Sekera, Ward held out of practice
Posted by Chip Alexander on December 3, 2014

There were two noticeable absences Wednesday at the Canes' practice at PNC Arena: Andrej Sekera and Cam Ward. Sekera blocked a shot by the Nashville Predators' James Neal in the final seconds of the Canes' 2-1 victory Tuesday. Ward started in net and had 32 saves.

Canes coach Bill Peters said he expected Sekera would be able to play Thursday against the Washington Capitals, but said the defenseman would have further medical evaluation before a final decision was made.

On Ward, Peters said, "He's a little sore, so we thought it was the perfect opportunity to give him a little rest. He'll try tomorrow, too, and if he's good to go he'll play. If not we'll go the other way."

That would mean going with Anton Khudobin in net. Khudobin started against the Caps in the Nov. 8 game in Washington, stopping 35 shots in a 4-3 overtime loss.

The Canes have won two of their last three, beating the Pittsburgh Penguins 4-2 on the road and then topping the Preds in a tight game. The two victories were sandwiched around a 3-2 loss to the Pens on Saturday at PNC Arena.

After a review of the game video from Tuesday, Peters said, "I thought it was a real good game, to be honest with you. It was real fast. I think everybody felt they played real well. They were gapped up. There wasn't a lot of room for the forwards."

"The one thing we'll go over a little bit here tomorrow is the neutral zone. There was a couple of breakdowns in the neutral zone. We can clean that up, but other than that I thought we played well."

The Caps (10-10-4) have lost their last two games and four of the last five (1-3-1). Vancouver topped the Caps 4-3 Tuesday in Washington, as the Caps allowed three power-play goals for the second consecutive game.

"They gave us a hard time in their building," Peters said. "We've got to get off to a good start. They're a big, heavy team and they've got some skill. They've got some guys who can finish.

"We need to play similar to the way we did last night and generate a little more offense consistently throughout the game."

The Canes' lines remained the same from the Preds game: Eric Staal centering Jiri Tlusty and Elias Lindholm, Riley Nash with Nathan Gerbe and Alex Semin, Victor Rask with Jeff Skinner and Andrej Nestrasil and Jay McClement centering Zach Boychuk and Pat Dwyer, with Brad Malone rotating in.

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Gameday: Capitals vs. Hurricanes
By Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes are one-for-December, and they look to make it two in a row when the Washington Capitals come to town! This is the gameday hub, where you can find all the latest news and information related to tonight's game in one handy location. Make this a regular stop throughout the day, as we update it with notes, videos, photos and more as the day rolls on.

A quick preview of tonight's Metropolitan Division tilt can be found below. We'll have updates-a-plenty for you, as the Canes will be on the ice at PNC Arena for a 10:30 a.m. morning skate. Amber Jaye will be anchoring live coverage of the skate on Storm Surge. Check back here for more!

Last updated: 6:00 a.m.

CANES HOST CAPS IN METRO DIVISION TILT 6:00 a.m.

The Carolina Hurricanes' five-game homestand continues as the Washington Capitals come to Raleigh for a Metropolitan Division match-up, the second of four between the two teams this season.

In the first meeting, the Hurricanes took a four-game winning streak to D.C., and though they didn't extend that streak, Eric Staal and Elias Lindholm helped the team fight back to erase a two-goal deficit in the third period and earn a point in a 4-3 overtime loss.

"They gave us a hard time in their building," head coach Bill Peters said. "We have to get off to a good start. They're a big, heavy team with some skill. They've got some guys who can finish.

The Canes kicked off the month of December with a decisive 2-1 victory over the Central Division-leading Nashville Predators.
“It should send a message to our team. We’re playing some really good hockey teams. Pittsburgh, one of the top teams, Nashville, one of the top teams. Not only are we hanging with them, but we’ve had every chance to win hockey games,” Cam Ward, who made 32 saves, said after Tuesday’s game. “It’s a confidence booster. We realize that we always have to play like that; it’s a consistency thing. But we can feel real happy about tonight.”

The Capitals’ stop in the Triangle is their first on a three-game trek that will then take them to New Jersey and Tampa Bay. Washington is 1-3-1 in its last five games, the lone win coming in the latter half of a home-and-home set with the New York Islanders.

Victor Rask earned his second-career NHL assist in Washington on Nov. 8, and he brings a three-game point streak (1g, 3a) into Thursday night’s game. Eric Staal is a point-per-game producer against Washington in his career with 67 points (25g, 42a) in 65 games.

Defenseman Andrej Sekera did not practice on Wednesday; he blocked a shot in the waning seconds of Tuesday’s victory, leaving the ice in quite some pain.

“We’ll know more tomorrow. I think he’s going to get some further examinations done this afternoon to make sure everything is good there,” Peters said after practice. “I would expect him to play, but I’m not sure.”

Cam Ward did not practice on Wednesday either, but he’s expected to start on Thursday. He owns a 16-12-4 record with a 2.56 goals-against average and four shutouts in 33 career appearances against Washington.

“We’re just a little sore,” Peters said of Ward. “We thought it would be a perfect opportunity to get him some rest.”

NOTES: Since the 2005-06 season, the Canes are 27-2-3 when they score three or more goals against the Capitals.

* Many NHL players shared memories and stories of Jean Beliveau via social media, including Pointe-Claire, Quebec, native Anthony Duclair (New York Rangers) and Canadiens defenseman P.K. Subban.

* In accordance with the wishes of the Beliveau family, the Canadiens announced the details of events in the days leading up to Mr. Beliveau’s funeral.

Click here to leave a personal message on the online tribute page.

* Players and fans observed a moment of silence in honor of Beliveau before puck drop in the Canadiens/Wild and Oilers/Jets games. In addition, the Canadiens wore special No. 4 decals on their helmets to honor their legendary captain.

DUCKS EDGE FLYERS IN BACK-AND-FORTH BATTLE

After combining for six goals in the second period, the Anaheim Ducks and Philadelphia Flyers traded scores in the final 5:02 of regulation – including Wayne Simmonds’ tying goal with 1.8 seconds left on the clock – before Anaheim emerged with a 5-4 shootout victory.

* Simmonds (2-0—2) scored the latest tying-goal this season and the seventh equalizer in the final minute of regulation this season. The others: Niklas Kronwall of the Detroit Red Wings (19:21, Oct. 23 vs. the Pittsburgh Penguins) and Tomas Tatar (19:52, Nov. 5 at the New York Rangers), Patrick Marleau of the San Jose Sharks (19:26, Nov. 20 vs. the Florida Panthers), Florida’s Nick Bjugstad (19:29, Nov. 22 at the Nashville Predators), Curtis Glencross of the Calgary Flames (19:55, Nov. 22 vs. the New Jersey Devils) and Alex Chiasson of the Ottawa Senators (19:19, Nov. 25 at the St. Louis Blues). Of those seven players, three saw their team go on to win the game in extra time (Kronwall, Glencross, Chiasson).

* With the victory, the Ducks (16-6-5, 37 points) took sole possession of the top spot in the Western Conference and kept pace with the Lightning (17-6-3, 37 points) for first place in the NHL. Tampa Bay, however, has a game in hand.
* Corey Perry registered two assists in regulation and scored the deciding goal in the shootout, his second such tally this season (also Nov. 20 at the Vancouver Canucks). Overall Perry improved to 27-for-73 (37.0%) in career shootout attempts, including 12 game-deciding goals.

* Jakob Silfverberg (0-1—1) also scored in the tiebreaker to boost his career shootout numbers to 10-for-17 (58.8%).

* Frederik Andersen stopped 31 shots – including 20 in the third period and overtime – and denied two of three shootout attempts to win in his career-high 13th consecutive start. Andersen is 12-4-4 with a 2.43 goals-against average and .915 save percentage in 21 games this season.

* Patrick Maroon (1-1—2) and Ryan Getzlaf (1-1—2) also posted multi-point performances for the Ducks, who overcame deficits of 1-0 and 3-1 in the second period en route to the victory.

* Sami Vatanen found the back of the net for the seventh time this season, marking a new career-high. With 21 points in 27 games this season, Vatanen has matched his best single-season output (6-15—21 in 48 GP) and shares second in scoring among all defensemen (tied with Calgary's TJ Brodie).

**STRONG THIRD PERIOD POWERS BLACKHAWKS**

With the game tied 1-1 after 40 minutes, the Chicago Blackhawks scored three times in the opening 5:19 of the third period – including two tallies by Patrick Kane – en route to a 4-1 win against the Blues.

* The Blackhawks (16-8-1, 33 points) have won four straight games and 10 of their past 13 to move within one point of the top spot in the Central Division.

* Antti Raanta stopped 40 of the 41 shots he faced (both career-highs) to pick up his second win of the season (the other was a 32-save shutout vs. the Flyers on Oct. 21). According to the Elias Sports Bureau, Raanta is the first Blackhawks goaltender with at least 40 saves and no more than one goal against in a victory since Feb. 3, 2004, when Craig Anderson stopped 43 shots in a 4-1 road win against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

* Kane had his third two-goal game of the season and leads the Blackhawks in goals (12) and points (25). He has 15-25—40 in 42 career games against the Blues, matching his highest point total against one opponent (also 15-25—40 in 28 GP vs. the Dallas Stars).

* Kris Versteeg (1-2—3) factored on all three third-period goals for his second three-point game of the season (Nov. 16 vs. Dallas) and 11th of his career. Overall he has three straight multi-point games for the first time in his career (1-6—7) and ranks second on the club with 8-13—21.

* The Blackhawks improved to 11-0-2 in their past 13 regular-season games against the Blues at United Center dating to a 6-5 win on April 7, 2010.

* Brad Richards notched an assist to push his point streak to three games (3-2—5). He has 3-21—24 in 22 career games against the Blues.

**JETS STAGE LATE RALLY, WIN IN OT**

After falling behind 2-1 early in the third period, Dustin Byfuglien tied the game with 3:06 remaining and Mathieu Perreault tallied the overtime winner just 17 seconds into the extra frame to rally the Winnipeg Jets to a 3-2 win against the Edmonton Oilers.

* Per Elias, Wednesday marked the first time the Jets have tied a game in the final 3:30 and won in overtime since they relocated to Winnipeg in 2011-12. The last such victory for the franchise was on March 12, 2011 when the Atlanta Thrashers rallied for a 5-4 win at Philadelphia on the strength of Andrew Ladd's tying goal at 19:15 of the third period and Ron Hainsey's overtime winner.

* Perreault (1-1—2) posted his first game-winning goal since Oct. 3, 2013, when he scored his first career overtime goal vs. Minnesota while with Anaheim. Perreault has nine game-winners.

* Jacob Trouba (1-2—3) matched a career-high with two assists and set a new personal-best with three points. He now has 4-3—7 in four career games against the Oilers.

* Byfuglien (1-1—2) posted his first multi-point game since Mar. 16 when he tallied 2-1—3 vs. Dallas.

**POMINVILLE’S GOAL LIFTS WILD TO VICTORY**

Jason Zucker scored from a crazy angle 19 seconds after the opening faceoff and Jason Pominville’s goal midway through the second period stood as the game-winner in the Minnesota Wild’s 2-1 home victory against Montreal.

* Zucker has 2-1—3 in his past three games and ranks second on the club with 10 goals this season (10-3—13).

* Zach Parise assisted on the game-winner to push his point streak to three games (1-4—5). He leads the club with 9-10—19 in 19 games.

* Pominville scored his second game-winning goal of the season (28th of his career) and ranks second on the club with 16 points (5-11—16) in 24 games.

