



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2018



Preview: Flyers vs. Hurricanes

Canes ring in new year against Flyers

by Michael Smith

As the clock ticks down on 2018, the Carolina Hurricanes host the Philadelphia Flyers in their final game of the calendar year.

The New Year's Eve match-up pits two struggling Metropolitan Division opponents against each other for the first of four times this season.

"Every game is important," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "The more the year moves on and where we are, they become ultra-important, but we approach every game the same. There are two points out there we've got to have."

Manufacturing Offense

The Hurricanes have won just one of their last five games (1-4-0), and a constant thread in the losses has been the team's inability to score goals; the Canes have managed just two goals in their last four defeats, while they netted five goals in a win over Boston last Sunday.

"There's no easy answer to it. You have to do it right and keep trying to get to the net and putting pucks there. There's no secret to that," Brind'Amour said. "Our overall team game has been fine. That has not been an issue at all. ... We've got to find ways to get pucks in the net."

The Canes were shut out, 2-0, by the New Jersey Devils on Saturday, Carolina's second such loss in the span of a week.

Magnified in this recent stretch is the underperforming power play, which was 0-for-5 on Saturday and 0-for-23 in the last six games.

"The little things that make a power play work well haven't been there," Brind'Amour said, simply.

If only getting the power play going was simple. The Canes have talked about it. They've met about it. They've diagrammed it. They've talked about it some more. And they've practiced, practiced, practiced it. But it's continually coming up empty, and it's costing the team points.

Strong in Net

While the offense has been inconsistent, the Canes' goaltending from the duo of Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney has been stable and reliable.

McElhinney owns a 2.31 goals-against average and a .922 save percentage through 13 games this season. He made 28 saves on 29 shots in New Jersey on Saturday. Mrazek has recorded a 2.59 goals-against average and a .901 save percentage through 16 games. He posted his first shutout with the Canes on Dec. 16 and made 30 saves on 32 shots in Washington on Thursday.

"They've done their job all year. Those two have been solid," Brind'Amour said. "That's certainly not been our issue. They've kept us in games despite scoring no goals; we're still in games at the end, and that's pretty impressive."

The Opposition

The Flyers are coming off a tough 2-1 loss to Florida, in which the Panthers scored twice in the final 6:44 of regulation to capture two points in regulation. Philadelphia is now winless in their last two games (0-1-1) after winning three of their previous four. The Flyers are equal to the Hurricanes in the standings at 15-17-5 (35 points) through 37 games.

AT THE RINK

Ring in the new year with the Canes! The earlier-than-usual 6 p.m. start will allow everyone to enjoy New Year's Eve festivities following the game, and we've got you covered. All fans in attendance will receive a complimentary First Night Raleigh wristband (pick up on the main concourse at section 108), which is valued at \$11 and provides all-access and discounts to downtown Raleigh festivities on New Year's Eve.

The 50/50 Raffle returns for one more night in 2018, and a cash drawing will be made with the winner taking home half of the jackpot. Ticket prices and all raffle details can be found here.

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Did Hurricanes' Hamilton Leave His Game in Calgary?

By Mark Shiver

The Carolina Hurricanes and the Calgary Flames made a big trade this past offseason. Part of that trade moved Flames defenseman Dougie Hamilton to the Hurricanes. At the time, it was received by Hurricanes fans as a positive move for their team. Now it is being looked at with a questioning lens. Some are wondering if Hamilton left his game in Calgary.

Pre-Hurricanes Hamilton

Hamilton has been a good defenseman in the NHL and justifiably regarded as such. According to the press release released by the Hurricanes when they announced the trade, "Hamilton, 25, scored a career-high 17 goals in 2017-18, tied for the most in the NHL by a defenseman. He ranked second among NHL defensemen in shots last season (270) and posted a career-high in time on ice per game (21:32)."

The Hurricanes needed (and still need) all the scoring they can get, so from that standpoint, getting Hamilton was viewed as a positive. They gave up 2017-18 all-star Noah Hanifin to the Flames to get Hamilton. But Hamilton brought more production and, as a veteran presence, was viewed as a good acquisition for the Hurricanes even though Hanifin would be gone.

The one piece of baggage that Hamilton carried was a reputation of not being a good presence in the locker room. A reminder here of what Eric Francis of Sportsnet wrote on June 23 in response to the trade: "Despite having most of the tools and stats a player could possibly possess, the 6-foot-6 210-pound offensive blueliner has now been traded twice in four seasons – a rarity for a player with his numbers and stature. A red flag for most teams, making him harder to trade than casual observers would think." Even back in 2015 when the Boston Bruins traded Hamilton to the Flames, there were rumors of him not getting along with his teammates.

Regarding that trade, Mark Burke wrote for letsgobruins.net, "...one assistant general manager told the Herald's Stephen Harris that Hamilton was a problem in the locker room, with the 21-year-old described as 'a loner and sort of an uppity kid,' and it was 'unanimous' that his teammates did not like him."

Of course, there are two sides to every story, but the bottom line is that the Hurricanes brought in a top offensive defenseman when they traded for Hamilton and were not dissuaded by rumors of friction between him and his Bruins or Flames teammates.

Post-Flames Hamilton

Since leaving the Flames and joining the Hurricanes, Hamilton's offensive production has been disappointing. Some wonder if he left his game in Calgary. His current stat

line through 37 games with the Hurricanes this season is three goals and seven assists for 10 points. He has a plus/minus of minus-15 this season, behind his plus-one last season and a plus-12 in 2016-17.

The plus/minus statistic is sometimes overused and assigned too much weight, but in Hamilton's case, at the very least it shows that his game is not what it was the past couple of seasons. Obviously, there are a myriad of possible reasons that could explain the difference in plus/minus, and admittedly a great number of those reasons might not be Hamilton's fault.

But, again, something is not what it was with his offensive production. A quick look at some of his stats last season compared to this season was compiled by Tyler Dellow of The Athletic. The point of his piece was to look at Hamilton in light of how he played last season with the Flames when paired with defenseman Mark Giordano, and how both players are doing this season apart from each other.

Dellow used a tweet by Darren Haynes, a contributor to both the Canadian Press and The Athletic, as a starting point in his article. Haynes' tweet shows the stat lines for both players for last year through a full season of 82 games and so 32 games this year:

The simple response to the tweet by Haynes is that Giordano is having a better season offensively and Hamilton is having a worse one. That is a pretty simple statement which Dellow then goes on to dive into a little deeper:

"Let's start with the points. Points for defencemen are, in large part, a reflection of opportunity. You know who's been getting a lot of opportunity on PP1 this year? Mark Giordano. You know who hasn't been getting a lot of opportunity on PP1 this year? Dougie Hamilton" And the Dellow also notes:

"Hamilton, on the other hand, is currently playing on Carolina's second unit. Second units are notoriously inept and Carolina further hamstring theirs by running with a 3F2D. Ninety-seven percent of Hamilton's time has been in a 3F2D. Good luck getting credited with points out of that." (From Dellow: An analytical look at early returns to see who drove the Mark Giordano and Dougie Hamilton pairing – Tyler Dellow – The Athletic, Dec. 19, 2018).

Whether or not sliding Hamilton up to the first power play unit would result in him increasing his production is not known. However, it might be something Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour should consider. Especially in view of how awful the 'Canes power play has been of late.

Current Hurricanes Hamilton



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What does one make of Hamilton's offensive falloff this season? Dellow pointed out in a follow-up piece in The Athletic about Hamilton that his shot volume was high with the Flames and is still high with the Hurricanes. But the entire Hurricanes game has thus far this season been a high-volume shot total. Hamilton is simply fitting right in even though it's easy for him to do so.

Dellow made this point which may sum things up: "There are undoubtedly criticisms that you can make of Hamilton's game. That sort of thing gets turned way up when you leave a high profile media market where you were playing with an

excellent partner and move to a smaller one and your old team excels while your new team struggles." (From "Dellow: No, Dougie Hamilton's on-ice shot numbers aren't being cheaply inflated" – Tyler Dellow – The Athletic, Dec. 28, 2018).

The entire Hurricanes team is struggling offensively. It's not just Hamilton. Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that his production is dramatically lower than it has been, and that is cause for concern. If Hamilton's game got lost when he flew into Raleigh to join the Hurricanes, it would be nice if it showed up soon.



Flyers face off against offensively challenged Hurricanes

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The Carolina Hurricanes are taking their shots, but that's the extent of the offense in many situations.

Sorting out those shortcomings remains a priority as the team goes into Monday night's game against the visiting Philadelphia Flyers at PNC Arena.

The Hurricanes have lost four of their last five games. In those defeats, they've been shut out twice and scored one goal in the two others.

"There's only so much we can do," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said of potential changes.

The disappointment mounts because the Hurricanes have felt that in many cases they've done the right things -- except putting the puck in the net.

"It still looks pretty much the same. We're getting our chances," Brind'Amour said. "Five-on-five, the game is there every night. We've changed lines and we've done that. We've got to obviously get special teams rolling, to at least not hurt us. The 5-on-5 game, I think, is fine.

"Switching lines up, we'll make a couple little adjustments but I don't know if that's really the answer."

The Hurricanes could be pressing at times, something that might not make things better right away.

"I think that has been weighing on the guys all year, really," Brind'Amour said. "There's no easy answer to it. You have to do it right."

Philadelphia isn't without its problems. The Flyers have gone four straight games without winning in regulation, holding a 1-2-1 mark in those games.

"It's frustrating and disappointing, but we have to move on," Philadelphia left winger James van Riemsdyk said.

The Flyers dropped a 2-1 decision at Florida on Saturday, but it was notable on some fronts. Philadelphia won 69.4 percent of its face-offs for its second-best rate in that category this season. Center Sean Couturier was 18-for-24 on draws, coming a game after winning a career-high 19 face-offs at Tampa Bay.

Goalie Carter Hart is coming off a 34-save outing for the Flyers. But Florida scored two late goals to pull out the victory.

"I have to bear down," Hart said. "We'll regroup and get ready for Carolina."

Said Flyers defenseman Radko Gudas: "I thought we had the game under control."

For the Flyers, Monday night's game marks the fourth stop in a stretch of five consecutive road games.

The Hurricanes have been hurt by the absence of center Jordan Staal, who has missed the last three games and eight of the last 10 games while dealing with injuries.

Staal didn't practice Sunday so it's unlikely he'll be back until January. With the situation facing the Hurricanes, they don't have the luxury to wait for all the pieces to be together.

"Where we are, every game is important," Brind'Amour said. "If there are points out there, we've got to have them."

For Carolina, this is part of consecutive games against the Flyers. The teams meet Thursday night in Philadelphia,



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though the Flyers have a game in between with Tuesday night's game at Nashville.

The other two matchups between the Hurricanes and Flyers come in the final eight days of the regular season.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-philadelphia-flyers-carolina-hurricanes/c-303388198>

<https://thehockeywriters.com/carolina-hurricanes-hamilton-struggling/>

<https://abc11.com/sports/flyers-face-off-against-offensively-challenged-hurricanes/4992777/>



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SportScan

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

1123572 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers 'just collapsed' against Panthers, and Carter Hart couldn't do anything to stop it

By John Boruk

December 30, 2018 9:35 AM

SUNRISE, Fla. — Earlier this month, it was the crusher in Calgary.

