conscious effort to drive the paint and shake his pass-first rep, added an all-hustle unassisted empty-netter and has now scored six goals in four games.

Rielly has noticed Marner pulling the trigger more often.

"As he should," Rielly said. "Me and Ron [Hainsey] smiled at each other. It feels like just a week ago or two weeks ago he had six goals. Now he's at 12. He's obviously got something going."

"You talk about confidence — he's a player that thrives when he has confidence, and his linemates love playing with him. As a D-man, you want to be on the ice when he's out there because of his vision and what he's able to do with the puck."

"He's a guy who works very hard for everything he gets. You look at the way he's playing, the way he drives that line, he's been one of the best players in the world now for a few months."

The Maple Leafs still have one more bit of business to take care of before the holiday break, as another severe underdog, the Detroit Red Wings, fly to town Sunday.

"We like playing here, we're comfortable, we think we've got a good team. Now we've got to play right though, and we understand that," Babcock said.

"Christmas — I hope everyone got their mom a nice gift. It's a real important thing you do."

Hope she likes Leaf hats.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1122575 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens continue to establish identity in win over Golden Knights

Eric Engels

December 22, 2018, 8:33 PM

LAS VEGAS — Phillip Danault registered the first hat trick of his career in a 4-3 overtime win over the Vegas Golden Knights on Saturday afternoon, and then he summed up perfectly what we've learned about his Montreal Canadiens through 37 games.

"I think this game is our whole image since the beginning of the year, since Day 1 of training camp," he said of Montreal's third-period comeback and its 47-shot effort against Marc-Andre Fleury and the 20-15-2 Golden Knights. "We bring hard work, speed and character. I think it's been all these characteristics so far this year and we brought them again tonight. Big win on the road."

Yes, it was. Perhaps Montreal's biggest of the season, registered in a city that can be impossible to play in for a team coming to town with tired legs and time to kill.

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Las Vegas could have gotten the better of the Canadiens, who were playing their third game in three and a half days, starting at an unusual hour, and facing off against a Golden Knights team that had an 11-3-1 record at T-Mobile Arena through nearly half a season.

They flew in late Thursday night after a 2-1 win over the Arizona Coyotes, and Canadiens coach Claude Julien cancelled practice and gave them a day off on Friday. There was no time for a morning skate prior to the 1:00 p.m. local start of Saturday's game, either.

"I have to show confidence in my players and let 'em know that hopefully they can handle themselves well," Julien said after the win. "Hopefully they enjoyed the day in Vegas yesterday. It was (resting for) the night that was important. And when you look at the way we played today, you know they did the right thing yesterday and they were ready to play this afternoon."

Were they ever. The Canadiens pushed the pace through the first period — out-shooting Vegas 17-9 and out-chancing them handily. Had Fleury not turned a miracle — with Danault's first goal of the afternoon giving the Canadiens one to match the one scored by Golden Knights forward Brandon Pirri — the game would have been out of hand before the puck dropped for Period 2.

Goals for Jonathan Marchessault and Pirri, and one more from Danault, made it 3-2 Vegas at the end of the middle frame, leaving the Canadiens a herculean task to accomplish against a team that came into the game 13-0-1 when leading after two periods.

When you see the way Danault tied the game with 1:25 remaining — while Montreal's net was vacated and an extra player from their side was on the ice — you can't help but agree with his post-game assessment of his team's season to date. His effort on the play mirrored theirs through most of their games.

Former Golden Knight Tomas Tatar, who was traded to the Canadiens prior to the season, found some open space down by the goal line and he used it to find Max Domi by the side of Fleury's net. And then Domi

waited for Danault to get into position in the crease before sending the puck to his stick.

One whack from Danault off of Fleury's pad, another off the post, and a final one that sent the puck and half of his body over the goal line gave him his third tally and sent the Canadiens bench into a frenzy.

"I was willing to eat that puck and bring it into the net if I had to," Danault said.

It's that kind of determination that's allowed Montreal to maintain its grip on a playoff spot for all but a few days through the first half of this season.

As of Saturday, the Canadiens are riding into their Christmas break five points clear of the next best team in the Eastern Conference, nipping at the Boston Bruins' heels from the second wild-card position and having established the NHL's 12th best record (19-13-5).

"We're where we want to be, meaning we want to be in the running for a playoff spot," said Julien. "I'll tell you what: We're a decent team, but honestly I still think there's lots of work to be done. You see the game [today] and you see some of the other (less good) games and we're working on consistency and the little details, and that's where we gotta keep getting better in the second half.

"When we all play hard together, we're a fast team but we've also got to be able to play smart defensively. I thought we did a pretty good job tonight against a team that really excels on the offence and transition game."