* Darcy Kuemper stopped 18 shots but had his shutout bid thwarted with 58 seconds remaining when Alex Galchenyuk
found the back of the net. Kuemper improved to 11-7-3 with a 2.28 goals-against average and a .912 save percentage this season.

* The Wild has a 8-2-1 record at Xcel Energy Center this season, with Kuemper in net for seven of those victories (7-2-0). Overall Kuemper is 18-5-2 with a 1.89 goals-against average and a .923 save percentage all-time in Minnesota (regular season and playoffs).

LOOSE PUCKS

Flyers forward Jakub Voracek recorded one assist to tie Penguins center Sidney Crosby for the League lead in assists (24) and points (33). . . . Canadiens defenseman P.K. Subban had an assist and has 5-6—11 in six career games against the Wild. . . . Wild defender Christian Folin recorded his second career assist/point and first since his NHL debut on Apr. 10 vs. St. Louis. . . . Oilers forward Jordan Eberle (300) and Jets forward Mark Scheifele (100) played in milestone games. . . . The Los Angeles Kings re-signed defenseman Alec Martinez to a six-year contract extension. . . . The Ducks announced that goaltender Ilya Bryzgalov has agreed to a professional tryout contract. Bryzgalov was selected 44th overall by the Ducks in the 2000 NHL Draft and played in 69 games with the Ducks from 2001-07, serving as the backup to Jean-Sebastien Giguere on Anaheim's Stanley Cup championship team in 2007. . . . The Department of Player Safety announced that Penguins defender Robert Bortuzzo has been suspended for two games for interference against Devils forward Jaromir Jagr. . . . Blues coach Ken Hitchcock announced after Wednesday's game that Martin Brodeur will make his first start when St. Louis visits Nashville on Thursday. . . . Brian Rafalski, Karyn Bye Dietz, Jeff Sauer and Lou Vairo dropped the ceremonial puck ahead of their induction into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame on Thursday. Dave Ogrean, Executive Director of USA Hockey, then led the Wild's traditional "Let's Play Hockey" chant.

'Pope of Hockey' Beliveau was in class of his own

Wednesday, 12.03.2014 / 12:35 PM / NHL Insider
By Serge Touchette - Special to NHL.com

It was in 2002 at a hotel in Los Angeles, the day before the NHL All-Star Game, and some of the game's legends were taking their turn entering a reception hall.

I was speaking to Ted Lindsay, the Detroit Red Wings great, when Jean Beliveau, dressed to the nines, made his appearance.

All of a sudden the room went silent and everyone, without exception, turned their attention toward him.

JEAN BELIVEAU: 1931-2014

Canadiens great Beliveau dies at 83
Jean Beliveau, who led the Montreal Canadiens to 10 Stanley Cup championships during his 20 seasons in the NHL, died Tuesday. He was 83.

NHL.com's obituary | Grace, dignity endured
‘Pope of hockey’ Beliveau in class of his own
Current Canadiens reflect | Owner saddened
Flyers’ Lecavalier discusses Beliveau’s impact
Career timeline | Most memorable games
Numbers show part of Beliveau’s greatness
Beliveau’s clutch scoring evident in records
Beliveau to lie in state at Bell Centre | Tribute Statements | Reaction | Photo gallery | Video
It was as if time had stopped.
"For me," Lindsay said that day, "Jean Beliveau is, and always will be, the Pope of Hockey."

The Pope of Hockey died Tuesday. He was 83.

When the hero of an entire generation leaves us, a part of us leaves with him. Who didn't dream of becoming Jean Beliveau?

In the 1960s, I remember organizing a hockey game with my friends on an outdoor rink, early on a Saturday morning. There were at least a half dozen of us wearing Beliveau's No. 4. In that era everyone, young and old, wanted to be Jean Beliveau.

I met Beliveau many times through the years. We often say that the great ones are sometimes the most generous with their time, the nicest with which to deal. It's actually not true for all great ones, but it certainly was for the former captain of the Montreal Canadiens.

Beliveau always appeared larger than life, but he made a point of making sure that anyone who approached him was instantly at ease. In the span of five minutes, you had the impression you were talking to someone you had known for years.

Beliveau had the gift of making himself appear small when he encountered Mr. Average Joe.

And he was a bastion of patience, never refusing an opportunity to share a few words with a fan who was thrilled to be in his company or to sign an autograph.

One example came in March 2006, when I was in Atlanta to cover the funeral of Beliveau's former Canadiens teammate, Bernard "Boom Boom" Geoffrion.

The day before the ceremony I was at the funeral home when I saw Beliveau. He couldn't have been happier to share his numerous stories about his former right wing, who he considered to be like a brother to him.
"Boom always made me laugh," Beliveau said that day, "even on the ice."

We had been talking for about 10 minutes when a man in his 50s came out of nowhere to interrupt us. Under his arm, he was holding a bag full of scrapbooks with yellowed, old photos and hockey cards.

Beliveau quickly understood what was happening, that he was about to be asked for 20 autographs, minimum.

I must admit, I felt a bit sorry for him.

Beliveau signed every single hockey card and photograph the man had, without the slightest sign of complaint or annoyance.

"I don't mind," Beliveau whispered to me. "This man has probably waited 30 years to meet me. I think I owe him 15 minutes of my time."

That was Jean Beliveau.

My job as a journalist has allowed me to travel to every corner of North America. Whenever the conversation turned to hockey, American journalists would regularly ask me about Jean Beliveau before anything else.

Some of them had met him at the old Forum, or had seen him play in Chicago or Boston or elsewhere, but he was revered by all of them. And I'm not exaggerating.

I got the chance to see him play during the final few years of his career, and to put it in context, he was like the Mario Lemieux of his era. He was elegant and skilled; he had no equal when it came to stickhandling. Maurice "The Rocket" Richard is considered by many to be the greatest player in Canadiens history, but, in my humble opinion, Beliveau was the most complete player.

But beyond the statistics, the records, his reign as captain and the Stanley Cup parades, Beliveau leaves a legacy of a warm man, a generous man.

An exceptional man.

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Game Day Hurricanes vs. Capitals: Lonely Boy Edition

By Jamie Kellner @jbk_ltd on Dec 4 2014, 8:00a

Carolina Hurricanes vs Washington Capitals
December 4, 2014 - 7:00 pm ET
PNC Arena - Raleigh, NC
TV - Fox Sports Carolinas
Radio - 99.9 FM The Fan
SB Nation Rival Blog - Japers' Rink

Fancy Stats:
Hurricanes  Record  8-13-3  Points  19  Division Rank  6th Metro
Capital  Record  10-10-4  Points  24  Division Rank  4th Metro
Conference Rank  14th EC  11th EC
Streak  Won 1  Lost 2
Power Play %  21.5%  28.4%
Penalty Kill %  83.3%  74.7%
Goals/Game  2.33  2.79
Goals Against/Game  2.79  2.79
Shots/Game  29.4  30.2
Shots Against/Game  28.7  27.3
ES Goals For %  43.0%  47.2%
ES Corsi For %  51.8%  51.7%
PIM/Game  8.1  10.1
Goaltender  Ward  Holtby

Record  8-8-1  ES Save Percentage  .915  .918
GAA  2.48  2.50
Goaltender  Khudobin  Peters
Record  0-5-2  2-3-1
ES Save Percentage  .898  .899
GAA  2.98  3.28

Stats via NHL.com and War on Ice

Game Notes:
The Hurricanes started out their week playing a team that used to be coached by Barry Trotz. Tonight they'll face his current team as the Washington Capitals come to town.

This is the second of four games this season between the Metro rivals and the first at PNC Arena, where the Caps have won the last four in a row here. They also took the first matchup in DC with a 4-3 overtime win on November 8th with old pal and ex-Cane Justin Peters in net.

The Caps are an up and down team, with bright spots yet troubling inconsistency. They've lost their last two games and four out of their last five. They are 9-1-1 when scoring first, but in the last four losses they failed to lead at any point in the game. They are lethal on the power play (second in the league...
at 28.4%) yet anemic on the penalty kill (next to last at 74.7%), and they've given up six power play goals in the last two games. The Canes would be wise to limit their penalties tonight, and they need to capitalize (pun intended) when they get the man advantage.

Andrej Sekera did not practice yesterday, after making a hell of a shot block in the waning seconds of Tuesday night's game against the Predators. Coach Bill Peters said he expected Reggie to be in tonight's line-up, but was not 100% certain. He'll be evaluated today.

Peters intends to go with the hot goalie in net again tonight, but Cam Ward didn't practice yesterday after saying he felt a little soreness, which may mean it's time to turn to Anton Khudobin.

On November 10th, Jeff Skinner became the fourth youngest player in Hurricanes history to reach 100 goals. He's now two points shy of 200 NHL career points coming into tonight's game.

And then there's Alexander Semin, who faces his former team with no goals for the season and pointless in his last seven, showing flashes of his brilliance but more often than not, hesitant and indecisive play. So the conundrum of what to do about Sasha wages on: bench him, waive him, trade him, give him a heart transplant, buy him out. In an ESPN Insider article that made the rounds yesterday, Rob Vollman offered an excellent in-depth analysis of what Semin brings to the table for a team that might be interested in pursuing his talents. The article is behind a paywall, but some of the key points were 1) He's a puck-possession monster, and even when he isn't scoring his line will see an uptick in points, 2) he's a calculated risk for a number of teams, ideally the team would have a center capable of maximizing his scoring potential, 3) his former team would be better with him on the roster, 4) he could likely make an immediate impact in Columbus or San Jose, but most importantly 5) no one needs Alex Semin more than the Hurricanes do. He's stuck at 499 career points. It would be nice to see number 500 (and then some) tonight against his former team.

The Capitals will start their three-game road trip with Mike Green present with the team, but he didn't practice with the team yesterday and won't be in the line-up tonight, after suffering an upper body injury that has kept him out since November 22.

John Carlson had a career high three point (two goal) game in Tuesday's 4-3 loss to the Vancouver Canucks. Carlson is riding a three-game point streak, leads Washington in time on ice and ranks second in assists (14), and is tied for sixth in the NHL among defensemen in points (18) and assists.

In terms of jinxes, streaks, milestones, and whatnot... Alex Ovechkin is one game-winning goal away from breaking Peter Bondra's Caps record (73). Brooks Laich is one point shy of 300 NHL points, and Joel Ward is one point shy of 200. Noted Canes killer Nicklas Backstrom (he of the overtime game winner on November 8) has assists in six straight games.

Projected line-ups:
Hurricanes (from yesterday's practice)
Jiri Tlusty - Eric Staal - Elias Lindholm
Nathan Gerbe - Riley Nash - Alexander Semin
Jeff Skinner - Victor Rask - Andrej Nestrasil
Zach Boychuk - Jay McClement - Patrick Dwyer
Brad Malone
Andrej Sekera - Justin Faulk
Tim Gleason - Michal Jordan
Ron Hainsey - John-Michael Liles
Jay Harrison
Cam Ward
Anton Khudobin
Injuries: Jordan Staal (IR broken fibula), Brett Bellemore (IR lower body)

Projecting line-ups:
Capitals (from yesterday's practice)
Alex Ovechkin - Nicklas Backstrom - Tom Wilson
Marcus Johansson - Evgeny Kuznetsov - Troy Brouwer
Brooks Laich - Eric Fehr - Joel Ward
Jason Chimera - Andre Burakovsky - Jay Beagle
Brooks Orpik - John Carlson
Karl Alzner - Matt Niskanen
Nate Schmidt - Jack Hillen
Braden Holtby
Justin Peters
Good seats are still available for tonight's game. If you can't be there in person, be a digital witness and join our game thread at 6:30 pm.