Now, just two and a half weeks later, we have the fiasco in Florida.

Good teams simply don't wilt like the Flyers have time and time again. The Panthers, playing on back-to-back nights, got an unthinkable game-winning goal Saturday from Jonathan Huberdeau with 1:06 remaining in regulation to beat the Flyers, 2-1 (see observations).

It wasn't so much what they did, but rather how they did it — on a set breakout from behind their own net.

"When that happens," interim head coach Scott Gordon said, "you have to get into your routes and get into position, and they just took off."

Somewhat confusing prior to the breakout was the positioning of the Flyers' personnel. Their best defensive forward and best defender on the ice, Sean Couturier, was stationed just in front of the Panthers' crease, roughly 180 feet away from his own net.

You would think Couturier would have been better served near the blue line to cover any odd-man rush against the Panthers' most dangerous line. Once Jakub Voracek failed in his attempt to pick off the pass between the Panthers' blue line and the red line, you could sense the doom.

"As soon as they fired it up the boards, they took off," Gordon said. "I know we were in between, and I think Jake tried to pick it off on the wall and it got by him, and that's how it happened. It's a bit of a hope play by them. We don't come up with it and it's a 3-on-2 and maybe a potential icing."

With Aleksander Barkov and Huberdeau on the ice, it's also a potential backbreaker. Voracek couldn't recover in time, Couturier was too far away from his own net and Wayne Simmonds was still at the Panthers' blue line when the puck entered the Flyers' zone.

Radko Gudas did a good job of riding the Panthers' lightning-quick winger Evgenii Dadonov out of the play, but once he left the puck for Barkov, it was tic-tac-toe — game over.

"I think we shot ourselves in the foot there. We had the game under our control there," Gudas said. "We just collapsed. We just have to pay more attention to the details. A controlled breakout ends up in our net, that's unacceptable especially with a minute left in the game."

It felt like that Flames game all over again when the Flyers executed a series of breakdowns that led to Sean Monahan's goal with seven seconds remaining, and once again, it was another outstanding effort from the goaltender that went wasted.

This may be Carter Hart's biggest psychological challenge if he stays in Philadelphia for the remainder of this season.

"I felt confident in the net," Hart said. "I saw the guy up top, Barkov, and then I saw Huberdeau on the back door as well. I think he just got it up over me on the glove side. Obviously, I'll look at things tomorrow and review the game. I think I just need to bear down a little bit harder."

I'm not sure how Hart bears down any harder than the effort he provided his teammates, stopping 34 shots and pitching a shutout through the first 53 minutes, but therein lies the concern for a 20-year-old rookie who deserved a much better fate.

Hart wants to shoulder the blame and take responsibility. On this team, that's a tremendous load to carry.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123573 Philadelphia Flyers

A look at why special teams continue to sink Flyers

Dave Isaac, NHL writer

Published 11:57 a.m. ET Dec. 30, 2018

SUNRISE, Fla. — Sean Couturier essentially shrugged when asked the question for the umpteenth time this season. There still doesn't appear to be a good answer.

What in the heck is going on with the Flyers' power play?

"I don't know. We're just not putting the puck in the net," Couturier said. "We seem to control the puck pretty well, but we're not creating enough chances I guess."

By going 0-for-2 on the power play in a 2-1 loss to the Florida Panthers Saturday night, the Flyers' man advantage fell to 12.8 percent for the season, dead last in the league. Only twice this season, which is nearly half over, have the Flyers scored on the power play in consecutive games.

Since Scott Gordon took over as interim coach, the Flyers are a measly 2-for-16 on the power play. Initially he argued that he thought the floodgates were on the brink of opening and there would be a flurry of goals considering the talent on the first unit and how much they were moving the puck.

That sure wasn't the case Saturday when the Flyers mustered only four shots in 3 minutes, 45 seconds of man advantage against a Florida penalty kill ranked 22nd in the league.

"Obviously our power play wasn't going tonight and even if it didn't score, we should have been able to gain some momentum from it," Gordon said, "and I think they might have gotten some momentum (instead)."



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Claude Giroux (31) and Shayne Gostisbehere (35) are the only Flyers who have more than 30 shots on the power play this season. They are the two catalysts and while Giroux has been on his game pretty much all season long, Gostisbehere's confidence struggled until recently with the puck on his stick.

As for where that duo compares league-wide, through Saturday's action Washington's Alex Ovechkin and Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon led the league with 52 power-play shots apiece.

Until the Flyers can find another weapon on the man advantage or if they can somehow create more opportunities originating from behind the goal line, which they have done at times in the past, they may continue to shrug at why they have fallen from being a league power house on the power play.

The other side of special teams continues to be a problem for the Flyers as well.

They have been stuck near the basement of the league all season on the penalty kill because of how poorly they performed in the first two months of the season.

Since Nov. 23, a span of 16 games, the Flyers' penalty killers have been successful 83.3 percent of the time, allowing only eight goals on 48 opposing power plays. They rank 10th in the league during that time period, but 29th for the season.

The problem recently is that when they do allow those goals, they're biggies. Saturday night, Mike Hoffman scored for the Panthers' second-ranked power play after James van Riemsdyk was whistled for hooking Colton Sceviour late in the third period.

"That was a little suspect. I've never heard of a hooking call with one hand on your stick," van Riemsdyk said. "I didn't agree with his ruling on that, but that's life sometimes. Unfortunately that's the way it went. Our penalty kill did a great job all game long and obviously they've got a really good power play and found a way to capitalize."

"I can't disagree with him," Gordon added. "I thought by the time (Sceviour) went down I don't even think JVR was holding his stick. I think he just kind of skated himself into the boards. I don't think we can blame the loss on that."

Gordon pointed the finger to missed offensive chances by the Flyers. After all, the penalty kill had been effective earlier in the night.

In the first period, the Flyers had to kill a 5-on-3 for 40 seconds and everything looked pretty smooth. They didn't even allow a shot during the 40 seconds. Rookie goalie Carter Hart was getting clear looks at the puck and the players in front of him were shutting down passing lanes and keeping the Panthers from getting easy entries into the Philadelphia zone.

"I thought our PK did a really good job tonight," Hart said after the game. "The goal that we gave up tonight was a tough goal, tough play. Got a lot of huge blocks on that 5-on-3, a lot of big clears. I think our PK has been doing really well lately and did a really good job tonight. Obviously you don't want to give up a goal on the PK, but that's a tough play and I thought our guys did a really good job tonight."

Courier-Post LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123574 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers 5 takeaways: 'We shot ourselves in the foot there' in late loss to Panthers

Dave Isaac, NHL writer

Published 10:58 p.m. ET Dec. 29, 2018

SUNRISE, Fla. — It was crushing because the Flyers felt like they were in the driver's seat all night. They got a lead less than two minutes into the game and for quite a while it looked like they'd hold it over a Florida Panthers team that played the night before.

Comfort became carelessness. A lead became a deficit.

It happened quickly and thanks to Jonathan Huberdeau's goal and assist in a span of 5 minutes, 38 seconds that gave the Panthers a 2-1 win.

"I think we shot ourselves in the foot there," defenseman Radko Gudas said. "We had the game under our control. We were doing lots of good things. We didn't allow them pretty much with scoring chances. I mean, they had a few, everybody's gonna do some, but we handled it pretty well and then just collapsed the last seven minutes."

Perhaps they got too comfortable with Carter Hart saving their bacon all night. The rookie goalie finished with 34 saves, the most he's had in his young career that includes only four games. They definitely got too thoughtless in their own zone and that's been a trait they've had for most of this season.

Interim coach Scott Gordon stopped short of calling it a chronic problem because the Flyers had been rather successful since he took over for Dave Hakstol on Dec. 17.

"When it doesn't cost you, sometimes you can't really give a good assessment of that," Gordon said. "I do know that we did make some turnovers (Saturday). I think that the turnovers that we made were situations where we outwaited, waited too long."

If he does go back to look over prior game footage, he'll find that making plays too late has been an unfortunate staple all season.

"I think sometimes we force some plays that weren't maybe there trying to make hope plays," Sean Couturier said. "Next thing you know they're coming the other way, especially with that top line. You've got to be careful when they're out there. Overall I thought it was a tight game, could have went one way or the other. They capitalized on one chance more than us and we didn't."

Here are four more takeaways from Saturday night...

Breaking down the goal

With 66 seconds left, Huberdeau scored as the benefactor of a tic-tac-toe play after Keith Yandle sent a long breakout pass along the boards. It went to Evgenii Dadonov, who reached longer than Gudas, fed Aleksander Barkov and then the puck went to Huberdeau for his 10th goal of the year.

Here's how the Flyers saw that play in their own words.

"I think it just got through two of us on the breakout pass and then it's a 3-on-2 with them coming with speed," Gudas said. "Me and Bobby (Robert Hägg) didn't have a good gap enough for us to cover those. We just have to pay attention more to the details like a controlled breakout that ends up in our net. That's unacceptable, especially with a minute left in the game."

"It started off where they got possession and went into a set breakout, which when that happens you have to get into your roots and get into position and they just took off," Gordon added. "As soon as they took off, they fired it up the boards and we were in between. I think Jake tried to pick it off on the wall and it got by him and that's how it happened. It's a bit of a hope play by them. If it gets picked off, we're going back into their zone. We don't come up with it and it's a 3-on-2 and maybe even a potential icing. That's the way it worked out. It's a tough way to lose the game. For me the biggest thing is that we didn't capitalize on the chances we did have."



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"Obviously we can't allow an odd-man rush at that point in the game," Couturier said. "We have to be better."

Hart was very good on the night, especially when the Flyers had to kill off 40 seconds of a 5-on-3 penalty kill. He was positionally sound so even if he wasn't able to control a rebound he was in the right place to stop the shot. The two exceptions were a back-door goal by Mike Hoffman and Huberdeau's shot which Hart nearly snagged with his glove.

"I felt good," he said. "I thought we did a good job of limiting things to the outside and collapsed at our netfront and didn't get any second or third opportunities but just gotta put this one behind us now and prepare for our next challenge."

Even though he's only 20, Hart's mental make-up is strong. His first NHL call-up might keep him here for an entire career but he knows there's no guarantee of that.

Gordon, who coached Hart with the Lehigh Valley Phantoms also, thinks he'll handle the loss well.

"He should leave here knowing that he was our best player and gave us a chance to win the game and if anything it falls on the rest of us," Gordon said. "There's no way that he should think the two goals were the reason why we lost the game."

Saturday was the fifth NHL game that Gostisbehere played at the rink where he grew up watching the Panthers with his grandfather, Denis Brodeur. It sure sounded like his kind of crowd based on the goal he scored less than two minutes into the game.

Jordan Weal, in the lineup after sitting out 10 of the previous 12 games, gave him a drop pass and Gostisbehere wired a shot past James Reimer for his fifth goal of the season.

