



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 26, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Carolina Hurricanes, in Whalers green, fight past Bruins 5-3

By Chip Alexander

For the first time in their history, the Carolina Hurricanes did not wear Carolina Hurricanes uniforms in a game.

They wore Hartford Whalers uniforms. Green Hartford Whalers uniforms, with the distinctive Hartford Whalers logo on the front.

It was different, it was strange, it was exciting. The Boston Bruins were on the ice Sunday at PNC Arena, adding to the retro feel and ready to play the Carolina Hurricanes wearing Hartford Whalers uniforms.

In the old days, the Bruins often beat up the Hartford Whalers. They appeared on their way to doing it again to those in green, taking a 2-0 first-period lead, but the Carolina Hurricanes would not be denied this day, winning 5-3.

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour had Sebastian Aho centering Teuvo Teravainen and rookie Andrei Svechnikov -- the line many Hurricanes fans have clamored to see. The results were immediate as Aho and Teravainen both had two goals and two assists -- each with a shorthanded score.

Defenseman Justin Faulk scored his first goal since Oct. 22 and goalie Petr Mrazek gamely battled his way through the game, making 27 saves, for his sixth win of the season.

"The guys prepared today, they had their own little chat and it really got them ready," Brind'Amour said. "You could see from the start they were engaged, even when we got down, and it was nice to see. The level of engagement, really for 60 minutes, it was there."

It was a throwback to the Carolina Hurricanes' past, when they once were the Hartford Whalers. Pucky the Whale, the old Hartford Whalers mascot, sounded the warning siren -- a pregame ritual for the Carolina Hurricanes at PNC Arena. Mike Rogers, once the Hartford Whalers captain, dropped the puck in a pregame ceremony, a faceoff "won" by Carolina Hurricanes captain Justin Williams.

"Throughout the day I was kind of like, 'I've never worn green' but it was fun, it was cool," Faulk said.

Less than a minute into the game, Hurricanes forward Jordan Martinook hammered the Bruins' Brandon Carlo along the boards. Game on, just like the old days.

The Bruins (20-13-4) did quiet things as forward Ryan Donato scored on a first-period power play -- the first of his two goals -- and defenseman Steve Kampf winged a long shot for a 2-0 lead after Boston had killed off a 5-on-3 power play by the Hurricanes.

"Down 2-0, I'm sure you get those thoughts in your head, 'Oh, God, this again,'" Aho said.

The Hurricanes fell behind the Pittsburgh Penguins 2-0 on Saturday and lost 3-0 as Sidney Crosby dominated play and Pens goalie Matt Murray thwarted every scoring chance. It was different this time.

"But the guys didn't hang their heads, kept at it and we got a break," Brind'Amour said.

Teravainen, on the right wing, attempted a centering pass from a tight angle, the puck hitting the glove of Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy and tumbling past goalie Tuukka Rask.

"Sometimes, that's what you need, a lucky goal," Teravainen said. "A lucky bounce and you feel better. It's those kind of things in the game of hockey that can turn things around."

It did for the Hurricanes, who scored three times in the second. Aho scored shorthanded, off a Teravainen pass, his shot getting through Rask and trickling across the goal line.

Then it was Aho, again. Teravainen had the pass into the slot and Aho let it fly for a 3-2 lead. McAvoy was the foil on both, being separated from the puck by Teravainen on Aho's first goal and by Aho before the second.

When Faulk let one go from the point, after a faceoff win by Williams, it was 4-2 and the crowd of 17,491 in full throat. Donato would score again late in the second, but Teravainen and Aho eased the tension level seven minutes into the third as the Hurricanes looked to kill off a Micheal Ferland hooking penalty.

Rask misplayed the puck in front of the net, nearly allowing Aho to complete a hat trick, but Teravainen was there to whip in a shot.

It was the first time since a November 2013 game at St. Louis that the Hurricanes had scored two shorthanded goals in a game.

As the game neared an end, the fans stayed in their seats, awaiting the postgame celebration. The players lined up, did the claps, they dropped to the ice in somewhat of a straight line.

Which was?

"A beached whale?" Faulk said.

Whatever, Brind'Amour liked it. He also liked hearing "Brass Bonanza," the old Whalers' goal song, played five times.

"Love it," he said.



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In Hurricanes' Hartford homage, a very un-Whalerslike comeback

By Luke DeCock

Coming into the game 14-15-5 was enough homage to the Forever .500s, as a Boston columnist once (appropriately) dubbed the Hartford Whalers. Going down 2-0 to the Boston Bruins in the first nine minutes was probably taking it too far.

The difference between then and now – yes, one of many differences between then and now – is that the Whalers never seemed to come back when that happened.

The Carolina Hurricanes, wearing the undead uniforms of their abandoned past on Sunday in this tribute game to the borrowed nostalgia of the unremembered '80s, to borrow a lyric from the unremembered aughts, actually did. Which was good, because it would have been a surly crowd instead of one that partied its way through the 5-3 win to an equally retro playlist, and not merely "Brass Bonanza."

There was something unavoidably surreal about seeing those jerseys back on the ice, the psychic dislocation that comes from watching something happen your brain accepted years ago wasn't possible. Like seeing man walk on the moon, except the man was a guy in a faded green Pucky the Whale costume and the moon was a place that, for hockey purposes in 1997, might as well have been lunar.

The Hurricanes did everything they could then to sever ties to their Whalers past and here they were, almost 21 years later, doing everything they could to leverage them.

The building was crowded and loud – more than the Hartford Civic Center could ever hold – and the lines for Whalers merchandise were long and lucrative. The former might have had more to do with the Hurricanes' comeback than the color of their uniforms; on most other Sunday evenings, the home fans would have been drowned out by the usual Bruins contingent. Not so on this one.

If that was the case, the decision to delve into the team's history came at a good time. This team has been on the ropes for a month, never more so than after the losses to Detroit and Pittsburgh over the previous three days, and the boisterous

environment couldn't have hurt. If the Hurricanes were running short on anything (other than, you know, goals) it was emotion, with patience worn thin and frustration piling up, and it was impossible not to get caught up in Sunday's retro shenanigans.

Putting Andrei Svechnikov with Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, the opposite of retro, didn't hurt either. Only Teravainen was even born the last time these jerseys were worn, and he was 2, so that line wasn't inspired by childhood memories as it generated two goals at even strength while Aho and Teravainen combined for two short-handed.

So many of these players are too young to remember the Whalers, let alone understand why their jerseys are such a big deal.

"Not really," admitted Petr Mrazek, who picked up the win wearing pads with Jason Muzzatti's old design. "But I like it."

The jerseys go on hangers until March, when they'll be worn in Boston in what could really be a scene, and the Hurricanes have five days before they have to get back to the real work of winning games in their real jerseys. They've been looking for a turning point, any kind of positive momentum to build upon, and this could be it.

Maybe delving into their past will give them a shove toward a new future.

Because it's important to remember that as beloved as the Whalers were, it's still a franchise that won a single playoff series in its entire existence. Despite the drought, even as it threatens to extend to a decade, the Hurricanes have won more and done more in Raleigh than the Whalers ever did in Hartford. At one point, the standards were higher here.

And if the Whalers jerseys can get back on the ice in an NHL game, as improbable as that once was, there's no reason the Hurricanes can't get back in the playoffs. There was a time when one would have seemed far more unlikely than the other.



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How are the Canes' Teuvo Teravainen and Sebastian Aho spending Christmas?

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes' Teuvo Teravainen was talking about Finnish Christmas traditions last week when the subject of Santa Claus came up.

"He's kind of Seabass's neighbor," Teravainen said.

Wait, what? Santa Claus is the neighbor of the Canes' Sebastian Aho back in Finland?

"Ask him," Teravainen said, nodding to Aho across the Raleigh Center Ice locker room.

Um, Sebastian, is Santa Claus really your neighbor?

"Yes he is," Aho said, and matter-of-factly. "I'd say it's about a two and a half hour drive from my place."

OK, so it's not like next door or just around the block. One Finnish legend has Santa Claus coming from Korvatunturi, in Lapland. It's in the northernmost reaches of Finland, with a lot of snow, a lot of reindeer and according to legend Santa's secret workshop.

Not that Aho, who is from Oulu, and Teravainen will be home for Christmas. The two forwards will spend their Christmas break in Raleigh.

"I haven't been home for Christmas in like seven, eight years," said Teravainen, a Helsinki native.

But he said his mother, Sari, is visiting this year. She'll be like most moms and see that her son has his favorite meals such as Karjalanpiirakka, a Finnish pie that has crust filled with rice porridge.

"Good Christmas food," Teravainen said.

Aho and his girl friend should join in, Teravainen said, which is fitting in that the two players are rarely away from each other during the season.

Teravainen lives in a fifth-floor apartment in the North Hills area. Aho is in the apartment directly below him.

Teravainen said he tries to be a good, quiet neighbor, saying, "I've learned to walk slow and smooth."

On the ice, it's all about speed and skill. Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour has had the two together on a line nearly all of the season, which suits both of them, and is using them on the power play and the penalty kill.

"We think the game the same way, pretty much," Teravainen said. "We're thinking quick, both of us. We pretty much know where the other is. I don't know but it just clicks pretty good on the ice."

In Sunday's 5-3 win over the Boston Bruins at PNC Arena, it was if they were playing a two-man game at times, even with

rookie Andrei Svechnikov on their line. Four of the Canes' scores were:

-- Teravainen with an excuse-me goal, the puck hitting the glove of Boston defenseman Charlie McAvoy and past goalie Tuukka Rask.

-- Aho scoring shorthanded after Teravainen took the puck from McAvoy along the boards and found Aho open in the slot.

-- Aho scoring again, pilfering the puck from McAvoy and getting the goal off a give-and-go with Teravainen.

-- Teravainen scoring shorthanded after Aho forced Rask to misplay the puck in front of the net.

With defenseman Justin Faulk scoring his first even-strength goal of the season, it added up to a nice win for the Hurricanes (15-15-5) on a festive night at PNC Arena when they wore the green Hartford Whalers jerseys as a tribute to the franchise past.

Aho and Teravainen matched their career highs with four-point games. Aho was named the first star of the game and Teravainen the second, although the order easily could have been flipped.

"They do think the game very similar," Brind'Amour said. "They're both pass-first guys and they both see the ice that way. They're looking to make that next play. They think a couple of plays ahead and that's a very unique gift most players don't have."

Brind'Amour said Aho, who has 14 goals and 24 assists, is "figuring out goals are fun to score and getting more aggressive in that area." He would like Teravainen, who the players and coaches call "Turbo," to shoot more.

Teravainen, 24, in discussing the season after a recent practice, was asked to assess his play.

"Not good, not bad," he said. "I feel I can play a lot better. I don't know. Sometimes, it goes your way and you get the bounces. When you don't get bounces your confidence is off. It's hard sometimes."

Teravainen got a bounce Sunday -- a big one for him and the Canes in the last game in a five-game homestand. He now has eight goals and 21 assists.

It was a good way to go into Christmas, which Teravainen calls his favorite holiday. It's time to relax, eat some good food, gather around the tree and open gifts.

"Maybe a few gifts but I don't have a tree," Teravainen said, smiling sheepishly. "I should but I've been a little lazy."

Maybe next year.



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No Whale fail: Hurricanes top Bruins 5-2 on Whalers Night

Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each had a goal and two assists to lead the Hurricanes

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — Nine minutes of Sunday's Whalers Night themed game, the Carolina Hurricanes really seemed to embrace the mediocre past of the franchise's former identity.

Already down two and a collective, "Oh no, not again" feeling admittedly coming from the coach and players, the Hurricanes turned the tables on Hartford's biggest rival, beating the Bruins 5-3 in front of 17,491 behind four points each from Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen.

The Bruins got a lucky bounce off Carolina defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk, then another off Jordan Martinook shortly after the Hurricanes failed to score on a 5-on-3 power play to jump ahead by two goals on a team that had scored just once in its last two games combined.

"We talked before the game — if anything happened, we have to stay strong and turn it around," Teuvo Teravainen said.

And the Finnish forward used a bounce to get Carolina back in the game.

Teravainen centered a pass toward Aho that bounced off Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy and past Tuukka Rask (32 saves) to cut the lead in half and press play on "Brass Bonanza" 12:55 into the game.

"It didn't look good when it got 2-0, but like I said, we got that break," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "And that's what we haven't had in really what feels like all year to turn the tide a little bit. And then we got a few more."

Teravainen was the catalyst again, this time on the penalty kill.

Forechecking while down a man, Teravainen delivered a check in the Boston zone and forced a turnover. He grabbed the puck and passed it to Aho, who was all alone in the slot and fired a shot that trickled through Rask to tie it just 89 seconds into the second period.

Aho then got in on the defense-first mentality, forcing a neutral zone turnover that led to an odd-man rush. Teravainen wound up with the puck and again dished to Aho, who blasted the puck home for a 3-2 lead at 7:11 of the middle frame.

"That was special. They were flying," Brind'Amour said of the Finns' play.

Defenseman Justin Faulk got his first goal since Oct. 22 — and first of the season at even strength — on a wrist shot through a Clark Bishop screen to make it 4-2 just past the game's midway point.

"He's had a lot of good looks this year — really a lot of our D have — and they just haven't gone in for him," Brind'Amour said of Faulk. "He needs a break, too, so maybe that's the one that can get him rolling."

The Bruins clawed their way back when, with 3:55 left in the second, Ryan Donato — who scored off van Riemsdyk to open the scoring — got his second goal of the night with a wrist shot that beat Petr Mrazek (27 saves) to make it 4-3.

But Teravainen and Aho weren't done.