Game Analysis: Hurricanes Topple Another Giant
By Cory Lavalette  @corylav on Dec 3 2014, 4:43p

Jeff Skinner and Victor Rask scored to push Carolina past Nashville, 2-1, at PNC Arena on Tuesday.

Three Observations
1. With the Predators being an average-at-best special teams squad and ferocious 5-on-5 team, one would have figured Carolina would need to win the special teams battle in order to upset them. Instead, Carolina scored first (on Skinner's redirection of an Andrej Nestrasil pass) and never really looked back. Most of the Canes' scoring struggles can be sourced at their even-strength play, so getting two five-a-side goals against one the league's stingiest defenses and goalies has to help in the confidence department.

2. Michal Jordan continues to play well, unspectacularly, since his recall, raising more questions about the future of Carolina's defense. The Hurricanes would love to keep Andrej Sekera, who will be tough not to shop at the deadline if the Canes are out of the playoff hunt due to the nice return he should command. But beyond Justin Faulk, anything is possible on the Carolina D. Ron Hainsey continues to look shaky with anyone not named Brett Bellemore. John-Michael Liles has performed well in recent games, but the team would love to get out from under his inflated contract. Jay Harrison...
has spent time in the press box of late, while Tim Gleason — who has been much improved this year — is on just a one-year deal. Could Jordan fit into the team’s plans for next year and beyond? When will Ryan Murphy and Haydn Fleury be ready to fill major roles? Tuesday everyone pitched in to insulate Cam Ward, who didn’t have to stand on his head to earn a win. Competition is always good, but Ron Francis has some big decisions coming regarding his blue line.

3. Good lord, Olli Jokinen.

Number To Know

2 — Points for Skinner in the first game of December. Skinner has had rough Decembers throughout his career due to both injuries and struggles. That is until last year, when he registered 12 goals and four assists in 15 games, including five power play tallies. He and the team are hoping his two-point start to the month will put Skinner on a similar path to last December.

Plus

Victor Rask Spent the last two seasons with the Charlotte Checkers. In 2013-14, he played in his first full season there, appearing in 76 games and notching 16 goals and 23 assists. Are you yawning? Why did he earn a spot in the Hurricanes’ training camp and preseason? Why is he still wearing a ‘Canes sweater? Brian LeBlanc at SB Nation wrote on October 8th, “Rask in particular, despite a bit of a lull in the middle of camp, has more than proven that he deserves a spot, and probably would have earned one anyway even if Jordan Staal hadn’t gone down with a broken leg.”

So even if the number one center for Carolina was playing, Victor Rask would still be in Raleigh? When you’re good you’re good is not something to project in the NHL. Either you belong or you don’t. ‘Canes radio pre and post game show host, Mike Maniscalco wrote of Rask yesterday, “Nash and rookie center Victor Rask might have been the brightest lights in October. With Nash proving he is a dependable NHL centerman and rookie Rask fitting in on the team playing second line minutes. Rask’s play might have slowed a bit during the second month of the season, but he has shown that he can play for this team, a question that needed to be answered.”

Victor Rask ranked tied for fifth in points among rookies in the month of November with 3 goals and 5 assists. He has nine points in Carolina’s last 15 games. Rask is one of 6 ‘Canes to have played in all 24 of the team’s games this season. He is averaging 15:01 minutes of time on the ice, and ranks third among NHL rookies with 55 shots on goal. While Filip Forsberg of the Predators was named the NHL rookie of the month, on
Tuesday night in Raleigh it was Victor Rask who was rookie of the night.

I spoke with Victor Rask after Tuesday night’s game and asked him how he is feeling about belonging at this level. He said,

“Yes, you know, I have a lot of fun. It’s my dream to play here, and you know, just trying to do my best every day, every shift and you know, trying to prove that I belong here, you know, just keep having fun, that’s the most important thing.”

I can say that from where I stand, Victor Rask does belong, and the fans are having a lot of fun watching him work hard and have fun proving that he belongs. He may however, get a bill from the PNC Arena if he keeps this up:

“When you’re good you’re good.”

This was the opening question/statement delivered by yours truly to Carolina Hurricanes Coach Bill Peters in the media gathering after Tuesday night’s game. The ‘Canes had just beaten the Nashville Predators, 2-1 in Raleigh’s PNC Arena. It was a typical Hurricanes vs Predators contest in the sense that it was a grinding, hard-fought battle. Not so typical in that the Hurricanes didn’t get pushed around as they have in seasons past.

Coach Peters responded to my, “when you’re good you’re good” statement with a typical “Petersesque” reply:

“Well, I thought we were good for the most part. I think we’ve been good here for a while. So, you know I was talking to the guys earlier today about it – now with tonight being a one goal game – I think we’ve played six one goal games in a row against some pretty good teams, so you’re looking for a play here or there that can make a difference, and we got one tonight.”

“Got one tonight is pretty much an understatement.” The Hurricanes got several plays that made a difference, and were able to defeat a team that I actually predicted on Monday will be hoisting The Cup in June. Am I wavering? Nah, I still like the Predators. They are a very good team that lost Tuesday to a Hurricanes team that played a near perfect game, much like their outing in Pittsburgh last Friday night. The bottom line, as illustrated in the wins against Pittsburgh and Nashville, is that when the ‘Canes are good, they’re good.

“Skinny” getting right

Jeff Skinner, also known as “Skinny” or “Skins” depending on which teammate or coach is talking, seems to be getting right. He had an assist on the goal that Victor Rask scored, and opened the scoring against Nashville in the first period with this from the spinning Andrej Nestrasil:

Andrej Nestrasil looked like the normally acrobatic Skinner on that play, and Skinner finished it off. Skinner has 6 goals and 7 assists this season, which is not typical for the young phenom. He has shown some spark lately in his play, and I believe he is getting right, and will start accumulating points regularly in the near future. His two points last night are just the start of what could be the spark the Hurricanes need to get them moving up in the standings.

One final note

Cam Ward was brilliant once again. He played against an elite goalie in Pekka Rinne, but he was very bit as elite in his own right Tuesday night. Watch the final seconds of the game with the Predators on the power play bombarding Ward in attempt to tie the game:

Ward has returned to form. And that is a very good thing for the Carolina Hurricanes. It’s a season that is moving along, but if the Hurricanes continue to get hard work from Victor Rask, Jeff Skinner, Cam Ward and the rest of the cast, the Hurricanes might just be “very” good when they’re good

TODAY’S LINKS
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Mike Green traveling on road trip but will miss fifth straight game

By Alex Prewitt December 3 at 2:18 PM

Injured defenseman Mike Green will travel with the Washington Capitals on their short road trip to Carolina and New Jersey, but will miss his fifth straight game with an upper-body issue, Coach Barry Trotz said Wednesday.

Green had hoped to resume workouts with the Capitals by then, he said Tuesday while watching practice in street clothes, but instead skated alone Wednesday morning, hours before the Capitals flew to Raleigh, N.C., to face the Hurricanes. Green suffered the injury in a Nov. 22 loss to the Buffalo Sabres during the first period, he said, and tried to play during the second period before missing the third.

Trotz shared hope Green could skate with the Capitals on Thursday morning at PNC Arena and play Saturday against the Devils in Newark, N.J.

"Mike will be making the trip," Trotz said. "He didn't skate today with us. Hopefully tomorrow. Sounds like he'll jump in the group for a little bit and go from there. He won't play tomorrow for sure, but maybe later in the week."

Forward Liam O'Brien, who has played just once since Nov. 11 after battling a lower-body issue and later getting scratched, will also make the trip, despite hints from Trotz that a reassignment to Hershey may soon come.

The 20-year-old forward, signed during training camp as an undrafted free agent, is exempt from clearing waivers to report to the American Hockey League, so with the Capitals already carrying 13 healthy forwards besides him, Trotz wanted O'Brien to receive work rather than watch from the press box on a nightly basis.

"He's coming on the trip," Trotz said. "But as I say, we'll determine. If I'm not getting him enough ice time in games and stuff, then we'll make that determination. He keeps working at his game. You can see, I watch him, he's not playing but he actually looks like a different player than he was at development camp. But we're going to lose his game skills, so we're going to have to get him in some games here or make that decision."

The lines at Wednesday's pre-flight practice looked exactly the same as they did during Tuesday's 4-3 home loss to Vancouver:

Forwards
Alex Ovechkin—Nicklas Backstrom—Tom Wilson
Marcus Johansson—Evgeny Kuznetsov—Troy Brouwer
Brooks Laich—Eric Fehr—Joel Ward
Jason Chimera—Andre Burakovsky—Jay Beagle

Defensores
Brooks Orpik—John Carlson
Karl Alzner—Matt Niskanen
Nate Schmidt—Jack Hillen

Washington D.C.-hosted NHL All-Star game could 'be in line soon'

By Alex Prewitt December 3 at 11:14 AM

Over the next month, Washington D.C.'s hockey community will chug toward the Winter Classic. The Epix documentary crew will begin full-time filming Friday. In mid-December, the rink will start to form at Nationals Park. The Chicago Blackhawks will arrive in town. The annual outdoor game will be played on New Year's Day.

The Capitals are just the seventh NHL team to welcome the Winter Classic, but Washington D.C. is also one of five NHL cities to never host an All-Star game. Sure, the Capitals hosted in 1982 in Landover, Md., but the event has never come into the nation's capital. Speaking to season ticket holders Tuesday night at Verizon Center, answering a fan's question about bringing the All-Star game here, deputy commissioner Bill Daly offered an encouraging response.

"I would say, in the foreseeable future, yes," Daly said.

Only the next two hosts have been announced: Columbus hosts on Jan. 25, 2015, and Nashville on Jan. 31, 2016. And though all administrative attention will be focused on the Winter Classic this month, Daly hinted that, once the rink gets dismantled at Nationals Park and Jan. 2 rolls around, he expects some moves from Capitals owner Ted Leonsis.

"There isn't at this point," Daly said, when asked if the NHL had a timetable for awarding Washington D.C. an All-Star game. "We do have — the way we do the All-Star game is we put it out for applications to the member clubs. This organization historically was focused on the Winter Classic and getting the Winter Classic. I think once we have a successful event on Jan. 1, I'm sure they'll turn to the next event that they want. I have no doubt the All-Star Game will be in line soon."

For now, though, the focus remains on New Year's Day. Epix will arrive at Kettler Capitals Iceplex to set up Wednesday, then start their all-access, behind-the-scenes look later this week. Ten of Washington's remaining 13 games this month will be spent on the road. Then, after visiting the Islanders on Dec. 29, the Capitals will return home and start skating outside.

"I think the league generally, not just me, is excited for the event," Daly said. "We always are. It's probably the most anticipated date on the NHL regular season calendar. It's become that. I think all eyes are going to be on the nation's capital on Jan. 1. We've been able to carve out a unique niche on that day, kind of our own little window where we have national prominence. That itself is pretty exciting."

As for this year's All-Star game, only forward Alex Ovechkin ranked among the top 40 forwards, top 30 defensemen and top 10 goaltenders after the second week of fan voting, according to the NHL. Ovechkin's 54,319 votes puts him at 17th for his position.

"Mike Green traveling on road trip but will miss fifth straight game"
Sometime several days ago, Matt Niskanen heard fellow Capitals defender John Carlson talking about “a squeaker or a bounce.” Carlson had scored two goals this season, one more than Niskanen, but none since Nov. 2. So Carlson hoped for some “puck luck,” as they call it. Or maybe, he hoped for an outing such as Tuesday night.

“Today they weren’t squeakers or bounces,” Niskanen said, “but nice shots and they found their way through for him.”