"I saw a chance for me to get up there in the play and I yelled before he gave it to me," Gostisbehere said. "I was just waiting for him to give me a little flash screen to take the goalie's eyes away, so I picked my spot and I had a lot of time."

Gostisbehere also scored a goal in his first game at BB&T Center as a Flyer (he had played a couple youth hockey games there). Saturday he led the Flyers with eight shot attempts.

With Nolan Patrick out of the lineup (he did skate Saturday morning and was handling the puck despite his "upper-body injury") Weal was in to take over and he didn't look out of place despite all his recent healthy scratches.

"You know what, people can say what they want but it's one of the tougher things to do in hockey, to take that much time off and try to get back into game situations," he said. "I'm playing with two guys who are playing great hockey right now so I just have to simplify things, keep moving the puck, get open for them and good things are happening out there."

Weal, Scott Laughton and Michael Raffl produced six of the Flyers' 35 shots in the game and were probably their cleanest line in terms of play with the puck on a sheet of ice that is never up to the players' standards.

Courier-Post LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123529 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets seek better net results with the puck

Brian Hedger

The Columbus Dispatch @BrianHedger

Dec 30, 2018 at 9:33 PM

Dec 30, 2018 at 9:33 PM

It's a common sound at a hockey practice, occurring whenever a puck misses the net.

It smacks into the glass or boards with a loud crack, which can be jolting to those not paying close enough attention. It can also be telling, especially to coaches after games like the Blue Jackets' 4-2 loss Friday to the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Each team finished with 29 shots, but the Jackets actually had 14 more attempted shots (65-51). Seventeen were blocked and 19 missed the net, which were numbers coach John Tortorella emphasized before practice Sunday at Nationwide Arena.

"I put (that) stat up on the board," Tortorella said. "I watched it very closely. The first shot that we took in our shooting drill went wide and then I don't think another one went wide. I didn't hear much noise on the boards."

The goal is to lessen that noise during games now. Going into a game Monday against the Ottawa Senators, the Blue Jackets had missed the net 460 times in 38 games — ranked 15th of 31 NHL teams and tied with the Detroit Red Wings in two less games.

That's solidly in the middle of the pack, but the Blue Jackets would like to hit the net more often.

"It's a major part of that game (Friday)," Tortorella said. "It may sound silly, but I do believe that when you do bring focal points to this group and you put a little bit of pressure on concentrating on that part of it, I think they get it quickly."

No Foligno

Nick Foligno will not play Monday and could be away from the team longer depending on the health of his 5-year old daughter, Milana, who was born with a congenital heart defect.

Foligno missed a game Nov. 17 at the Carolina Hurricanes for the same reason, after she became sick and experienced complications with the heart condition. She now has a surgery scheduled in Boston and Foligno will be there for it. The Blue Jackets captain informed his teammates on the ice after practice and was swarmed with hugs.

Lukas Sedlak will re-enter the lineup and likely play left wing on the third line, after being a healthy scratch the past five games. Anthony Duclair is expected to play in Foligno's spot on the second line, skating with center Alexander Wennberg and right wing Josh Anderson.

Looking for a spark

After going 9 of 31 and clicking at 29 percent between Nov. 6 and Dec. 4, the Blue Jackets have again spiraled downward on the power play.

Since going 1 of 3 against Calgary in a 9-6 loss Dec. 4, they've scored just once in 33 power plays for a frigid success rate of 3 percent. That includes their current 0-of-19 drought.

The past couple of games, the Jackets have changed their power-play setup for the top unit — using more of a 2-3 look instead of the usual 1-3-1. They've used it to put their five best offensive players on the ice at the same time, with the first forward line of Artemi Panarin, Pierre-Luc Dubois and Cam Atkinson backed by top defensemen Seth Jones and Zach Werenski at the points.

"We're trying to give them a foundation," Tortorella said. "We've changed things, I'll tell you that, but we want them to be more instinctive and not be so much on their spots all the time. With a little bit of a lack of confidence in it and guys just really struggling, it's become a little predictable. We want them to be more instinctive."

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 12.31.2018



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1123530 Columbus Blue Jackets

Cam Atkinson's career year brings Rick Nash's records with Blue Jackets into reach

By Aaron Portzline

Dec 30, 2018

COLUMBUS, Ohio — An excerpt from a telling conversation among press box wags on Nov. 23, late in the third period of a Blue Jackets win over Toronto in Nationwide Arena:

PBW #1: "That's 10 career short-handed goals for Atkinson."

PBW #2: "How far behind Nash is he?"

To peruse the Blue Jackets' list of franchise records is to see Rick Nash at the top of almost every meaningful category — games played, goals, assists, points, power-play goals, power-play points, shorthanded goals, game-winning goals, shots on goal, overtime game-winners ... we could go on here.

But Cam Atkinson's career-best start to this season, coupled with the monster contract extension he signed last season (through 2024-25), has brought something into focus.

Atkinson is on pace to break one of Nash's records this season. But within the next couple of years, he is likely to supplant Nash at the top of many of the franchise's lists.

For many years, Columbus fans have wondered which sweater would first find its way to the rafters of Nationwide Arena. Nash's No. 61? Sergei Bobrovsky's No. 72? Nick Foligno's No. 71?

That's a long way off, of course.

"Not right now," Atkinson said. "I'm still just starting this long-term deal. Maybe later on down the road, we can come back to this topic."

Since last Jan. 25, when Atkinson returned to the Blue Jackets' lineup after being sidelined with a broken foot, only three players in the entire NHL have more goals than Atkinson's 41.

You might have heard their names: Washington's Alex Ovechkin (49), Winnipeg's Patrik Laine (47) and Edmonton's Connor McDavid (47).

"He's one of the top players in this league," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said, paying Atkinson the type of compliment he usually reserves for defenseman Seth Jones, goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky or forward Artemi Panarin.

Atkinson, with 23-16-39, is on pace to have the first 50-goal season in the history of the franchise. Nash, who had 41 goals in 2003-04 and 40 in 2008-09, is the only Blue Jackets player to have a 40-goal season.

"I've always shot the puck, but I think I've focused on getting into better areas," Atkinson said.

Playing on a line with left wing Panarin and center Pierre-Luc Dubois is obviously a good spot for offensive production. Panarin is a world-class dangler, and Dubois is an underrated setup man with the ability to make precision passes with both his forehand and backhand.

Atkinson is the "shooter" on a two-playmaker line. "I like that," he said, with a smile.

Atkinson often describes the art of finding space on the ice as "getting lost," and that's a lot easier to do with the attention Panarin and Dubois attract.

But he's also handled the responsibility of being a scorer better. In the past, his frustration when he missed a prime scoring chance was easily visible from the ice. He'd stare into the rafters, slam his stick on the wall or glass, even walk down the hallway behind the bench to vent.

"Don't get me wrong, when I get grade-A chances I still feel like I should always score," Atkinson said. "I'm still hard on myself, but I've worked on improving my body language on the ice. That's important."

A couple of other points on Atkinson's season so far.

His shooting percentage (15.4 percent) is significantly higher than last season (10.4), but not much different from 2016-17 (14.6) when he scored a career-high 35 goals.

He's averaging 4.03 shots on goal per game, which is third in the NHL, trailing Colorado's Nathan McKinnon (4.5) and Buffalo's Jack Eichel (4.2).

Atkinson's shot rate is about a half-shot more per game than last season (3.55), which would mean 39 more shots on goal across an entire season. That's about six more goals at his current shooting percentage.

"I've had success so far in the first half of the season," Atkinson said. "I feel really confident it will continue."

Here's a look at the major franchise benchmarks, all of them held by Nash, that Atkinson could claim within the next few seasons.

Games played: Nash played in 674 games for Columbus, 121 more than the No. 2 guy on the list, Fedor Tyutin. Atkinson is at 484 games, meaning that if he stays healthy he could catch Nash late in the 2020-21 season.

Goals: Atkinson is already second on the franchise list, with 168 goals. Nash still has a comfortable margin (+121), but with the way Atkinson is pouring them in of late, it would likely happen during the 2021-22 season.

Assists: Nash and Atkinson are similar in the sense that they have more goals than assists most seasons. Still, Nash had 258 assists with the Blue Jackets. Atkinson is at 144 assists, currently, sixth on the list. This feels like a 2021-22 target for Atkinson as well.

Points: Atkinson is six points from surpassing David Vyborny for No. 2 on the franchise list. This one could take a while because Atkinson is currently 235 points behind Nash. But that's four seasons, comfortably, or three seasons if Atkinson can maintain his current point-a-game pace.

Power-play goals: Yes, I know many of you have already cracked a joke about the Blue Jackets power play, which has been most inept for two-plus seasons now. Anyway, Atkinson (35) is six power-play goals from jumping David Vyborny (36) and R.J. Umberger (40) into second place. Nash, with 83 man-advantage goals, has a huge lead. This one might be safe for a while.

Short-handed goals: Not a marquee category, we'll grant you. But Atkinson, with 10 short-handed goals, is already closing in on Nash (14) for the top spot.

Game-winning goals: This is impressive. Atkinson had 35 game-winners, leaving him just nine behind Nash's mark (44) that took 674 games to achieve. Atkinson already has five game-winners this season.

Overtime winners: Nash ended six games in overtime, but he never played three-on-three overtime in Columbus. He was traded in 2012, and the NHL didn't switch to three-on-three until 2015. Atkinson and Jones have five OT winners.

Shots: Atkinson already is second on the franchise list with 1,431 shots on goal, leaving him 847 behind Nash. But if Atkinson continues to fire four shots on goal per game, it'll happen sooner than you think, maybe late in 2020-21 or early 2021-22.

Notebook



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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- Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno will not be with the club for Monday's game versus Ottawa, and perhaps longer. The club announced Sunday that Foligno's daughter, Milana, was scheduled to have surgery in Boston. She was born with a congenital heart defect.

- An emotional scene at the end of practice, when Foligno addressed the rest of the team and told them he would be absent indefinitely. When Foligno finished, the players tapped their sticks on the ice and engulfed Foligno in a 25-man hug near center ice.

- Here's what the lines looked like in practice Sunday: Artemi Panarin – Pierre-Luc Dubois – Cam Atkinson; Anthony Duclair – Alexander Wennberg – Josh Anderson; Lukas Sedlak – Boone Jenner – Oliver Bjorkstrand; Riley Nash – Brandon Dubinsky – Markus Hannikainen.

- A moment of levity from Tortorella on Sunday. The first few questions from media dealt with Friday's 4-2 loss to Toronto, as well as Tortorella's unhappiness with the Blue Jackets' recent run of play. Midway through an answer, Tortorella stopped and smiled. "... You know, it's our first loss in, I think, seven games. You guys are kicking the shit out of us."

- Tortorella was asked about switching the first power-play unit to a 2-3 setup, rather than the 1-3-1 formation the Blue Jackets have used for two-plus seasons. For the last three games, Seth Jones and Zach Werenski have run the points, with the top line — Panarin, Dubois and Atkinson — at forward. "We've changed things. I'll tell you that much. But we want them to be more instinctive and not be so much on their spots all the time. With a little bit of a lack of confidence in it and with guys really struggling, it's become a little predictable. We want them to be more instinctive."