Rask misplayed the puck in his own end with Boston on the power play, and Aho pounced. A scramble ensued, with the puck ending up on Teravainen's stick and then in the net for the second shorthanded goal of the night and an insurance goal at 7:20 of the third.

The two-goal cushion proved enough, and in head-to-toe green the Hurricanes celebrated their latest win with a beached whale Storm Surge.

For a night, the Forever .500s — the unfortunate label attached to the Whalers — were undefeated on the season. The coach even took a reluctant liking to the old fight song.

"Love it," Brind'Amour deadpanned.

One thing he did seem grateful for was the chance to perhaps enjoy the holiday break.

"The guys at least gave me a few days where I don't have to freak out," Brind'Amour said. "I can take a breath here, and then we obviously have to get right back to work. It was a great win, but we're still obviously not where we want to be."

Notes: Jordan Staal was again out of the lineup, along with Haydn Fleury, with a presumed concussion was replaced in the lineup by Clark Bishop. Phil Di Giuseppe was scratched and replaced by Janne Kuokkanen, who was called up from the AHL with Bishop Saturday night. Both were reassigned to Charlotte following the game. ... Andrei Svechnikov played on the top line with Aho and Teravainen for the first time. He was plus-1 with two shots and two minor penalties. ... Aho had a game-high seven shots on goal. he and Teravainen were plus-4, while McAvoy was minus-4 for Boston.



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Gold: A Whale of an unexpected Christmas present

By Adam Gold

The best gifts are always those that are unexpected.

On a night that was controversial for some, but fun for most, the Carolina Hurricanes gave their fans a Christmas experience to remember. A rousing, come-from-behind, 5-3 win over the Boston Bruins in which their best players dominated the game. And, it all came on "Whalers Night" when the team honored the franchise's Hartford heritage by wearing the iconic green uniforms of the Whalers and turning back the clocks to the mid 1980s.

Hey, if some of the more cynical fans wanted to call this a straight cash grab designed only to sell tickets and merchandise at The Eye, as well as shake up the hockey establishment, I'm not going to try to dissuade you from that position. Boiled down, that's exactly what it was. And, that the opponent was the "other" club from New England, would only further prove your point. It's also no coincidence that the Whalers will reappear in March when the club plays in Boston.

But, for 17,491 fans, Sunday night was a rare bit of fun in what has been a season of fits and starts, and far too many disappointing endings. That the win came after falling into a 2-goal pit only added to the surprise. We've been coming to this show for almost a decade, and the one thing that has been a constant has been the Hurricanes' glass jaw.

Only tonight, thanks to a great job of marketing — I mean honoring the franchise's New England roots — they were the Whalers. And, in front of a nearly sold out PNC Arena, the team in green didn't crack.

The Whalers hung in, even after failing to score on a 3-minute power play that featured 57 seconds of a 2-man advantage. Even after Bruins forward Noel Acciari made it 2-0 17 seconds after the penalty — HIS penalty — expired, the Whalers stuck to the plan. Then, four minutes later the bounces that had been going against them all year, turned in their direction.

Teuvo Teravainen, from fairly deep in the corner and behind the goal line, flipped the puck towards the net hoping it would carry across the slot to Sebastian Aho. But, it never got there. It hit the glove of Boston defenseman Charlie McAvoy and ricocheted behind Tuukka Rask for a 2-1 score and the Hurricanes had the break that gave them life. "I feel like we haven't got any bounces", Teravainen said following the win. "That was the break we needed and we played much better after."

Did they ever.

Teravainen and Aho, always close, brought home matching score sheets. Each with two goals, one short handed, a pair of assists and a plus-4 rating. It was straight dominance all

over the ice and it's the way it has to be for this team to have success until reinforcements arrive either through a trade, recall or internal improvement.

At the start of the second, with the Bruins' power play on a clean sheet of ice, Teravainen forced a turnover from McAvoy. He slid the puck to Aho in the slot who's slinging wrist shot trickled through Rask's pads and crawled across the goal line for a 2-2 tie. It was Aho's 13th of the year and his second short handed. About six minutes later, Aho hounded McAvoy along the right wall forced another turnover and Teravainen ended up with the puck. It got back to Aho who ripped another shot past Rask and the Hurricanes were suddenly in the lead.

Alert the media! Break into network programming! Scream it from the top of mountains!

Four and a half minutes later, Justin Faulk laced a wrist shot from the right point that beat Rask to the far side thanks to a great screen from Clark Bishop. For Faulk, it was his first goal since October 22. "I didn't throw the monkey off my back like Foges did", Faulk joked referring to Warren Foegele's celebration following HIS first goal in more than two months. "But, it's nice because anytime you can get a 2-goal lead that's huge."

Faulk may have downplayed his role in the win, but make no mistake, his team desperately needs an offensive contribution from a player who averaged 16 goals a year for the three seasons prior to 2017-18.

I've written this before, but this team treads a fine line between winning and losing. Even on nights when they do things right it still might not work out. But, when their best players leave a mark on the game they stand a chance. And, when they get energy and more from the likes of Jordan Martinook and Foegele, who's line centered by Lucas Wallmark managed to hold Boston's top line of Patrice Bergeron, Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak completely off the score sheet, the chances for success skyrocket.

Then you get to the intangibles. When asked about how the team managed to recover from the early deficit, especially considering the loss to Pittsburgh less than 24 hours earlier, head coach Rod Brind'Amour had the answer. "They prepared today." He said, "They had their own little chat and Willie (Captain, Justin Williams) got them ready."

The fans unwrapped an early present. The Whalers earned the holiday break. Now, when the season begins Thursday in Washington, lets see if the Hurricanes can keep the magic going.

No matter the name, or the colors they wear, Sunday night was a welcome sight. And, it should make for a Merry Christmas to all the Caniacs.



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Recap: Finns Lead Canes Past Bruins

Aho, Teravainen each record four points

by Michael Smith

Powered by four-point nights from both Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, the Carolina Hurricanes topped the Boston Bruins, 5-3, on Whalers Night in Raleigh.

Aho and Teravainen each scored two goals, including one shorthanded tally apiece, and recorded two assists to help the Canes close out their five-game homestand with a win.

Here are five takeaways from Whalers Night.

One

Aho, who was born more than three months after Hartford played its final match, and Teravainen each had a whale of a game.

The Finnish duo combined for eight points, with each player recording two goals and two assists, matching career highs for points. Aho and Teravainen both factored into four of the Canes' five goals, and the two have hooked up for a point on the same goal 25 times this season.

"It was a good game for us. It's nice to produce some points, too, but a big win for us," Aho said. "I felt like the whole team was in the game. Everyone played really well."

"That was special. They were flying," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It was nice to see them get rewarded."

Two

At first, this one seemed like the same old tune for the Hurricanes.

Just 2:40 into the game, Torey Krug's point shot bounced around in the slot. Ryan Donato got a stick on it, and the puck popped up and bounced off Trevor van Riemsdyk into the net.

Later, after the Hurricanes failed to capitalize on 57 seconds of a 5-on-3 advantage and the remaining conventional 5-on-4 power play that followed, Steven Kampfer's wrist shot from the point had eyes through traffic to give the Bruins a 2-0 lead.

"It felt like the same old thing was going to happen. They got kind of a weird one to start the game. Bounced around," Brind'Amour said. "Then you get down 2-0. We were actually playing fine."

"Down 2-0, I'm sure you get those thoughts in your head like, 'Oh, God. This again,'" Aho said. "But it was really good to see that our team can come from down 2-0 against a good team."

Three

The Hurricanes worked to get a bounce of their own just four minutes after falling in a two-goal hole. Teravainen tossed the puck toward the net - a pass, he said, that was looking for Aho

darting toward the net, of course - that Charlie McAvoy gloved into his own net.

The Canes would take that. 00:48 • December 23rd, 2018

"That sometimes what we need - a lucky goal or a lucky bounce," Teravainen said. "We just worked hard. We got a few good bounces."

"The guys really dug in. They didn't hang their heads. They just kept at it," Brind'Amour said. "Then, we got a break to get on the scoresheet. Banged one off their D in front. That hasn't happened much this year, so it was nice to see."

With literal assists from Teravainen, Aho helped the Canes take over in the second period. On an early penalty kill, Teravainen forced a McAvoy turnover along the far boards. He then dished to Aho in the slot for the one-timer that trickled through Tuukka Rask and in the net.

Six minutes later, it was Aho forcing another McAvoy turnover at the blue line, and the Canes took the puck the other way. Teravainen fed Aho in the middle of the ice for another one-timer and another goal to give the Canes a 3-2 lead.

"When you score, you get more confidence. That's how it goes," Aho said. "I'm feeling pretty good right now, but it's not just me. My linemates helped me out a lot."

In the third period, Teravainen stretched the Canes' lead back to two goals with a shorthanded goal of his own. Rask misplayed the puck along the side of the net, and Aho nearly potted his third of the game. Instead, Teravainen was there to clean up the mess.

Four

Justin Faulk was the only goal scorer for the Canes not named Aho or Teravainen. Off an offensive zone faceoff win past the midway point of the second period, Micheal Ferland pushed the puck up to Faulk at the point. His wrist shot beat Rask through traffic in front, his first goal since Oct. 22.

"We'd hope that it means getting him a few more. He's had a lot of good looks this year," Brind'Amour said. "Maybe that's the one that can get him rolling."

Five

Less than 24 hours after being shut out by the Pittsburgh Penguins, it felt as though the Canes returned to the ice with a renewed sense of energy - not an easy task, especially considering the rut the team had been in after winning just two of their nine previous games in December.

It didn't take long for the tone to be set. On his first shift of the game, Jordan Martinook laid out Brandon Carlo behind his own net. And though the Canes would fall down 2-0, they



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didn't mail in the final two-and-a-half periods. They just kept playing.

Credit that positive outlook and evident energy to the locker room, Brind'Amour said.

"The guys. They prepared today. They had their own little chat. Willy got them ready," Brind'Amour said. "You could see from the start they were engaged, even when we got down. That was nice to see. The level was engagement, really for 60 minutes, was there."

The Canes capped their 5-3 victory with the patented Storm Surge celebration. After the clap in unison on the blue line, the team laid down on the ice. So, what exactly was that?

"We were whales," Aho explained.

Beached whales?

"Yeah, exactly. Those ones," he said with a smile. "You're laughing, so I guess it was good."

Up Next

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays! The NHL rests from Dec. 24-26, and the Canes will be back in action in Washington on Dec. 27.

"I'd love to get some sleep. The guys at least gave me a few days where I don't have to freak out," Brind'Amour joked. "I can take a breath here, and then we've got to get right back to work. It was a great win, but we're obviously still not where we want to be."



Whalers Night features 'Brass Bonanza,' Pucky and those great uniforms

Hurricanes fire up the fun in homage to franchise's old days

by Daniel O'Leary

What a whale of a night.

The Carolina Hurricanes dipped into their past for a game on Sunday against the Boston Bruins, donning the classic uniforms of the Hartford Whalers.

The Hurricanes franchise was known as the Whalers until 1997.

The reason for the celebration was simple, according to Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon.

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The team went all out in celebration of all things Whalers, starting by changing the profile pictures on all social media accounts to the famous whale tail logo.

The uniforms were just as incredible as we all remember.

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Goalie Petr Mrazek had a custom mask and pads made for the occasion.

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Even Pucky, the Whalers mascot, was in attendance.

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And, of course, when a goal was scored, "Brass Bonanza" was played.

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And, because it is 2018, emojis were tweeted.

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After the 5-3 win, the players, who have found unique ways to celebrate all year, went with what sort of looked like whales out of water in celebration.

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All in good fun.



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Hurricanes score twice on penalty kill, defeat Bruins

Teravainen, Aho each has shorthanded goal, four points for Carolina on Whalers Night

by Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each scored a shorthanded goal and had four points for the Carolina Hurricanes in a 5-3 win against the Boston Bruins at PNC Arena on Sunday.

Aho and Teravainen each had two goals and two assists, Justin Faulk scored and Petr Mrazek made 27 saves for Carolina (15-15-5), which had lost five of its past six.

The win came on a night the Hurricanes honored their heritage by wearing Hartford Whalers jerseys for the first time since the franchise moved from Connecticut to North Carolina in 1997.

"It was a pretty special night," Teravainen said. "For Christmas, we just wanted to put everything out there and work as hard as we can. Thank God we made it happen this time."

Ryan Donato scored two goals and Brad Marchand had two assists for Boston (20-13-4), which had won three in a row. Tuukka Rask made 32 saves.

Donato gave the Bruins a 1-0 lead at 2:40 of the first period on the power play when his rebound attempt in the crease went in off Hurricanes defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk.

"He was around the net getting his nose dirty, and we like that, especially on the power play," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "That's his bread and butter, his shot."

Steven Kampfer extended the lead to 2-0 at 8:56 on a shot from the right point.

"It's not nice when you're down 2-0 early in the game, but we didn't panic," Mrazek said. "We were good in the defensive zone all game. It wasn't like on the first two goals we did something wrong. The first one went off [van Riemsdyk], the second one off [Jordan Martinook's] shin pad."

Teravainen cut it to 2-1 at 12:55 when his attempt at a cross-ice pass deflected in off the glove of Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy.

"The guys dug in, they didn't hang their heads and we got a break," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

Aho scored shorthanded to tie it 2-2 at 1:29 of the second period, taking a pass from Teravainen and scoring five-hole on a one-timer.

"When you score, you get more confident," Aho said. "It's how it goes. I'm feeling pretty good right now, but it's not just me.

My linemates (Teravainen and Andrei Svechnikov) are helping me a lot."