Twice during the second period, in a 4-3 loss eventually obscuring a career night, Carlson blasted goals past Vancouver Canucks netminder Ryan Miller, at once ending his scoring drought and showing the benefits of putting bodies in front of the net.

Down 1-0 after Derek Dorsett’s even-strength goal, the Capitals replied early into the second period. A defensive zone turnover coughed up the puck to center Nicklas Backstrom, who tugged two Canucks into the corner while Carlson stationed himself near the middle. Carlson’s quick trigger, while standing still, was enough to beat two more Canucks who moved up in coverage once Backstrom’s pass reached him, while forward Tom Wilson crossed in front of Miller and blinded him as the puck zipped through.

“I think we’ve been hammering home trying to get to the net and get bodies there, get traffic,” Carlson said. “You can see that kind of coming, and I think tonight was the first night — not that we went to the net first, but I thought we got some results from going to the net. I think shots matter. You just never want to see a guy pass up a shot when he’s in a good scoring situation. If we’re just going to throw pucks at the net when no one’s there or from the wall, yeah no shot’s a bad shot, but at the end of the day, in some ways you’re just helping them.”

With 5 minutes, 17 seconds left in the second period and the Capitals again trailing, forwards Joel Ward and Jason Chimera dug the puck from a scrum in the corner and passed back to Carlson. Carlson drifted left just long enough for Ward to pitch camp in the crease. The puck barely left the ice, a hard grounder that Ward leapt over and let remain on its natural path, through Miller’s five-hole.

“I liked our net-front traffic against Miller,” Coach Barry Trotz said. “I thought we created a lot of that. I thought we were more physical, I thought we did some good things. It wasn’t one of those games where you come out of it and go we didn’t deserve any points out of it. We lost the special team war. That was the biggest area.”

Yes, for the second straight game, the Capitals lost after allowing three power-play goals, but Tuesday night also marked Carlson’s fourth three-point game of his career, and his first two-goal game.

While Carlson continued to build up production — over the past three games, he has registered six points — forward Brooks Laich dazzled in his third game back from a left shoulder injury. Down 3-2, seconds after Carlson nearly found a hat-trick with a close-range backhand, Laich dragged a pass around his defender, tapped the puck once and, as it tumbled end over end, launched it high over Miller’s glove. He spread his arms and roared at his first goal since March 8, a 10-game scoreless drought.

Elevated in the lineup, replacing Jason Chimera beside Eric Fehr and Joel Ward, Laich’s line proved the Capitals’ most productive Tuesday night. All three members posted even-strength Fenwick-for percentages — a measure of unblocked shot differential — higher than 60 percent, according to War On Ice. If the Capitals could find solace anywhere, they would look no further than the third game back from a left shoulder injury. Down 3-2, seconds after Carlson stationed himself near the middle, Carlson’s quick trigger, while standing still, was enough to beat two more Canucks who moved up in coverage once Backstrom’s pass reached him, while forward Tom Wilson crossed in front of Miller and blinded him as the puck zipped through.

“I think he’s skating really well,” Trotz said. “He looks really fresh, a great four on four there, nice goal. He deserves to get a goal once in a while. I know he’s been battling injuries and a little bit of tough luck to start the season. But he’s a big piece of our team. He can add a lot of different elements for us. I was really happy with his play.”


Trotz: ‘We’re not as good as we think we are’

December 3, 2014, 2:15 pm

Chuck Gormley

They have not won back-to-back games in regulation all season.

Their penalty killing has fallen from 13th in the NHL to 29th — in one week.

They are 10-10-4 after 24 games.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are your Washington Capitals.

And more than a quarter into his first season behind the bench, their head coach does not like what he sees.

“Either we’ve got to change or we change people,” Barry Trotz said on Wednesday afternoon, after seeing the Caps lose 4-3 to the Vancouver Canucks Tuesday night at Verizon Center.

“We’re at that quarter pole where everybody has a good sample of what they are. I don’t think that’ll change a lot unless we change our ways. For some guys there are old habits of five or six years that keep popping up at inappropriate times for us.

“Am I happy where we are? No, not at all. I think we’re better than we’ve shown, but we’re not as good as we think we are.”

From a statistical standpoint the Capitals are a better team 5-on-5 under Trotz. They have outscored their opponents 48-47 at even-strength this season. Last season they were outscored 163-147 at even strength.

But in other statistical categories everything is about the same. Last year the Caps scored 2.74 goals a game, 13th in the NHL. This year they’re averaging 2.79 per game, ranking 11th. Last year the Caps allowed an average of 2.79 goals per game, ranking 22nd. This year it’s the same [2.79], ranking 21st.

“We’re a .500 hockey team,” Capitals veteran left wing Jason Chimera said. “We’re a way better club than that. It’s up to us in here. We’re a way better hockey club to be fluttering around at .500. If we had no coach we should be above .500.

“We should be the team [opposing] teams fear to play. We should be the team going up 3-0 on a team and then just stomp them. We’re not doing it. Right now we’re playing better on the road [5-5-1] than we are at home [5-5-3]. We have a team that should drop the hammer right away and we’re not doing it.”

The Capitals have gone 9-1-1 in games in which they’ve scored the first goal, but 1-9-3 when allowing their opponents to score first.

“When we’re down we really come after teams,” said right wing Eric Fehr. “We’re really desperate. I feel like we need to play that way when we’re even. We want to come after teams. We don’t want to wait to see what kind of effort the other team is going to bring forward.

“When people look at our team they see a lot of offensive firepower and teams are coming in here ready for a fight and we have to realize that and be ready for it.”

Trotz said he was especially disappointed in the way the Capitals came out on Tuesday night, three nights after suffering their worst loss of the season, a 6-2 setback Saturday night in Toronto.

“The response after getting our butts handed to us in Toronto should be the next game,” Trotz said. “We tend to dwell on things way too much or not enough. I’m not quite sure which it is.

“When we get angry and focused or determined there’s not anybody we can’t play with. But we always need someone to punch us before we get going. Sometimes you can pull it off and a lot of times you can’t.”

When asked if the Capitals could benefit from having an ornery player like Steve Ott or Antoine Vermette, he referenced what captain Shane Doan does for the Arizona Coyotes.

“I think those players pull you into a fight,” he said. “Shane Doan, I mean, he pulls his team into a fight. He’s not the cleanest guy. He’s an awesome person, an awesome human being, but he plays right on the edge and he pulls his team along. We need that.
"We just need the group to pull itself. I've felt the urgency from Day One, but we seem to say, 'Everything will be OK.' Well, let's make it OK. There's too much talk and not enough action. I need more action."

Trotz said the Capitals have the financial commitment of ownership and have been given first-class class facilities at Kettler Capitals Iceplex and Verizon Center, but he says the team is prone to falling into old habits that have been prevalent for five or six years.

Asked to identify those habits, Trotz ran off a litany of items.

"Everything from old habits in how you practice; how you play; how you push yourself; how you deal with adversity; how you deal with decisions on the ice; how you deal with wall play; how you deal with faceoffs; how you deal with film sessions to correct your mistakes; how you deal with getting better on a day-to-day basis and having a plan for that; how you deal with adversity when it hits you right in the face. Do you stand up and plow through it, or do you roll up in a corner and cry about it?

"Every teams has those things. We're trying to correct it so that we have a high standard in terms of accountability, in terms of leadership. If you get all of those and shrink those to a small ball, you're going to be pretty consistent."

Mike Babcock gives weary Red Wings a day of rest

By Helene St. James, Detroit Free Press 2:54 a.m. EST December 4, 2014

The Detroit Red Wings had an off day Wednesday, as their coach thought it would leave players with sharper faculties.

The Wings seek the start of a new winning streak when they host the Dallas Stars tonight. They'll have to do so without top-six forward and power play net-front presence Justin Abdelkader, who remains sidelined by a shoulder injury suffered during Sunday's game.

General manager Ken Holland told the Free Press on Wednesday that Abdelkader "is doubtful for the weekend. We'll see how he feels Saturday morning for final decision. Realistically, we're hoping he's ready to play some time next week."

The Wings host the New York Rangers on Saturday and play at Carolina on Sunday.

They had strung together a nice four-game winning streak before a 4-3 loss to Florida on Tuesday that caused players to think of new words for awful. Coach Mike Babcock pinned some of the blame on the coaching staff and figured a day off would help.

"We're going to have an off day so that we're fresh mentally, and so there's no excuse mentally or physically," Babcock said after Tuesday's game. "We'll get back at it."


Gordie Howe having difficulties, but may leave hospital

By Helene St. James, Detroit Free Press 5:34 p.m. EST December 3, 2014

Detroit Red Wings legend Gordie Howe remains hospitalized as his dementia affects his ability to rest.

Son Mark Howe told the Free Press that Gordie Howe has had a hard time sleeping since being hospitalized Monday. "Anxiety from dementia does that to him," Mark Howe wrote via text. "Change of surrounding makes his dementia worse as well."

The family released a statement this afternoon casting further light on the health of the man known as "Mr. Hockey."

"During the afternoon of Monday, December 1, our father appeared to have suffered another severe stroke as he displayed diminished consciousness to his attending caregivers and physical therapy personnel for more than 30 minutes, EMS was called and he was immediately transported to UMC Hospital. An MRI was performed Tuesday afternoon which revealed the great news that he did not in fact have a second severe stroke. It was determined that he was suffering from dehydration and is currently being treated accordingly. He is having difficulty eating solid foods at this time, has slurred speech and has been unable to walk for more than three weeks now. All of these factors are contributing to his overall decline in health. His mental awareness has improved enough in the past 24 hours to where we expect him to be out of the hospital and in his own bed at home before the night is over."

Mark Howe, a pro scout for the Wings and like his father, a member of Hockey's Hall of Fame, left Detroit late Monday after hearing from his sister, Cathy, that their father had suffered an episode they believed at the time to be a major stroke. Gordie Howe has been in Lubbock, Texas, since last summer, staying with Cathy and her family.

Mark Howe originally told the Free Press his dad was in ICU, but Murray Howe, another son, later clarified Gordie Howe was in hospital, but not intensive care. He also clarified that an MRI revealed it was not, in fact, a stroke.

Gordie Howe, 86, suffers from dementia and has had a series of mini strokes since summer.

Mark Howe told the Free Press the events of Monday night were scary. "Dad was unresponsive for about 30 minutes and it was very similar to when he had his big stroke." That occurred on Oct. 26, when Gordie Howe lost function in most of his right side. He remains unable to speak clearly or move on his own.


Red Wings not happy with number of goals allowed

Ted Kulfan, The Detroit News 8:58 p.m. EST December 3, 2014

Detroit — There were signs the last few weeks.

Goals were being scored in bunches, but the Red Wings were allowing quite a few, too.

"The thing I don't like about what's gone on lately is we're giving up too many goals," Red Wings coach Mike Babcock said in the midst of that stretch. "I don't mind if we score goals, but I'm not interested in giving them up."

Tuesday's 4-3 loss to Florida was an example of Babcock's words.

The Red Wings have allowed three or more goals in 11 of the last 15 games. During that stretch, they are 7-3-1.

"If we let in three or four goals a night, it's not easy to win games," Red Wings center Henrik Zetterberg said. "You have to score a lot of them (goals) yourself. Even (Tuesday) some of the goals shouldn't have happened but (did), and it's something that has to change."

A lack of execution and sloppy defensive play have been the issues, leading to many of the goals allowed.

By the coaching staff's count, the Red Wings had 20 turnovers against the Panthers.
"All throughout the (Florida) game, we didn't take care of the puck well enough," Red Wings forward Gustav Nyquist said. "If you don't do that, you'll lose. We have to be better."