- The Blue Jackets had a brief uptick in the power play, but have again fallen on hard times. The unit is now 30th in the NHL at 13.4 percent, ahead of only Philadelphia (12.8 percent). The Jackets are in an 0-for-19 slump dating back to Dec. 13 versus Los Angeles and a 1-for-33 plunge since Dec. 4 versus Calgary.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123565 Ottawa Senators

Brennan: The Senators, one of Ottawa's newsmakers in 2018

DON BRENNAN

Updated: December 30, 2018

This year was one of disasters, tragedy, boondoggles and love. From wild politics to wild winds to a Senators team that couldn't stay out of the news, 2018 was filled with twists and the unexpected. It was also a year in which the whole city paused to mourn, after losing its Butterfly Boy. In 2018, some narratives transfixed us, while others dominated our conversations — and here, in our annual newsmakers series, we return to examine the year's biggest stories. Today, Don Brennan reviews the Senators' 2018 year.

Heading into the last week and a half of December, the Senators had won just 11 of 39 games away from the Canadian Tire Centre during the 2018 calendar year.

And that may have been the least of their road problems.

It seemed everything bad that happened to the Senators — and there was unprecedented amounts of bad — had some sort of connection to the road.

Like, the thinly veiled threats of owner Eugene Melnyk to hit the road, with the team, if he didn't get more support. That backfired in a big way. More and more people chose to forgo the drive to Kanata for games. In some cases, it meant they didn't see the #MelnykOut signs put up alongside streets.

Like, the money-driven trip to Sweden for two games against the Colorado Avalanche in November, 2017. It's believed during that road trip is when the seeds were sewn back home for a feud between Erik Karlsson's wife Melinda and Mike Hoffman's fiancée Monika that divided the team and broke the dressing room.

It became apparent before the end of the season that Karlsson was going to be sent packing, and that cast a dark cloud of uncertainty over the dressing room regarding the future. Following the team's last game at the Canadian Tire Centre, he grabbed the puck. Still, Karlsson was coy when asked about being moved — and about picking up the keepsake.

"I was down there and I just saw it was in the net, so I just picked it up and decided to keep it," he said, before adding the possibility it was his last game as a Senator at the CTC: "I haven't thought about it until now. I'm a social guy, I read a lot of things and I'm not reading too much into it, but the word is out there from you guys."

The Senators dropped seven straight upon their return to North America, and 25 of 32 through the first month of 2018. During that span, they lost 16 of 18 road games. Their playoff hopes were squashed in January.

Their season ended with back-to-back losses in Pittsburgh and Boston on April 6-7. While their home record (16-19-6) was certainly nothing to brag about, they finished with the second worst road record in the league at 12-24-5. Only the Montreal Canadiens had fewer wins (11) while visitors.

The Senators wound up with 67 points, their lowest total in a non-lockout shortened season since their infancy in the mid-1990s.

More road woes were to come heading into the NHL entry draft, in June. At the scouting combine in Buffalo, Senators assistant GM Randy Lee was accused of inappropriately touching and making lewd remarks toward a 19-year-old hotel shuttle driver. He was arrested and plead not guilty to the initial charge of second degree harassment.

Ultimately, Lee was suspended by the team and later resigned, ending a 23-year employment with the club. The case was still alive in December, when Lee pleaded guilty to harassment, and will continue on into the new year as the driver's lawyer prepares to launch a civil suit against Lee and the Senators, whom he alleges are liable because they continued to employ Lee despite allegedly being aware of him doing similar things in the past.

The loss of Lee left the Senators shorthanded heading into the draft and through much of the summer, and was not the only embarrassing incident involving a driver. During a road trip in October, seven players climbed into an Uber car that had a hidden camera. The video was circulated of them badmouthing the coaching staff. More shame was brought to the organization.

Meanwhile, the trading of Karlsson in September created waves of angst in the fan base that lasted for months into December, the Senators had yet to have a sell out and ranked 27th in league attendance, despite the fact they had one of the best home records in the NHL.

Having learned his lesson, Melnyk made no public complaints, but the lack of support had to be eating him up — even while involved in legal battles with former business partner John Ruddy, with whom he was going to partner in the construction of a new home for the Senators at LeBreton Flats.

At the start of the year, Melnyk maintained the team absolutely needed to move to a new world-class building downtown in order to survive. The Canadian Tire Centre in Kanata was suddenly too far out of the way. When his partnership with Ruddy dissolved and turned into \$1.7 billion in



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lawsuits, the agreement with the NCC to develop LeBreton was ripped up.

Melnik changed his tune again, saying he could make the CTC work after all. If it turns out he can't, Melnik is expected to make more threats, perhaps even attempts, of hitting the road.

The Senators are expected to remain in Ottawa through 2019 and well beyond as the league frowns on relocation attempts. But what state they'll be in is anyone's guess.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123566 Ottawa Senators

'Tough blow': Senators' Thomas Chabot laments shoulder injury

Bruce Garrioch

December 30, 2018 6:09 PM EST

Thomas Chabot will have to play the waiting game. He doesn't have any other choice.

As the Ottawa Senators skated out for Sunday's practice at Canadian Tire Centre, the 21-year-old defenceman appeared briefly on the bench, but then headed back inside for treatment on his injured shoulder.

Speaking to the media for the first time since he was knocked out of the lineup for three weeks by a hit from Matt Martin of the New York Islanders on Friday night, Chabot tried to keep a positive outlook.

"It's been (feeling) pretty good actually," Chabot said. "It was a little sore (Saturday) morning, as we expected, but I think, after one day of treatment, I woke up feeling better and we're taking little steps and I think we're going the right way."

This is a tough blow for Chabot, who has been a point-a-game player for the Senators with 10 goals and 28 assists in 38 games. Not only was he taking advantage of the ice time freed up by the trade that sent Erik Karlsson to the San Jose Sharks, but Chabot had also improved his game at both ends of the ice.

While he wouldn't have won the Norris Trophy, he had put himself in the conversation and had a chance to be one of the finalists for the award to be presented to the National Hockey League's top defenceman in Las Vegas in June. He may have had a chance at being selected for the all-star game next month in San Jose.

Now, instead, he'll spend three weeks working hard to get back. At this point, it's unlikely before the all-star break at the end of January.

"Whether you're having a good season or not, it always sucks to be hurt," Chabot said. "It's part of the job. It always happens in hockey and you have to expect this. It is what it is and now we've got to look on the recovery road and, hopefully, be back as soon as possible."

Even in junior, Chabot never had a major injury that sidelined him for an extended period.

"It's one of the first times I've had a pretty good injury," he said. "It sucks, it's unfortunate, and it's not something you want to see happening, but now we've got to look on getting the shoulder back."

Chabot knows the damage on the hit from Martin could have caused a lot more damage. It was questionable to say the least, but there was no review from the NHL's department of player safety even though many thought Martin could have had a hearing.

"Remembering the play, it could have been way worse and even a more serious injury," Chabot said. "Obviously, we're lucky in some ways with what we have now. I hope it gets better quicker."

Chabot's teammates didn't like the hit and Mark Borowiecki fought Martin at the end of the game.

"I saw (the hit). I tried to catch the puck and I didn't even come close to it," said Chabot, who was hurt in the second period. "I saw the guy coming blindsided. I didn't expect to get hit, but he hit me and it's not the first time you get hit like that."

"Especially as a (defenceman), you get hit a lot in those positions, but those plays happen. I've gotten hit a few times like that and I've never gotten hurt. This time I got hurt and I think it's just a hockey play."

Chabot hopes to resume skating in the next few days and to get the green light to return as quickly as possible.

Watching Saturday's 3-2 loss to the Washington Capitals wasn't easy.

"You always want to be out there," Chabot said. "Just being at the rink and seeing the guys get ready for a game and just watching the game, it sucks. You want to be out there, helping your team have success. That's always the worst part of it."

"You just have to make sure your injury is back to normal whenever you get back so you can get back and help the team."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123567 Ottawa Senators

Senators notebook: Rookie Brady Tkachuk gets some fighting tips

Bruce Garrioch

December 30, 2018 5:53 PM EST

It didn't take Brady Tkachuk long to take some lessons on fighting in the National Hockey League.

Less than 24 hours after declaring he wasn't happy with his efforts in a scrap with Madison Bowey of the Washington Capitals at Canadian Tire Centre, the 19-year-old winger put some extra work in at the end of practice Sunday.

Tkachuk, who fell after throwing one punch at Bowey after taking a questionable hit from the Capitals defence in the second period, sought tips from Mark Borowiecki and Ben Harpur.

"That's a part of my game and it's something I've really got to work on," Tkachuk said. "I've worked on it before. With (Harpur) he's a bigger guy like myself ... I'm not as big as him, but the fights he's had this year, he dominated all those fights."

"And Boro, he's had so many fights, he's so tough and he's so willing. Just taking a little bit of tips from both of them. From Harpur, it's just his technique and what bigger guys should do and how to grab. It's all about hand placement and feet placement. With Boro, it's about the technique."

"It's going to be part of my game and I'm going to have to answer the bell. I'm going to have to learn those things."

Borowiecki, who said he received fighting tips from Chris Neil when he came into the NHL, asked Harpur to participate after Senators coaches requested that the veteran defencemen give Tkachuk some help.



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"He plays on the edge. It's something he's going to have to do and it's something he relishes," Borowiecki said. "The coaches asked us if we would help out. I didn't really feel comfortable doing it on my own because I think it's a little better doing it by committee."

Borowiecki said he didn't have Tkachuk's size, which was Harpur could offer assistance.

"I told him to watch (Harpur) a little more because they're bigger guys that can string guys out," Borowiecki said. "Coming up in the league's for me, I'm typically fighting guys that are bigger than me and it's a bit of a different style for me."

"I'm a little bit more in survival mode as a little guy than those two guys. My biggest lesson to a young guy is not to get tagged. The biggest win is to try to tie up and protect yourself. It's about showing up and not necessarily throwing bombs and putting on a show."

Tkachuk said he had to be ready fighting still had a place in the game.

"That's the type of game I play: fast, physical and try to get under their best player's skin," Tkachuk said. "I have to be really hard to play against. It's going to frustrate guys and that's how I engage myself by being physical and being part of the game."

The future is now for the Senators in goal.

While Mike McKenna has done a standup job as Senators backup, the 35-year-old journeyman may have to take a back seat to Marcus Hogberg until Craig Anderson returns from injury.

The Senators have decided to start the 24-year-old Hogberg, one of their top goaltending prospects, in Columbus on Monday. He made 21 stops in Saturday's loss to the Caps.

"A young guy getting his first game in a tough setting is going to get another tough setting (Monday)," head coach Guy Boucher said. "We thought he did well."

"It's a year for young guys. It's a year for us to build and find out for the future. That fits right in with our plan."