Aho gave the Hurricanes a 3-2 lead at 7:11. After forcing a turnover by McAvoy at the blue line, he took a pass from Teravainen and scored in the slot on a 3-on-1.

Faulk scored from the right point to give Carolina a 4-2 lead at 11:47. It was his first goal since Oct. 22 (26 games).

Donato scored to make it 4-3 at 16:05 after he cut to middle of the ice and shot to the far post.

Teravainen scored a shorthanded goal to make it 5-3 at 7:20 of the third period. Rask mishandled the puck at the side of the net, and Teravainen got the rebound in the slot off Aho's initial shot.

"A huge mistake by me, and there's the game," Rask said. "The way I see it, it was an early Christmas present for the fellow Finns (Teravainen and Aho)."

They said it

"The focus, the execution, I'm not going to hide from it, we made some bad plays that ended up in the back in the net. Early on, from below the goal line, we had trouble breaking pucks out. The goalie handles got involved in that, and they were very poor." -- Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy

"After the last (few games), it was tough on us. Guys were feeling it. Guys were pretty unhappy and embarrassed as a group. I don't think anyone in here was comfortable with our performance the last little bit. We always say you need something to build on and hopefully this provides that. Obviously, you don't want to sit home and be grumpy with all your family at the holidays." -- Hurricanes defenseman Justin Faulk

Need to know

Marchand has had two assists in three straight games and has 17 points (five goals, 12 assists) in the past nine games. ... The Bruins are 6-1-1 in the second game of a back-to-back this season. ... Aho has 10 points (six goals, four assists) in eight games against the Bruins; Teravainen has 12 points (five goals, seven assists) in 11 games against Boston.

What's next

Bruins: Host the New Jersey Devils on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; SN360, SNE, SNO, NESN, MSG+, NHL.TV)

Hurricanes: At the Washington Capitals on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; NBCSWA, FS-CR, NHL.TV)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Aho leads Carolina past Bruins 5-3 on Whalers Night

By Joedy McCreary

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes brought back the Hartford Whalers for a night, and two of their younger stars kept “Brass Bonanza” seemingly playing on repeat.

Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen each had two goals and two assists and the Hurricanes beat the Boston Bruins 5-3 on Sunday while wearing Whalers uniforms for the first time since moving 21 years ago.

Aho, a 21-year-old who was born three months after the Whalers’ final game, had his fourth career four-point night and his second in five games, while it was the third for his linemate Teravainen. They assisted on each other’s two goals.

“Obviously, when you’re scoring, you get more confidence. That’s how it goes,” Aho said. “It’s maybe a little bit easier to score when you get a couple of goals. I’m feeling pretty good right now, but it’s not just me. My linemates are helping me out a lot.”

The Hurricanes scored four straight goals — three in the second period — to erase an early 2-0 deficit and snap a two-game losing streak that had left them two points out of last place.

“You could see from the start, they were engaged, even when we got down,” coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “That was nice to see the level of engagement for 60 minutes. ... (The Bruins are) going to have their moments, and they did, but I felt like we just kept battling, and we got the win.”

Justin Faulk also scored for Carolina, which scored two short-handed goals for the first time since 2013.

Ryan Donato had two goals, Steven Kampfer also scored and Brad Marchand had two assists for the Bruins, who had won three straight and six of eight.

Tuukka Rask made 32 saves for Boston, which pulled to 4-3 on Donato’s blast with 3:55 left in the second period. But the Bruins goalie made a critical miscue in the third, turning the puck over near the left post, and that led to Teravainen’s short-handed goal that put Carolina back up by two with 12:40 remaining.

“Huge mistake by me, and there’s the game,” Rask said. “The way I see it, it was just an early Christmas gift to the fellow Finns.”

Petr Mrazek stopped 27 shots for the Hurricanes, who broke out the throwbacks to celebrate their Hartford Whalers heritage, donning jerseys with the whale-tail logo for the first time since they moved to North Carolina in 1997 and left plenty of hurt feelings back in Connecticut.

While former owner Peter Karmanos Jr. preferred to leave the Whalers in the past, his successor, Tom Dundon, has fully embraced the organization’s old identity — stating his desire for a turn-back-the-clock game within weeks of buying the team in January.

And when Teravainen cut the Hurricanes’ deficit to 2-1 with 7:05 left in the first, they piped “Brass Bonanza” over the PNC Arena speakers.

“We wanted to just put everything out there, and work as hard as we can, and thank God we made it happen this time,” Teravainen said.

That catchy tune blared again three times in the second, twice courtesy of Aho. He tied it with a short-handed goal 89 seconds into the second, then scored the go-ahead goal with a kneeling-down shot from the slot at 7:11.

The nostalgia ran deep throughout this one, with chants of “Let’s go Whalers” occasionally breaking out during the game. And the latest twist to the Hurricanes’ post-victory celebration on the ice — after their coordinated claps, the players flopped to the ice as if they were beached whales.

“You’re laughing, so I guess (the idea) was good,” Aho said.

NOTES: Carolina C Jordan Staal was scratched with an upper body injury. ... A slightly less-intense version of one of those storied Bruins-Whalers fights took place early between Boston D Brandon Carlo and Hurricanes RW Andrei Svechnikov — who was born 3 years after the Whalers moved. ... Carolina will bring its Whalers throwbacks to New England for its game at Boston on March 5.

UP NEXT

Bruins: Play host to New Jersey on Thursday night.

Hurricanes: Visit first-place Washington on Thursday night.



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Hartford Courant

Mike Anthony: Whalers Night wasn't an insult, it just fell flat

By Mike Anthony

For a fleeting moment, if one were able to block out the other sights in the building and ignore the feelings of disenchantment solidified over 21 years, it was beautiful.

The Carolina Hurricanes, what became of the team ripped from our Hartford hockey hearts in 1997, hit the PNC Arena ice Sunday evening as the Whalers reincarnated and, man, did those green jerseys pop. The iconic logo never looked better. In a temporary and twisted way, the whole scene and theme of "Whalers Night" even felt good.

For only that moment, though, only at the outset of this bizarre event, one of the strangest in history with ties to our sporting landscape, one that ultimately was more about personality conflict and confusion than recapturing the past or realizing a fantasy. It was kind of sad, really.

Brass Bonanza blared and Pucky The Whale shook hands throughout the game, a 5-3 WhalerCanes victory over the Bruins that was played before a near-sellout crowd of 17,491, a collection of hockey fans mismatched in green and red at the collision of past and present.

It didn't feel right. It was unsettling. It wasn't the horrendous affront to pride in what took place at the Civic Center in the 1980's and 1990's like the most vocal faction of Connecticut fans made it out to be. It was just forced, uncomfortable, manufactured romance.

No more, please. We ask this of the good people at the Hurricanes, who put on a terrific show and were all in on creating a unique theme and scene, however misguided it turned out to be. These hockey communities must go their separate ways for good now, no harm done, no memories trashed, but nothing gained.

Of course, the Canes will wear the same green jerseys, with the perfect whale tail and negative space H on the chest, March 5 in Boston -- planned, scheduled and announced in conjunction with whatever the heck it was that took place Sunday on Tobacco Road -- and then the sweaters will be auctioned off for charity, with some of the return going to the Learn to Play program at the Champions Skating Center in Cromwell.

And then, that's it. Has to be. As sure as the Whalers uniform and logo still work, Whalers Night does not. The Hurricanes, the most disgruntled fans say, essentially dug up Whalers graves and picked through our heartstrings to skate around in the dead skin of our Adams Division heroes. But so what? It was a little money grab that any forward-thinking business might try.

"Well, I don't know where a money grab is because, first of all, Boston is always a great draw for us," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said in his office before the game. "All

I know is I spent \$100,000 on goalie equipment, helmets, gloves -- those things don't have the value. Now the jerseys will do a purpose, but all that money is going to go to our foundation and not back to our hockey team. This was never, absolutely not -- I would totally disagree that it was a money grab at all."

Few will buy that but we also must understand that no franchise is going to break the bank with a marketing gimmick. Whalers gear has been readily available on the open market for nearly 10 years and the logo, owned by the NHL, is all over the place. Teams take only a percentage of that revenue.

Sure, the lines snaked out of the Canes souvenir shops and there was a lot of green in the crowd and the registers surely rang Sunday, but this is not how a hockey organization secures financial health. Nor is it how the Canes, third from last in NHL attendance, would go about drawing new fans. It was about engaging, staying fresh, and that's OK.

Peter Karmanos, Hartford enemy No. 1 for moving the team in 1997, sold it in January to an ambitious, involved and progressive Texas billionaire named Tom Dundon. Whalers Night had been thrown around as an idea for years but never made sense with Karmanos, who does maintain an equity stake, at the helm. Dundon told the team to run with it, so here we were Sunday, the NHL again infiltrating our world, this time from afar.

It wasn't insulting because we can't let it be. The NHL is no closer to a return to Hartford with or without it. Nothing we cherish was taken away. The team has been gone from Hartford longer than it was even there, and Sunday night didn't represent a malicious stab at a fresh wound.

It just, from a Hartford perspective, fell flat.

Like "Let's Go WhalerCanes" chants fell flat. Like the Mike Rogers ceremonial puck-drop fell flat. Like the postgame team routine fell flat -- literally and figuratively -- with players flopping to the ice as beached whales in a themed celebration. Like Brass Bonanza -- and I never thought I'd say this -- sounded flat. It came off as hokey with each goal simply because of its audience, which seemed to appreciate that it was cute and catchy but could never be moved by it the way our city was in the 1980's and 90's.

Those folks shouldn't be. It isn't theirs. It is ours, unofficially but certainly. Carolina fans did nothing wrong in having a little family fun, but their traditions mixed with ours made for a strange recipe. Fans wearing Whalers jerseys and Hurricanes hats, or vice versa, looked ridiculous.

Advertisement

There were, to put it mildly, conflicting feelings in Connecticut in advance of the event. Guess what?



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"Here, too," Waddell said.

That's right. Many Canes fans don't want any part of the Whalers. The Whalers belong to Hartford and the Canes belong to Raleigh. They are exclusive and we have to treat it that way now, but that doesn't mean a public meltdown needs to take place. It only makes Connecticut look bitter and weak.

Those on Twitter who aren't even old enough to remember the Whalers but somehow were so appalled Sunday, and even more so those who think the team is on its way back, need to get a grip. It was just the Hurricanes in costume against the Bruins — no Ron Francis, no Cam Neely -- and people innocently playing along.

Yes, for a moment it was like looking at a great scrap book. Breathtaking. But the moment has passed. Waddell even seems to understand this.

Asked if the franchise should be reconnecting with its old fan base, he said, "I'm not so sure. There are still probably a lot of people who are bitter that the team left. So I don't know if you could ever do anything to ever make people feel good about the situation."

So let's not. The only way something like this should be attempted again is if it takes place in Hartford with an enormous charitable benefit.

Green and red just don't work together.

Merry Christmas.



Whalers Night brings back fond memories, beautiful threads

By Scott Billeck

It's been over 20 years since the Hartford Whalers took the ice for a hockey game in the National Hockey League. On Sunday, their spirit was resurrected one more time on Whalers Night at PNC Arena in Raleigh.

The Carolina Hurricanes — who moved from Hartford for the 1997-98 season — paid homage to their former selves by donning their old threads and green helmets as they faced off against former Northeast Division foes in the Boston Bruins.

And my, oh my, did those sweaters look great on the ice once again.

"The motivation was primarily around [the fact that] it's interesting, it looks great and it's a way do something different," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon told NHL.com. "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."

Of course, no Whalers game would be complete without that iconic goal song, the Brass Bonanza.

Teuvo Teravainen did the honors, scoring at 12:55 of the first period to get fans into the groove.

And then it happened three more times in succession as the Whalers... err... Hurricanes battled back from being down 2-0 to lead 4-2.

The Hurricanes went on to win 5-3. Teravainen added another goal for a two-goal night, and Sebastian Aho had two of his own in the win.

Petr Mrazek, who had a beautiful special mask made to mark the occasion, made 27 saves.

Other highlights included the return of Pucky the Whale, Hartford's old mascot (who was never a physical mascot during their time in Connecticut).

There, of course, was a ceremonial puck drop to be had, too.

Whalers legend Mike Rogers was on hand to do the honors.

The Whalers have quite the history and a who's who of some of the greatest ever to play the game in their lineage — from their days in the World Hockey Association to their integration into the NHL.

Paul Coffey, Ron Francis, Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull, Dave Keon are among the legends to wear Whalers green.

The Whalers uniforms will be back on the backs of the Hurricanes in March when they face Boston at TD Garden.



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About Last Night: A Whale of a Time

This might end up being a statement win for the season, but it was definitely a statement win for the franchise.

By Jake Crouse

The Carolina Hurricanes honored their tradition on Whalers Night, but they also honored the generally positive preseason views placed on them with their performance in a 5-3 win over Boston.

It's been a slog of a season, with more losing streaks than winning streaks. There was hope that with two of the top young forwards in the league, a top blue line, a No. 2 Draft pick who was ready to play on the first day and an AHL affiliate with a motor that the Canes had a good path to snapping their lengthy playoff droughts. But morale — and ticket sales — have sunk lower and lower.

But on Christmas Eve Eve, a packed PNC Arena got to see the home team play an exciting brand of hockey and defeat a playoff-bound opponent. Plus going to bed with "Brass Bonanza" ringing in your head isn't so bad.

Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen were both on the cusps of hat tricks after scoring some slick goals. But one of the most noticeable things about the duo on Sunday was the willingness to be a pest against the Bruins in the offensive zone, which ultimately led to a pair of goals.