Babcock jackpot

TSN national analyst Darren Dreger reported the Red Wings are "willing to make Babcock the highest paid coach" in the league, with a four- or five-year contract.

For that to happen, Babcock would have to make a minimum of $3 million per season (Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville is the league's highest paid at $2.75 million per season).

Babcock and general manager Ken Holland have been mum about negotiations.

Ice chips

Red Wings forward Tomas Tatar, on Tuesday's loss: "It's an advantage to play in our home and it's a big month for us (10 of 14 at Joe Louis Arena)."

... The Red Wings had Wednesday off, so there's a chance Justin Abdelkader (shoulder) could return for the morning skate Thursday. He also was fighting the flu Tuesday.

... The Red Wings have scored power-play goals in five straight games and eight of the last nine. The power play ranks seventh in the NHL at 22.8 percent.

... After going pointless in four games, Zetterberg has points (seven, one goal) in five consecutive games.

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Howe might be released from hospital Wednesday night

By Gregg Krupa, The Detroit News 5:08 p.m. EST December 3, 2014

Detroit – Gordie Howe’s mental awareness improved Wednesday, according to his family. But his health remains in decline.

The Red Wings released a statement confirming media reports that rather than suffering a severe stroke on Monday, as feared by his family, Gordie Howe suffered from dehydration.

The Howe family also expressed sympathies after the death of one of Howe’s greatest rivals, the elegant, high-scoring Canadiens center and captain, Jean Beliveau, who died Tuesday at 83.

Howe continued to recover Wednesday, in Lubbock, Texas, where he has stayed with his daughter Cathy Purnell, and also attended by his sons, Mark, Marty and Murray.

"During the afternoon of Monday, December 1, our father appeared to have suffered another severe stroke as he displayed diminished consciousness to his attending caregivers and physical therapy personnel for more than 30 minutes," the family said, in the statement. "EMS was called and he was immediately transported to UMC Hospital (in Lubbock).

"An MRI was performed Tuesday afternoon which revealed the great news that he did not in fact have a second severe stroke. It was determined that he was suffering from dehydration and is currently being treated accordingly.

"He is having difficulty eating solid foods at this time, has slurred speech and has been unable to walk for more than three weeks now," the family said.

"All of these factors are contributing to his overall decline in health. His mental awareness has improved enough in the past 24 hours to where we expect him to be out of the hospital and in his own bed at home before the night is over."

As Howe endured the health trials, his old rival throughout the 1950s and 1960s, finally succumbed after some years of health problems.

In the 11 seasons from 1950 to 1960, the Canadiens won six Stanley Cups and the Red Wings four, while Howe and Beliveau played critical roles.

"The Howe family is also deeply saddened to hear of the passing of hockey legend Jean Beliveau," the Howes said, according to a release from the Red Wings.

"The hockey world has lost a man who epitomized professionalism, dignity and class. We extend our condolences and prayers to his family and friends."
sending him down when he was the only player on the team with minor-
league options.

After recording just two assists in his first 14 games, Jurco has seven points in the last eight to help the Red Wings post a 6-2 record in that span.

"I think it's just getting a little more luck than I used to at first," Jurco said. "The first few games, there was no way for me to get the puck in. It was bouncing everywhere out of the net, I'm just trying to play a little harder with the puck, be stronger and skate hard.

"It's working well for me right now."

So well that coach Mike Babcock promoted the second-year forward to the Red Wings’ top forward line alongside Henrik Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk late in the second period of Tuesday’s 4-3 loss to Florida.

When Johan Franzen wasn’t going to the net as the Red Wings had hoped, Jurco took his place on the top line next to Detroit’s top two players.

Jurco wasn’t able to capitalize by figuring in the scoring, marking the first time in six games he didn’t get a point.

"The season is long," he said. "There is always a time you’re struggling a little bit. Sports are like this. You cannot always be the best or at high levels. I think I went through my struggles this year and hopefully it's only going to get better.

"For sure it's not a good thing for confidence but right now, I'm really high with my confidence where it used to be. So it helped me the last few games and it’s good for me."

Jurco, the Red Wings’ youngest player at age 21, is 11th on the team’s scoring chart with two goals and seven assists. He also leads the Red Wings with a plus-7 rating.

His surge started with a goal and an assist Nov. 18 in a 5-0 victory at Columbus.

Jurco isn’t the only Red Wings’ youngster who struggled to produce at the start of the season.

Tomas Tatar, who turned 24 Monday, had one goal in the Red Wings’ first nine games but is among Detroit’s top scorers with 10 goals and five assists. And Riley Sheahan, 22, has five goals and seven assists after getting one goal and one assist in his first nine games.

"Jurcs, to me, is an important guy for us," Babcock said. "Tats struggled at the start. Sheehan struggled at the start. I don’t know the reason for it. The schedule is 82 games long and it’s a grind and they've been able to find their way out of it.

"They’re good young players. They really can skate, get good offensive skill so over time you’d like to think they can score."

A native of Slovakia, the 6-foot-1, 203-pound Jurco was the Red Wings’ second-round pick (35th overall) in the 2011 NHL draft after playing two seasons with the Saint John Sea Dogs of the QMJHL.

He spent a third season with Saint John before beginning his pro career in 2012-13, when he helped the Grand Rapids Griffins win the AHL championship.

In three seasons with Saint John, where his coach was former Red Wings forward Gerard Gallant, Jurco had 87 goals and 88 assists in 172 games.

"Tomas Jurco is a real good hockey player," Gallant said. "I really liked him in the three years that I had him in Saint John and to watch him develop into the player that he is today is really satisfying because he came over here as a young kid from Europe and he had no idea of the work ethic that it takes to be a professional player.

"His skill level was unbelievable so it’s good to see Tomas play that way he’s playing because he’s competing every day, every shift, and he’s a true professional NHL hockey player and he’s doing real well for the Red Wings."

NHL Power Rankings roundup: Eight top-10 showings propel Detroit Red Wings to No. 8

Brendan Savage | on December 03, 2014 at 11:11 AM, updated December 03, 2014 at 6:14 PM

Nobody likes the Red Wings more this week than Ken Campbell of The Hockey News.

The Red Wings moved up in virtually all of the NHL Power Rankings but they took a huge jump over at THN, where Campbell - who had them 14th a week ago - bumped them all the way up to No. 3 behind only the Nashville Predators and Tampa Bay Lightning.

NHL.com has the Red Wings 10th and says they can win the Eastern Conference if they add an impact defenseman at some point.

THN and NHL.com were two of eight top-10 rankings for the Red Wings, who check in no lower than 11th this week. Add it all up and they’re No. 8 this week in MLive’s NHL Power Rankings roundup.

That’s up three spots since MLive’s last NHL Power Rankings roundup.

(These week’s rankings were compiled before Tuesday’s 4-3 loss to Florida.)

The top three teams this week are Nashville, Tampa Bay and Pittsburgh.

Here’s how the Red Wings stack up:

• ESPN.com: Seventh, up from 13th last week. What they’re saying: "Can’t get over how impressive the Red Wings are. A big win over the Canucks on Sunday was their fourth in a row and sixth in seven games as they nip at the heels of the Lightning and Canadiens at the top of the Atlantic."  

• NJ.com: Eighth. What they’re saying: "Gustav Nyquist had a team-high 11 goals through Sunday for the Red Wings, who were 6-1 in their last seven games."

• SB Nation: 11th. What they’re saying: "It’s starting to look like the Red Wings playoff streak will continue. Detroit’s defense has been especially good: only Tampa is allowing less unblocked shot attempts per game at even strength."

• NHL.com: 10th. What they’re saying: "Mike Babcock is doing a masterful job of putting his skilled young players in situations to succeed. He’s leaning on the fourth line to eat up a lot of the defensive-zone faceoffs (they’re not the only team trying to emulate what has been a staple in Chicago) and the kids are turning offensive-zone faceoffs into great possession numbers. If this team adds a high-level defenseman, Detroit could win the East."

• Metro.us: 11th. What they’re saying: "It has been rather sneaky but the Red Wings are on a roll, having won their last four games, including a 5-3 victory over Vancouver on Sunday. Detroit is 9-2-2 this season at Joe Louis Arena with three more home games beckoning this week: Panthers, Stars and Rangers. Detroit is only one point behind Tampa Bay and Montreal with a goal-differential of plus-13."

• Comcast Sports New England: 10th, up from 12th. What they’re saying: "Tomas Tatar is on fire for the Red Wings, who have won (four) in a row as they protect their third place spot in the Atlantic Division."

• Buffalo News: 11th, up from 12th. What they’re saying: "Prospects blooming: Nyquist and Tatar have combined for 19 goals."

• TSN.ca: Seventh, up from ninth. What they’re saying: "Six wins in seven games, with a relatively healthy roster, and even getting production (3 G, 2 A in 5 GP) from Stephen Weiss, puts the Wings within a point of first place in the league."

• USA Today: Sixth, up from 12th. What they’re saying: "Captain Henrik Zetterberg has six points during his team’s four-game winning streak."

• Toronto Sun: Seventh, down from sixth. What they’re saying: "Howard having bounce back season."

• The Hockey News: Third, up from 14th. What they’re saying: "Yes, we picked the Red Wings to miss the playoffs this season and, yes, it looks as
though we're going to be wrong. Coming up: Florida, Dallas and Rangers at home, where they're 9-2-2 this season.”


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Red Wings take Wednesday off after turnovers catch up with them in Florida loss

Aaron McMann | on December 03, 2014 at 7:00 AM, updated December 03, 2014 at 6:39 PM

DETROIT -- Sooner or later the goals against were going to catch up with them, and Tuesday night the Detroit Red Wings learned that the hard way.

Searching for its first five-game win streak in two seasons, Detroit instead looked slow and uninterested at times during its 4-3 loss to the Florida Panthers at Joe Louis Arena. It was the seventh time this season the Red Wings (14-6-5-) have allowed at least four goals, and the second in the last three games.

Far from the team’s 2.74 goals-against average.

“If we let in three goals a night it's not easy to win games,” forward Henrik Zetterberg said. “You've got to score a lot of them yourself. Even tonight some of the goals shouldn't have happened. But it does, and it’s something we've got to change.”

Detroit outshot Florida 41-31 but finished minus-8 in giveaways, turning the puck over eight times in the first period. They scored first on a Tomas Tatar power play goal but gave up the lead later in the period on a goal from Jimmy Hayes.

The lackluster effort poured over into the second period, and while the turnovers were cleaned up for the most part (Detroit was minus-11 in its 5-3 win Sunday over Vancouver) Florida had trouble getting shots off near the net.

“We had our count around 20 turnovers,” Detroit coach Mike Babcock said. “You have no chance. Mentally we weren't engaged. Whatever we did today wasn't the right thing.”

Henrik Zetterberg The captain says "You snooze, you lose."

Said Johan Franzen: "You get comfortable and let your guard down a little bit. We have to keep telling ourselves it's going to be a war out there and to come prepared every night."

Everyone agreed Tuesday night that Detroit was outplayed physically and mentally, downplaying any talk that the canceled morning skate had anything to do with the team's play.

Detroit hosts Dallas on Thursday night at Joe Louis Arena.

“It's bad mistakes, bad giveaways and not many shots on net,” Tomas Tatar said. “We just have to flush this out of our heads and get ready for the next game.”

Said Babcock: "We have to regroup and get back at 'er. We're going to have an off-day tomorrow. So we'll get refreshed mentally so there's no excuse mentally or physically, and we'll get back at it.”