Holding the Golden Knights to just 26 shots on goal — and just a few quality opportunities — was evidence to support Julien's point.

Brendan Gallagher, who helped set up two of Danault's goals, liked what he saw too. He hopes to see more of it when play for the Canadiens resumes in Florida on Dec. 28.

"I think we're learning a lot about ourselves," he said "We gotta continue to build on that and we understand the way we need to play in order to be successful. When we skate, we give every team in the league trouble, and that's got to be our strength. When we get away from that, we're a bad team, and I think we're starting to understand that.

"For the most part this year, we've been skating, we've been moving our feet. It puts teams on their heels, and when we can come at teams like that line after line with the speed we have I think it's got to be the identity of our group. I think it's why we've been getting the results we have so far."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1122576 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers looking for depth players to 'seize opportunities' on offence

Mark Spector

December 23, 2018, 2:14 AM

EDMONTON — Sometimes, circumstances mix together just so, the perfect concoction for a crisp slap in the face on a cool winter night.

A three-game losing streak. A Christmas break. A measuring stick game that gives everybody a close-up look at what a real Stanley Cup contender looks like — and just how far away that really is for Edmonton.

The Edmonton Oilers lost 6-3 to the Tampa Bay Lightning Saturday night, and with a three-day break and the season's halfway point just around the corner, it was time to take stock.

"We're going to need a little bit more out of everyone here. To win every night, it doesn't matter who you're playing... we're going to need a little better out of everyone," said Alex Chiasson.

Chiasson can talk, and he is fast becoming a leader here. He arrived on a PTO and sits third on the team with 16 goals. He played on a Stanley Cup champion last season in Washington, and knows what a good team looks like.

"This group has to learn how to play in close games," he said. "If you want to be a playoff team... you have to learn how to play being down one goal, or a tie game. Stick with it for 60 minutes. It seems like we lose our focus, change the way we want to play as the game goes on. That's something we have to address here, as players."

OK. That's the players' Christmas homework.

As for the front office, well, they're in a whole lot deeper.

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.

General manager Peter Chiarelli has a capped out this team despite having just two lines that can score, two lines that do not even remotely threaten the opposing goalie, and as thin a defence as you'll find out west. He's got a \$6 million Milan Lucic who scored on his first shot of the season and hasn't scored since, a free agent pick-up in Tobias Rieder who lives goalless on the perimeter, an invisible Ryan Spooner costing \$3.1 million, and the list goes on.

The lack of scoring depth had Connor McDavid (three assists) playing 23:27 on Saturday. After watching Tampa get goals from three lines — not to mention five points from Nikita Kucherov — Hitchcock came clean on his empty arsenal.

"We're leaning on people pretty heavy, and other people have to seize opportunities. You're right — we've got to get more," Hitchcock said. He's trying to "get more people to try to help. Unless it changes, it's looking a lot like we don't have enough support... for our group. We're going to end up running on fumes if we don't."

Meanwhile, Jesse Puljujarvi's big chance on McDavid's right wing was short but eventful. The big Finn dug a puck off the wall in the first period, fed it to Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, and he worked a nice give and go with McDavid for the game's first goal. Thirteen minutes into Period 2 however, with the Oilers clinging to a 2-1 lead, Puljujarvi couldn't handle a hot pass from Darnell Nurse.

The ensuing loose puck worked like a breakaway pass for Kucherov, who tied the game when he rifled one past Mikko Koskinen. Not the player you want to spring on a breakaway from his own blue line.

"(Puljujarvi) was playing a hell of a hockey game, and then... that happens," said Hitchcock. "But he's been a really good participant in helping us get better. So has J.J. (Jujhar Khaira, who served the first game of a two-game suspension). But we're going to need more; more people helping us — whether it's here or in the American Hockey League. We aren't getting enough support players."

When the third period opened, with Edmonton trailing 3-2, Puljujarvi had been replaced by Chiasson, and the young Finn was playing with Kyle Brodziak and Milan Lucic. His time with McDavid would be best be described as "OK," as he was neither a liability nor particularly dangerous.

Out west, almost everyone around the Oilers gave up at least a point on Saturday, so Edmonton squandered a chance to make up some ground. Still, as their Christmas break begins, the Oilers are tied for the second wildcard spot in the West.

That's a sight better than a year ago, when they were dead and buried before the halfway mark of the year. Now, it'll be up to Hitchcock to squeeze every drop he can out of his lineup, to avoid missing the playoffs here for the 12th time in 13 seasons.

"Rather than relying on the same people every night to do everything, I'm trying to get people connected. We're going to have to figure out who's helping and who's hurting, for us get to another level," he said.