The second period began with a Bruins power play that carried over from the first period, and the Canes established a strong kill to set the tone. After Aho calmly guided a puck out of the Canes' zone, Teravainen skated in to apply whatever pressure he could. Tuukka Rask, instead of carrying the puck behind the net for a setup, tipped it into the corner, and Turbo smelled blood.

He worked Charlie McAvoy (tough night) against the glass and took the puck away, then Aho crashed the open slot to receive a pass and go five-hole to tie the game after being down 2-0 early.

Shortly after, Aho decided to give some of his own business to McAvoy, risking a high stick to make a play. As McAvoy attempted to skate the puck out of the Bruins' zone, Aho threw his stick across McAvoy's chest to take his handles away, and Teravainen collected the puck just outside of the blue line. Turbo drew McAvoy, leaving another wide-open shot for Aho from the slot. 3-2.

In older days, those bigger and more vicious guys like Jordan Staal, Micheal Ferland and ... [checks card] ... Clark Bishop (!) would be the one to annoy the living hell out of the opponent's with their bodies. Now, speedsters with less punch but great awareness like our two Finns are proving their worth in defensive mode.

Speaking of those two, another interesting point of tonight's win was the glance we got at some Aho - Teravainen - Andrei Svechnikov units. Of little surprise, they were in the offensive zone a lot.

All three were on the ice were on the first goal, a semi-fluky one that Teravainen put off McAvoy (seriously, tough night) in front of the crease. But the trio kept possession for a long while to keep the Bruins breathing heavy before Slavin put the puck off the corner that found Teravainen for the goal.

And on the aforementioned Aho goal, in which he chopped McAvoy to set up the entry, Svechnikov played a big part in tiring out the Bruins yet again. He created a zone entry, badgering two Bruins to get the puck deep, and after he lost it, came back up the glass to create heavy pressure. The puck barely crossed the blue line before Svechnikov fed it back in, then he went off for a change to put Foegele on the ice when the goal was scored.

There aren't very many highlights of "generally good shifts," but our rookie deserved a few for his play.

One of the few problem areas I saw in the game was that Petr Mrazek, who stood strong at the end and got a big win, sat deep in his crease on shots from distance. That helped led to two goals, though a screen was pretty heavy on the first. It's hard to stretch the blocker wide to stop a shot like, say, Ryan Donato's slapshot.

It's pretty weird to see the guy who has done interpretive dances feet from the crease in desperation be so conservative in staying inside his blue paint last night. Hopefully, he and the coaching staff will sit down and talk it over.

But to be honest, I'm just happy last night happened. Let the Hartford natives say what they will. I get there's a level of heartbreak with a team not just leaving (RIP my OG team, the Pee Dee Pride), but also with rights to your icons and colors.

I'm not going to feel bad, though, because look what it did on Sunday for Raleigh. A packed house. A loud crowd. A mix of colors from red to green to yellow. The players loved it and the fans there loved it.

It was important to get a win out of that. It was just extra sugar on Santa's cookies that the Bruins chants in the first period were drowned out by Canes and Whalers chants as the home team ran off with the win.

That's all that matters to me. It may not be a statement win for the team this season, but it was one for the franchise and its history.

Following the game, Bishop and Janne Kuokkanen were reassigned to the Charlotte Checkers.



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Aho, Teravainen lead Hurricanes to big win over Bruins on Whalers Night

Aho and Teravainen both netted two goals in Carolina's come-from-behind win over the Bruins on Sunday.

By Brett Finger

Sunday afternoon's matchup between the Carolina Hurricanes and Boston Bruins was important for a variety of reasons.

For starters, the Hurricanes had started 1-2-1 on their crucial 5-game homestand and had just fallen below NHL .500 against the Pittsburgh Penguins less than 20 hours before hand.

Also, it was a special night as they honored the history of the franchise. The Canes were green-jersey clad on Whalers Night against their old northeast rival, the Bruins.

An early Micheal Ferland cross-check to the face of David Backes gave the Bruins their first man-power advantage of the evening, and they were able to make it count.

Rookie Ryan Donato got credit for the PPG after a loose puck in the crease deflected off of Trevor van Riemsdyk and behind Petr Mrazek.

Just a few moments later, the Hurricanes got a power play of their own. After 1:03 of sustained pressure, they drew another penalty and were gifted with 57 seconds of a 5-on-3 which they promptly squandered.

Like clockwork, less than 20 seconds after the expiration of Carolina's power play, the Bruins scored again. Steven Kampfer one-timed a floater from the point and Mrazek couldn't detect it through traffic in front. Just like that, it was 2-0.

The Hurricanes needed an early Christmas gift to get back into the game, and they were lucky enough to get one.

From behind the goal line, Teuvo Teravainen threw the puck to the front of the net and Charlie McAvoy accidentally swatted it into his own goal. Jaccob Slavin and Sebastian Aho got the helpers on Teravainen's seventh goal of the season.

Through 20 minutes, the Bruins had a 2-1 lead over the Hurricanes.

A late-first-period penalty carried over into the second period, and the Canes' PK had to keep the game close. Instead of keeping the game close, they just went ahead and tied the score. Teravainen forced a turnover in the Boston zone and found Aho all by himself in front of Tuuka Rask. Aho's shot snuck through Rask's pads and just barely got over the goal line.

Less than six minutes later, Fishy did it again.

On a quick transition, Teravainen found Aho streaking through the slot, and Aho sniped his second goal of the night home to give the Hurricanes their first lead of the hockey game at 3-2.

Just over four and a half minutes later, Justin Faulk added an insurance marker. After a face-off win, the Carolina alternate captain shot the puck through traffic in front and the puck found its way home. It was Faulk's first goal in 26 games.

Before the closing of the second period, Boston got one back.

Donato deposited his second of the game with just 3:55 left in the middle frame to cut the Carolina lead in half to 4-3 entering the second intermission.

Donato kept causing problems for the Hurricanes in the third period. He nearly put them on a highlight reel after he danced through the defense and had a chance to score the game-tying goal. Instead, he was hooked and the Bruins went on the power play.

Just like earlier, this power play didn't end like the road team wanted it to.

Teravainen scored his second goal of the night after Rask misplayed a puck and made an unreal hat-trick-stealing save on Aho. That marked two short-handed goals from the Canes' dynamic Finnish duo on Sunday.

That goal made it a 5-3 games and let Canes fans in the building exhale.

Fun was had for the remainder of the third period. The Hurricanes salted away a huge win over a very good Bruins team on Whalers Night.

Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen both fin(n)ished with two goals and four total points. They had a banner night and were the driving forces behind the win. Petr Mrazek had a solid night, providing support for the Canes when they needed it.

It wasn't a great homestand for the Hurricanes, but with the win they finished it at 2-2-1. Could have been better. Could have been worse. They are back at NHL .500, as well, at 15-15-5.

It was a fun night and an important win for the Canes. They're going to have to kick things up a notch after the holiday break if they want to stay in the playoff picture, though.

Postgame Quotes

Sebastian Aho

[On what the difference was between last night and tonight] I felt like the whole team was in the game and everyone played really well

[On the team's fight after falling behind 2-0] Yeah, I think that was huge. Down 2-0 and, I'm sure, you kinda start to get those thoughts in your head; "Oh God, this again?". It was really good to see (us) come back from behind 2-0 against a good team.

[On the Whalers uniforms] Yeah, it fit well. (laughs) I liked it.

[On how getting the bounces to go your way can influence your confidence] Obviously, when you're scoring, you get more confidence. That's how it goes. Maybe, it's a little bit easier to score when you're (getting the good bounces). I'm feeling pretty good right now, but it's not just me. I think my line-mates are helping me out a lot.

[On playing with Svechnikov] Yeah, he's a great kid. Like I said, I've liked every guy I've played with this year. He was really good.



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[On the post game celebration] We were whales... Not my idea. I don't know whose idea it was, but you're laughing so (it must've been good).

Justin Faulk

[On bouncing back after a bad start] Honestly, getting that ugly one (Teravainen's first goal) got some of the weight off of our shoulders. I still don't really know exactly how it went in, but I think when that happened there was some life. You could hear the mood on the bench change a little. Obviously, being down by two is tough. I don't think we were right there, mentally, but we got the bounce and we got some life and we were able to feed off of that a little bit.

[On how big his goal was] I don't know. Maybe I don't feel it the way... I'm not throwing the monkey off my back like Foeges (Warren Foegele) and kick it or punt it. Whatever he did. But yeah, it's nice. Obviously, any time we can get a goal, as a group, and build on a lead and get a two-goal lead, that's huge. You go up by one and you're not too sure, and then the old saying is "the two-goal lead is the worst (lead) in hockey", but I'll still take two over one.

[On the atmosphere in the building] Yeah, I got a text this afternoon from an old friend who used to suit up (play) here. He asked me what the chant was going to be. Would it be "go Canes" or "go Whalers"? At first, to be honest, the first one I heard was "go Bruins" and I wasn't really sure if that was going to continue, but then the group of fans came together and I heard "let's go Whalers" throughout the night. That was fun. It's fun when the crowd can get into it. That's what we want.

About Last Night: Embarrassed at Home

Everything about last night should be an embarrassment to this team.

By Cody Hagan

After Thursday night's 4-1 loss to the Detroit Red Wings the Carolina Hurricanes challenged themselves to come out and give a full 60 minute effort against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Instead of successfully doing just that in a must win matchup, the Hurricanes were tossed around like rag dolls by the Pens during the 3-0 drubbing. In a game where a response was needed not just for the season, but for a sign of hope for the future, the Canes came out flat and laid an egg as we've become all too familiar with.

The Good - Goaltending

Curtis McElhinney is truly the only reason the Hurricanes were even remotely close last night. He fought all the way to the end of the game and made numerous huge saves to keep the game within reach. He picked up right where he left off before his injury and that is a great thing to see. Without him, last night easily would have been a 8-0 contest.

Other than that, not a damn thing was good about last night. There is no nicer way to say that.

The Bad - The Atmosphere

Home ice advantage should come with many perks. Generally it means a good sleep at home, normalized routines, better training equipment, and fans cheering you on. The only thing

We want to provide a type of game for them to enjoy and create an atmosphere that's fun for them, as well.

[On the importance of the win] Yeah, after the last (stretch of games), it was tough on us. The guys were feeling it. We were pretty unhappy and embarrassed, as a group. I don't think anyone in here was comfortable with our performance or the product we (put out on the ice) over the last little bit. We always say, "we need something to build on" and hopefully this (win against the Bruins) provides that. We don't have to sit on (the loss) at home and be grumpy during the holiday.

Rod Brind'Amour

[On how the bounces went their way] It wasn't that way early. It felt like the same old thing was going to happen. They got kind of a weird one to start the game, it bounced around and then we got down 2-0 and were actually playing fine. The guys really dug in, and they didn't hang their heads. They just kept at it and then we got a break to get on the scoresheet. We banged one in off their (defenseman) in front and that hasn't happened much this year, so it was nice to see.

[On how his team bounced back after yesterday's loss] They prepared today. They had their own little chat and it really got them ready. You could see they were engaged, even when we got down, and that was nice to see. (High) level of engagement for 60 minutes, it was there. Obviously, you're playing a high-end team with some high-end talent and they're going to have their moments, and they did, but we just kept battling and we got the win.

that changes that is when your arena is overrun by the opposing team's fans.

If you had the had the, um, pleasure of attending last night's game in person you may have been confused about who the home team was. Not because of the uniforms or an error on the scoreboard, but by the enormous amount of Penguins fans out of the 16,264 people in attendance. There's been many a night where the opposing team has filled a large portion of PNC Arena with their fans, but last night may have been the worst yet.

Thousands upon thousands of Penguins fans filled the Hurricanes' arena last night and they ruled the evening. During the first intermission I counted five Hurricanes fans in the restroom (including myself) compared to the 17 Penguins fans in line. The entire arena looked this way.

Is this the fault of Hurricanes fans? Partially. Many of those Penguins fans will be back tonight wearing red (or green?), which is unfortunate in its own right. But this issue goes much deeper. It's a true reflection of how irrelevant this organization has become. No team should ever have more opposing fans in its building and while no official number will say this, I fully believe there were more Penguins fans in Raleigh last night than Hurricanes fans.

The Ugly - Everyone but Curtis

An old saying in sports is that you live and die as a team. The Hurricanes did that to a tee last night but not in a good way.



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The entire team looked very bad. From multiple defensive breakdowns to losing key battles around the net, scoring was made easy for the Penguins on all three of their goals.

Sidney Crosby set up the opening tally from his knees after he outworked Justin Faulk behind the net. Then Kris Letang was able to get free in the slot and had an easy tap in to get the Penguins on the board.

Crosby would then repeat himself in the second period by outworking the Carolina defense behind the net and finding a teammate in front of the net. Jordan Staal was outworked and then Jaccob Slavin allowed the pass to get through in what was a terrible example of team play.

Jake Guentzel would net the final tally after yet another defensive miscue allowed him to get wide open right in front of McElhinney. Staal ended up a minus three and played another costly role in this goal, although eventually he left with an upper-body injury so it could probably be fairly argued he wasn't himself most of the night.

But the defensive issues are not the only glaring issue. The blatant lack of offense is just as much to blame. You can't win if you don't score. Another game where the Hurricanes looked beyond bad on their power play led to another game where the Hurricanes lost. This team is very bad at scoring goals, as we've come to learn, and last night was another case of that. Matt Murray played fine, but that is one of the easiest shutouts he will ever get.

It's time to wake up, management: this team, these guys, aren't getting the job done offensively and that's more to blame for where they are in the standings than anything else.

