CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The News&Observer

Hurricanes in wait-and-see mode on starting goalie, Kuznetsov return for Game 3 vs. Rangers

By Chip Alexander

Raleigh

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour left a few doors cracked and a few questions not completely answered Wednesday.

The Canes, after a 4-3 loss in double overtime Tuesday to the New York Rangers, are down 2-0 in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup playoff series. After the first two games on the road, the Canes host Game 3 on Thursday at PNC Arena, then Game 4 on Saturday.

Frederik Andersen has been the starting goalie in each of the seven playoff games for the Canes – the first five in the series against the New York Islanders. Goalie Pyotr Kochetkov has not played a game since April 14, at Chicago in the next-to-last regular-season game.

Might Game 3 be the time for a change in net, Brind'Amour was asked?

"We'll see," Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "We'll see how Freddie is feeling today and we'll make that decision (Thursday). But I think Freddie's been good. That's not a concern. It's more about how he's feeling."

The Canes did not practice Wednesday, going through team meetings. Nor was a morning skate scheduled for Thursday at PNC Arena -- an interesting twist.

Kochetkov has served as Andersen's backup in the playoffs, although Brind'Amour said Kochetkov not playing in nearly a month "would not be a concern." Both Andersen and Kochetkov played well this season after layoffs, he said.

One decision Brind'Amour did make for Game 2 was making Evgeny Kuznetsov a healthy scratch, replacing him with forward Max Comtois on the fourth line. It was a curious move in that Brind'Amour had said a few hours before game time that he did not anticipate any lineup changes, only to have Comtois – a free-agent signee by Carolina during the season – go in for Kuznetsov.

Comtois was in for nine shifts and 6:19 of ice time in Game 2, with one shift in the third period.

Kuznetsov won a Stanley Cup with the Washington Capitals in 2018 and was a key acquisition by the Canes at the NHL trade deadline this season, someone brought in to add another veteran presence in the playoffs. Comtois was making his playoff debut for the Canes.

Why the Kuznetsov scratch?

"I don't know. I just thought I'd change it up a little," Brind'Amour said. "Max had been practicing well and wanted to give him a chance. That's really what went into that."

Would Kuznetsov return for Game 3?

"Possibly," the coach said.

Regardless of the lineup or starting goaltender, the Canes must find a way to score on the power play to beat the Rangers, who are good at it and have scored two power-play goals in each of the first games. The Canes are 0-10 on the power play, twice taking penalties that negated the man advantage.

"The games have been real tight," Brind'Amour said. "It's a play here or there. You've got to keep fighting to get that extra play. That's really what it's coming down to."

NECAS DODGES BIG ONE

Martin Necas came bounding into the interview area Wednesday at PNC Arena in a T-shirt and shorts, looking energetic. But had the Rangers' Jacob Trouba not missed his mark in Game 2 …

Trouba, never hesitant to make a big hit, launched himself at Necas near the boards, his left arm bent as if aiming at Necas' head. Necas held up just enough and slid under Trouba as the defenseman went flying over him and tumbled head-first into the boards.

Necas said he has seen the replays a few times. His thoughts on Trouba's intent?

"I don't know, I guess, elbow me in head. I don't know," Necas said. "Maybe he protecting himself going into the boards. He knows, he knows. Everybody knows what kind of player he is.

"I mean, good for him. Nothing happened. We're all good and I'm excited for the next game."

Canes forward Seth Jarvis has been on the receiving end of big Trouba blast. In Game 7 of the 2022 playoff series with the Rangers, Jarvis was knocked woozy after an open-ice hit from the D-man.

"That was something," Jarvis said of the Necas-Trouba play. "I'm just glad 'Nechy' got out of the way. That could have been a little scary for him."

Injury update

Brind'Amour said defenseman Brett Pesce, out with a lower-body injury, has not yet skated and remains sidelined indefinitely. Brind'Amour has said he is hopeful Pesce could return at some point in the second-round series.

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The Athletic

Peter Laviolette tales from Carolina: A ropes course, lucky coins, motivational talks and more

By Peter Baugh

RALEIGH, N.C. — With the Hurricanes struggling to start the 2003-2004 season, then-Carolina general manager Jim Rutherford wondered if it was time to move on from longtime coach Paul Maurice. With his team playing in late November on Long Island, he reached out to 38-year-old Peter Laviolette, whom the Islanders had recently fired.