The Senators aren't going to make the playoffs in 2019 and they promised they'd develop young players during their rebuild. With Anderson injured, McKenna was thrust into the starter's role, and he played well until Friday's 6-3 loss to the Islanders.

McKenna was signed with the idea that he'd be the starter with Belleville of the American Hockey League, helping prospects Hogberg and Filip Gustavsson develop. That hasn't happened because of Mike Condon's struggles, though, and McKenna spent most of his time with Ottawa.

If Hogberg had struggled Saturday, then McKenna likely would have started Monday, but the Swedish rookie was fine and he couldn't be faulted for the Capitals' goals.

"It's been two years I've seen him and I've always thought he had a lot of poise," Boucher said. "He's a big guy, he's got talent and he's been doing really good in the American league. That's where he's at right now and we're giving him a shot."

THE LAST WORDS

The Senators hope Anderson will return to the lineup either Saturday against Minnesota or next Sunday against the Carolina Hurricanes. There are no guarantees, though. Anderson received a concussion in a Dec. 21 contest against the New Jersey Devils and there still isn't any timetable for him to play again. Defenceman Justin Falk, also recovering from concussion, skated alone on Sunday morning. Boucher wasn't sure what the next step would be with Falk ... The Senators are 4-13-1 on the road and having won away from home since beating the Detroit Red Wings 4-1 on Dec. 14.

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1123568 Ottawa Senators

Christian Wolanin has a chance to show Senators he's an NHLer

Bruce Garrioch

December 30, 2018 5:54 PM EST

After losing Thomas Chabot and Christian Jaros to injuries Friday night, the Ottawa Senators called the 23-year-old Wolanin up from their American Hockey League affiliate in Belleville.

Nobody is asking him to fill the void left by Chabot, but Wolanin does have the offensive skills to play at the National Hockey League level and the Senators want more from him defensively.

Now he's getting a chance to show he has improved that part of his game with Belleville, where he has five goals and 13 assists in 26 games.

"The common theme when my name is brought up is defensively, and I've been working super-hard at that," Wolanin said Sunday. "I think I've made constant improvement every single day and I think that's all that I can ask for."

"I even talked to Guy (Boucher, Senators head coach) this morning, and, with the puck I'm fine, I can play at this level. Without the puck, I've just got to work harder and be more specific with the little details. I feel like I can make the jump right now, but that's not in my hands. I'm supposed to have that confidence and I'm supposed to believe in myself."

"That's up to the staff and I'm just going to prove it game by game and practice by practice."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123569 Ottawa Senators

Sens shuffle: Guy Boucher takes blender to forward lines

Bruce Garrioch

December 30, 2018 8:39 PM EST

Guy Boucher has seen enough.

He can't sit still any longer.

Since his options are limited, the Ottawa Senators head coach sent a message to players at practice at Canadian Tire Centre on Sunday afternoon by changing all forward line combinations and then running drills focused on being physically involved.

With the Senators mired in a four-game losing skid and preparing to close out 2018 on the road against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday night, Boucher broke up the top line of Mark Stone, Colin White and Brady Tkachuk.

Besides Chris Tierney landing at centre between Tkachuk and Stone and White on the wing beside Matt Duchene and Bobby Ryan, the most noticeable change was using winger Ryan Dzingel on the fourth line with Tom Pyatt and Nick Paul.



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Coming off Saturday's 3-2 loss to the Washington Capitals, the Senators may still be missing four regulars — including goalie Craig Anderson — but that's no excuse.

"I want more of what you saw in the second and third period, and that's more drive," Boucher said Sunday before the Senators' charter flight to Columbus. "We're just too perimeter.

"We've just got too many guys who try to skill it and (use) the perimeter and look for space when there is no space out there. Most of the game, you have to charge through the game. I love the White line, it's unbelievable, but we can't be a one-line team and that's what we've been lately."

Boucher said he had to try something new by breaking up the White trio because the Senators weren't winning and success was always part of the rebuilding plan.

"Those three guys (White, Stone and Tkachuk) have worked so hard and they're great to watch, but we need to have a team," Boucher added. "It's not that I wanted to split the line up, but I have to spread my hard working elements throughout the lineup."

Sure, there's risk involved, but Boucher is paid to make these decisions and the Senators are 3-8-1 in their past 12 National Hockey League games. A five-game losing streak to end 2018 would just add to the mounting frustration, and some of these guys are clearly underachieving.

Dzingel, who can become an unrestricted free agent if he's not re-signed before July 1, hasn't lived up to expectations. He has three goals and three assists in 13 games in December, and that won't cut it. When Boucher talks about guys needing to pay the price, Dzingel's one of them.

Players won't like some of the decisions made by Boucher and his assistants, but it's time to turn around the Senators' ship.

"There's a danger to going out of the house and falling on my face down the stairs," Boucher said with a chuckle. "If I always stopped myself at the danger, I might as well sit on my couch. It's always about making a decision to move forward.

"One of the things I know is that I can always retract back and go back to that (White, Stone, Tkachuk) line, but all I know, if that is the only line that has the identity I want, then we're not going to win many games. Right now, we have to spread it and, hopefully, have a hard-working identity. We're going into a barn that's hard to play in because (Columbus) is a very, very hard-working team.

"We're not going to out-skill anybody. We don't have that. The minute we don't work harder than the opponent, we don't get on top. If you look at the last two games, we had the best of the New York Islanders (on Friday) because we outworked them for the first two periods.

"We were the better team in the second and third (against Washington), but there was a period missing where we didn't outwork the opponent. We have to find combinations that will give us 60 minutes of work, paying the price, being first on the puck, taking checks to make plays, blocking shots, screening, tipping and fighting around their net. That's how you get an identity."

It would be wrong for Boucher not to try a new look.

"The biggest risk is to do nothing and then there's nothing happening and that's the worst thing in life for me. Nothing" Boucher said. "For me, shake, find, try, adjust, readjust and then readjust again and that's the way you figure out your best combinations."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123570 Ottawa Senators

Jean-Gabriel Pageau could rejoin Senators lineup earlier than expected

Bruce Garrioch

Published:December 30, 2018

Updated:December 30, 2018 9:36 PM EST

The wait for Jean-Gabriel Pageau may not be long.

As the Ottawa Senators wrapped up their skate at Canadian Tire Centre on Sunday, head coach Guy Boucher and Pageau, who has been out all season after having surgery to repair an Achilles tendon torn on the first day of training camp, had a long chat.

No, Pageau, a 26-year-old centre, won't suit up against the Columbus Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena on New Year's Eve, but it sure sounded as if he could be in the lineup early in 2019, which wasn't supposed to be the case.

Cleared for contact after the Christmas break, Pageau has been a regular participant in practice. He hasn't been ruled out of back-to-back afternoon games at home against the Minnesota Wild and Carolina Hurricanes next Saturday and Sunday.

"Pageau is going very well," Boucher said.

Is there any chance he'd play this week?

"Not (Monday)," Boucher said.

Is later in the week possible?

"I lit up some candles at church, and I asked Santa Claus so we'll see," Boucher said with a laugh. "It's going very well. Pageau is one of those guys who always surprises you, so we'll see."

Pageau was supposed to be sidelined for between four and six months after being injured in early September. Getting him back anytime before mid-January would be a bonus.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123571 Ottawa Senators

Game Day: Ottawa Senators at Columbus Blue Jackets

Ken Warren

Published:December 30, 2018

Updated:December 30, 2018 3:38 PM EST

Five Keys To The Game

Channelling late-game passion: Despite losing 3-2 to Washington on Saturday, the Senators showed some spunk in making a game of it after falling behind 3-0 and outplaying the Capitals in the second and third periods.

Other sources of offence: The Brady Tkachuk-Colin White-Mark Stone has impressed on a nightly basis for the Senators, but it appears they may be broken up in a bid to spread the production around. White as a winger for Matt Duchene? Ryan Dzingel with Tom Pyatt? Stay tuned.



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Handling Panarin and Atkinson: Road matchups have become nightmares for the Senators, but somehow head coach Guy Boucher needs to find a way with his makeshift forward and defence units. The Blue Jackets' Artemi Panarin and Cam Atkinson are delivering at better than a point per game.

Idle bodies: While the Senators will be playing for the third time in four nights, the Blue Jackets haven't played since losing 4-2 to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday. That defeat ended a five-game winning streak. Perhaps inactivity will make the Blue Jackets a sloppy bunch at the outset.

Order in the defensive zone: Poor defensive zone coverage ("sorting on the backcheck," according to Boucher) led to two preventable Capitals goals.

THE BIG MATCHUP

Sergei Bobrovsky versus Marcus Hogberg: Bobrovsky is a two-time Vezina Trophy winner with 234 National Hockey League wins. Hogberg has one game of NHL experience, losing 3-2 to the Washington Capitals on Saturday. It would appear to be a mismatch. Bobrovsky is 14-7-1, with a 2.41 goals against average and .922 save percentage in his past 22 games, and he is rested. At the same time, how else will the Senators determine how close Hogberg is to being an NHL regular?

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.31.2018

1123605 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' latest moves show a team and GM fighting for survival

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

December 30, 2018, 8:10 PM

The Edmonton Oilers added a third defensive pairing, moved out the popular Drake Caggiula, and took on the guy Oilers fans blame for breaking Connor McDavid's collarbone in his rookie season. Not bad, for a Sunday.

That's a lot to digest. Even more when you throw in a third-round draft pick, plus Jason Garrison, Chris Wideman and one Robin Norell, a J.D. Dudek wannabe who we suspect may never arrive from Sweden.

So, let's break this down, and see if we can make some sense of a pair of Sunday transactions that had Oilers fans wearing out their Twitter apps.

Deal No. 1: Edmonton dealt a third-round pick and defenceman Chris Wideman to Florida for Alex Petrovic. The Oilers have two third-round picks in 2019 — theirs and the Islanders (for Brandon Davidson). The Panthers will receive the more valuable of the two on draft day.

Deal No 2: Edmonton sends winger Drake Caggiula and defenceman Jason Garrison to Chicago for defencemen Brandon Manning and Robin Norell, who currently plays for Djurgardens of the Swedish Hockey League.

With Oscar Klefbom (broken fingers) out another month, and Kris Russell (groin) not yet ready to play, the Oilers need to stop the bleeding. They've lost five in a row and are a mess in their own zone, completely overpowered by opponents night after night.

Petrovic and Manning are third-pairing guys, but they have been brought in to defend. They'll eat up 17-18 minutes dependably, minutes that neither Garrison (who we expect to see on waivers Monday morning) nor Wideman could handle.

Manning, of course, gained fame in these parts when, as a Philadelphia Flyer, he was involved in the collision that broke McDavid's clavicle in 2016. Oilers fans blame him for the wreck, which fans are wont to do. But I loved the way he wore the black hat and never backed down, coming back into Edmonton with his head held high, ready to rumble.

Our opinion on that play is this: Manning was just a defenceman being beaten wide by McDavid's blazing speed, and he did what he could to get in McDavid's way. That opinion is strengthened by the fact that, upon his return, McDavid has ceased to attack the net as recklessly as he did in that rookie season.