741123  Detroit Red Wings

Gustav Nyquist not suffering from sophomore jinx

By Chuck Pleiness, The Macomb Daily

Posted: 12/03/14, 4:51 PM EST |
Howe originally suffered a major stroke on Oct. 26 and has had several smaller strokes since then.

On Monday afternoon, it appeared Howe had suffered another severe stroke because he was displaying diminished consciousness to his caregivers and physical therapists for more than 30 minutes.

Emergency personnel immediately took Howe to the hospital where an MRI showed that Howe did not have another stroke. Instead, doctors determined that Howe was dehydrated, so they are treating him for that.

Howe's family said he is currently having trouble eating solid foods, has slurried speech and has not been able to walk for more than three weeks.

However, because Howe's mental awareness has improved enough in the last 24 hours, his family expects him to be able to leave the hospital and return home sometime later tonight.

Howe's family also wanted to express their condolences to the family and friends of hockey legend Jean Beliveau, who passed away yesterday.

"The Howe family is also deeply saddened to hear of the passing of hockey legend Jean Beliveau," the statement said. "The hockey world has lost a man who epitomized professionalism, dignity and class. We extend our condolences and prayers to his family and friends."

Howard on the rebound following rough season

Vanessa Taylor/Detroit Fan Favorites

DEC 03, 2014 11:24a ET

Over the first 20 games he's started this season, Jimmy Howard is 11-5-4. Jimmy Howard was in bad need of a rebound as the Red Wings began the 2014-15 season.

The Red Wings' starting goaltender had a rough go of it last year. There was a rash of injuries that he struggled to shake (hand, knee, and hip), and he missed the team's final two playoff games with a case of the flu.

The health issues were accompanied by exasperating inconsistencies, which were arguably what frustrated Howard -- and fans -- the most.

These issues caused Howard to shoulder a lot of the blame for the Red Wings' regular season struggles and early exit from the playoffs, as goaltenders so often do.

Then the offseason arrived early in Detroit, and Howard spent the summer with his wife, Rachel, and two young sons. He appeared to have gotten a few years. Over the first 20 games he's started this season, Howard is 11-5-4 and has a solid 2.23 goals-against average and .916 save percentage.

So far in this young season, Howard has been dependable when the Wings have needed him to be. He's managed some brilliant, game-changing saves. His performances have been notable, regardless of a game's outcome.

One of those performances came on Nov. 18, when Howard was instrumental in the Red Wings' shutout of the Blue Jackets. He stopped all 28 shot attempts from Columbus and collected the 19th shutout of his career.

Two weeks later on Nov. 30, Howard managed 30 saves to achieve his 163rd career win during a 5-3 victory over the Canucks. With the win, he tied Harry Lumley for third place on the franchise's all-time goalie wins list, behind legends Terry Sawchuk (351) and Chris Osgood (317).

He currently stands in 16th place among active players on the all-time career wins list, which is topped by Martin Brodeur (688) and Roberto Luongo (381).

He was in goal for three contests of the Red Wings' four-game winning streak which began Nov. 24, and came to an end with a 4-3 loss to the Florida Panthers on Tuesday night at Joe Louis Arena.

During the game, Howard faced heavy pressure from an energetic Panthers offense and stopped 27 shots, yet defensive errors and a high number of turnovers proved to be too damaging for the team to recover.

Had the game resulted in a win for Detroit, it would have been their longest winning streak since they swept six straight in February 2012.

Despite Tuesday's loss, Howard is quietly managing a much-needed rebound at the quarter mark of the season.

Provided he can stay healthy, this season could have a very different outcome for Detroit's number one goaltender.

TORONTO — Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Robert Bortuzzo has been suspended for two games without pay for his "predatory" hit to the head on Devils right winger Jaromir Jagr Tuesday night.

The NHL's department of player safety said Bortuzzo's hit was "interference" because the contact was "well after Jagr has released the puck and at a point at which a body check is no longer legal."

Interestingly, the NHL claims Jagr will not miss any further time because of injury.

The report says Bortuzzo "drives through Jagr's chest and chin with his right shoulder" and called the high hit of a "predatory nature with significant head contact."

The incident occurred at 17:57 of the second period of the Devils' 1-0 loss to the Penguins. Jagr did not play at all in the third period of the game.

Under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and based on his average annual salary, Bortuzzo will forfeit $6,451.62. The money goes to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

No retaliation for Jaromir Jagr head hit? Are Devils gutless? (WITH VIDEO)

Rich Chere | December 03, 2014 at 3:52 PM, updated December 03, 2014 at 6:03 PM

TORONTO — Their best player was lying on the ice, clearly dazed and injured. It was a sight no one connected with the Devils had ever seen before.

Jaromir Jagr never seems to get hurt, so that was shocking in itself. But the fact that the big winger was cut down by a late hit to the head from Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Robert Bortuzzo Tuesday night left everyone doubly stunned.
So why did the Devils do nothing about it?

Why didn't they make sure Bortuzzo paid dearly for a hit they all felt was dirty? Why didn't they go after Sidney Crosby or Evgeni Malkin, the Penguins' two star forwards?

In the eyes of some, it was because the Devils are soft. They saw their best player hit in the head and did absolutely nothing about it.

Some old timers might call their lack of a response gutless, an invitation to the rest of the NHL that they can go after the Devils' top players without fear of any consequences.

"Your initial reaction is you're (ticked) off that somebody took a liberty on a guy like that," Devils coach Pete DeBoer told NJ Advance Media. "Then you're concerned. This is a guy who is not a 25-year-old. But he's a big, strong man. And he's a tough guy. It was good to see him get up.

"Speaking to him today I think he's heading in the right direction."

But there is still concern about a blow to the head.

"Yes," DeBoer admitted.

In the not-too-distant past, we would be criticizing the Devils for not seeking immediate payback. If this were still the era of the Flyers' Broad Street Bullies, with bench-clearing brawls and fights outside dressing rooms, we'd be screaming about it.

But in retrospect, they did the right thing for several reasons:

1. When the incident occurred with 2:03 left in the second period, it was still a 0-0 game. The Devils still had a legitimate chance to win, or get one point by forcing overtime.

2. They certainly could not afford to lose a fourth forward with a major penalty or game misconduct. They were already down to nine healthy forwards.

3. And Jordin Tootoo repeatedly asked Bortuzzo to fight. The Penguins' defenseman refused every time. So who should be called timid?

4. Had DeBoer sent someone out to get Crosby, he correctly pointed out that World War IV would've occurred. And the NHL would have come down hard on the Devils and their coach.

"We tried to be more physical with Crosby and Malkin and some other guys. I think Toots tried to challenge the guy," Dainius Zubrus said. "And guys tried to get involved more physically. Saying that, there were still two points up for grabs and we know how important that is."

"I think Toots tried to challenge the guy," Dainius Zubrus said. "And guys tried to get involved more physically. Saying that, there were still two points up for grabs and we know how important that is."

"I think they're a good example of how quickly this can turn around once you get it going the other way."

Any reasonable person would also have to ask: Why would Crosby, who has a history of concussions, deserve to be attacked when he had nothing to do with Bortuzzo's indiscretion?

Still, the Devils are wondering if they did the right thing. Tootoo pointed out that it is a long season and he has a good memory.

The image of Jagr lying on the ice will stick with them, as will their view of the hit.

"I think it was a little late with the motion going up right to his head," Patrik Elias said. "You don't expect that, obviously."

What, then, should we have expected from the Devils?

Will Devils have enough healthy bodies for clash with Maple Leafs?

Randy Miller | on December 03, 2014 at 11:00 AM, updated December 03, 2014 at 1:26 PM

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Martin Brodeur's greatness in goal came out a lot during Devils-Flyers games for two decades.

Of his NHL record 124 shutouts, he has 12 in 92 games against the Flyers, his most against any team.

Of his record 688 wins, 50 came against Flyers, his second most versus one team behind the 51 he has against the Islanders.
The Flyers heard the big news Tuesday that Brodeur, after playing 21 seasons and winning three Stanley Cups with the Devils, won't be spending his entire career with one club. 

The Devils won't get to face Brodeur this season because they've already played their two games against St. Louis, but the Flyers play the Blues twice late in the season - March 5 in Philadelphia and March 12 in St. Louis. 

Here is what Flyers players had to say about Brodeur signing a one-year contract with the St. Louis Blues just a few days after he'd reported to the team on a tryout.

R.J. UMBERGER

Left wing

"It's funny, when I grew up as a kid in Pittsburgh, Mario Lemieux was my favorite player and Martin Brodeur was the second-favorite player. So half of my bedroom was Mario and Penguins and the other half was posters of Brodeur. I had no reason for liking him. I was never a goalie. Never told him that. I only scored one goal in my career against him in a lot of games. I threw a puck from the corner that banged off a guy's skate and in. It'll take it. It will be weird to see Marty in a different uniform. I think that was a pretty cool thing to see nowadays, a guy playing his whole career in one organization. He had a Hall of Fame career there and he's one of the greatest of all-time, but you can understand why a guy like him doesn't want to quit playing. The competitive in him wants to keep going as long as he can. He wants to win another Stanley Cup and it's his decision."

CLAUDE GIROUX

Center

"He wants to play and St. Louis is a good team, so that's good for him. He's going to bring a lot of good things for St. Louis, too. It'll be really awkward (seeing Brodeur in a Blues jersey)."

BRAYDON COBURN

Defenceman

"Devils fans can be bummed about Brodeur signing with St. Louis or happy to have had him for 20 years. It's his life and some guys just love the game. I'm sure he's one of those guys who just loves the game and he isn't so wrapped up in how the fairy tale is suppose to be pieced together at the end of the day. He's got an unbelievable amount of accomplishments and everything that he can hang his hat on, but I think what it comes down to is this is a great job and it's a passion of a lot of guys. Him being 42, he still feels like he has something to give to the team. Obviously, he's been playing at a very high level for a very long time, even though his 40s, so I'm sure he'll be all right."

MICHAEL DEL ZOTTO

Defenceman

"It's interesting. Growing up, you see him. Then you're playing against him. He'd been the face of the Devils organization for so many years, so it's weird to see him go to another team. But obviously he still has the desire and the will to play and he wants another chance. We had lots of battles when I played with the Rangers. Big rivalry. He's one of the best goaltenders of all-time. Seeing him with St. Louis, you realize it's a nature of the business. It's tough to stay in one spot for a whole career. We're all dealing with that."

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.04.2014

741176 New Jersey Devils

Is this season Devils forward Patrik Elias’ worst nightmare?

Rich Chere

on December 03, 2014 at 6:00 AM, updated December 03, 2014 at 7:27 AM

TORONTO — Patrik Elias has been through nightmares before. He missed the first half of the 2005-06 season because of hepatitis A. And he was stripped of the captaincy while having his ice time cut by former Devils coach Brent Sutter two years later.

So there isn’t a teammate who does not believe Elias will emerge from his latest woes, which includes a season-long scoring slump and now an undisclosed injury suffered during the first period of Tuesday night's 1-0 loss in Pittsburgh.

Exactly what happened has yet to be revealed. Elias took seven shifts in the opening period and did not play again.

"Obviously something happened because Patty will play through anything," linemate Scott Gomez said.

Gomez, playing his first game since signing with the Devils on Monday, lost both of his wingers. Jaromir Jagr suffered a head injury on a hit from Pittsburgh’s Robert Bortuzzo in the second period.

Although Gomez hit Elias with a shot in the first period, he doesn’t think that did any damage.

"That's what I initially thought, but I think it was his elbow or something like that," Gomez said. "I think I got him in the chest. And it was more of a tip."

The injury just adds to Elias’s frustration. In 25 games this season he has 11 points. He’s gone six games without scoring a goal and has just one goal in his last 24 games.