There was one problem. Laviolette thought it was a prank call.

“Once we worked through that and he understood it was me, we set up a meeting and started talking,” Rutherford said.

Rutherford hadn’t met Laviolette before making contact, but he was impressed with how the coach had handled the Islanders, even though the club had let him go. He’d made the playoffs in both of his seasons with the club, and he also had a Calder Cup championship on his head coaching resume.

With the Hurricanes’ record still middling around three weeks later, Rutherford decided it was time to make the change. He fired Maurice and introduced Laviolette as his new coach.

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Thus began the tenure of the only coach who has brought the Hurricanes a Stanley Cup. Rod Brind’Amour, the captain of the 2006 championship team, is hoping to change that this year, but his Hurricanes are down 2-0 in their second-round series with the Rangers. His coaching counterpart is none other than Laviolette, who led New York to a franchise-record 55 wins and the President’s Trophy in the regular season.

Thursday’s Game 3 will be the first time Laviolette coaches a playoff game in Raleigh since Game 7 of the 2006 Final, the night Carolina won the Stanley Cup. Those who knew Laviolette with the Hurricanes describe him as a prepared coach with good communication skills. During the championship season, he always seemed to know exactly when to chew his players out or build them up, defenseman Bret Hedican remembers.

“I thought he really had his finger on the pulse of the team all season long,” Hedican said. “He did a magical job the year we won the Cup.”

Laviolette hasn’t bitten on questions about his emotions coaching against Carolina. He joked that the statute of limitations has passed for him to have to talk about his old job. With the Rangers-Hurricanes series underway, his former Carolina players were far more willing to discuss their memories. Here are 10 of their stories.

The ropes course

Hedican didn’t like Laviolette when he took over in the middle of the 2003-04 season. He found the coach to be arrogant and felt he treated a veteran group of Hurricanes players like they were boys.

“I just think there was an attitude about him that really needed to shift,” he said. “I give him credit that he did.”

The 2004-05 NHL season never happened because of a labor lockout, but Hedican felt much better about his coach almost immediately when the team met for training camp in 2005-06. Laviolette knew an ex-serviceman in the area, then-assistant Kevin McCarthy said, and got in touch to organize a team-building trip to a ropes course.

“It was one of those game-changing moments of my career,” said Hedican, who was 35 at the time and still seeking his first Stanley Cup. “I felt like it was a real incredible thing to pull people together.”

The Hurricanes went through a variety of obstacles and tasks on the course, at points crossing ropes high in the air. The players were all equally terrible at it, Ray Whitney recalls. They had to work together to find ways through, and they saw each other in vulnerable positions. Mike Commodore, terrified of heights, was drenched in sweat while high in the air. His teammates laughed good-naturedly as he battled his fears.

“That’s part of the learning process and trust process when you’ve got another teammate that’s helping guide you across,” said Glen Wesley, who also wasn’t a fan of the heights.

McCarthy — who later coached on Laviolette’s staff in Philadelphia, Nashville and Washington — had never been a part of a team-building exercise like the ropes course. Everyone had a role that day, just like everyone did when the team was on the ice. It was important, in McCarthy’s eyes, for the players all to see that.

Said Hedican: “It was a real key piece to how the team came together really early in the year.”

'He's like a great chef' — Peter Laviolette keeps an incredible streak going with the Rangers

Rule changes

The NHL introduced a series of rule changes coming off of the 2004-05 lockout aimed at making the game faster and more exciting. The changes included a crackdown on interference, holding and hooking penalties.

Perhaps no one was better prepared for it than Carolina. Rutherford, who tried to bring in skaters suited for faster play,

credited Laviolette with accepting the changes immediately and having his players buy in. The coach knew adjusting would be difficult for players, McCarthy said, so he designed drills focused on keeping their sticks on the ice. Wesley also remembers an in-practice focus on not clutching and grabbing.

“If you win a couple games early because of being disciplined, that could make a difference in making the playoffs,” McCarthy remembers stressing to players.

The Hurricanes had the third-worst Stanley Cup odds entering the regular season, according to Hockey Reference. They started the year on fire, winning 12 of their first 15 games, and by midseason were legitimate contenders. Rutherford traded for Doug Weight and Mark Recchi to solidify the roster.

Discipline — as preached in practice — was a strength all year. The Hurricanes drew the third-most power plays in the league, all while committing the sixth-fewest penalties.

