



CAROLINA HURRICANES

GAME PREVIEW

CAROLINA HURRICANES vs. TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

Thursday, Dec. 29, 7 p.m. ET

RBC Center * Raleigh, NC

Hurricanes: 12-20-6 (30 pts.)

Maple Leafs: 18-14-4 (40 pts.)

** All statistics through NHL games of Dec. 27*

TV: FOX Sports Carolinas HD

RADIO: Hurricanes Radio Network: WCMC 99.9 FM The Fan (Raleigh – flagship); WWNB 1490AM/105.7FM (New Bern, NC); WAVQ 1400 (Jacksonville, NC); WMFD 630AM (Wilmington, NC)

INTERNET: www.CarolinaHurricanes.com

AUDIO CLIP OF THE DAY

Please find below a link to an .mp3 file of Hurricanes head coach Kirk Muller as he spoke to the media at the RBC Center on Wednesday following the team's practice. **Muller:** <http://carhur.com/cms>

TOMORROW'S GAME

Carolina hosts the Toronto Maple Leafs on Thursday at the RBC Center for the third of four meetings between the teams this season (7 p.m. ET, FOX Sports Carolinas HD, Hurricanes Radio Network). The Hurricanes are 1-0-1 against the Maple Leafs this season, winning 3-2 on Nov. 20 at the RBC Center and losing 2-1 in overtime on Dec. 13 in Toronto.

HURRICANES STREAKS

Tuomo Ruutu has points in six straight games (5g, 2a)

Tim Gleason has assists and points in two straight games (0g, 2a)

Tim Brent has points in two straight games (1g, 2a)

Alexei Ponikarovsky has assists and points in two straight games (0g, 2a)

HURRICANES MILESTONES WITHIN REACH

Eric Staal is two games shy of 600 NHL/Hurricanes games

Tuomo Ruutu is two games shy of 500 NHL games

Tim Gleason is four assists shy of 100 NHL assists

Jussi Jokinen is four assists shy of 100 Hurricanes assists

Alexei Ponikarovsky is five points shy of 300 NHL points

HURRICANES MILESTONES AND FIRSTS RECENTLY ACHIEVED

Cam Ward scored his first career NHL/Hurricanes goal, Dec. 26 vs. NJ

Andreas Nodl recorded his first Hurricanes assist, Dec. 26 vs. NJ

Riley Nash recorded his first career NHL/Hurricanes assist/point, Dec. 23 vs. OTT

CAROLINA NOTES

-- **Home Cooking:** The Hurricanes have won two straight and three of their last four games at the RBC Center. Overall the Canes are 8-10-2 on home ice in 2011-12. Beginning with Thursday's game, Carolina plays four of its next six games at home.

-- **Keeping their Discipline:** Carolina has been shorthanded just 10 times in its last six games (7-for-10 on the kill in those games) and just once in each of its last five home games (4-for-5). The Hurricanes rank third in the NHL in fewest penalty minutes per game (9.8), through games of Dec. 27.

-- **Shorthanded Leaders:** Carolina ranks tied for first in the NHL with seven shorthanded goals this season (through games of Dec. 27). The Hurricanes scored seven shorthanded goals in 82 games in 2010-11. **Brandon Sutter** ranks tied for second in the NHL with three shorthanded goals, while **Patrick Dwyer** is tied for fourth with two shorthanded goals (through games of Dec. 27).

-- **Ruutu Heats Up:** Carolina forward **Tuomo Ruutu** has goals in four straight games and points in six straight (12/15-27: 5g, 2a). Ruutu leads the Hurricanes with 14 goals this season and is tied for second on the team with 22 points.

-- **Staal Among Ice Time Leaders:** Hurricanes captain **Eric Staal** ranks eighth among NHL forwards in ice time per game (21:19), through games of Dec. 27. Staal has skated 20-plus minutes 28 times this season, including a season-high 26:57 on Dec. 3 against Pittsburgh.

-- **Shot Blockers:** The Hurricanes rank third in the NHL with 571 blocked shots, an average of 15.0 per game (through games of Dec. 27). **Bryan Allen** is tied for 14th in the NHL with 76 blocked shots (through games of Dec. 27).

-- **Season High/Low for Shots:** The Hurricanes totaled a team season-low 18 shots on Tuesday in Pittsburgh. The Penguins' 52 shots on goal in the same game were the most given up by Carolina this season.

TORONTO CONNECTIONS

The Hurricanes have four former Maple Leafs – **Tim Brent** (2009-11), **Jay Harrison** (2005-09), **Alexei Ponikarovsky** (2000-10), **Jiri Tlusty** (2007-09) – on their current roster. Harrison, Ponikarovsky and Tlusty were each drafted and made their NHL debuts with the Leafs. Hurricanes Head Coach Kirk Muller, Director of Hockey Operations Ron Francis, Director of Defensemen Development Glen Wesley and Assistant Coach Tom Barrasso each briefly played for the Leafs during their careers.