"You go through tough times. Better players go through this. You just work through it," Elias told NJ Advance Media before the game in Pittsburgh.

"Listen. I've had plenty of chances in plenty of games where I could score goals and put up points, but it just hasn't happened. I just have to keep going. If it would've happened, all of a sudden I've got 20 points instead of 11 points and nobody is talking about it."

Instead, they are talking. Some have suggested that Elias is finished at 38. "Everybody can think whatever they want. Everybody is entitled to their opinion," Elias said. "I know how I feel physically. When you struggle it frustrates you and still bothers you."

Is this the most frustrating season of his NHL career?

"Probably not, because I had slumps and I didn't get the opportunity to play as much," he said, referring to the two seasons Sutter was coach.

"I'm still playing 17, 18, sometimes 19 minutes a game. I'm still getting the chance. Pete (DeBoer) gives me the opportunity to play on the PK and power play. I had times when I didn't get that."

Now comes an injury. The severity of it might just determine whether this season turns into one Elias will be anxious to forget.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.04.2014

741177 New Jersey Devils

Coaching change not in Lamoriello’s plans; “He’s here because you believe in what he’s doing”

Posted by Tom Gulitti

Dealing with a slew of injuries and struggling to win games, the Devils are in the middle of a pivotal moment in their season.

They have lost five in a row (two in shootouts) and have just three wins in their last 14 games (3-9-2) to fall to a season-worst 9-12-4. This is the kind of slide that can take down an entire season if it goes on much longer.

The statuses of Jaromir Jagr (head), Patrik Elias (groin) and Stephen Gionta (foot) for Thursday night’s game in Toronto remain unclear (though the Robert Bortuzzo suspension video indicated Jagr is not expected to
miss any more time). Still, the Devils desperately need to defeat the Maple Leafs regardless of which 20 players they have in uniform.

If there was any question about Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello’s belief that Pete DeBoer can turn things around, however, he stated pretty clearly today that a coaching change is not in his plans right now.

“The coach is coaching,” Lamoriello said. “He’s here because you believe in what he’s doing. If you didn’t do that, he wouldn’t be here. So, I think that answers the question.”

With the Devils sitting four points out of a playoff spot, however, the standings are starting to become a serious concern. That most of the Metropolitan Division, other than the Islanders and the Penguins, has also struggled is the main reason the Devils aren’t farther out of the postseason picture -- and still have a chance to get back in it.

“That’s something that’s always behind your mind, but it can’t be in the forefront,” Lamoriello said of the standings. “Right now, you have to do everything necessary to get to the points. You can’t worry about the points.

Those take care of themselves. We’ve got to get our total game together to have success. To this point, we haven’t had that.”

Even when fully healthy, putting together a complete game on a consistent basis has been one of the Devils’ biggest problems. Lamoriello has been encouraged, however, by the efforts they put forth in their last two games, beginning with a dominant third period in a 2-1 loss to the Islanders on Saturday and continuing through three solid periods in a 1-0 loss in Pittsburgh Tuesday.

The big negatives, of course, from those games were that the Devils struggled again to score and didn’t win.

“I’ve seen four periods consistently of the best hockey as far as on a consistent basis,” Lamoriello said. “Our inconsistency for two periods or one period and not for three periods, competing is the most important word I’ve always used. And we competed last night and in the third period on the Island and that is what we have to sustain and the end result will take care of itself.”

DeBoer talked earlier this week about it taking longer this season than he expected for this team to find its identity and play to it consistently. When I asked Lamoriello if it has also taken longer than he expected, he said didn’t want to talk about “hypotheticals.”

“Right now it is what it is and we have to get on track,” Lamoriello said. “There’s no question about that. We’ve seen it. We’ve seen it in spurs, but not a consistent basis.”

Only seven players skated for the Devils this afternoon in Toronto: Backup goaltender Scott Clemmensen, forwards Michael Ryder and Jordin Tootoo and defensemen Jon Merrill, Seth Helgeson, Adam Larsson and Eric Gelinas.

The Devils are scheduled to have a full morning skate at 1:30 a.m. Thursday at Air Canada Centre. I should know more about Jagr, Elias and Gionta along with the rest of the potential lineup then.

Bergen Record LOADED: 12.04.2014

741178 New Jersey Devils

Bortuzzo suspended two games for "late, violent hit"; Jagr "not expected to miss any more time"

Posted by Tom Gulitti

The NHL’s Department of Player Safety announced today that Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Robert Bortuzzo has been suspended for two games for his “late, violent hit” on Devils right wing Jaromir Jagr with 2:03 left in the second period of Tuesday night’s game.

The official description for Bortuzzo’s unpunished hit was “interference.” The video explaining Bortuzzo’s suspension detailed how “well after Jagr has released the puck and at a point after which a body check is no longer legal, Bortuzzo drives through Jagr’s chest and chin with his right shoulder.”

Although video notes that Bortuzzo “neither launches into Jagr nor hits with his elbow,” it explains that the hit is worthy of supplemental discipline because of “it’s extreme lateness, it’s predatory nature and the significant head contact that results from the way it is delivered.”

“Since Jagr should have no reason to expect to be hit this late, he is defenseless at the moment of contact,” the video says. “Since this play is entirely in front of Bortuzzo and he can see that Jagr has passed the puck the onus is entirely on Bortuzzo to avoid contact completely and he has ample time to do so. Instead, he drives forcefully through this dangerous hit.”

Bortuzzo, who had an afternoon telephone hearing with Player Safety today, has not been suspended previously. The Department of Player Safety also took into account that though “Jagr required medical attention and did not return, he is not expected to miss any more time.”

Before making these decisions, the Department of Player Safety consults with the team if a player is potentially injured due to the incident, so that sounds like good news for the Devils, particularly if that means Jagr will be available to play Thursday night in Toronto.

Under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and based on his average annual salary, Bortuzzo will forfeit $6,451.62. The money goes to the Players’ Emergency Assistance Fund.

Bergen Record LOADED: 12.04.2014

741179 New Jersey Devils

Jagr, Elias, Gionta with Devils in Toronto, but availability for Thursday’s game still unknown

Posted by Tom Gulitti

Jaromir Jagr, Patrik Elias and Stephen Gionta accompanied the Devils to Toronto after all three were injured in Tuesday night’s 1-0 loss in Pittsburgh, but it remains unknown whether any of them will be available for Thursday night’s game against the Maple Leafs.

Devils GM Lou Lamoriello said today that all three were still being evaluated.

“We won’t know anything until this evening,” he said. “There’s nothing to report.”

Jagr was injured on a late hit to the head from Pittsburgh defenseman Robert Bortuzzo with 2:03 left in the second period. Bortuzzo faces a disciplinary hearing this afternoon with the NHL’s Department of Player Safety.

Lamoriello believes Bortuzzo’s hit was worthy of a suspension.

“Everybody saw it,” he said. “It’s causing a hearing, so it’s obvious there’s some intent there that was out of the ordinary and I’m sure there will be a decision on this and I’ll be shocked if there’s not a suspension.”

Gionta blocked a Paul Martin shot off his foot in the first period and Elias left with a groin injury.

It is possible that the Devils will need to call up a forward or two from Albany for Thursday’s game. They have only one extra forward on the trip with the team (Michael Ryder was a healthy scratch Tuesday).

The decision on that hasn’t been made yet, though.

“We’ve got a full day here,” Lamoriello said. “It’s an easy flight if we need somebody. All those decisions will be made tonight.”

Only a handful of players are expected to skate today in Toronto. Defenseman Jon Merrill is still working his way back from a sore right hand. He has been cleared medically to play, so now it just depends on how he feels and looks in practice and the coach’s decision.
Lamoriello said there is no change in status on any of the injured players that didn’t make the trip – Travis Zajac (lower body), Martin Havlat (lower body), Bryce Salvador (lower body) and Ryane Clowe (suspected concussion).

Jordin Tootoo tried unsuccessfully to get Bortuzzo to fight before and after his hit on Jagr. (Bortuzzo had also hit Jagr hard in the first period and had jostled with him earlier in the second period).

The Devils were focused on trying to win the game, so there were no other attempts at direct retribution. Lamoriello had no problem with that.

"First of all, I don’t worry about how our team responds to those type of situations, but the focus was certainly on the game as far as trying to find every way to win," Lamoriello said. "But, I don’t worry about that."

By Pierre LeBrun

ESPN / Kings re-sign Alec Martinez

Martinez, who scored the Stanley Cup-winning goal last June, was slated to become an unrestricted free agent July 1.

Martinez has been a dependable defenseman for the Kings ever since the Detroit-area native cracked their lineup in late 2010. The former fourth-round draft pick has 25 goals and 37 assists in 221 career NHL games, all with Los Angeles.

Martinez scored a career-best 11 goals in the regular season last year, but it was just a prelude to two of the biggest goals in franchise history.

Martinez’s Game 7 overtime goal off Nick Leddy’s torso sent the Kings past the Chicago Blackhawks in the Western Conference finals, ending a grueling series between the two teams widely considered the NHL’s best last year.

Twelve days later, his shot into an open net in Game 5 against the New York Rangers handed the Kings their second Stanley Cup title in three years. Martinez added a personal touch to the moment by throwing off his gloves and wildly shaking his arms at his teammates, a gesture forever immortalized by Kings fans as “Jazz Hands.”

Martinez’s ice time and responsibilities have risen this season in the absence of departed free agent Willie Mitchell and suspended Slava Voynov. He returned from a seven-game injury absence Tuesday for the Kings’ 2-0 win over Boston.

The Kings also re-signed blue-liner Jake Muzzin to a five-year deal worth $4 million a year earlier this season.

By Pierre LeBrun

ESPN / Rumblings: Brodeur’s future foggy, league ticked at Kings, Drouin likely to stay put

Martin Brodeur’s bonus-laden contract with the St. Louis Blues is unique in more ways than one.

Most notably, though, are those two roster payments of $125,000 apiece, one payable Feb. 1 and the other March 4 if he’s still on an NHL roster. (Which are in addition to his prorated salary of $700,000.)

The question is, will he be on the Blues’ roster still or that of another NHL team?

If there’s one thing everyone involved in his signing with the Blues can agree on, it’s that there are so many “what ifs” involved in how this will ultimately play out.

Could he play out the rest of the season in St. Louis, even if that means being a No. 3 goalie? Yes, perhaps.

Could he be traded to another playoff-bound team before the March 2 deadline? Yes, of course.

Could he pack it in before then for a variety of reasons? Yes, also a possibility.

Both Brodeur and the Blues are playing this week to week. No need to look past that.

For now, the future Hall of Famer ensures quality assistance to Jake Allen while Brian Elliott recovers from a knee injury.

After Elliott returns, the Blues will likely still want Brodeur around in case Elliott has a setback, which can happen sometimes when returning from a knee injury.

Martin Brodeur is a St. Louis Blue -- for now.

But once it’s clear the Elliott-Allen tandem is back for good, that’s when the decision will get interesting both for Brodeur and the Blues. Because even though Brodeur doesn’t officially have a no-trade or no-movement clause in his contract, there’s certainly a gentlemen’s agreement between all involved that the goalie will be dealt with the utmost respect in terms of his next move. He’s not going to get dealt to a team he has no interest in going to, to be blunt about it.

For now, this signing is simple: The Blues have afforded the NHL’s all-time winningest goalie an entry back into the NHL, while Brodeur gives the Blues important protection during a period of the season in which they play a lot of games. The workload would have been too much for Allen to handle by himself and there weren’t viable options in the minors.