‘Nobody will touch us’

Whitney believes that, when he played under Laviolette, players were treated like thoroughbreds: Made to run. No one was going to out-skate the Hurricanes. They had fast, intense practices, and Laviolette had them go through at least some intense skating every practice.

“He did that right through the Stanley Cup Final,” Whitney said. “That’s how we were meant to be. That’s how we played.”

Hedican vividly remembers a practice during the dog days of the regular season. The team was at the Hurricanes’ old rink, “a s—hole” with brutal amenities and a bad weight room, according to the old defenseman. The setting didn’t matter, though. Carolina would have trained hard anywhere, and that practice they were particularly on point. Their passes were crisp, and they were playing with a rare blend of speed and precision.

At the end, Laviolette pulled his team together. He paused for a moment before speaking.

“If we keep practicing like we’re practicing and like we practiced today,” he eventually said, “nobody will touch us.”

A Montreal speed bump

Multiple players praised Laviolette’s motivational skills, and that came in handy early in the 2006 playoffs. After a 52-win regular season, the Hurricanes dropped their first two postseason games to the Canadiens. The Hurricanes, who had home-ice advantage, then had to prepare to head to Montreal, where an entire hockey-crazed city would be rooting against them.

Recchi, whom Carolina acquired at the deadline, said he felt no panic going into Game 3. That wasn’t a unanimous sentiment.

“I would say we had s— in the pants,” Whitney said.

Before the team left for Montreal, Laviolette gathered the players in the dressing room. Instead of giving a long speech himself, he opened the floor for players to share memories of overcoming adversity, whether at the college, junior hockey or professional level. Hedican, for example, told teammates about coming back from a 3-1 first-round deficit while with Vancouver in 1994. The Canucks ended up going all the way to the Stanley Cup Final.

“When the guys got on that plane to go to Montreal, we all believed — because guys had done it in the past — that we could do it in the future,” McCarthy said.

With the Hurricanes down a goal in the third period of Game 3, Hedican assisted a Brind’Amour goal on a play they discussed in intermission. Eric Staal won the game in overtime, and the Hurricanes didn’t lose again the rest of the series.

Peter Laviolette cheers with fans as he leaves the ice after the Hurricanes beat Edmonton Oilers 3-1 in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final on June 19, 2006. (AP Photo / Ann Heisenfelt)

Playing goalie cards right

Cam Ward appeared in 28 games as a rookie in 2005-06 and had a lackluster .882 save percentage. But when starter Martin Gerber, who was dealing with the flu, allowed nine goals in his first 74:46 of playoff ice time with Carolina, Laviolette pulled him in favor of Ward. Carolina lost in double overtime, but the coach stuck with Ward and had him start Game 3.

“As a coach, you’ve got to go with what your gut tells you at times,” McCarthy said. “That was one thing Lavi relied on. Whenever he had that feeling, he didn’t really care about what people thought.”

It was the first key goalie decision Laviolette made in the playoffs. Ward went on to post a .920 playoff save percentage and win the Conn Smythe Trophy.

But that wasn’t the only moment Laviolette had to make a tough call. After Carolina dropped two of its first three games in the conference final against Buffalo, the coach started Gerber in Game 4. He delivered a 22-save shutout.

“This is one of the finest and (most) underrated decisions that Lavi ever made,” Hurricanes color commentator Tripp Tracy said.

Laviolette started Gerber in Game 5, then pulled him for Ward after he gave up three goals in just over a period of play. Carolina came back to win. Each goalie button Laviolette pushed in that playoff run seemed to work.

“Series changing,” Tracy said. “Championship changing.”

‘Whatever it takes’

Laviolette gave each player a coin inscribed with the team motto: Whatever it takes. Each player was to carry theirs around at all times.

“If somebody asked if you had it and you didn’t have it, you had to buy lunch for the team,” Andrew Ladd said.

‘Don’t touch anybody’

With the Hurricanes up big against the Devils in Game 1 of the second round, New Jersey’s Cam Janssen checked Commodore into the Carolina bench. When the defenseman regained his footing, Janssen started shoving him and eventually threw a punch. Commodore engaged, and the two

had a 40-second bout, both missing on several big swings and landing a couple jabs.

After the game, which Carolina won 6-0, Laviolette approached his player.

“It’s the only time I kind of remember Peter being p—ed at me,” he said.