Last night was pegged as a gut check game following the Detroit loss and the Hurricanes failed the test. They actually managed to play worse than they did on Thursday and that sinking ship feeling is setting in fast. They absolutely must find a way to win tonight or the players will be making April golf reservations very soon.

Hockey is ultimately a team game and the Carolina Hurricanes, as currently constituted, simply are not very good, and it's become an embarrassment.



Red-hot Aho, Teravainen push Canes past Bruins on Whalers night

By Andrew Schnittker

On a night when the Carolina Hurricanes paid tribute to their past by wearing Hartford Whalers jerseys, the team's future led the way. Thanks to four points apiece from forwards Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, the Canes topped the Boston Bruins 5-3 at PNC Arena Sunday.

Aho and Teravainen each scored twice for the Canes (15-15-3), and defenseman Justin Faulk also scored against the Bruins (20-13-4). Petr Mrazek stopped 27 of 30 shots in net, and the Canes scored two shorthanded goals. Following a 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins Saturday, the Canes showed resilience, bouncing back from an early 2-0 deficit.

"They prepared today," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "They had their own little chat, and [team captain Justin Williams] got them ready. You could see from the start they were engaged, even when we got down. That was nice to see. The level of engagement, really for 60 minutes, it was there. Obviously you're playing a high-end team with some high-end talent; they're going to have their moments and they did but I felt like we just kept battling and we got the win."

The team honored its past life as the Hartford Whalers with a pregame montage, Whalers uniforms and by playing Brass Bonanza, the Whalers' signature song, after every goal.

"I got a text this afternoon from an old friend who used to suit up here," Faulk said. "He asked me what the chant was going to be, go Canes or go Whalers. ... It's fun when the crowd can get into it. That's what we want; we want to provide a type of game for them to enjoy and create the atmosphere where it's fun for them as well."

Following a rough start to the game that saw the Canes fail to score on a two-man advantage and the Bruins take a 2-0 lead, Carolina stormed back with four unanswered goals.

Teravainen started the rally with about seven minutes left in the first period, banking a shot in off a Bruins defender for the Canes' first goal in almost five full periods to make it 2-1.

"It's natural to kind of go 'Oh no, here we go again,'" Brind'Amour said. "Because that's what's happening. ... It didn't look good when they got to 2-0 but we got that break. And that's what we haven't had in really, it feels like, all year to turn the tide a little bit."

That tally set the table for a three-goal second period that allowed the Canes to turn a two-goal deficit into a two-goal lead.

With the Bruins on an early second-period power play, it was the Canes who took advantage and tied the game. Teravainen set up Aho in the slot with a pass from the corner, and Aho leaked a shot through Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask for his second shorthanded goal of the season.

The Finnish connection struck again a few minutes later, as Teravainen perfectly set up Aho off the rush, and the Canes' leading scorer buried a shot to give the team a 3-2 lead.

"Obviously when you're scoring you get more confidence," Aho said. "That's how it goes. Maybe it's a little bit easier to score when you're [getting good bounces]. I'm feeling pretty good right now, but it's not just me. I think my linemates are helping me out a lot."



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Faulk extended Carolina's lead with about eight minutes left in the middle frame, snapping a point shot home through a screen for his first goal since Oct. 22 to make it 4-2.

"It's nice, obviously anytime we can get a goal as a group, build on a lead, get a two-goal lead," Faulk said. "That's huge. When we get up one it's not really sure, a lot of people say two's the first lead in hockey, but I'll still take two over one."

The Bruins answered back with about four minutes left in the second; forward Ryan Donato zipped his second goal of the game past Mrazek from the right circle to cut the Canes' lead to one.

After Rask lost the puck behind the net on a Bruins power play, Aho nearly finished his hat trick, but his shot went off Rask's skate. Fortunately for the Canes, Teravainen cleaned up the rebound to make it 5-3 with his second of the game and the Canes' second shorthanded goal of the night.

"We just try to play good all around," Teravainen said. "I feel like we get a lot of chances when we forecheck hard and make

their D turn the puck over. That's when we get loose pucks and just try to turn it around and shoot."

The Bruins got a power play and pulled Rask for an extra skater with 2:40 left, giving them a six-on-four advantage, but they could not get a puck past Mrazek as Carolina held on for a crucial win.

Carolina will now take three days off for the league's mandated holiday break and will be back in action against the Washington Capitals Thursday.

"I don't anyone in here was comfortable with our performance or the product we've been providing here the last little bit," Faulk said. "We always try and say you need something to build on and hopefully this provides that. Obviously you don't want to sit on it at home and be grumpy with all of your family for the holidays so I hope the guys can have a smile on their face through the week, come back and have that attitude that we need to have the same results as we had tonight."



Aho, Teravainen help Canes finally put it together on one Whale of a night

Multiple-point performances from Finns leads the way in 5-3 win over Bruins

By R.L. Bynum

RALEIGH, N.C. — For the Carolina Hurricanes to shake away their recent frustrations and that snakebit feeling, they needed their top two players to play like it.

They badly also needed an elusive lucky bounce and for no panic when they fell behind by two goals.

All of that came together nicely on a nostalgic evening in classic uniforms on Whalers Night to give Hartford, er, Carolina the needed boost.

The Canes surged with four consecutive goals to a huge 5-3 victory Sunday over the Boston Bruins.

"The guys really dug in and they didn't hang their heads and just kept at it and we got a break," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

Center Sebastian Aho and winger Teuvo Teravainen — the team's top point scorers — did all of that by playing on the top line and the penalty kill to factor in on all but one of the Canes' five goals.

Both had two goals (one short-handed) and two assists to torment Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask, who gave up five goals for only the second time this season.

Aho and Teravainen each also created a turnover that led to a goal for the other, and have now notched a point on the same goal 25 times this season.

"Sometimes it just goes like that," said Aho, who has team-high totals of 14 goals and 24 assists on the season.

"We got the lucky bounce in the first period and got rolling. That's sometimes all you need — a lucky bounce. We haven't got those bounces lately, so it was nice to see that go in."

For a while, ominous déjà vu seemed to be setting in.

Just after coming up empty with an extended power play, including a minute of a 5-on-3 advantage, the Bruins took a 2-0 first-period lead.

Instead of the Canes panicking as they did in the previous two games, they came back strong and fought their way to a big win.

"Well, it's natural to kind of go, 'Oh, no, here we go again,' because that's what's happened and the 5-on-3 was fine," Brind'Amour said.

"We got some great looks and moved around right. We got the open shot ... a one-timer from 30 feet out. It's what you want. But, it didn't happen, and it didn't look good when it got two-nothing. We got that break and that's what we haven't had, in it feels like all year, to turn the tide a little bit and we got a few more."

That break came off a Teravainen shot.

His shot from the corner deflected off the glove of Boston defenseman Charlie McAvoy and into the net.

That helped the team reset itself instead of falling into bad habits as it did in losses to Pittsburgh and Detroit.

"Sometimes, that's what we need," said Teravainen, whose eight goals and 21 assists on the season is second only to Aho on the team.

"Lucky goal, lucky bounce. It feels better after that. It's so many small things in a hockey game that turn the game



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around. I feel like our battle is always good, so it's the small things. Sometimes it bounces off the d-man."

Aho, who has 12 points (six goals and six assists) in his last eight games, scored both a short-handed goal and a power-play goal in a game for the second time in 10 days.

It's only the 15th time it's been done by a Hurricanes/Whalers player since 1989.

"I think that was huge," Aho said of rallying with four consecutive goals.

"Down 2-0, I'm sure you get those thoughts in your head. Is it this again? But it was really good to see that our team can come from down 2-0 against a good team."

Aho and Teravainen moved from playing on the second line against Pittsburgh on Saturday night with Michael Ferland to form the first line with Andrei Svechnikov.

That move, and more PK time for Teravainen, came because Jordan Staal was again out, likely with a concussion.

"Obviously when you're scoring, you get more confidence. That's how it goes," said Aho, who took only one shot in the loss to the Penguins but fired a game-high seven Sunday.

"Maybe it's easier to score when you get a couple of goals. I'm feeling pretty good right now but it's not just me."

Aho and Teravainen have clicked with various linemates but not in recent games.

Svechnikov made for a good combination Sunday.

"We just worked hard," Teravainen said.

"We got a few good bounces, I feel like. A couple of good forechecks and get the confidence with a couple of goals so it's easier to play after that."

The 1980s feel wasn't just because every song played during the stoppages was a 1980s hit. (The Canes made sure that "Brass Bonanza" dominated the rotation, though.)

The number of goals made it feel like they were Adams Division rivals again, even with a little choppiness at times.

The power-play struggles continued for Carolina, but it doesn't matter when you have more short-handed goals (2) than power-play goals (1).

"There are chances around," Teravainen said of Carolina's penalty kill.

"Sometimes, the power play is loose and they don't do anything out there, you might get the puck in 2-on-1s or something, so you have to be ready to go."

The last time that the Hartford Whalers faced the Boston Bruins, March 12, 1997, they also fell behind early and won late.

That night, the Whalers won 6-3 and Sunday they were just an empty-net goal away from matching that.

In 1997, though, the players didn't act like beached whales on the ice to celebrate like the Canes did on Sunday night to end a festive night for the players and the fans.

It was fun for all involved wearing green or red to go into the holiday break with some momentum and positive vibes.

It was one Whale of a victory.



Hurricanes 'Whalers Night' a Huge Success

By Mark Shiver

For a few hours on the evening of Sunday, Dec. 23, the Carolina Hurricanes wore the green gear of the Hartford Whalers. It was a night to remember, as Raleigh's PNC Arena was nearly sold out with 17,491 in attendance. Hurricanes fans were seen in green and the sound of "Brass Bonanza" — the Whalers' goal song — was heard five times as the Hurricanes beat the Boston Bruins 5-3.

The song, the uniforms, and even the rivalry were all throwbacks to an era long ago. Players like Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov did not grow up with the Whalers being a team in the NHL. But they played Sunday evening with an intensity that would make even the most ardent Bruins-haters proud.

Why the Bruins?

The Hurricanes could have lobbied the NHL for permission to wear the Whalers green against any opponent. Why did it turn out to be the Bruins? Why will it be the Bruins again when the Hurricanes don the green on the road in March? Because many the fans of the Whalers vigorously hate the Bruins, that's

why. It is a rivalry that lives on in Hartford even though the two teams haven't played one another in decades.

The Hurricanes front office was very attuned to what is the mindset of Whalers fans, even though they have not had a team since 1997 when Peter Karmanos, majority owner of the team at that time, moved it to North Carolina. The Bruins are about an hour and a half or so away from Hartford and were a natural rival when the Whalers were there.

On June 17, 2011, Paul Doyle wrote in the *Hartford Courant* a reminder that Whalers fans hate the Bruins. When the Bruins were winning the Stanley Cup Finals that year, Doyle found comments from some Whalers fans that were consistent with this dislike of the Bruins.

Doyle wrote, "Still hate 'em," Nicole Pesino of Bristol tweeted. Pesino, 35, attended her first Whalers game when she was 13 and is now a Connecticut Whale season ticket holder. Her NHL allegiance shifted to the Penguins — Ron Francis was her favorite player — but she says she still bleeds Whalers green, and her hatred of the Bruins has never diminished."



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"The Bruins were always the enemy," Pesino said. "If the Bruins were the last hockey team on the planet, I still would not cheer for them." (From "Whalers Long Gone, But Fans' Hatred Of Bruins Is Not" – Paul Doyle – *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 2011).

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It had to be the Bruins on the other side of the ice when the Hurricanes donned the Whalers' green. The emotions of Whalers fans surely ran the gamut between being mad at Karmanos for yanking their team away, to being mad at Hurricanes majority owner Tom Dundon for daring to clothe his 'Canes in their team's garb, to enjoying watching those same Hurricanes smack the Bruins pretty hard in the 5-3 victory.

All in all, it was a roller coaster night of emotions for the folks in Hartford and elsewhere who still love their Whalers. And it will likely be even more emotional when the Hurricanes dress in the Whalers gear again on March 5.

Whalers Night Fun or Insensitive?

Opinions galore surfaced surrounding this game and how the Hurricanes would be dressed. Dundon told NHL.com, "The motivation was primarily around [the fact that] it's interesting,

Sabres Skinned the Hurricanes in Getting Skinner

By Mark Shiver

Jeff Skinner is blowing up with the Buffalo Sabres. He is doing what everyone who has followed his career knew he could do, scoring a lot. The Carolina Hurricanes didn't want to keep this stellar sniper on the roster so they traded him to the Sabres for Cliff Pu and a few picks.

Hurricanes and Skinner No More

At the time, a lot of heads were scratched and eyebrows raised at the one-sided nature of the trade. Were the Hurricanes really so desperate to get rid of Skinner that they were willing to let him go for virtually nowhere near his value in return? Apparently so.

While Skinner had another year on his contract, it was questionable as to whether or not he would sign an extension. One would think that he would like to have stayed in Raleigh with the only team he had ever played with, but that was not to be.

As the start of the 2018-19 season drew near, the trade was made, almost as if it had to be done before Skinner played another minute with the team in the preseason or the regular season. The details have not been released as to what was going on behind the scenes with the Hurricanes and Skinner.

Did Skinner want out or did new coach Rod Brind'Amour, new GM Don Waddell or new owner Tom Dundon want him gone? If so, what was the reason? Was it because he was not playing defense the way former head coach Bill Peters wanted? Was he a bad seed in the locker room? Whatever it was, it reached the point that one could almost hear the voice of management echoing off the halls of Raleigh's PNC Arena, "Skinner's got to go and go now!"

it looks great and it's a way to do something different. 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."