BACK IN BLACK

The Hurricanes will wear their black jerseys for the 10th time in the 2011-12 season on Dec. 29 against the Maple Leafs. Carolina is 2-5-2 this season when wearing its third jersey. The Hurricanes unveiled their alternate uniform in 2008-09, and have gone 30-17-5 all-time when wearing the third jersey.

WARD NETS FIRST CAREER GOAL

Goaltender **Cam Ward** scored his first career NHL goal on Monday (12/26) against New Jersey when he was credited with Carolina's empty net goal. He became the first netminder in franchise history to score a goal, and the first NHL goaltender to score since Chris Mason on April 15, 2006 with Nashville against Phoenix. Ward's goal also marked Carolina's first empty net goal of 2011-12. The last empty net goal scored by the Hurricanes was on April 2, 2011 (Eric Staal) in a 4-2 win at the NY Islanders. Carolina's last empty net goal at home prior to Monday was Jan. 24, 2011 (Erik Cole) in a 6-4 win vs. Toronto.

BROADCAST NOTES

-- FOX Sports Carolinas continues its coverage of the Hurricanes' 2011-12 season on Thursday when the team hosts the Toronto Maple Leafs. As always, John Forslund will have the play-by-play call and former professional goaltender Tripp Tracy will provide color analysis. Bob Harwood hosts the Hurricanes Live pregame show, and reports from rinkside during the game.

-- Fans can tune into the Hurricanes Radio Network's flagship station, 99.9 FM The Fan as Hall of Fame broadcaster Chuck Kaiton calls every Canes game. Capitol Broadcasting's Mike Maniscalco hosts *Stormfront* and *Aftermath* surrounding all broadcasts.

CANESPR.COM

The Hurricanes Media Relations Department created CanesPR.com to provide local, visiting and national media with a variety of convenient resources to cover team. Please visit CanesPR.com for team media guides, practice and media availability information, game notes, audio of player and coach interviews, media clips and more.

CAROLINA AT HOME: 8-10-2

CAROLINA ON THE ROAD: 4-10-4

CAROLINA ON THE POWER PLAY: 20-of-161 (12.4%)

CAROLINA SHORTHANDED: 95-of-121 (78.5%)

INJURIES

Goaltender, **Brian Boucher**, is on injured reserve, lower body, missed 10 games

Defenseman, **Joni Pitkanen**, out indefinitely, concussion, missed 9 games

Forward, **Jeff Skinner**, out indefinitely, concussion, missed 8 games

Forward, **Patrick Dwyer**, day-to-day, upper body, missed 1 game

2011-12 MAN GAMES LOST: 59

UPCOMING PRACTICE SCHEDULE

DATE	DAY	LOCATION	TIME
Dec. 29	Thursday	RBC Center	10:30 a.m.
Dec. 30	Friday	RBC Center	TBA
Dec. 31	Saturday	None	-
Jan. 1	Sunday	None	-
Jan. 2	Monday	RBC Center	TBA
Jan. 3	Tuesday	RBC Center	10:30 a.m.
Jan. 4	Wednesday	Raleigh Center Ice	TBA

* All times are local... Times and locations subject to change

HURRICANES vs. MAPLE LEAFS SERIES NOTES

-- Carolina leads all-time 51-33-12-1 (99), including 26-17-6-1 (50) at home and 25-18-6 (49) in Toronto.

-- The clubs meet four times in 2011-12: at CAR: Nov. 20 (3-2 win) and Dec. 29; at TOR: Dec. 13 (2-1 OT loss) and March 27

-- The teams split their four-game series in 2010-11, 2-2-0, with each team winning once at home and once on the road.

-- The Canes have won 12 of the last 18 meetings between the clubs, including four in overtime/shootout, and have netted four or more goals in five of the teams' last nine meetings.

-- CAR career point-per-game players vs. TOR: Jussi Jokinen – 12 points (3g, 9a) in 12 games; Eric Staal – 30 points (12g, 18a) in 28 games.

-- Cam Ward is 10-8-2 with a 3.01 GAA and one shutout in 20 career games against Toronto. Brian Boucher is 7-2-1 with a 1.68 GAA and one shutout in 11 career appearances against the Leafs.

-- Jonas Gustavsson is 1-2-1 with a 3.47 GAA in four games against CAR. James Reimer is 3-0-0, 0.66 GAA and one shutout in three games. Ben Scrivens is 0-1-0 with a 3.05 GAA in one appearance.

-- Canes players Jay Harrison, Alexei Ponikarovsky and Jiri Tlusty were each drafted by and made their NHL debuts with the Leafs. Tim Brent recorded 20 points (8g, 12a) in 80 games over the last two seasons for the Maple Leafs.

-- Hurricanes Head Coach Kirk Muller, Director of Hockey Operations Ron Francis, Director of Defensemen Development Glen Wesley and Assistant Coach Tom Barrasso each briefly played for the Leafs during their careers.