“What are you doing fighting Cam Janssen?” the coach demanded angrily.

Commodore explained that Janssen took a run at him — the Devils forward got an instigator penalty and misconduct — but Laviolette wasn’t having it.

“I don’t want you fighting ever again in these playoffs,” Laviolette told him. “Don’t touch anybody. I need you on the ice.”

Though Laviolette was angry, his words made Commodore feel good. The defenseman, a frequent fighter, had split time between the AHL and NHL before arriving in Carolina, and Laviolette validated him as more someone who could throw punches. He wanted him to play.

Knowing whose voice mattered

Part of coaching is knowing when and when not to speak. In the Stanley Cup Final, the Hurricanes failed to close out the Oilers in both Game 5 at home and Game 6 in Edmonton. After Game 6, a 4-0 loss, McCarthy recalls Laviolette heading to the dressing room to address his players, only to find that Brind’Amour was already talking, telling his teammates that they’d win Game 7 at home. The coach didn’t force a speech of his own.

“At that point, Lavi just knew that words coming from Roddy were the most important ones,” McCarthy said.

Hurricanes captain Rod Brind’Amour and coach Peter Laviolette enter the East Room of the White House on Feb. 2, 2007 with a jersey to present to President George W. Bush who was to honor the Stanley Cup Champions. (AP Photo / Gerald Herbert)

A family presence

When Recchi came to Carolina at the trade deadline, he could immediately tell how much Laviolette valued family.

“He talked about your family, asked about your family, wanted to know about your family,” Recchi said. “It was just a complete family atmosphere in the dressing room. There’d be kids in there. It was important for you to have your family around.”

Before Game 7 against the Oilers, Laviolette reminded his team that hockey was important, but family was even more important, according to Wesley’s memory.

“It kind of took the pressure off everybody,” Wesley said. “We were able to just relax. That showed in Game 7 for us, just how we played. We weren’t nervous.”

When the keepers of the Stanley Cup brought the trophy to the Hurricanes after their 3-1 victory, players’ family members had already made their way onto the ice. The playing surface was packed with people celebrating.

“It was kind of (Laviolette’s) way of saying we all did this together,” Whitney said.

“I think we bent the rules a little bit,” Rutherford added. “Probably we were told (to have) only so many people on the ice. Gradually members of the family squeaked through the cracks and got on the ice.”

After the Hurricanes’ championship, the league grew stricter about families watching the trophy presentation from the ice. Ladd noticed the difference when he won another Stanley Cup with Chicago in 2010. The playing surface was much less crowded.

“It was one unique thing I’ll remember,” he said of the Carolina experience. “It’s a pretty cool memory to be able to share all that.”

Saying goodbye

Rutherford fired Laviolette in December 2008, replacing him with his predecessor, Maurice. After learning the news, Whitney, his wife, Brijet, and Justin Williams went to Laviolette’s house. They shared a few drinks, shed a few tears and said goodbye.

“I felt I had a coach who really understood me and I understood him, and our relationship was so good that it was hard for me,” Whitney said. “I felt very emotional.”

To this day, Whitney, who played 1,330 NHL games over a 22-year career, calls Laviolette his favorite coach. Whenever he runs into him, he gives him as big a hug as he can.

NHL Playoffs picks, odds: Hurricanes head home down 2-0, Stars look to even series with Avs

By Julian McKenzie

Are these two second-round matchups the most fun of the Stanley Cup playoffs so far?

The Hurricanes and Rangers went to double overtime in Game 2 of their series, producing some riveting back-and-forths and Jacob Trouba comically trying to hit Marty Necas before going face-first into the boards. Vincent Trocheck got to play the role of hero in overtime there, his first game-winning playoff goal in 46 games.

In the time it took me to write this intro, the Avalanche erased a 3-0 deficit at the hands of the Dallas Stars. Miles Wood was the overtime hero, his first-ever game-winning playoff goal in 19 career postseason games. But the Stars have started from behind before, so be prepared for a long one with those two teams.

New York Rangers at Carolina Hurricanes — Game 3

How to watch: 7 p.m. ET on TNT, SN

Rangers lead series 2-0

Series odds: Rangers -300, Hurricanes +250

• Vincent Trocheck is on a hot streak with goals in five consecutive playoff games. Trocheck also has points in each of his last six games (5 goals, 10 points).