"We can't keep doing it the same way over and over. It's not going to work."

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Sportsnet.ca / Mitch Marner's agent meets with Maple Leafs' GM in New Jersey

Josh Beneteau

15 December 22, 2018, 11:02 PM

Earlier this week Toronto Maple Leafs GM Kyle Dubas said he wants to lock up stars Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner as soon as possible, and now it seems like the wheels are turning with at least one of those player's agents.

Marner's agent Darren Ferris met with Dubas in New Jersey ahead of the Maple Leafs' game against the Devils on Dec. 18, and is expected to be in Toronto for two Maple Leafs home games this weekend, according to Sportsnet's Chris Johnston on Saturday Headlines.

But Johnston added he doesn't think Marner wants to sign during the season.

"While I believe the dialogue is positive, I'm still not convinced Mitch Marner wants to do a deal in season," Johnston said. "I believe he's still waiting for Auston Matthews but the dialogue has accelerated since Kyle Dubas met the media this week."

Sportsnet's Nick Kypreos added that part of the reason Marner might want to wait until the end of the season to sign an extension is because rival teams could send him an offer sheet.

"Not only Marner but many of these pending restricted free agents are certainly intrigued by the offer sheet," Kypreos said. "There's a lot of people I'm sure, including Kyle Dubas, who believe that's a lot of white noise. But behind the scenes I believe there are multiple teams telling these agents that there's a distinct possibility we will offer sheet your player."

"In saying that, there's a big difference between someone talking about that around Christmas and actually having the guts to do it on July 1."

Marner entered Saturday with 10 goals and 47 points, leading the team in scoring and putting him in the top 10 in points across the entire league.

While the summer is a long way off, this new development shows Dubas is going to do everything he can to avoid a long negotiation with Marner like the one he just had with William Nylander.

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Sportsnet.ca / What is the future of the Senators in Ottawa?

Josh Beneteau

15 December 22, 2018, 11:27 PM

Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk was counter-sued by his business partner this week as the plans for a downtown arena continue to deteriorate.

But according to Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman, the NHL is still set on keeping the team in the nation's capital long-term.

"When an owner gets sued for a \$1 billion you'd think the league is going to weigh in somewhere, but no. And that's because I believe they think they've got a lot of options to have this sort out," Friedman said on Saturday Headlines.

With the arena issues currently stalled, questions about the team's long-term future in Ottawa are starting to pop up. According to Friedman, commissioner Gary Bettman believes a new downtown arena is in the best interest for the club.

"The commissioner reminded the city sometime in the fall of the importance of the downtown arena, how much he believed it was important to the future of the Senators and how critical that would be to get, and I think they understand the message," Friedman said. "The problem is, just like the city didn't want it in the middle of their election (in 2018), the federal government, which is coming into their own election, they're not going to want it either. So we're about a year away probably at least until this is put back into the front burner and that's just not good for anyone."

The Senators entered a partnership with developer John Ruddy and his company, Trinity Developments, to build a \$4-billion arena development on a prime piece of land known as LeBreton Flats in downtown Ottawa. In Jan. 2018, the National Capital Commission (NCC), a federal body that manages government property including LeBreton Flats, agreed in principal to sell the land to Melnyk and Ruddy's RendezVous LeBreton group.

But the two sides of RendezVous had trouble agreeing on things from the start and in November, the NCC warned them that the sale could fall apart if the two didn't result their issues.

In late November, Melnyk filed a lawsuit against Ruddy for \$700 million. In the suit, Melnyk alleges the developer has a conflict of interest with another development near LeBreton that the Senators owner sees as direct competition to the arena project.

On Tuesday, Ruddy counterclaimed Melnyk for \$1 billion, alleging the Senators ownership has been evading its financial responsibility and wanted to rent the arena for free.

Neither claim has been tested in court.

As this turmoil continues, the Senators will likely be forced to remain in their current home in Kanata, Ont., a suburb 25 kilometres southwest of the capital, for the next four-to-five years. According to Friedman, the delay will turn the spotlight on Melnyk and whether he will want to sell the team.

"We know that Eugene Melnyk loves owning the Ottawa Senators and we know that he has said many times that he's not going to sell the Ottawa Senators," Friedman said. "We also know that at a board of governors meeting this year, there was a sale brought up but it was not at a number that the NHL thought was even remotely acceptable. The maximum that it was, was \$400 million and the word has got out that if

that's what you're going to do for the Ottawa Senators, don't even bother coming to the table.

"Now, as this continues over the next couple of years, and now we know that the Senators will be at Kanata for probably about four-or-five more years at least, people are going to wonder will that change? And will he begin to look around and hire companies to explore and say 'ok, what potentially is out there?' And I think that is going to become the biggest question because that is where they're going to be."