Because it’s worth remembering: the Blues finished one point out of first place in the Central last season, which netted them a first-round date with the Chicago Blackhawks.

Every point matters, and that’s a huge reason that GM Doug Armstrong pursued Brodeur the moment Elliott was injured last week.

That’s why it’s fitting that Brodeur will earn $10,000 for every point in the standings he earns as the goalie of record. It’s exactly what this is about for St. Louis.

Kings in NHL doghouse

The NHL was beyond furious Tuesday after finding out that suspended defenseman Slava Voynov skated with his teammates during the Los Angeles Kings’ optional morning skate.

You see, the NHL felt it was already being flexible in allowing Voynov to use the team’s practice facility and skate on his own as per the terms of his suspension.

The NHL is steamed at the Kings for letting Slava Voynov work out with the team.

I believe it was made quite clear by deputy commissioner Bill Daly in his conversations with Kings GM Dean Lombardi on Tuesday that the league reserves the right to stiffen the terms of that suspension to where Voynov is completely banned from any access to the team’s facility -- period.

But the whole episode, to me, underlines what had been a building tension between the Kings and the league. No question, in my mind, the Kings had a right to feel at a disadvantage before finally getting cap relief; as many other team executives around the league shared, it wasn’t fair for the Kings to pay such a price cap/roster-wise because of the mistake of one player that happened off the ice.

And when commissioner Gary Bettman, asked about the Kings’ cap situation, was quoted earlier this month saying essentially that NHL teams
The Ducks are short-handed in goal after losing John Gibson for about six weeks due to a groin injury earlier last month. Frederik Andersen has been starting in his place.

On Wednesday, the team announced that backup Jason LaBarbera is out two to three weeks with a broken bone in his hand.

The Ducks also said newly acquired defenseman Eric Brewer is out four to six weeks with a broken bone in his foot.

Brodeur reached a one-year deal with the Blues on Tuesday following a tryout with the team.

ESPN LOADED: 12.04.2014
741309 Websites

FOXSports.com / Injury-riddled Ducks get job done in shootout win over Flyers

Abbey Mastracco
DEC 04, 2014 2:25a ET

It's beginning to feel a little calamitous in Anaheim.

The mumps, groin strains, broken bones -- the Anaheim Ducks are stuck on a merry-go-round of injuries and illnesses. Every day, it seems as though there are new faces in the dressing room, from either their own minor league system or other from another NHL team.

Relatively speaking, you could probably say Wednesday morning was business as usual in the training room. Defenseman Eric Brewer, who played in only two games since coming over in a trade from Tampa Bay, was found to have a broken bone in his foot. Goalie Jason LaBarbera was found to have broken his hand Sunday at San Jose. LaBarbera will be out for a few weeks, Brewer a month, maybe more.

The goalie circumstances are so dire that the Ducks brought in former backstop Ilya Bryzgalov for a tryout.

Calamitous might not quite describe the game they played later Wednesday night against the Philadelphia Flyers, but it's something close to it. A dismal first period, a goal-for-goal and hit-for-hit match in the second and a tie game with only 1.8 seconds left to play in the third.

Finally, Corey Perry gave the Ducks a 5-4 shootout win.

It was a crazy day by most teams' standards, but in Anaheim, it's just another day.

"We've been battling since training camp," left winger Patrick Maroon said, who scored his first goal in five games, his second of the season. "Guys were injured in training camp, then the mumps. We've been going hard through it and battling. This is a good group of core guys, we're a good close team so that's been what brings us together as a team. And it's good that we have a good (minor league) system to use guys that come in and fill in."

The funny part is, the Ducks have cleared all of the obstacles thrown at them this season. With 37 points, the Ducks are three points up on Nashville for the best record in the Western Conference.

It's been the contributions of some of the unfamiliar faces that have greatly aided the beleaguered club.

Winger Tim Jackman has continued his brilliant skating, young defensemen Josh Manson and Matt Clark have played big minutes in big-game situations, while blueliner Sami Vatanen has been a fourth forward at times. An asset on both the power play and the forecheck, Vatanen scored his seventh goal of the season for a new career high and his 21 points in 27 games leads all Anaheim defensemen.

"He knows when to go and I think he did," Ducks coach Bruce Boudreau said. "You always think he's going to get checked but he finds a way to wiggle his way through everybody. I hope he doesn't stop doing that."
Corey Perry talks about the power play drought https://t.co/70GCFB6d07
— Abbey Mastracco (@AbbeyMastracco) December 4, 2014

With all of his backups injured, goaltender Frederik Andersen has had little rest, playing in 13 straight games now. Undaunted, his short-term memory has served him well during this brutal stretch.

"It's very similar to being a pro golfer: If you have a bad shot, you can't dwell on it, you've got to go to the next shot," Boudreau said. "Freddie does a good job of that."

If there's something the Ducks can't overcome, we haven't seen it yet.

"We just have a keep-on-pushing mentality," winger Andrew Cogliano said. "I think guys just know here that winning is the mandate and in order to be successful you've got to keep pushing forward and I think we've done that pretty well."

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Sportsnet.ca / Hitchcock: Brodeur to start Thursday for Blues

JEFF SIMMONS  DECEMBER 3, 2014, 11:27 PM

Martin Brodeur will make his first start with the St. Louis Blues Thursday night, coach Ken Hitchcock told reporters on Wednesday.

Lou Korac on Twitter

Brodeur, 42, signed a one-year contract with the Blues on Tuesday to provide depth in net after goaltender Brian Elliott suffered a lower-body injury last week.

He will become the eighth goalie in NHL history to start a game past his 42nd birthday.

St. Louis wraps up the back end of their back-to-back Thursday night in Nashville. The Blues fell 4-1 to the Chicago Blackhawks Wednesday night.

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Sportsnet.ca / Bortuzzo suspended two games for hit on Jagr

LUKE FOX  DECEMBER 3, 2014, 5:22 PM

You don't deliver a late, high hit on a living legend and get away Scot-free.

That was the message sent to Robert Bortuzzo Wednesday by the NHL's department of player safety, which handed Bortuzzo a two-game suspension for his late hit (watch above) on New Jersey Devils forward Jaromir Jagr.

The Pittsburgh Penguins defenceman slammed Jagr, 42, with a check to the head behind the net late in the second period during the Penguins '1-0 win Tuesday night.

The Devils' leading scorer hit the ice for a few minutes before leaving the game.

Bortuzzo did not receive a penalty on the play, which infuriated New Jersey head coach Peter DeBoer. DeBoer said it didn’t matter if it was an elbow or a shoulder that hit Jagr, it was a headshot.

"If one of our guys had done that to [Sidney] Crosby, there’d be World War IV," DeBoer said. "I just thought it was a liberty."

Jagr did not attend the Devils' practice Wednesday. New Jersey's next game takes place Thursday in Toronto.

"Everybody saw it," Devils GM Lou Lamoriello told reporters. "It's obvious there's some intent there that was out of the ordinary."

TOOTOO ON BORTUZZO: "I'M NOT GOING TO FORGET WHAT NUMBER HE IS. IT'S A LONG SEASON." HTTP://T.CO/7JRS9FAFZZ
— RICH CHERE (@LEDGER_NJDEVILS) DECEMBER 3, 2014

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Sportsnet.ca / Howe's condition improving, hopes to return home

RYAN MCKENNA  DECEMBER 3, 2014, 5:34 PM

Detroit Red Wings legend Gordie Howe continues to recover from dehydration and is improving enough that his family expects him to return home from the hospital by the end of Wednesday.

Howe's family released a statement through the Detroit Red Wings Wednesday afternoon with an update on his condition.

It was reported early Tuesday that Howe, 86, had another significant stroke on Monday and that he displayed diminished consciousness for over 30 minutes. Those reports were clarified late Tuesday night, when an MRI revealed that he did not suffer a stroke, but rather was dealing with dehydration according to his son Mark Howe in a text message to the Associated Press.

Wednesday's statement indicated that Mr. Hockey has been having difficulty eating solid foods, had a slurred speech and has also not been able to walk for over three weeks.

The family says that his mental awareness has improved enough in the last 24 hours that they are hopeful for his release from the University Medical Center in Lubbock, Texas.

Howe's family also expressed their condolences to the death of Jean Beliveau.

"The hockey world has lost a man who epitomized professionalism, dignity and class. We extend our condolences and prayers to his family and friends," the statement said.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 12.04.2014
741313 Websites

USA TODAY / Red-hot Blackhawks, Blues collide without usual No. 1 goalies

By: KEVIN ALLEN and KRISTEN SHILTON 18 hours ago

The Chicago Blackhawks have won 48 playoff games over the past five seasons, and opponents know when their confidence is high because their swagger becomes more pronounced.

“What they did to L.A. on Saturday night was surgical,” NBC analyst Pierre McGuire said. “The Hawks look like a team that knows they are good. They enjoy the process of being a top team.”

The Blackhawks beat the Kings 4-1 to finish a six-game trip with a 5-1 record. They are 8-2 in their last 10 and playing at the level they showed in the Stanley Cups years in 2010 and 2013.

But they face another major test tonight against the surging St. Louis Blues.
“There is serious skill, passion, size and speed whenever Chicago and St. Louis get together,” McGuire said. “Factor in the great fans in both cities … and the David Backes showdown with Jonathan Toews, and you have something really special.”

The Blues, 7-2-1 in their last 10, made news Tuesday by signing future Hall of Famer Marty Brodeur to be Jake Allen’s backup while Brian Elliott is injured.

“Jake Allen has been fantastic,” McGuire said. “His composure and ability to control his rebounds has made him a solid fit for the Blues. He should be in the Calder conversation.”

The Blackhawks will be without their usual No. 1 goalie, too, after Corey Crawford hurt his foot at a concert.

Crawford said he slipped on a step coming out of a concert. Wearing a walking boot on his left foot. #Blackhawks
— Tracey Myers (@TramyersCSN) December 3, 2014

Chicago has the NHL’s second-best goals-against average and eighth-best offense.

“We got off to a bit of a rocky start but you can see the team trending in the right direction here, see it all coming together,” coach Joel Quenneville said. “We can be a dangerous team.”

USA TODAY LOADED: 12.04.2014

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports 9:25 a.m. EST December 3, 2014

When fans think of the grand Montreal Canadiens tradition, they conjure up dynamic images of Rocket Richard or Guy Lafleur soaring up ice and unleashing a booming shot into the upper corner of the net.

To me, the symbol of the Canadiens’ majesty will always be Jean Béliveau because he was the franchise’s most majestic player.

Béliveau died Tuesday at age 83 after a lengthy illness, leaving behind a legacy of elegance and class.

Toughness was a requirement to be an NHL star in the 1950s and 1960s, but there was a stylishness and gracefulness to Béliveau’s game that could not be denied. He was cognac in a shot-and-beer league. He was a 6-3 center with a poetic rhythm to his skating stride and magic in his hands and instincts.

Hockey can be a brutal physical battle, but there was beauty in the way Béliveau played the game. His approach always seemed more refined, less harried. He always played as if he believed he controlled his own destiny. He played in the helmetless era, and there was considerable energy being expended and frequent contact, but Béliveau never seemed to have one hair out of place.

Today, Bobby Orr is the player most associated with No. 4. But before Orr, Béliveau was the NHL’s No. 4.

Béliveau played on 10 Stanley Cup championship teams (from 1956 to 1971) and was a primary difference maker on all of those teams. He was the team’s captain for 10 years.

He might have been the NHL’s most gentlemanly player, but when he decided to play more physical to gain an advantage, he did so. Of course, he played rough, with as much class and dignity as humanly possible.

Jean Béliveau knew the true meaning of a dynasty...