• Alexis Lafrenière's breakout season continues. He already has two playoff goals this spring through six games. It's the same number of goals he had in 20 playoff games through the 2021-22 postseason.

• Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen has allowed four goals in back-to-back playoff games. Andersen allowed 12 goals in the Canes' opening-round series against the New York Islanders.

• Jake Guentzel's two-goal game against the Rangers was his first two-goal playoff game since May 11, 2022, when he was a member of the Pittsburgh Penguins. The opponent? The New York Rangers. Three of his eight multi-goal playoff games have come against the Rangers.

Colorado Avalanche at Dallas Stars — Game 2

How to watch: 9:30 p.m. ET on TNT, SN

Avalanche lead series 1-0

Series odds: Avalanche -210, Stars +170

• Nathan MacKinnon extended his playoff points streak to seven games (3 goals, 12 points) after a two-point effort against the Stars in Game 1.

• Wyatt Johnston continues his excellent postseason with five goals and eight points in eight playoff games this spring. For the second time this postseason, Johnston has goals in back-to-back playoff games.

• Mikko Rantanen has points in his last 11 playoff games (8 goals, 20 points) dating back to April 22, 2023, against the Seattle Kraken.

• Jamie Benn scored a goal and an assist in Game 1 against Colorado. He is now five points away from tying Sergei Zubov for the second-most points in Stars playoff history. Benn is also three goals away from second place for most Stars playoff goals.

The Hurricanes need to get back to their identity — here's how

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH, N.C. — Other than struggles on special teams, and the two losses those failings caused, the Carolina Hurricanes feel they're on the right track in their second-round series against the New York Rangers.

"I don't know what you guys are watching, but it was a double overtime with a lot of good chances to end the game," Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said after Tuesday's 4-3 double-overtime Game 2 loss. "It's been a good series. They're a good team. We're a good team."

Coach Rod Brind'Amour echoed that.

"I thought we played really well in that department, for sure," Brind'Amour said of the team's five-on-five play after Game 2. "Both games, I thought we were pretty good in that department, tonight even better than the other night. Certainly had our opportunities."

But for the second straight postseason — despite the familiar forechecking, the barrage of point shots and continued championship expectations — the Hurricanes look like a team that has lost its way.

It's not Carolina's propensity for taking bad penalties, its struggling penalty kill or its impotent power play that led to the Hurricanes' sweep at the hands of the Panthers last year or its two-game hole against the Rangers this spring.

It's a lack of faith.

The Hurricanes have seen firsthand that losing two games of a series on the road is not a death sentence.

"They believe in there," Brind'Amour said Tuesday night. "They're the ones playing the game, but I think they understand what we've got to do, and I think they feel capable of it."

Yes, the power play needs to score. For sure, the penalty kill needs to stop the bleeding. But what the Hurricanes truly need to do is get back to what they know works.

When Frederik Andersen returned from a blood-clotting issue in early March, Brind'Amour alternated him and Pyotr Kochetkov in goal, keeping the rookie who dragged them back into a playoff spot involved while easing — and protecting — Andersen from the grind of being an everyday starter.

As the Hurricanes attempt to get back in the series in Game 3 on Thursday, here are some back-to-basics suggestions for them:

Go back to Kochetkov

The move wouldn't be because Andersen has played poorly — he matched New York's Igor Shesterkin save for save in Tuesday's two overtimes, at least until he didn't — but because Kochetkov deserves the chance and Andersen has earned the rest.

Kochetkov often has elevated his game against fellow Russian goalies, and you can bet he wouldn't have stayed in his crease had he been on the ice when Shesterkin ventured into an early-game scrum Tuesday.

Then, win or loss, Brind'Amour could — and perhaps should — go back to Andersen for Game 4.

Reunite familiar linemates

Both in this postseason and last, Brind'Amour has taken lines and forward pairings he knows work — Jordan Staal playing with Jordan Martinook and (currently injured) Jesper Fast; Teuvo Teravainen or Seth Jarvis running shotgun to Sebastian Aho; Jack Drury centering Stefan Noesen — and stored them in his back pocket, instead using lines that played infrequently or not at all in the regular season and

refusing to go back to combinations he knows have consistently worked.

In Game 2, the line of Staal centering Teravainen and Jarvis dominated possession — according to NaturalStatTrick, the trio was on the ice for 11 shots on goal at five-on-five while allowing just one — but didn't score.