In response to Ruddy's allegation that Melnyk wanted a free arena, Friedman also detailed what the original partnership plan for the new arena was, before everything fell apart this fall.

"Before this whole thing started to fall apart in September, here is what I understand the deal was," Friedman said. "The city was going to own the arena; they were going to operate it through a governing body but the city was going to own the arena. The Senators were going to pay 100 per cent of the operating costs and they were going to pay 100 per cent of the upkeep costs. And they were going to feedback their debt over 25-to-35 years."

"Now people can decide if that's acceptable, but that's what the plan was."

It's been tumultuous year for the Senators on and off the ice, and Friedman's latest reporting suggests there is still a long way to go before the team can solve its arena issues.

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Sportsnet.ca / Flyers have had conversation with Kings about Jonathan Quick

Josh Beneteau

December 22, 2018, 11:08 PM

It's no secret the Philadelphia Flyers need goaltending help, and Sportsnet's Nick Kypreos reports the team is looking to acquire a veteran goalie to help stop the bleeding.

According to Kypreos, the Flyers have had a conversation with the Los Angeles Kings about Jonathan Quick, who is signed for four more years at \$5.8 million per season.

"There is some link between Jonathan Quick and the L.A. Kings and the Flyers," Kypreos said. "I don't think they're in contract talks but we believe there's been a conversation. In saying that, I wouldn't be surprised if those links start heating up in the new year."

Quick, who turns 33 in January, has spent his entire 12 year career in Los Angeles, including backstopping the team to two Stanley Cups in 2012 and 2014.

The Kings, like the Flyers, have struggled this season. The Kings entered play Saturday last in the entire league with a 13-20-3 record, while the Flyers are not much better with a 14-16-4 record.

Quick missed over a month this season after having surgery to repair a torn meniscus, and because of that has only made 13 starts this season. In those 13 starts he has a 3-8-2 with a .897 goals-against average and 3.16 save percentage.

The Flyers started their sixth goalie of the season this week when 20-year-old Carter Hart took the net on Tuesday against the Detroit Red Wings. While Hart has started his career with a 2-1-0 record, he's more viewed as the goalie of the future than the present in Philadelphia.

With veterans Brian Elliott and Anthony Stolarz currently injured, adding Quick would give the Flyers a more stable option in net while Hart develops in the AHL.

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TSN.CA / DiPietro, Scott to share goalie duties in final pre-competition game

Mark Masters

TSN reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on Team Canada, which held a practice on Saturday night at the Hollyburn Country Club in Vancouver ahead of their final pre-tournament clash against Finland on Sunday.

Mikey DiPietro will start Canada's final pre-competition game against Finland on Sunday, but will be replaced by Ian Scott halfway through.

"That gives them both the chance to play in Vancouver with all those fans and that environment before the tournament starts," head coach Tim Hunter explained. "So, they will have seen it, lived it. We're expecting it to be a full crowd. And the rink boards, glass, everything, these guys have to get used to all that stuff, the way the pucks rim, the way the pucks bounce off the boards and we want them to experience that in a game."

While DiPietro, a Canucks prospect, got into one period of a pre-season contest at Rogers Arena in September, Scott will be playing his first game in the building.

"It will definitely help," the Prince Albert goalie said, "getting used to the lights and the crowd and stuff like that."

"I'm kind of familiar with it," DiPietro noted, "but definitely a bigger stage and a lot more fans in the stands."

DiPietro is looking forward to getting reacquainted with the boards in the building admitting he's kind of forgotten what they're like.

What's the biggest difference about the feel of a bigger barn?

"The atmosphere," said DiPietro. "The momentum. You can really feel it in the arena, the excitement, so definitely a few nerves will be there."

"I find I don't think about it too much," Scott said. "Obviously, all the toys and stuff, it's pretty cool to look up at."

Canada opens the tournament with games on consecutive days (Dec. 26 v Denmark and Dec. 27 v Switzerland) so Hunter noted there's a "good probability" that DiPietro and Scott will split the first two starts.

"Then after that we can head in one direction or not," Hunter said, "but we'll see how it goes."

DiPietro, Scott will split final pre-competition game

With Canada's final pre-competition game taking place on Sunday night before the World Juniors kicks off, head coach Tim Hunter revealed that both Mikey DiPietro and Ian Scott will see action, so they both have equal chance to get used to a rink they will become very familiar with.

For the first time since blocking a shot off his hand in the final selection camp scrimmage on Dec. 14, Brett Leason practised with Team Canada.