That's a dangerous play that he had to change, and you'll notice he does not end up inside the net or in a pile with the goalie anymore, the way did when he arrived in the NHL. McDavid glides behind the net now to avoid the collisions that some blame Manning for, but frankly, were inevitable.

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Just in case, GM Peter Chiarelli sought McDavid's blessing on the trade. It was granted by the Oilers captain, perhaps as long ago as last season, when the Oilers first considered acquiring the quiet, Prince George, B.C. native.

Losing Caggiula costs Edmonton a well-liked, injury-prone winger who to this point is about a 20-point player. He's a friendly, well-liked teammate who should improve, but where players like Patrick Maroon (27 goals) and Alex Chiasson (16 goals in 31 games this season) have become uber-productive on McDavid's wing, Caggiula never managed to score enough there to hold the position.

After a nice career, 34-year-old Jason Garrison is no longer an NHL defenceman. And the tiny Wideman is that small defenceman who simply does not produce enough offence to compensate for what he gives up with the inability to defend at his size.

So, what is Chiarelli trying to accomplish here?

Survival would be the most accurate term. Both for the team and his job as general manager.

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The Oilers need to keep pucks out of their net while waiting for Russell and Klefbom to return, and honestly, if the goaltending continues to trend downward none of these moves will have an impact.

Chiarelli is still in the marketplace in search of help on right wing, we are told. Ryan Spooner, acquired earlier this season for Ryan Strome, is being made available by Chiarelli.

The theme in Edmonton back in training camp was how players like Ty Rattie, Jesse Puljujarvi and Kailer Yamamoto were going to turn a weakness at the right-wing position into a strength. Well, fast forward to today, and those three players have six goals between them.

They don't have the forward depth necessary to outscore opponents, so the focus has to be on keeping the puck out of their goal.

It's a place to start, for an organization that is perpetually in search of some traction.

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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2018

Sportsnet.ca / Stars GM Jim Nill on CEO's criticisms: 'We've all got to be better'

Josh Beneteau | @jbenny15

December 30, 2018, 7:12 PM

Dallas Stars GM Jim Nill agrees with the criticism team CEO Jim Lites gave on Friday, but not necessarily the way in which it was delivered.

"First of all, the hockey message by Jim was dead on. I think that message had to get out there," Nill said on Sunday, according to NHL.com. "We've all got to be better, from management to the coaches to players, all the way down, we've got to be better. So, the message was right.

"I've talked to Jim; I don't condone the language or the tone. He's emotional; he wears the star on his heart. He got emotional, and understandably so I don't condone that. But the message that was sent from him and management was dead on and correct. I agree with all that."

Lites made headlines on Friday when he gave an interview with The Athletic criticizing star players Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin for their poor offensive numbers so far this season.

"They are [expletive] [expletive], I don't know how else to put it," Lites said. "These guys were signed to big contracts because they were the third- and sixth-leading scorers in the National Hockey League over the past five years. They get their money, we expect them to not be outplayed every game we play in. And if they were as good as they've been in the past we wouldn't be having this conversation."

Nill tried to stay positive when speaking Sunday, pointing out the team has been good defensively despite missing many regulars on the blue line, including John Klingberg, due to injuries. But he also added that the Stars have high expectations for the season, and their 20-16-3 record, which has them currently in the second wild card position in the western conference, simply isn't good enough.

"Why did this come about? We are 40 games in. Last year we were in this spot, our goaltending got hurt, and it cost us the playoffs. We're not going to let it slip this year," Nill said.

"Part of that is Tyler Seguin, as we sit today, is 60th in the league in scoring and Jamie Benn is 78th. And I've talked to them. They know it. We've talked about it. They know they've got to be better," Nill added. "Where would we be if they were in the top 30 in scoring? Would we have two, three, four more wins? We wouldn't be standing here right now. That's part of them getting better. They are the leaders of the team. We are looking for them to lead us. With the rest of the team, they've got to get better."

After the comments were published, the Stars put together a solid 5-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday. Nill sees that win as a sign of good things to come, and isn't worried about any negative consequences from Lites' public criticism.

"This isn't the end of the world. We're in a good spot. Let's grab more," Nill said. "No complacency. We've got high expectations, which everybody does in this league. Don't let it slip."

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers acquire Manning from Blackhawks for Caggiula, Garrison

Sportsnet Staff

@Sportsnet December 30, 2018, 5:29 PM

The Edmonton Oilers have traded forward Drake Caggiula and defenceman Jason Garrison to the Chicago Blackhawks for defenceman Brandon Manning and defence prospect Robin Norell.

The news comes hours after the Oilers acquired another defenceman, Alex Petrovic, from the Florida Panthers in exchange for defenceman Chris Wideman and a third-round pick.

The Oilers' blue-line has been hit hard by injuries this season, with veterans Andrej Sekera (achilles), Oscar Klefbom (hand) and Kris Russell (groin) all currently out of the lineup.

Manning, 28, joined the Blackhawks as a free agent in July after spending parts of six seasons with the Philadelphia Flyers. The Prince George, B.C., native is well known to Oilers fans, after a hit he threw on Connor McDavid in 2015 sidelined the star centre for three months in his rookie season.

In 2016 following a rematch with Manning and the Flyers, McDavid called the hit "classless" and accused Manning of hurting him on purpose, something Manning denied. McDavid scored in the game and was seen shouting something to Manning when skating by the Flyers' bench.

Manning is signed through the end of the 2019-20 season with a cap hit of \$2.25 million.

Norell, 23, was a fourth-round pick by the Blackhawks in 2013. He's currently on loan to Djurgårdens IF of the Swedish Hockey League after playing the previous two seasons with the AHL's Rockford IceHogs. In 28 SHL games, Norell has three assists and 14 penalty minutes.

Caggiula, 24, is in his third NHL season after signing with Oilers as a college free agent in 2016. He is currently in the first year of a two-year, \$3 million contract.

In 29 games this season Caggiula has seven goals and 11 points.

Garrison, 34, signed with the Oilers to a league-minimum contract after appearing in training camp on a player-tryout contract. In 17 games this season he has one goal.

The Oilers also announced that the team has recalled forward Joseph Gambardella from the American Hockey League's Bakersfield Condors. The 25-year-old leads the Oilers' AHL affiliate in points (21) and goals (12) in 28 games this season.

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Sportsnet.ca / Why Jason Arnett chose hockey over every other sport he was great at

David Singh | @ByDavidSingh

December 28, 2018, 11:43 AM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2018

There were only so many times per day Jason Arnott could rifle a tennis ball into the goalie net on the driveway. Whenever his mind yearned for a release from hockey, a young Arnott would venture to the backyard of his parents' Wasaga Beach, Ont., home to shoot hoops.

He had to be careful, though. The makeshift basketball court was the domain of his older sister and she defended it fiercely. Kari is five years older than Arnott and towered over him when the two were growing up. While the difference in stature didn't factor into games of 21, it certainly mattered during one-on-one matchups.

"She wasn't letting up on me, especially because I was her little brother. She wanted to show me she was the boss," Arnott recalls. "If I took the ball to the net, she would throw a high elbow at me and take the ball."

That competitive foundation served the siblings well — Kari went on to play basketball at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ont., while Arnott grew to become a feisty, dependable centre over 18 NHL seasons. Hockey was obviously Arnott's first passion, but he excelled in every sport he touched. By the time he attended high school in Collingwood, the site of this week's Rogers Hometown Hockey stop, Arnott was dabbling in football, wrestling, soccer, volleyball and golf, in addition to basketball and hockey.

"Hockey wasn't [the] seven-days-a-week thing that it is now," Arnott says. "You practised a couple times during the week and you maybe had one game here or there.... You had to fill your days up and be busy."

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Bert Crago, a longtime basketball coach at Collingwood Collegiate Institute (CCI), suggests that Arnott wasn't simply biding his time on the hardwood. He was actually a dominant forward who could score in bunches, hovering around six-feet tall by the age of 15 and oozing with athletic ability.

Crago knew Arnott played hockey, but wasn't quite aware of his skill level on the ice. So, when the time came for Arnott to leave CCI after Grade 10 and head to Lindsay, Ont., in pursuit of a pro career, Crago stepped in.

"I was trying to convince him to stay at Collingwood Collegiate and play senior basketball and he was telling me, 'Coach, you know what, I'm gonna go on and pursue my No. 1 love,'" says Crago, who's now retired. "So I'm giving him a hard time. I'm saying, 'Ah, don't do that. You'd be a really good senior boys' basketball player.'"

"The joke ended up being on me."

The same episode unfolded on the high school football team. Arnott joined the squad as a linebacker in Grade 9 and, of course, stood out.

Head coach Dick Edwards and his staff noticed during first-year practices that whenever Arnott casually tossed the ball, it would sail with mechanic perfection. His footwork was impeccable, too, so the coaches moved him to quarterback. It paid off as he led the team to the regional finals at the end of his second year.

However, just as he was peaking in football, hockey hauled him away.

"One of my coaches — and he chuckles about it — bumped into Arnott in the hall and I think he was saying half facetiously, after we knew he wasn't coming back: 'Oh, you know, Jason, you could probably do well as a quarterback in a Canadian college,'" remembers Edwards, who's also retired. "But you don't have to be a Rhodes scholar to know that for a Canadian kid, a hockey road can lead to a lot more opportunity than a Canadian college quarterback."

Says Arnott: "I loved both [basketball and football] and I played every sport to the best of my abilities. But obviously, hockey was my No. 1 love.... It was always hockey, 100 per cent."

Ultimately, that avenue took Arnott to Lindsay, then Oshawa, Ont., where he spent two seasons with the Generals before being drafted by the Edmonton Oilers. The forward was traded to New Jersey in 1998 and

enjoyed his best years with the Devils, helping the club to a Stanley Cup in 2000 by scoring the championship-clinching goal in double overtime of Game 6 against the Dallas Stars.

The ensuing moment is immortalized on a banner in the gymnasium at Arnott's high school. It pictures a drained Arnott — sporting two black eyes and a red Devils sweater — jubilantly hoisting the Stanley Cup.

The over-sized banner was raised during a recent ceremony that inducted Arnott and others into the school's athletics hall of fame. He wasn't able to make it to CCI for the event, so Kari attended in his place. She's no longer playing competitive sports and currently works in parks and recreation, but the fire still smoulders when it comes to besting her brother.

"Any time something comes up where [it looks like] I am tougher than her," says Arnott with a laugh, "she always brings up, 'Remember that time I elbowed you and your nose was bleeding and you ran to Mom? I used to dominate you on the basketball court.'"

"She gives it back to me."

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Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Canadiens should leave Tampa Bay with heads held high

Eric Engels

December 29, 2018, 11:27 PM

The Montreal Canadiens stood toe-to-toe with the mighty Tampa Bay Lightning and didn't flinch.

But they didn't win, either. And we're betting they're not considering it a moral victory that they came into Tampa to face a rested Lightning team, just 24 hours after they beat the Florida Panthers 5-3, and tilted the ice — scoring another five goals and controlling the vast majority of play.