Others felt like it was a sharp stick in the eye to the folks in Hartford. Mike Anthony wrote in the *Hartford Courant* back in September when Whalers Night was announced, "The Hurricanes are going to skate around collecting money in the clothes that were essentially stolen from us. So be it. We can't be red-lined with anger, can't be fragile. Our memories belong to us and they can't be bought and sold." (From "Mike Anthony: Hurricanes' Disingenuous 'Whalers Night' Money Grab Does Not Change Past or Impact Future in Hartford" – Mike Anthony – *Hartford Courant*, September 28, 2018).

Sure, there are fans in Hartford who are still reeling from having lost their team. But, it was a very fun night. The Whalers uniforms looked fabulous. Those in attendance had a tremendous time. And the Hurricanes won. And there was this:

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All in all, Whalers night was a huge success. Dundon, his staff and his team put together an amazing night that will long be remembered.

Sabres Skinned the Hurricanes Getting Skinner

And so he went. The Sabres welcomed him with open arms, and undoubtedly with a feeling of having put one over on the Hurricanes. Skinner's arrival in Buffalo was a game-changer and so far, he has been a season-changer for the Sabres.

While the Hurricanes currently languish near the bottom-tier of the league in points, the Sabres are sitting in the top-three of the Atlantic Division. They have turned what many thought would be another sub-par season into one with legitimate playoff contention within reach. The Sabres have the Hurricanes to thank for at least some of their surprising success this season.

In fact, those who believed that the Sabres might be able to turn things around this season after having finished last in their division four of the last five seasons cited the Skinner acquisition as one of the main reasons. Griffin Youngs at fansided.com wrote several months ago:

Now with Jeff Skinner in their top-six, the Sabres have to start being taken seriously by other teams. It might not be enough to make them a playoff team just yet after finishing in last place the previous season, but it certainly gives them a fighting chance.

The truth is that Skinner is making a huge difference for the Sabres and may very well lead them into the playoffs. He is currently second to Jack Eichel in points with 38 but leads the team in goals scored with 26. His plus/minus plus plus-21 is immensely better than the minus-27 he put up with the Hurricanes last season. Perhaps the constant struggle with Peters about playing defense his way is reflected in that number.



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But, while that argument swirled, and while Peters put Skinner on the third line as a form of discipline because of the defensive issues, the more prudent thinking was to let Skinner be Skinner. Let him focus on scoring like he is capable of doing and stop trying to force him into a defensive mold. Seems the Sabres got that memo.

On Dec. 3, Greg Wyshinski posted a conversation he had at ESPN with Skinner. On his thoughts on Buffalo's chances of having a good season when he arrived, Skinner said, "For me coming in, the organization thought there was a young core of players. They had [Rasmus] Dahlin coming in. They made some other moves during the summer. There was a big sense of excitement around the team that we could get off to that fresh start. And fortunately, we've been on a nice little run."

Skinner is the main reason the Sabres are having a "nice little run." Imagine if he had been able to stay with the Hurricanes

and be a part of the wide-open forechecking style that they started the season with. He might have 36 goals by now.

Waddell said when the Skinner trade was executed that the Hurricanes had talked with every team in the league and that the Sabres had provided the best value in return. It is hard to believe that getting Pu and a few picks was the best offer that Skinner could have yielded the Hurricanes.

No matter what really went on, the Sabres skinned the Hurricanes in getting Skinner. The Hurricanes desperately need what Skinner is for the Sabres – a proven goal-scorer. While the Sabres are the hottest team in the NHL, the Hurricanes are staring at the season and hoping to be able to dig themselves out of the hole they are in and miraculously make the playoffs.

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1122824 Washington Capitals

Who from the Capitals is on Seattle's expansion Christmas list?

By J.J. Regan

December 25, 2018 6:00 AM

Christmas came early for Seattle as the city learned earlier in December that it has been awarded the NHL's 32nd franchise. The new team will begin play in 2021. Now that they have the team, the process for putting that team together begins now.

So even though it is still years away, Seattle is already putting together its "Christmas list" for the 2021 expansion draft.

The Seattle expansion draft will have the same rules as the Vegas draft in 2017. That means the Capitals will have the option to protect seven forwards, three defensemen and a goalie or eight skaters and a goalie. It also means Washington will lose one player. But who?

Here's a player by player breakdown of where they may stand in 2021 and whether or not they will be protected or exposed to the expansion draft.

Alex Ovechkin: The captain is not going anywhere. Having said that, you may find this hard to believe, but I think there is a good chance the Caps could leave him exposed. Let me explain. Ovechkin's contract expires at the end of the 2021 season which means that, should Seattle select him in the expansion draft, his contract would expire at the end of the month and he could easily walk. T.J. Oshie was in a similar situation in the Vegas draft. He was left exposed and Vegas passed because why waste a pick on a player who could walk in a week? Had he been under contract, he would have been an extremely attractive option. With no contract, however, they passed and Oshie re-signed with the Caps two days after the draft. I think we could see a similar situation with Ovechkin, though if the team decides to re-sign him before the expansion draft, he will absolutely, 100-percent be protected. The point is that regardless of whether the team protects him or not, he's not going anywhere.

Nicklas Backstrom: Backstrom's current contract expires in 2020. He's still a top echelon player in the league and there's no reason to think he won't be re-signed and protected from the draft.

Andre Burakovsky: Burakovsky's future with this team is going to be determined in the next few months. Either he begins producing and living up to his top-six potential, thus earning him a long-term deal with Washington, or he won't and he will probably be playing for someone else. If he is still with the Caps in 2021, it is because he has established himself as a player worth protecting.

John Carlson: Carlson will only be three years into an eight-year contract and 31-years old. He will be protected.

Lars Eller: Eller is under contract until 2023 and will be 32 at the time of the draft, but a \$3.5 million cap hit is already a reasonable number and looks better and better as the cap continues to rise. Considering the premium the Caps put on center depth, it seems likely they would like to

hold onto Eller through the rest of his contract which would mean protecting him from Seattle.

Braden Holtby: I wrote about the issue in net in a previous post explaining the difficulties that Holtby's contract presents since it expires in 2020. Knowing what he knows now, MacLellan would probably like a do-over so he could give Holtby one more year on his current contract. That would solve a lot of issues. I do not believe Holtby will be the goalie the team ultimately shields from the draft, but I also do not think they team will risk losing him for nothing. The most likely scenario is that the Caps work out a deal for Seattle to keep its hands off. Otherwise, the Caps may have to explore other options.

Michal Kempny: Todd Reirden was able to take Kempny off the scrap heap in Chicago and turn him into a top-four defenseman. As valuable as he has proven to be in Washington, it makes the most sense to expose him to the draft. He will still be under contract in 2021, but with Carlson and Dmitry Orlov almost certainly going to be protected, that likely leaves the Caps with room for only more defenseman to protect. You have to think one of the team's young defenseman will have ascended by then to take that spot.

Evgeny Kuznetsov: By 2021, Kuznetsov will be the top center on the team and there's a reasonable case to be made that he already is. He will be 29 at the draft, still in his prime and still under contract. He's not going anywhere.

Matt Niskanen: Niskanen's contract expires in 2021 so whatever MacLellan thinks about him at that point is irrelevant. He will be exposed and Seattle will pass because he has an expiring contract. From there, it's up to MacLellan whether he wants to re-sign Niskanen or let him become a free agent.

Dmitry Orlov: Orlov will still be under contract, will be relatively cheap and at the tail end of his prime. He will be protected.

T.J. Oshie: When Oshie signed an eight-year deal to remain with the Caps, the first thing that jumped out to me was the length of the contract. Given how hard he plays the game and the wear and tear he puts on his body it is not unreasonable to expect a precipitous decline in production each year through the rest of the contract. He will be 34 years old by the expansion draft and have four years left on his deal. He is going to be left exposed and – even though he is a native of Washington and would be a big-name addition – I think there is a good chance Seattle will pass.

Ilya Samsonov: Samsonov is the team's future starter and will ultimately get protected because you can't risk losing a 24-year-old budding starter. Please, no one quote me his numbers from Hershey this season and tell me he can't cut it in the NHL. He is 21 years old and has played a grand total of 14 games in North America. It takes time to transition. He will be fine and the Caps will protect him from Seattle.

Jakub Vrana: Vrana is quickly establishing himself as a top-six forward in Washington. It's hard to envision any scenario in which his value dips to a point in which the team decides to expose him by 2021. He will be one of the team's top two or three forwards at that point.

Tom Wilson: Assuming he can stay on the ice and out of trouble, Wilson will have a long future with the Caps and will probably be wearing a letter on his chest by 2021. You do not expose a player like that.

The depth forwards (Travis Boyd, Brett Connolly, Nic Dowd, Dmitrij Jaskin, Devante Smith-Pelly, Chandler Stephenson): MacLellan does not



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give long-term deals to depth players. Many of these guys won't still be on the team by 2021 and if they are, it will be on a one or two-year contract. If MacLellan thinks you're worth two years or less, you're probably not worth adding to the protected list.

The young defensemen (Madison Bowey, Christina Djoos, Connor Hobbs, Lucas Johansen, Jonas Siegenthaler and Alex Alexeyev (if he is eligible)): The Caps have a lot of young blue line talent on the way up. Carlson and Orlov look like the only two slam dunk defensemen the Caps will protect meaning there is one more slot open. One of these players is going to take that spot. The rest will be exposed and just about all of them are going to get some consideration from Seattle.

Predictions on who is protected:

Forwards – Backstrom, Eller, Kuznetsov, Ovechkin, Vrana, Wilson

Defensesmen – Carlson, Orlov, a young prospect

Goalie – Samsonov

Though I stated before that Ovechkin could be exposed if he does not have a contract by that point so that the team can sign him afterward, I do not think either side will wait until the summer of 2021. Given his importance to the franchise and the fact that he could always return to Russia to play in the KHL, I believe both sides get together for a new deal before the draft and he is re-signed.

If you look at that projected list and say that's not enough forwards, gold star for you. The Caps right now have a loaded roster, but they do not have any superstar forward prospects currently working their way up to the NHL. That's not to say the team has no talented prospects, but the last time the Caps took a forward in the first round was 2014 (Vrana). There's not a lot of prospect depth at forward and by 2021, I believe we will see the team sign one or two top-nine caliber players to bolster the lineup, both of whom ultimately will be protected.

Prediction on who gets selected?

Michal Kempny

Kempny would be an intriguing option for Seattle to claim as a proven top-four defenseman with a Stanley Cup ring to boot. His current contract runs through the draft meaning there is no possibility of him adding a no movement clause and there are just too many other defensemen I believe the Caps will want to protect in 2021.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.26.2018

1122803 New Jersey Devils

Ranking the 11 biggest Devils' moments of 2018: Taylor Hall's MVP, Nico Hischier's debut, Keith Kinkaid's run, Brian Boyle's hat trick, more

By Chris Ryan

Between the end of the 2017-18 season and the start of 2018-19, the 2018 calendar year provided its share of memorable moments for the Devils.

From a postseason berth to an MVP winner to stunning goals, there were plenty of moments to pick from.

Here are NJ Advance Media's top 11 from 2018.

11. Back-to-back road wins in Nashville and Las Vegas

When the Devils started their playoff push during March of the 2017-18 season, they faced a daunting six-game road trip. A three-game California swing followed by a stop in Pittsburgh came after stops to play the Nashville Predators and Vegas Golden Knights -- two of the top teams in the Western Conference.

The Devils started that trip off in style, beating the Predators in a 3-2 shootout before handing the Golden Knights their worst loss of their inaugural season, 8-3.

The Devils finished that trip 4-2-0, and they then beat the Tampa Bay Lightning at home, one day after ending the journey with a win over the Penguins. The two games in Nashville and Las Vegas helped set the tone for the rest of the regular season.

10. Nico Hischier's 4-goal week

The most impressive run of Nico Hischier's rookie season came during a one-week stretch in February, where he scored four goals in four games -- all of them wins.

Hischier's hot streak earned him the NHL's first start of the week. He finished his rookie season with 20 goals and 32 assists.

9. Blake Coleman's one-handed, backhanded goal

The top goal of the Devils' 2017-18 season came at the tail end of the team's six-game road trip in March, when Blake Coleman managed to fend off a Penguins defender with one arm before shoveling in a one-handed, backhand shot past Pittsburgh goalie Matt Murray.

"Cutting in, I felt I would be able to take it or maybe have him haul me down," Coleman said after the March 23 game. "But he played me hard and it's something I know that I can get the puck up. So just made the play and it went in.

"It was on the blade and just tried to shovel it. It's not an easy puck to get off the ice, but if you do, it's a tough play for the goalie to read."

The move worked so well, Coleman tried to do it again 24 hours later against the Lightning. That one did not find the net, though.

8. Nico Hischier caps off rally with OT winner

The 2018-19 portion of the calendar year has not been as friendly for the Devils, but the new season has delivered a couple signature moments.

One came on Friday, Dec. 14, when they rallied from a 4-1 deficit to force overtime against the Golden Knights at Prudential Center. That led to Hischier scoring his first career overtime goal, giving the Devils an improbable 5-4 win with Taylor Hall out of the lineup due to injury.

7. Drafting Ty Smith

Making the postseason meant the Devils picking later in the first round at the 2018 NHL Draft, but the team landed a promising defenseman prospect.

Ty Smith fell to the Devils at No. 17, and the Canadian blue liner immediately became one of the Devils' most intriguing prospects.

He nearly made the Devils' NHL roster out of training camp before the team ultimately sent him back to his junior team for another season. He has 39 points in 28 games with the Spokane Chiefs in the WHL, and he will play with Canada at the upcoming World Junior Championships.