"It felt really good," said the Prince Albert Raiders winger, who had been skating on his own this week. "I've just been thinking about it the past few days, just getting back with the team, skating, moving my feet, flying, shooting on goalies. I was really happy to be back."

And Leason, who led the WHL in scoring when he left for Canada's camp (64 points in 31 games), will play on Sunday against Finland.

"It'll be really good to be back, to be playing, to be moving fast and get a feel for how fast it's going to be before the tournament kicks off," he said.

Any discomfort remaining due to the injury?

"No, everything's back to normal."

Leason rotated in on the fourth line with Mackenzie Entwistle during Sunday's workout.

"He just practised there today with that group," said Hunter. "We didn't want to disrupt anything in practice. Today was about coming out and feeling the puck a little bit. We didn't do anything really arduous out here today. We'll work him in, we'll find a spot for him, we'll decide where he's going to play eventually. But right now we'll just get him in, get him some reps and see how he goes. He hasn't played a game in a while so we want to get through that as well."

Leason practised in the bumper/slot position with the second power play unit as Morgan Frost shifted to the left flank with that group. Noah Dobson was the odd man out.

Canada's Leason ready to return after fluke hand injury

Brett Leason hasn't gone through a full session with teammates since blocking a shot off his hand in the final selection camp scrimmage on Dec. 14, but he will see some action on Sunday night in Canada's final pre-competition game.

Jaret Anderson-Dolan describes it as "a nothing play." The Spokane forward was in his own end trying to do the right thing when disaster struck on Oct. 27.

"I was just boxing a guy out in front of my net and I turned and he was right there and I didn't get my legs behind me and I went to push into him and bent my wrist back," Anderson-Dolan recalled. "I didn't even know what happened, finished the game and then the next morning went for X-rays and found it was fractured."

The first thing he thought about?

"How it would affect coming here to World Juniors. I knew it would be right around the timeline for me to be back for this."

Anderson-Dolan had surgery in early November and his recovery was projected to take six to eight weeks. So, that meant even if he was ready for Boxing Day, Canada's staff would need to save him a spot with very little track record this season.

The Kings prospect did start the year in Los Angeles recording one assist in five NHL games, but only played two games with the Chiefs after being sent back to the WHL. That's not exactly an ideal lead up to the biggest junior tournament in hockey. And Anderson-Dolan wasn't able to participate in any of the selection camp scrimmages either.

But Hunter and the Hockey Canada brass were already sold on the Spokane co-captain, who also wore the 'C' for Canada at the under-18 World Championship in 2017.

"We really liked him," Hunter said. "I think he was the most detailed player in the way we were trying to play in the summer, the detail in the small things we're trying to do as a team. He was a leader in the summer and he has those capabilities. He's a great kid. He's enthusiastic."

Anderson-Dolan received positive feedback at the summer camp, but still wasn't sure that would be enough.

"The night they made the final cuts, they pulled me in and said, 'If you can prove you can play in a game and prove your wrist is ready to go then you have a spot.' At that point I still really didn't know if I'd be ready to play, but after that first week of practising, following that, it felt good and I was cleared for contact so once I found that out I was pretty excited."

Anderson-Dolan has been able to play in the pre-competition games this week and is already looking like his old self.

"It was a lot of relief," he admitted. "I was kind of on the edge of my seat."



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A relief to Hunter as well, who counts on guys like Anderson-Dolan to set the tone.

"He looks like he hasn't missed a beat," the coach said. "Stopping on pucks, climbing above the play, detailed with his stick, detailed with his routes, forechecking and tracking back in the D zone and competing on pucks, that's his game and that's why he's a likeable player, because he's detailed in all the little areas that our important to our game."

Nick Suzuki, who also played with Anderson-Dolan at the under-18 level, has enjoyed lining up beside someone who has such a keen understanding of the game.

"He knows what systems we're running at all times and he can remember plays like it's nothing so he's a good guy to have on the line," Suzuki noted. "He can bring up a bunch of plays from before like it just happened so it's pretty special to do that."

Where does Anderson-Dolan get his detailed nature?

"I think just lucky for me I've always been that way," he said, "raised that way and been around people that focus on details like that so it's always been a part of my game and part of my life. It's not really something I think about it's just kind of what I do."

All about the details: How Anderson-Dolan became Canada's comeback kid

Jaret Anderson-Dolan started the season in the NHL with the Kings and after getting sent back to Spokane in the WHL the forward seemed destined to play a big role at this year's World Juniors. But after breaking his wrist in just his second game back on Oct. 27, his hopes of playing for Team Canada appeared to be slim. Luckily for the Chiefs co-captain, a strong summer camp put him in coach Tim Hunter's good books.