Not that the Canadiens should leave Florida with their heads down after losing to the top team in the NHL by a score of 6-5. They put in as honest of an effort as they have all season and did so without starting goaltender Carey Price at their disposal — and with a gas tank half empty. And they were 1:02 away from squeezing (at least) a point out of this game when Adam Erne scored his second of two third-period goals to give the Lightning their 13th win in their last 14 contests.

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It was Tampa's NHL-leading 17th come-from-behind win of the season, with the club's latest comeback delivered in devastating fashion.

But the Canadiens are well intact, shuffling off to Dallas to face the Stars on Monday with a chance to finish this six-game road trip at 4-2-0.

Sure, this would've been their biggest win of the season. But there are many positives for them to take away from the loss.

Speaking of takeaways, here are the ones we jotted down from Saturday's game.

Andrew Shaw's power-play marker got the Canadiens on the board on their second opportunity of the game.



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It was the fifth time in Montreal's last six games that they managed a power-play goal. Considering they came into Saturday's game with the 30th-ranked power play in the league, connecting on just 17 of 129 opportunities, it's a sign things might be swinging upward in that department.

The power-play goal also created the momentum that led to Kenny Agostino's goal, which made it 2-0 Montreal a mere 16 seconds later.

If you paid to watch this hockey game, you got your money's worth.

It wasn't just about 11 goals being scored. The best games feature multiple lead changes and drastic momentum swings, and this one was chalk-full of them.

There were the goals the Canadiens got from Andrew Shaw and Kenny Agostino in the first period. And 22 seconds after Tampa tied the game with goals from Yannick Gourde and Anton Stralman, Jordie Benn wired one from the point to put Montreal back up 3-2.

A little less than eight minutes into the second period, Nikita Kucherov tied the game for the Lightning, and teammate Tyler Johnson made it 4-3 just 38 seconds later.

When Montreal's Brett Kulak and Andrew Shaw scored 52 seconds apart to make it 5-4 Montreal with 6:49 to go in the second period, you got a sense more could be on its way before the end of the third.

Erne cashed in on a rebound chance with 10:24 left in the final frame, and he put his game-winning goal under the crossbar.

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The Canadiens were all over the Lightning for most of the game, controlling the shot attempts 54-34 through two periods and limiting them to three shots on net through the first nine minutes of the third.

They had 18 shots compared to Tampa's nine in the first period, and came out skating in the second to record another 14 shots.

But they just couldn't open up a big enough lead against a team that's been absolutely lethal for the last month — and for most of the NHL season.

Over a 12-0-1 stretch, the Lightning averaged five goals per game, allowed just over three on average, ran their power play at 36 per cent efficiency, and killed 89 per cent of the penalties they took. They were as healthy as they've been all season prior to Saturday's game, rested and waiting at home, and they got out-worked for the majority of the night.

But they walked away unscathed thanks to the opportunism of their offence and a solid performance by Andrei Vasilevskiy, who improved to 2-0 against the Canadiens this season.

Antti Niemi couldn't come up with the big saves

In a game where the Canadiens didn't need him to be the difference, Price's back-up didn't give them a chance to win.

Niemi came up with big saves on Victor Hedman and Erne on a second-period penalty kill. He came up with bigger ones on Mikhail Sergachev and Anthony Cirelli on a third-period penalty kill.

But Stralman's goal that beat him in the first period was one the 35-year-old Finn should have stopped. The rebound he left for Erne on Tampa's fifth goal should have been easily kicked to the boards on what was a soft point-shot from Stralman. And he failed to cut down the angle on what proved to be an excellent shot from Erne on the game-winner.

On Saturday morning, Canadiens coach Claude Julien didn't strike the possibility that Price could be sufficiently recovered from his lower-body ailment to join the team in Dallas on Monday. If that proves to be the case, it'll be great news both in the short and long term.

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Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Canucks keep momentum going after Christmas break

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

December 30, 2018, 2:36 AM

The Vancouver Canucks: Canada's team. For one night at least.

On a Hockey Night in Canada that had all seven Canadian teams playing, the Canucks were the only one that got a win, beating the Calgary Flames 3-2 in overtime Saturday to complete a post-Christmas sweep of Alberta.

Alex Edler scored 3:06 into overtime, one-timing a beautiful pass from Brock Boeser under Calgary goalie David Rittich to push the Canucks' hot streak to 8-2-1 since Dec. 4. Only the San Jose Sharks have done better than Vancouver in the Western Conference the last 10 games, and the Canucks' surge follows a 1-10-2 nosedive that could have buried their National Hockey League season but, clearly, did not.

Vancouver remains one point out of a playoff spot as it hit the mid-point of its season at 19-18-4.

Young stars Boeser and Elias Pettersson scored the first two Canucks goals, each on an all-world wrist shot from distance, while Mark Jankowski and Travis Hamonic scored the Flames' goals short-handed.

The real star of the game, however, was Canucks goalie Jacob Markstrom, who made 31 saves, many of them difficult, and stymied the Flames at even strength despite a 14-minute spell of Calgary dominance that saw it outshoot Vancouver 14-0 from the 12:25 mark of the first period.

The Canucks were labelled by many the most hated team in hockey when they were winning Presidents' Trophies at the start of this decade. They're not the best team now, but there is a lot to like about them.

Here are some takeaways from the win.

Nobody's going to say no to three days off, turkey with family and a quick trip to Whistler for Christmas. But, really, the schedule break was far from ideal for a Canucks team that was in a pretty good rhythm and on a winning roll.

That makes Thursday's 4-2 win against the Edmonton Oilers, when the Canucks diligently defended their lead through the second half of the game, and Saturday's win against the Flames, especially impressive.

That pre-Christmas run was not an aberration. Markstrom has continued the best month of his NHL career, and the Canucks continue to manufacture goals at a surprising clip — averaging three per game the season after Daniel and Henrik Sedin retired — and the team defending continues to be solid, Saturday's ragged spells in the opening 40 minutes notwithstanding.

The Canucks' road trip continues against the New Jersey Devils on New Year's Eve, before they visit Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. They have a chance to be Canada's team a few days longer.

Hockey Night in Canada panelist and insider Elliotte Friedman predicted if the Canucks make the playoffs, rookie Elias Pettersson will get Hart Trophy consideration.

The 20-year-old Swede is probably at least a couple of years away — and depending how well the Canucks do — from seriously challenging for the



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NHL's highest individual honour, but we understand Friedman's point. And Pettersson will get some MVP votes if the Canucks actually make the Stanley Cup tournament in April.

On a West Coast team that simply doesn't get a whole lot of notice outside the Pacific time zone, Pettersson is impossible to miss. You notice him every night. You're aware, as the opposition is, every time he's on the ice.

He scored a beautiful goal on a two-on-one to tie Saturday's game 2-2 at 11:37 of the second period, slinging a rocket wristed from his off-wing to the right of goalie David Rittich, who looked to be guessing left, which is where Pettersson scored his first NHL goal from a nearly identical position against the Flames in the teams' season-opener.

But Pettersson did so much more than score. He seemed to be at the epicentre of the play all night, impressing in both the offensive and defensive zones. His second most important contribution was to defend a two-on-one in overtime by sprawling to block T.J. Brodie's attempted pass. The wiry centre even got involved physically, registering three hits and going back at Dillon Dube late in the game after the Flames' rookie shoved him into the boards.

He also took a number when Sam Bennett took a dangerous run at him in open ice, narrowly missing the Canucks rookie with his knee.

Pettersson doesn't appear to be wearing down or becoming less effective as opposing teams pay him more attention. He seems to be getting better.

It's not often you survive two short-handed goals against and win. Both of the Flames' shorties came against Vancouver's second power-play unit. And a key culprit on both was forward Markus Granlund, who threw a grenade square across the ice to Josh Leivo that led to a Calgary breakaway, and later forced a pass into traffic in the Flames' zone that was turned into a two-on-one the other way.

One of the most interesting plays of the game was the Canucks' Nikolay Goldobin's unsuccessful second-period breakaway where the Russian chose to pull the puck back behind him, reverse his stick and shoot from between his legs. Sensible? Probably not. Defensible? Absolutely.

What good is all that talent and offensive flair if you don't unload it once in a while? Goldobin did force Rittich to make a save. And the Canuck has just one goal in his last 16 games, so what did he have to lose?

Well, Goldobin got only four more shifts from coach Travis Green in the final 27 minutes and finished with just 9:53 of ice time. Only fourth-line checker Tyler Motte had less at 9:08.

At least there is a consolation prize for Canuck rookie Adam Gaudette, who was returned to minor-league Utica two-and-a-half months after his early recall amid injuries. The 22-year-old finally gets to pick up the new muscle car he ordered shortly before he was summoned to the NHL on Oct. 15.

There's that, and an awful lot of ice time waiting for the reigning Hobey Baker winner who did some good things during his 31-game run with the Canucks but managed only two goals and six points.

Gaudette will get to play special teams with the Comets, log nearly twice the 10:09 average ice time he had in the NHL, and build some offensive confidence back in his game. With Sven Baertschi back from a concussion that kept him out more than two months, it was pretty much a no-brainer that Gaudette would be the forward getting bumped from the roster.

The Canucks could have demoted the disappointing Tim Schaller, something that may yet happen – as soon as Brandon Sutter nears a return from a shoulder injury. But Gaudette's ice time was well below eight minutes a night in three of the last four games. Regardless of Gaudette's upside, he is in his first season of pro hockey and needs to play. If he does well in the American League, he'll probably be back in Vancouver this season. And he's got a sweet ride until he does.

In his first game since Oct. 24, when he was concussed by Vegas Golden Knight Tomas Hyka's unpenalized hit from behind, Baertschi had an assist on Boeser's early power-play goal and finished with three shots in 12:35 of ice time.

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1123611 Websites

TSN.CA / Habs prospect Suzuki impresses with hockey IQ

Mark Masters

TSN reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on Team Canada, which held a media availability in Vancouver on Sunday.

Nick Suzuki didn't just watch the NHL as a fan growing up. The Canadiens prospect studied games always looking for little things he could apply to his own approach. His two favourite players to keep an eye on were Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby and Boston's Patrice Bergeron.

"They do a lot of little things with their stick and with their feet, puck protection," the Owen Sound forward said, "making little plays with their linemates and that's where I really found the love of hockey and making smart plays."

Suzuki's high hockey IQ was evident on Saturday night against the Czechs especially on the power play when he set up Morgan Frost with a beautiful cross-ice pass in the third period.

"It didn't look like a lot was there," observed assistant coach Brent Kizio, who works with the power play. "I watched it on video again and it still doesn't look like a lot is there and yet he finds a way to know where that seam pass is and makes it. He has the skill, but he also seems to be able to slow it down and make the right reads."

"Zukes kind of faked everyone out," said Frost, who had a gaping net to fire the puck into. "Everyone was thinking he was going to shoot and he just slid it backdoor. It was a great pass."

Frost's fourth of tourney puts Canada up by four

On the power play midway through the third, Nick Suzuki finds Morgan Frost streaking to the backdoor for his fourth of the tourney.

Suzuki had been plotting the move since early in the game.