6. Stefan Noesen's postseason goal

The Devils won just once during their brief five-game postseason appearance, but that one victory at Prudential Center gave fans a deserved taste of playoff excitement.

In Game 3 in the first round against the Tampa Bay Lightning, the Devils broke a 2-2 tie when forward Stefan Noesen buried a third-period one-timer, giving the Devils a 3-2 lead en route to a 5-2 win, capped off by a pair of empty-net goals.



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5. Keith Kinkaid's run at end of 2017-18 season

NHL

4. Brian Boyle's hat trick on Hockey Fights Cancer night

Brian Boyle's one and a half seasons with the Devils have provided a fair share of dramatic moments. He scored a goal when the Devils hosted Hockey Fights Cancer night in 2017, and he took that to another level while visiting the Penguins in 2018.

Boyle netted his first career hat trick, scoring three straight goals to full off the feat.

It capped off a big calendar year for Boyle, who also won the 2018 Masterton Trophy.

3. Taylor Hall wins MVP

Taylor Hall became the first Devil to ever win the NHL MVP award, taking home the Hart Trophy in June following a career season.

Hall finished with 39 goals, 54 assists and 93 points in 76 games, propelling the Devils to the postseason.

Hall finished 41 points ahead of Hischier for the Devils' team lead in scoring, giving the Devils the league's largest gap between a team's top two scorers.

2. Hall's point streak reaches 26 games

There are two big reasons why Hall won the NHL MVP award for the 2017-18 season. One is explained in the No. 1 moment in this countdown, and the other is tackled here.

The most prolific scoring run in Devils history fittingly started with the Devils' first game of the 2018 calendar year, and Hall rattled off 26 consecutive games with at least one point. He didn't play a single game in January or February where he did not record one point.

1. Devils return to postseason

All the individual moments from 2018 culminated in the ultimate team moment in early April, when the Devils officially punched their ticket back to the Stanley Cup Playoffs, ending a five-season drought.

Their 97 points earned them the second wild card in the Eastern Conference after they fended off the charging Florida Panthers by one point for the final postseason spot.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.26.2018

1122809 Philadelphia Flyers

Philly's big four sports teams are back to giving fans their favorite gift: real effort | Mike Sielski

by Mike Sielski

Mike Sielski | @MikeSielski | msielski@phillynews.com

Just guessing here, but if you had polled Philadelphia sports fans this month on a single question — "What do you want most for Christmas?" — the most popular response would have been "Already got what I wanted. I'm good." The logic behind that guess is simple enough. For those fans, Christmas came 10 months and three weeks early this year — not on Dec. 25, but on Feb. 4, when the Eagles won Super Bowl LII.

That might be the popular answer, but I'm not so sure it would be the right answer. Often at this time of the year, it's the gift you didn't know

you needed that turns out to be your favorite present, and over the last 3-4 months, the Eagles, Phillies, 76ers, and Flyers have recommitted themselves to providing what many fans around here, if not the majority of them, seek most. They want championships, yes, but that's not really what I'm talking about. Even with the Eagles' Super Bowl victory, those shining moments have been in short supply over the last 35 years, and the Eagles themselves, with the exception of Nick Foles' recent excellence, have spent most of the 2018 season dulling whatever sheen was left from that glorious three-week run early this year. That's the thing about this fan base: A championship satisfies and sustains it for only so long.

No, what Philadelphia sports fans want most, even if only at a subconscious level, is simpler: They want their teams to go for it. They want their teams to try, because it's the trying itself that counts most. Philadelphia fans are not patient. They never have been, even when they needed to be or should have been. They expect the pilot to refuel the plane while he or she is still flying it. Maybe the plane will land safely (like the Eagles' did this year or the Phillies' did in 2008), or maybe it will crash (as usually happens around here). But the one thing the pilot can't do is wait until conditions are ideal before taking off in the first place, regardless of how sensible that plan might be. In that regard, within the last half-year, the four franchises here have done exactly what people here want. They've shown what Flyers CEO Dave Scott called "a bias for action." All fans here are Tom Sizemore's bank robber in Heat: To them, the action is the juice.

Think about it. It was an unfamiliar, uncomfortable time in these parts for a while. Chip Kelly was revamping the Eagles' training concepts and practice schedules and the standards by which players were evaluated, and he demanded time and power to implement those and other changes. Sam Hinkie was making the crazy assertion that the Sixers ought to try to position themselves for high draft picks so they could would have a better opportunity over time to acquire better players. Andy MacPhail and Matt Klentak were advising Phillies owner John Middleton to keep his checkbook locked in a drawer for a few years while the Phils tried to collect more prospects and collect more information about those prospects. And Ron Hextall put an end to a few longtime Flyers traditions — trading away draft picks for aging veterans, having former players yuck it up after games with the current team, and not treating every season as if it were the team's only chance to win a Stanley Cup — all in the belief that an organization that hadn't won a championship in four decades could use a fresh perspective on how it had been operating.

Yeah, crazy, crazy times.

Now, though, look around. Each of those teams has done one of two things, to varying levels of success so far: Either it decided that its rebuilding period had run its course, or it brought that experiment in endurance and patience to a hard and fast stop. The Eagles fired Kelly, put Howie Roseman back in charge of their player-personnel operation, and drafted Carson Wentz not to rebuild, but to try to win right away with a promising/low-cost quarterback. Then, after winning the Super Bowl with Foles and without Wentz, they brought Foles back this season, either because the trade market for him was too soft, they wanted to protect themselves in case Wentz injured himself again, or both. For Roseman, an executive always with his eye on the future, this was a striking approach, as all-in as he can get.

In November, the Sixers traded two founding fathers of The Process — Dario Saric and Robert Covington — for Jimmy Butler, a superstar to complement Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons. They have a shot at reaching the Finals, but the irony of their condition — and the true indication of how damaging Bryan Colangelo's tenure as general manager was — is that, despite all those years under Hinkie of losing games and hoarding draft picks and assets, they have so little roster depth that they'll likely have to make another trade. Middleton was so eager for the Phillies to be relevant again that he boasted to USA Today that they would spend "stupid money" this offseason in pursuit of Manny Machado, Bryce Harper, and any other free agents who might tickle their fancy. And not to be outdone, the Flyers fired their GM and their head coach, then found a new goaltender in the hope of igniting a winning



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streak and saving this season — the kinds of moves that make their most devoted followers feel warm and solid inside, as if life was again as it is supposed to be.

No one knows, of course, whether these strategic shifts result in, say, the Phillies' actually landing Machado or Harper or the Sixers' upsetting the Raptors in the Eastern Conference Finals. But in a way, that's not the point. The trying is the point. The romance is in the journey, and the hope and angst that accompany it deliver many sports fans here their greatest happiness and peace.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.26.2018

1122810 Philadelphia Flyers

For a Humboldt bus crash survivor and his family, another scare brings even greater sense of purpose

by Sam Donnellon,

AIRDRIE, Alberta — The bus was stopped at a light. Then it was not, jolting forward, spilling Ryan Straschnitzki from his wheelchair to the cold floor.

It was happening again. A bus. A crash. The overwhelming feeling of helplessness amid chaos and great need.

This was in early December, near his suburban Calgary home, eight months and 500 miles removed from the bus crash that had killed so many teammates and friends, put him in this wheelchair, put him in this medical transport bus that had just been rear-ended at a red light by an inattentive driver, sending him forward to the floor — and back in time.

Ryan wasn't out of his mind. He was too far into it, back into the buried memories of that terrible afternoon at Armley Corner, where Saskatchewan Highways 35 and 335 intersect, where a semi-trailer truck rammed into a bus carrying him and 28 other members of the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team, leaving 16 dead and him paralyzed from his chest down.

And leaving scores of others — injured players, their families and friends — irreparably changed forever.

"Tom took the call," Michelle Straschnitzki was saying as she sat in the Wingate Hotel lobby in Airdrie that has served as their living room since Ryan returned from a lengthy and exhausting rehabilitation at Shriners Hospital for Children in Philadelphia. "We had it on the speakerphone. We heard his panic. And everything was scare and fear and so front and center that he transferred us back to April 6."

Ryan was back in that bus, back among the blood and the bodies of his friends, of boys he had been joking with just seconds before, of boys he had spent as much or more of his life with over the previous three years than his own family. He was talking about it all as he lay on the floor of that medical transport, for the first time really, his mind reenacting the scene, detail by detail, as his horrified family listened.

"Not a good situation," said Ryan, 19. "We need to bring awareness to safe driving."

"He was so afraid for his teammates," Michelle said. "And he saw it all over again. He wasn't even afraid for himself. He was in that moment. And it wasn't jumbled thoughts. He really thought he was back in that moment."

"For us, as a family, that was very difficult to get through."

A full-time job

Like the Shriners, the owners of the Wingate are part of a network that has extended to the Straschnitzkis and the other Humboldt survivors. While their home a few miles away is being rebuilt to suit the needs of a paraplegic — an undertaking that began last summer and is already months behind schedule — the Straschnitzkis have lived here. Ryan takes up a handicap-accessible room on the first floor, his twin siblings, Jett and Jaden, and 6-year-old brother, Connor, are in another room, Mom and Dad next door.

This is where they eat their meals, watch television together, play board games. The hotel lobby is their living room, where the phone call came on the afternoon of Dec. 3.

"The first time we got a glimpse," Michelle said, "of what that day must have been like for all of those boys."

When he was again thrown to the floor of a bus, Ryan said, he allowed himself a moment of self pity. "But I mean, everything's good," he said. "I'm healthy. And still kicking, so ..."

So upward and onward. He was at rehab the next day, and the day after that. The medical transport bus company quit him — insurance concerns, they said — but this was a minor problem for a family that has maneuvered around so many larger ones.

For starters, there is family life out of hotel rooms. Michelle cooks and cleans and does the wash. Tom drives and picks up, at least when he and Ryan aren't traveling around North America for speaking engagements, to motivate, to raise funds. It has become a full-time job for Tom, a laid-off production accountant with an oil company.

Michelle lost her job as an oil company administrator just before last Christmas.

It seemed like a big deal at the time, she said. Not anymore.

Tom hates the travel. Michelle dreams of it.

"I'd love to go and see all these places," she said. "But I have to be here for all my little monkeys."

With all the adjustments, it's a full-time gig. The teenagers have their own lives, filled with hockey games and school events. Connor still attends the grade school near their home, walks past his house every day on his way to the friend's house where the Straschnitzkis have arranged a pickup.

"He'll walk across the street to our house and he will sit on the bench in front of our house," Michelle said as her voice quavered. "He'll just sit there. I don't know what he's thinking. He doesn't say anything. He just sits there and contemplates."

"I think he misses it. We all miss it. He wants to go home. And in the simplest terms, we all just ... want ... to ... go ... home."

"That really hit Ryan hard."

The problems with the home's rehab has tested their patience, made them a tad stir-crazy too. Small structural changes have become big structural changes. Timelines have come and gone. An elevator that was expected to be installed by now has yet to arrive. February is the new target date. Christmas will be spent in a hotel.

For the family, the accident has meant standby. Standby while the house is completed. Standby as funds are raised for Ryan to take the next step to recovery. Standby for them to return to at least a semblance of their previous lives.

Standby as medical science tries to catch up to their adjusted dreams, too. There is talk that once Ryan is strong and stable enough, they will look into experimental methods and surgeries available in other countries.



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Ryan is a study in contrasts. For him, the accident has created a sense of urgency and immediacy to his life. He wants everything done a minute ago, said Michelle. No wasted minutes, no sitting around.

"A person is defined by how they act all the time," he said. "I see some people my age who decide to hang out and party all the time. Not do anything with their lives.

"I think a true person would put their mind to something and try to achieve something and be successful. Not everyone has that mentality. And after this tragedy it really struck me that you can't always rely on hockey. For me it's trying to find something that I want to achieve and then putting the work in.

"I'm pretty adaptive."

Clearly his family is too. A typical big family with members headed in opposite directions before the crash, they savor family time together now. Recently the family attended the Flyers game in Calgary, which ended with the Flyers blowing a two-goal lead in the last 68 seconds before losing 35 seconds into overtime.

A meet-and-greet had been arranged before the game, which the Flyers players dutifully honored.

"After the game I was pretty pissed off," Flyers captain Claude Giroux said a few days later. "Pretty upset what happened. And then I saw him. First of all, just great to see him again. And his courage. All that he's been through. It puts our problems a little smaller.

"Anytime I see him it kind of brightens my day. Even that one."

It's that reaction, Michelle said, that makes the sacrifice mean something. She's seen her boy become a man over the last trying eight months, "really stepped up in so many ways I couldn't have imagined," she said.

"Before this, he was that guy who didn't want to be the focus of attention. He couldn't talk to groups of people. ... Now he's like, that's OK. I'll meet with people. I'll talk to little kids. It's really strange. But it's great."

"It's hard to wrap my head around sometimes," Ryan Straschnitzki said. "It seems unreal. I'll get those messages here and there that I've inspired. Obviously if I do that, it feels good. But at the same time it doesn't feel real. I'm just a guy who is trying to do something with his life.

"I mean I'm just living my life the way I want to right now. And if that's helping people out, I'm happy. And I'll keep continuing to do that and inspire more people."

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1122811 Philadelphia Flyers

7 Flyers prospects will learn same World Junior lessons Carter Hart did

Dave Isaac, NHL writer

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Believe it or not, the pressures that Carter Hart has felt over the last week and a half haven't been the most in his life. OK, maybe just his NHL debut.