—

Lines at Saturday's practice:

Forwards

Comtois-Glass-Tippett

Lafrenière-AndersonDolan-Suzuki

Frost-Hayton-Studnicka

Veleno-Bowers-Entwistle/Leason

Defence

Brook-Dobson

Phillips-Bouchard

Smith-Mitchell

McIssac

Goalies

Scott

DiPietro

Power play units at Saturday's practice:

PP1

Bouchard

Tippett-Studnicka-Glass

Hayton

PP2

Smith

Frost-Leason-Suzuki

Comtois

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TSN.CA / Canucks hope to head into holidays with a win

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – The Vancouver Canucks (17-17-4) hope to head into their holiday break on a high when they host the Winnipeg Jets (23-10-2) tonight at Rogers Arena.

The Canucks beat the St. Louis Blues 5-1 on Thursday night. After a slow start in which they were outshot 15-5 in the opening period, the Canucks scored twice in the second period and three more times in the third. Bo Horvat grabbed a share of the team lead with his 17th goal of the season while Adam Gaudette, Josh Leivo, Jake Virtanen and Loui Eriksson also found the back of the net.

Horvat has now scored in five of his last eight games. Leivo has goals in three of the last six games and has four goals and an assist in nine games with the Canucks. Virtanen's goal was his 11th of the season, which is a new career best.

Jacob Markstrom stopped 29 shots for his sixth consecutive victory. Markstrom has won all six of his decisions in December, stopping 162 of 172 shots. He has a 1.67 goals against average and .942 save percentage this month. He'll get the start again tonight and the Canucks will go with the same line-up they used on Thursday to beat the Blues.

Travis Green revealed Saturday morning that Brandon Sutter will likely join the team on its post-Christmas road trip. Sutter has missed 27 games with a separated shoulder suffered on October 29th.

The Canucks are on a run of 20 straight successful penalty kills over their past eight games. They have not surrendered a power play goal since December 4th against the Minnesota Wild. The Canucks' penalty killers have been perfect in nine of their last 10 games.

Alex Edler will appear in his 782nd NHL game tonight, all with the Canucks. He'll move past Harold Snepsts to set a franchise record for games played by a defenseman in a Vancouver uniform.

After Thursday's win, the Canucks are 6-1-1 in their past eight games and have points in nine of their past 13 (7-4-2). A year ago, the Canucks went into the Christmas break with a 15-17-5 record for 35 points in 37 games.

Winnipeg arrives in Vancouver on the heels of a 5-3 win in San Jose on Thursday. It was the Ehlers and Wheeler Show as Nikolaj Ehlers recorded his second hat trick in the past 12 games and captain Blake Wheeler had the primary assist on all three of Ehlers' markers. Dustin Byfuglien and Mason Appleton, with his first in the NHL, had the other Jets' goals while Connor Hellebuyck made 41 saves.

The win vaulted the Jets into top spot in the Central Division with 48 points. They are 6-1 in their last seven games and 10-2 in their past 12. They are tied for third in the NHL with 126 goals this season fueled by a league-best power play which is running at 29.2%.

Patrik Laine leads Winnipeg, and sits tied for third in the league, with 23 goals on the season. He is tied for the league lead with 10 power play goals. Mark Scheifele leads the team in points with 48 (21 goals and 27 assists) while Wheeler has 47 (five goals and 42 assists). Wheeler shares the league-lead in assists.

After three straight starts, Hellebuyck will watch from the bench tonight. Port Alberni native Laurent Brossoit will get the start in goal. He has won four straight games. His last appearance was a 4-3 win in Chicago on December 14th.

The Jets have owned this head-to-head matchup in recent years, winning seven straight games and 11 of the last 12 including both previous meetings this season. They were 4-1 winners on home ice on October 18th and beat the Canucks 6-3 at Rogers Arena on November 19th. Winnipeg registered 23 first period shots in that latest win. That is the most shots against the Canucks in a single period this season.

Projected lineup vs. Jets

Eriksson-Horvat-Virtanen

Goldobin-Pettersson-Boeser

Granlund-Gaudette-Leivo

Roussel-Beagle-Motte

Edler-Tanev

Hutton-Gudbranson

Pouliot-Biega

Markstrom

Projected Jets lineup

Ehlers-Scheifele-Wheeler

Connor-Little-Laine

Perreault-Roslovic-Tanev

Lemieux-Petan-Appleton

Morrissey-Trouba

Chiarot-Byfuglien

Kulikov-Myers

Brossoit

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TSN.CA / Maple Leafs prepare to get by without Hyman

Kristen Shilton

The Toronto Maple Leafs didn't see Zach Hyman's absence coming. The sturdy winger never lodged any complaints after he was slew footed into the boards on Tuesday in New Jersey, and Toronto fully expected he'd play again on Thursday against the Florida Panthers. But on that day, Hyman was clearly not at full health, and instead of playing, Hyman had an MRI that revealed an ankle sprain. He'll be out a minimum of three weeks for the Leafs.