"On our first power play, he saw me look at him, but the lane wasn't there," Suzuki noted.

But the pair believed that same play would be available later and let defenceman Ty Smith in on it. Sort of.

"Frosty just came over and said, 'We have a play so just give it to Zukes if we win the draw,'" Smith said with a grin. "So I think I took one step with it and just gave it to Zukes, as I was told, and that was a great pass. It was a nice finish too."

"Frosty made a great play getting lost out by the boards and came back in backdoor," Suzuki said. "And (Maxime) Comtois also made an amazing play by taking the defender's stick away to open the lane so it's a full team effort."

At even strength, Suzuki has joined forces with Spokane's Jaret Anderson-Dolan and the Boston University's Shane Bowers, offering head coach Tim Hunter a reliable trio that can be trusted against top lines and also chip in offensively.



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"In the O-zone he's always in the right spot," said Anderson-Dolan of Suzuki. "When you have the puck he's always diving into holes and getting in good spots to get the puck back. He's so good with the puck and he's such a smart player you kind of just try to create picks and let him do his thing and get to the net as much as possible. And then in the D zone it seems like he's always on the right side of his guy."

Suzuki's hockey sense is so good that he rarely takes any penalties. In fact, he's been named the most sportsmanlike player in the OHL two seasons in a row and has a great chance at a three-peat considering he's only taken two minors in 28 games with the Attack this season.

"He doesn't really need to be hooking or holding to get in position," said Anderson-Dolan, "because he's always in the right spot and that's something I've really noticed."

Suzuki actually took a tripping penalty against the Swiss so he's up to three minors on the season. Considering his relatively spotless record, Suzuki was asked to explain himself.

"Just a lazy stick by me," he said smiling, "but try to move on from those and not to think about them too much."

The fact Anderson-Dolan is able to play a significant role for Canada at the World Juniors is remarkable when you consider he broke his wrist on Oct. 27 that required surgery in early November. He returned just in time to play in the three pre-competition games before his Boxing Day debut.

"It almost doesn't make sense how he's doing what he does, to be honest with you," marveled Kisio. "To step up at this level having played the limited amount he's played ... it shows how big a pro he is, the preparation he's put in and the work he's been putting in off the ice."

Anderson-Dolan insists he feels no ill effects from the injury despite having his wrist wrapped during games.

"It's been great," he said. "I've had no problems with it. It feels normal. I've, honestly, forgot it's even there."

It certainly doesn't look like he's been hampered on the ice.

"It's been working really good," Suzuki said of the line chemistry. "We're working the cycle really well. That's when we're at our best when we're causing a lot of havoc on the forecheck and down low."

All about the details: How Anderson-Dolan became Canada's comeback kid

Jaret Anderson-Dolan started the season in the NHL with the Kings and after getting sent back to Spokane in the WHL the forward seemed destined to play a big role at this year's World Juniors. But after breaking his wrist in just his second game back on Oct. 27, his hopes of playing for Team Canada appeared to be slim. Luckily for the Chiefs co-captain, a strong summer camp put him in coach Tim Hunter's good books.

Anderson-Dolan and Smith, co-captains in Spokane, have been playing Rock, Paper, Scissors while walking out to ice before games at the World Juniors. What's that all about?

"Me and Ty have done that since he was a 16-year-old in the WHL. We just got into it one day and we played well that game and ever since then we've done it," Anderson-Dolan explained. "And we have a little bet going, whoever wins buys coffee before the next game."

Who's got bragging rights in Vancouver?

"I'm in his head right now, because I've won a couple in a row," Anderson-Dolan says with a grin. "But he's definitely got in my head a couple times as well. It's just a fun thing that keeps us loose before games."

Anderson-Dolan, Smith bring Rock, Paper, Scissors routine to World Juniors

Spokane Chiefs teammates Jaret Anderson-Dolan and Ty Smith have brought their WHL pre-game routine with them to the World Juniors. In

the tunnel, before going onto the ice for the start of the game, the centre and defenceman will play a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. On the line? A cup of coffee before the next game. "I'm in his head right now, because I've won a couple in a row," Anderson-Dolan said with a laugh.

Comtois missed a few shifts in Saturday's game due to a shoulder issue and didn't speak with reporters after the game, because he was undergoing treatment.

"As far as I know, he's good to go," Kisio said.

That's good news for Canada, because their captain has already produced five goals and one assist. The left winger has also set a physical tone while managing to not cross the line and take bad penalties. It's an example his teammates have been following.

"The Czechs were trying to get us to bite," Anderson-Dolan pointed out, "but we've talked since Day 1 about our discipline as a team and we did a good job of that even when they were trying to get in our face a bit."

Only Denmark (20 PIM) and the United States (18 PIM) have been penalized fewer times than Canada (24 PIM) so far.

"That's been something I've been really impressed with so far is our discipline and keeping our emotions in check," Kisio said. "It's not easy. There's 20,000 fans cheering and it's easy to get worked up, but our guys have done a good job sticking to the plan."

After missing a few shifts due to a shoulder issue on Saturday, Team Canada captain Maxime Comtois is good to go for the New Year's Eve clash with Russia, assistant coach Brent Kisio confirmed. The big left winger didn't speak to the media after the Czech win because he was undergoing treatment. Comtois and his teammates have done a good job managing their emotions during the World Juniors, which will be a key against their historic rivals.

Mikey DiPietro has looked very sharp so far, stopping 37 of 38 shots (.974 save percentage) at the World Juniors. How locked in is DiPietro right now? Well, he was even kicking himself for allowing the one goal on Saturday night despite the fact it was the result of a two-on-one rush.

"I shouldn't have gone into the splits right away," DiPietro said while smiling and shaking his head. "I know what I did wrong right in the beginning. Unfortunately, I didn't stop that one."

The Ottawa 67s goalie also sees room for improvement in another part of his game.

"I think my puck touches can be better, making the D's lives a little bit easier back there," DiPietro told TSN's Tessa Bonhomme. "They made my life pretty easy and I want to reciprocate. I never like seeing Bouch (Evan Bouchard) get hit like that twice so I got to get better with that."

Michael DiPietro joined Tessa Bonhomme after Canada's win over the Czech Republic to discuss the growing confidence in the home side's locker room, his relationship with fellow goalie Ian Scott, and what the Canadians can improve on ahead of its game against Russia.

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TSN.CA / Late blooming Leason living up to pedigree for Team Canada

Frank Seravalli

VANCOUVER — If there was a TSN Turning Point for Team Canada's Brett Leason, his father suspects it came last summer.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 31, 2018

Leason had just been passed over in the NHL Draft for the second time. He finished 170th in WHL scoring. Big life decisions were soon on the horizon for the third-year junior player.

A summer job as a landscaper touched off a spark.

"He hated it. He wanted to quit after a couple weeks," said Darryl Leason, Brett's dad. "I think that was maybe a real eye-opener that he said 'Holy jeez, I don't want to do this the rest of my life. I better work extra hard and hope that this hockey thing works out.'"

One year ago, Leason was sitting at home watching the World Junior Championship, not even a twinkle on Team Canada's radar.

This season, Leason became a revelation Hockey Canada couldn't possibly ignore. Finally given an opportunity after a 2017 trade from Tri-City, Leason set a modern day WHL record with a 30-game point streak to start this season.

He netted 28 goals and 64 points in 31 games, the game that broke the streak coming in his final contest before departing to join Team Canada's selection camp.

"This is nothing I ever would have expected last year," Leason said.

Leason, 19, now has three goals and five points in his first three games wearing the red Maple Leaf. He's following in the footsteps of Tanner Pearson, who was passed over twice and burst onto the scene at the 2012 World Juniors, and went on to be picked in the first-round by the Los Angeles Kings that summer. Pearson etched his name on the Stanley Cup with the Kings two years later.

"Sometimes things just happen later for other people," Darryl said. "We watched the draft together. I think that was a little tough, seeing friends that he played with and against. I told him 'If they call your name, great. If not, you just have to work harder. He put the time in.' He's in a good situation now."

That Leason is a bit of a late bloomer maybe shouldn't be surprising, given his pedigree.

Darryl, a native of Hudson Bay, Sask., didn't start playing football until high school and went on to have one of the most prolific junior football careers in Canadian history. (Six degrees of Canadian separation: Darryl's youth hockey coach and math teacher growing up in Hudson Bay was Eugene Gulutzan, father of Edmonton Oilers assistant coach Glen Gulutzan.)

Darryl Leason with the Regina Rams

Darryl quarterbacked the Regina Rams to three straight national junior titles from 1993 through 1995. He has been nominated for the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in Hamilton. Like his son, Darryl had an existential moment off the field that helped spark greatness.

"I took a year off from school, I worked in a warehouse and it didn't take me until Christmas to figure out that I should go to university," Darryl said.

As a 26-year-old, Darryl came back and took the Univ. of Regina - a 4-4 team that once lost earlier in the season by a score of 50-1 - to the 2000 Vanier Cup at the SkyDome on TSN. They fell a field goal short to the Univ. of Ottawa.

TSN Rewind: Brett Leason's father, Darryl plays in 2000 Vanier Cup

Watch as Canadian World Juniors forward Brett Leason's father, Darryl Leason, plays quarterback for the Regina Rams in the 2000 Vanier Cup against the Ottawa Gee-Gees.

Leason grew up hearing of Darryl's exploits, including one play against Regina's rival Saskatoon that will live in infamy.

"I think he faked a knee once and threw a touchdown for a win," Leason said. "My dad has had a big influence on me, not only as an athlete. I'm

really appreciative of everything he's done for me. He's got a lot of football stories, but that one stands out."

Regina Rams fans are still talking about that play.

"It's funny over time how the story changes," Darryl said, laughing. "It wasn't a fake knee. We had the game locked up. I took a knee on the play before. They came after me, they were yapping. So on the next play, I told them 'Don't tell the ref we're taking a knee' and I dropped back and threw it."

Darryl, now 44, still plays once a week for the Calgary Wolfpack in Canadian senior men's football. He's led the Wolfpack to four more national titles while working for Torxen Energy, where he helps acquire fields from the crown and farmers to drill for oil.

"It's hard to give up something you're passionate about," Darryl said. "I think Brett has that same passion for hockey."

Leason himself was an elite quarterback. As a 12-year-old, Leason led his team to back-to-back Alberta provincial pee wee championships, throwing 37 touchdowns and just one interception in his final season of organized football. He had a choice to make.

"For him, it was an easy decision. He loved football, but he hated practicing when it was minus-20 outside," Darryl said. "I wasn't disappointed at all. Football is a little more violent sport, there's a lot more serious injuries. I said if hockey doesn't work out, you can always come back and play high school football."

Even when it looked like hockey might not pan out for Leason, he said he didn't waver and start thinking about school or what might be next. Getting here, these moments, were always front of mind.

"We're pretty excited," Darryl said. "A lot of teams are probably kicking themselves now. Who knows? He may be a first or second rounder now. He's a big kid. It took some time for his feet to catch up to him. I always told him, 'If you're good enough to play, they'll find you.'"

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