Since then, it's been less stressful than the last two Decembers when he hadn't been able to be home in suburban Edmonton for Christmas. Instead, he had been playing with the weight of a nation on his shoulders, let alone one NHL franchise searching for its first long-term answer in goal since before the 20-year-old Hart was born.

And we're not talking Lithuania here. In Canada, Dec. 26 is almost as important as Dec. 25 because it marks the beginning of the World Junior Championship which takes over the nation for two weeks.

"The World Juniors...it's really scrutinized in Canada," said Hart, who was on the 2017 silver medal team and helped backstop his nation to gold almost a year ago. "It's put on a pretty high pedestal, but I think you just kinda gotta block that out. We did a good job of focusing on us and not worrying about other teams or the media and just trying to stay away from that. Our staff and our coaches told us about that and how the media gets really involved and to try to get away from that and make sure you're focusing on each other and do whatever it takes to help the team win."

Two years ago, Hart said, was the most nervous he's ever felt up until his NHL debut. The 2017 gold medal game, a 5-4 shootout loss to the United States, had him on pins and needles like everyone else and left a rather sick feeling until he was able to make up for it a year later.

"The second year I felt way better," Hart said. "You're just realizing, 'Hey, I've been here before.' If you've been here before then you can do it again and just play your game."

This year the Flyers have seven prospects in the tournament and all of them are first-timers.

Four of the seven are on the U.S. squad — first-round picks Jay O'Brien and Joel Farabee along with 2017 draft pick Noah Cates and defenseman Jack St. Ivany. Defenseman Adam Ginning and goalie Samuel Ersson will play for Sweden and 2017 first-round pick Morgan Frost is the Flyers' lone prospect for Canada.

"It's always an honor to play for your country, whatever the opportunity is," Farabee, who was part of the U.S. National Team Development Program before joining Boston University this fall, said the other day by phone. "I am definitely used to putting on the jersey and stuff like that, playing with a bunch of guys that are here, but it's a new experience and I'm excited to be out here and, if I make the team, to represent my country."

For the first time in a while, the Flyers have a ton of college prospects. Six more than those representing the U.S. in the tournament are playing NCAA hockey this season.

In pre-tournament play, Farabee had played mostly with Jack Hughes, whom hockey experts expect to be the No. 1 overall pick in June's draft held in Vancouver. O'Brien made the squad despite not playing much so far in his freshman season at Providence College. He's already been out of the lineup twice for the Friars due to hits to the head.

Cates, 19, is third-oldest on the U.S. roster and the head coach of the team, Mike Hastings, feels comfortable using him in all situations. He tried to recruit Cates to Minnesota State, but lost out to Scott Sandelin, an assistant on the U.S. coaching staff who is the head coach at University of Minnesota-Duluth. St. Ivany, a freshman at Yale, won a spot after Hastings went to watch him play Harvard in person in early November.

It will be two weeks that these players never forget.

"It's a really fun experience and any time you get the chance to represent your country is obviously a huge honor," Hart said. "Just the feeling that you get when you put on the maple leaf is something that you don't forget and competing against other nations, other countries, there's a lot of pride that goes into that. You're playing for a country and not just a team or a city. It's a really cool experience and there's definitely experiences through the past two tournaments that I've taken away that have helped me transition to pro hockey.

"It's just fun being with guys that are the best at their level competing for your country. We all share the same goal so it's a lot of fun and definitely a different schedule from juniors or the pros or whatever it is. You're playing back-to-back or game, day off, game and the games are ... it's



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not like one out of 72 games or one out of 82 games. It's one of seven games or whatever it is so every game means a lot."

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1122826 Websites

TSN.CA / Comtois emotional after being named captain for World Juniors

Mark Masters

TSN reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on Team Canada, which practised on Tuesday a day ahead of its opening game of the World Juniors against Denmark.

When's the last time Maxime Comtois served as the captain of a hockey team?

"I don't remember," the Drummondville left winger said with a grin. "I've been before, but it's been a long time. I usually wear the 'A.'"

As Canada's only returning player, Comtois was always destined for a leadership role at this year's World Juniors, but it was still emotional on Tuesday when head coach Tim Hunter announced at a team meeting who would wear the letters. Comtois will serve as captain while London Knights defenceman Evan Bouchard, University of Denver defenceman Ian Mitchell and Spokane Chiefs centre Jaret Anderson-Dolan will be the alternates.

"It means everything," Comtois said. "I don't really have words for it, but just to represent my teammates and the coaching staff and that they believe in me that I can assume this role and be a leader on this team, it's a huge honour. We have 11 captains on our team from their club teams so it's a huge honour to represent them."

"Known him now for two years and he's a good man," said Hunter, an assistant coach at the last couple World Juniors. "He's a leader in the locker room. He's a leader off the ice. He's led all the way through this on all the little details and the mindset we want and he's played like a leader on the ice so really felt comfortable with Max. I know him well and have a good relationship with him."

For the second straight year, Canada's captain will be someone who doesn't wear the 'C' for his club team. Last year, Dillon Dubé, an alternate in Kelowna, was the captain. And Comtois was watching closely.

"I took notes from that and I'll try to do the same," the Longueuil, Que. native said. "He was one of our best guys every night. He was working hard, he was doing all the little details on the ice and that's the main thing that I learned from him. I have to give my best, try to be the best player out there and compete against the other team and myself to be better every game."

One big difference is Dubé had six other returning players to lean on last year to help insulate the leadership group whereas Comtois stands alone in that regard this time around. But the personable Comtois, who played 10 NHL games with the Ducks at the start of the season, is anything but shy.

"He's a guy who feels comfortable out there," said Ottawa 67s goalie Mikey DiPietro. "He's kind of a calming force for us, because he's been in these situations before."

"He holds guys accountable," observed Mitchell. "I think that's the biggest thing that will make him such a great captain for us. If he sees someone

not doing things the right way he'll tell them about it and that will only make our team better."

Comtois held himself accountable after Sunday's 5-2 loss to Finland calling it his worst performance of the season and he seemed particularly locked in at practice on Tuesday.

"We're ready," Comtois said after the workout. "We had a good practice today. We had good meetings about last game. We turned the page and it's time to go and we're going to be ready tomorrow."

Comtois named Canada's captain: "I don't really have words for it"

Maxime Comtois can't remember the last time he wore the 'C' on a hockey team. "It's been a long time," the Drummondville left winger said with a grin. But as Team Canada's only returning player, Comtois was destined to play a leadership role at this year's World Juniors and after taking notes on how Dillon Dube handled the role a year ago, the 19-year-old feels ready to take on the job.

Among those named to the leadership group, Mitchell may have been the biggest surprise.

"It was pretty unexpected," he agreed. "I didn't necessarily think I would be named to wear a letter, but it's such an honour. I came in to try and make the team and just tried to be myself and didn't really come in with any other expectations."

What was it about the Chicago Blackhawks prospect that earned him the job?

"He's really vocal on the bench and in practice and he follows things along really well," Hunter explained. "He understands, he's always asking questions and he's relaying all that information to his teammates during the game and in the locker room. And he's played well and he's going to play a lot of big minutes for us. He's just a composed guy back there with the puck."

Mitchell insists he's not very vocal in the room. So, what makes him such a chatterbox on the ice?

"I guess I'm just a very curious guy," the native of Calahoo, Alb. said. "I try to learn as much as I can about the game. On the ice I like to kind of direct traffic out there and make sure that everyone kind of knows what they're doing and it helps me. Being vocal helps me get into the game."

Mitchell serves as an assistant captain with the Pioneers in the NCAA and it was there that he learned a great deal from Jim Montgomery, who left this season to become the Dallas Stars head coach.

"He was awesome for me," said Mitchell. "Definitely the best coach I had growing up. He was such a special person and a special coach and he's going to have great success in Dallas. He was just so huge for me in my development."

The two remain close and Montgomery sent Mitchell a congratulatory text when he was named to Team Canada.

"He always harped on just being a difference maker every time you're stepping out on the ice," Mitchell recalled. "For me, he was always saying that, 'Every time you're out there try and make a play or do something that will have a positive impact on the game,' and that's something I've carried with me through this year and helped me grow my game."

Mitchell has emerged as one of the go-to defencemen for Hunter, who shuffled a couple of his pairs in the final practice before the World Juniors. Mitchell, who previously skated with Spokane's Ty Smith, moved up to play with Moose Jaw's Josh Brook. Noah Dobson shifted down to play with Smith while the duo of Owen Sound's Markus Phillips and Bouchard remained intact.

What's Hunter looking for?

"Just a little more close-out ability with the two groups up top," he said. "Phillips-Bouchard and Brook-Mitchell, those guys will be our top four for



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now and we'll give those guys the heavy assignments and see how they do and then those other guys, we'll monitor how they play."

The new formation means the top-four group is comprised entirely of 19-year-olds while the bottom-three group is all 18-year-olds.

Mitchell, meanwhile, noted that he's sparked a fast friendship with Brook this week and believes that chemistry will be solid on the ice as well.

"We're both good skaters and we both see the ice really well so we'll be able to make plays and be able to read off each other really well," he said.

DiPietro will start on Wednesday against Denmark while Maple Leafs prospect Ian Scott gets the call on Thursday against Switzerland, Hunter confirmed. DiPietro looked shaky in allowing three goals on 17 shots in a pre-tournament game against the Swiss, but Hunter said that did not play a role in the decision.

"No, no, no, we just wanted to start Mikey in the first game and give him the opportunity to start the tournament," he said. "We're confident in his abilities and we're looking forward to him starting the tournament."

"I'm definitely excited," the Canucks prospect said. "It's kind of a dream come true. This tournament is something I grew up watching so to start tomorrow is awesome. Obviously, I'm happy with the decision, but there's a lot of work to do."

DiPietro backstopped Windsor to a Memorial Cup title a couple years ago and was asked if the feeling now was similar to what he went through before that tournament.

"It's kind of the same emotions, the nerves, the excitement are similar, but this is kind of a little bit bigger," he noted. "And, for myself, it's something that I got to separate from. I had success in the Memorial Cup and my team did, but this is a brand-new tournament and you need to put in the work to be successful."

"Dream come true": DiPietro gets Boxing Day start as confidence builds

Mikey DiPietro will get the start on Wednesday as Team Canada opens the 2019 World Juniors against Denmark. The Canucks prospect was happy with his bounce-back effort in Sunday's final pre-tournament game and is growing in confidence. "I'm definitely excited," he said of opening the tournament. "It's a dream come true." Ian Scott will start the second game against Switzerland on Thursday.

DiPietro looked a lot more at ease in his second pre-competition game against Finland. In an interview with NHL.com's Kevin Woodley, the Ottawa 67s goalie explained that a recent conversation with Hockey Canada's mental performance consultant (Dr. Ryan Hamilton) helped him settle down. He's now written "ABC" on the back of the blocker.

"ABC: Be Aware, Breathe, Choose," DiPietro told Woodley. "I was talking to our sports psychologist and it stuck out to me. Be aware of your surroundings, be aware your mind is drifting, take a breath and then choose what to focus on. It's just mental."

That advice has DiPietro feeling good heading into the tournament.

"It's building," he said of his confidence level. "Today in practice was really good. I liked our pace and felt really comfortable in the net, was seeing pucks well. I think as the tournament progresses I'll become more comfortable."

Getting a chance to play in the building on Sunday also boosted DiPietro's comfort level. He noticed that there was a weird bounce when a puck got rimmed into the zone in the first period against Finland so he's filed that in the memory bank. And the atmosphere shouldn't overwhelm him either.

"We all really agreed in the room it was getting pretty loud and it wasn't even fully packed so we're excited to get it going," he said.

After missing the first two pre-tournament games with a hand injury and then bouncing around the line-up in Sunday's pre-competition finale,

Brett Leason finally has a home. The Prince Albert right winger skated alongside Morgan Frost and centre Barrett Hayton at practice.

"Those two guys are really gifted and fast with the puck, skilled playmakers and you need someone on that line who's going to shoot the puck and that's going to be Brett," said Hunter. "Those guys can use their speed, their small, little-area passes and find Brett. And Brett's a big-body guy, he's going to win some battles along the boards for them and get some pucks to the net for them to find some second opportunities."

Leason has proven to be a deadly finisher this season potting 28 goals in 31 games in the WHL.

"I think it will work well," he said. "They're both small, skilled guys, who can make great passes so I just have to find open spots and let my shot go and our line will be successful at the tournament. I'm ready to get this thing going. Wish it was right now, but we'll have to wait for tomorrow and we'll bring it then."

While Leason is familiar with being the designated shooter on a line, he has basically no experience with his role on the power play. He's been in the bumper/slot position with the second unit.

"I've never been there growing up, but I'm learning and I'm sticking to it and I think it will work."

What's he focused on?

"Just being in the right position at all times, being there for close support and being ready to crash the net when the pucks go there."

Only four of Leason's 28 WHL goals have come on the man advantage this season.

With Leason moving to the third line, Oshawa's Jack Studnicka was bumped to the fourth line and Hamilton's MacKenzie Entwistle appears likely to start the tournament as the 13th forward. Halifax's Jared McIsaac is locked in as the seventh defenceman.

"No message to them just yet," said Hunter. "They're all going to play and we'll find our way through this and starting as the 13th forward or seventh D doesn't mean you'll end up there. It puts pressure on the guys above: play well or there's somebody else waiting to move into your spot."

The 13th forward cannot be overlooked

The 13th forward is at the bottom of the depth chart for teams but occasionally, players who have started the World Juniors as the 13th forward have found a way to move up the chart and make an impact. James Duthie and Jeff O'Neill look back at last year's extra forward, Tyler Steenbergen, and the key role he played for Team Canada in its gold medal triumph over Sweden.

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