"He's a key member of our group, on our line as well [with Mitch Marner]," said John Tavares after the Leafs' morning skate on Saturday, ahead of that night's game against the New York Rangers. "Just his consistency, his work ethic; a lot of little things he does very well. That doesn't always make it onto the score sheet, but he does so many good things."

Hyman, who has seven goals and eight assists in 32 games this season, doesn't just make his mark at even-strength. He's one of the Leafs' premier penalty killers, averaging the most minutes per game among forwards shorthanded (2:15). The penalty kill has been struggling more of late as it is, going 2-for-3 on its most recent outing without Hyman on Thursday. But Marner, a fellow penalty killer, says guys are prepared to step up and take on more responsibility.

"He's really our only right-hand shot that can take faceoffs, or that they let [take faceoffs]," he said. "So I think we lose that part, but this is where guys have to step up. [At 5-on-5], we have to make sure we're moving through the neutral zone fast and we're getting it in, making sure we have guys pressuring the D. We'll miss him for the time he's out, but we have to fill that spot now."

While Mike Babcock noted on Thursday that the Leafs' don't have enough "heavy guys" like Hyman, Travis Dermott thinks there are players available who can help there too. In fact, Dermott thinks an injury like Hyman's could be just what the Leafs need in the long run.

"Obviously Hym is a big player for us, losing him is going to be a bit of a setback," he conceded, "but in the middle of the season, it's just about trying to figure out your best game now and hopefully [it's] ready by playoffs. Until he's back we'll learn more about ourselves here and hopefully a few guys will step into that spot."

After all, the Leafs have already endured extended layoffs from Auston Matthews (14 games) and William Nylander (28 games) this season, so Dermott think the potential 8-10-game absence of Hyman will only call upon the same resiliency Toronto has already shown.

"It's bad as a personal thing [for the player], but as a team-wide thing it's almost better for guys to step in, get more opportunity, especially early on in the season," he said. "If it's going to happen, it's almost a good thing when guys are taking out for injuries or whatever and other guys get their shot."

* It was back in 2014-15 that Tavares notched a career-high 38 goals, midway through his nine-year tenure with the New York Islanders. In his 10th NHL season, and first with the Leafs, Tavares has 23 goals in his first 35 games, putting him on track to surpass that previous best with more than 50 goals.

Tavares doesn't think anything is particularly different about his game this season, only that he's executing a well-known principle of goal-scoring success: get to the net.

"I think I've always been around [the net], even when I was growing up and into junior," he said. "When [you get] to the NHL, you realize how hard it is to score goals and how good guys are defending and how good the goaltenders are. Trying to be versatile and finding different ways to score is key to being consistent all year long so I just try to be hard to play against and find different ways to produce."

Helping Tavares on that path has been the play of linemate Marner and the early potency of Toronto's top power play unit, on which he is stationed as the net-front presence. Tavares has five goals with the extra man this season, second only to Matthews' seven, and leads the team in even-strength tallies with 18.

"He figured out early in his career that all the goals are scored within a stick-length of the net, so he goes there," Babcock said of Tavares. "If you track the guys that don't score, they're never near the net. It doesn't matter how much you tell them. You don't beat the goalies from a distance in the NHL, you just don't."

That a player of Tavares' stature is still willing to get deep into the dirty areas to score hasn't surprised Marner at all. Most of the time, it's Marner who spies Tavares down low, and feeds him the passes that end up behind a goalie.

"[With] his ability to find the open man, it's my job to find the open space and get open and get my stick available," Tavares said. "Or to get to the net and anticipate pucks getting there and getting good body position and whatnot. Just working on those types of things and trying to read the play that way."

"[We hang] out outside the rink as well; that's something that can get your chemistry up and build a friendship on," added Marner. "We communicate better with each other. On the ice, we're talking a lot. We talk about most of the plays that happen throughout the game. We're both really focused I think in game on things we could do better and talking to each other about that."

Whatever Tavares is doing out there, it's not only working for him, but has been impressive to those watching him work as well.

"He's so good at everything he does," said Dermott. "I think that's really what makes him exceptional. He's so strong with his legs that it's really hard to get the puck off him, so when he gets those big legs out in front of your stick defensively it's pretty tough to get it off him."

* The Leafs were already caught off guard by Hyman having to miss Thursday's tilt, and then Igor Ozhiganov was suddenly sidelined too by a mystery illness that seemed to befall him during warmups. He took line rushes as usual next to Dermott, but when the Leafs returned to the ice before puck drop, Martin Marincin was in Ozhiganov's place and the rookie was ruled out against Florida.

It's not often that a player will so suddenly be inserted into the lineup without even a turn at warmups, but Babcock liked what he saw from Marincin in his seventh game of the season.

"I thought he played good," Babcock assessed of Marincin, who had one assist. "He's a good skater, has a good stick, smart guy. He just has to find a way to get in every day. No different than [Justin Holl]; he's a good d-man too, can play every day for you too. We just haven't got him in."

Holl will have to wait for his chance to play, with Babcock opting to go back to Marincin on Saturday. Ozhiganov did participate in morning skate, but wasn't at the level necessary to play against New York.

"We tried to give [Ozhiganov] some extra work here today, he couldn't do it," Babcock explained. "So he's not going."

When missing some regular skaters from the lineup – and even when they're not – minimizing self-inflicted problems will be paramount to Toronto's success.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

"That's like turning the puck over too much. Feeding the transition. Being too cute," Babcock said of the ways the Leafs have been hurting themselves lately. "We really believe if we can get rolling around the offensive zone, that we have enough weapons, enough skill, that we're going to hurt you. Everybody is way better when you spend no time in your own zone."

Projected lines vs. New York Rangers:

Johnsson-Tavares-Marner

Marleau-Matthews-Kapanen

Brown-Kadri-Nylander

Lindholm-Gauthier-Ennis

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Marincin

Andersen starts

Sparks

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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

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USA TODAY / Buffalo Sabres announcer Rick Jeanneret hospitalized during broadcast

Mike Brehm

12:38 a.m. ET Dec. 23, 2018

Buffalo Sabres announcer Rick Jeanneret fell ill during the broadcast of Saturday's game and was taken to a local hospital.

Jeanneret stopped talking early in the third period of a 3-0 victory against the Anaheim Ducks and was seen being taken out of Buffalo's KeyBank Center on a stretcher, the Buffalo News reported.

A Sabres spokesman said at midnight ET that there was no update on Jeanneret's condition.

According to the Associated Press, color commentator Rob Ray took over the play-by-play call after about 20 seconds of silence, then pregame and postgame host Brian Duff finished the game.

Here's the last thing Rick Jeanneret said on the Sabres broadcast tonight, following by several seconds of silence.
pic.twitter.com/HLfMTZpqsW

— Jon Campbell (@JonCampbellGAN) December 23, 2018

Jeanneret had appeared on the pregame show wearing a Santa suit.

Before being stricken tonight, Rick Jeanneret was dressed up as Santa, or as he noted "Old Saint Rick". <https://t.co/QLPreL64Ek#sabres>

— Eric Hornick (@ehornick) December 23, 2018

He was awarded with the Hockey Hall of Fame's Foster Hewitt Award in 2012 for outstanding contributions to hockey broadcasting. He had been calling Sabres games since the team's second season in 1971-72.

Jeanneret was diagnosed with throat cancer in the summer of 2014, but declared himself cancer-free that November.

He recently cut back his work to about half of the team's games.

USA TODAY LOADED: 12.23.2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 23, 2018

1122584 Websites

USA TODAY / Sharks' Erik Karlsson faces suspension over illegal hit to head against Kings player

Mike Brehm

12:39 a.m. ET Dec. 23, 2018

San Jose Sharks defenseman Erik Karlsson continued to roll Saturday afternoon as he was named second star of the game.

But his streak of eight games with an assist could come to a screeching halt because of an unpenalized hit that knocked the Los Angeles Kings' Austin Wagner out of the game.

The NHL's department of player safety tweeted after the Kings' 3-2 overtime victory that Karlsson would have a hearing Sunday for an illegal hit to the head.

The two-time Norris Trophy winner knocked Wagner woozy on the second-period play. The Kings player was spun around, hit the ice and got up but was wobbly as he skated to the bench. He eventually went to the dressing room and didn't return.

#DECEMBER22#LAKvsSJS 2nd period

For those that missed the Erik Karlsson hit on Austin Wagner
pic.twitter.com/nbsWCOh5cs

— John Smith (@HabsCorner) December 23, 2018

Karlsson, who has a clean history on supplemental discipline, had two assists in Saturday's game, giving him 10 since his assist streak began on Dec. 7.

Any suspension would end that streak.

Karlsson was acquired from the Ottawa Senators in September and got off to a slow start. Even with the assist streak, he has been held to two goals after totaling 84 from 2013-17.

USA TODAY LOADED: 12.23.2018