Sebastian Aho set up two Jake Guentzel goals on Tuesday, but the top line wasn't enough. The other two lines had just one high-danger chance while allowing five.

The current line of Drury centering Martinook and Martin Necas played just 6:40 together during the regular season. The fourth line in Game 1 — Noesen playing opposite Jesperi Kotkaniemi, with Evgeny Kuznetsov in the middle — logged 33 seconds as a line in the regular season. The Game 2 fourth line, with Max Comtois playing in place of Kuznetsov with Kotkaniemi moving to center, got 3:49 together in the inconsequential pre-playoff finale.

Perhaps putting Teravainen or Jarvis with Aho and Guentzel would further juice the first line. Could a line of Svechnikov-Kuznetsov-Necas be a threat, especially given how well Svechnikov has played in the postseason?

Staal and Martinook have long been formidable checkers, and either Jarvis or Teravainen joining them brings offense without defensive concerns. Drury with Noesen always works, and Kotkaniemi would give Carolina a second faceoff guy if the fourth line were to get stuck on the ice for a defensive-zone draw.

Commit to four lines

Ask any player in the league about the Hurricanes and they are quick to tell you Carolina is difficult to play against because of their aggressive defense and how all four lines play the same hard-charging style.

In Game 2, Brind'Amour quickly shortened his bench to three lines, playing Kotkaniemi, Comtois and Noesen just one shift in the third period. Noesen played just two shifts — both on overtime power plays — after that third-period shift ended at the 5:22 mark. Comtois didn't play at all.

Brind'Amour insinuated he did it because the Rangers were doing the same.

"Yeah, it's not ideal," he said, "but they were kind of doing the same thing. I thought the flow was good and our guys looked fresh, so that really wasn't a concern."

But it was only Matt Rempe (4:03 time on ice) nailed to the New York bench. Kaapo Kakko, meanwhile, played more shifts as the game wore on than he did in the opening periods. Jimmy Vesey's ice time was consistent throughout the game.

Carolina should have a bottom-six advantage against the Rangers, but it's mostly negated if half of those players don't see the ice.

Run with the horses that got you here

Comtois, who didn't sign an NHL deal with the Hurricanes until early March, played in place of deadline acquisition Evgeny Kuznetsov — who has four points, including a power play goal, in his six playoff games.

Brind'Amour is wont to talk about how players need to adapt to the team's system and often need time to get comfortable, and surely Kuznetsov's 26 games with the Hurricanes is a better crash course than the 13:04 Comtois played in the regular-season finale.

Comtois admitted on Monday that it would "be an adjustment" if he got the opportunity to play after spending his season with the AHL's Chicago Wolves playing a different system.

"It will definitely be a little hard the first, probably, two (or) three shifts," he said.

The Rangers scored on Comtois' third shift, and he played just nine shifts in all.

That's not an indictment of Comtois, but Carolina has familiar — when did Brendan Lemieux get bypassed? — and more prepared options

Don't panic on the power play

Yes, Carolina is 0-for-10 in the series, but the way out of the mini-funk isn't tinkering with the two units. The top group hasn't been good enough, but Brind'Amour needs to believe in the league's second-ranked power play the way he believed in Guentzel and Aho, who combined for five even-strength points in Game 2.

He's already fiddled with the second unit, scratching Kuznetsov — who has one of Carolina's five power-play goals this postseason — and putting Drury (eight career power-play points) in his place. Brind'Amour also pulled Brady Skjei off the point to have Tony DeAngelo quarterback PP2 in overtime. In the regular season, Skjei had 12 power play points in 80:42, while DeAngelo had six in 78:09.

The right coach is making the wrong moves

It's not a fluke that the Hurricanes have had so much success since Brind'Amour took over as coach. Players who faced annual end-of-season questions like, "Are you going to the World Championships?" before Brind'Amour's arrival have had to answer much tougher questions after each playoff run thanks to what he's built in Raleigh.

No team in the NHL has built a more defined identity than the Hurricanes under Brind'Amour.

Now Carolina needs to get back to what has made them successful. If Brind'Amour has faith in what's worked in the past, the Hurricanes can get back into this series.

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NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Growing up Jarvis: Brothers Seth and Kayden Jarvis celebrate Hurricanes success together

By Pat Welter

They are six years apart in age, but the resemblance is uncanny.

"It's an atmosphere like no other, so I'm excited to finally see it live," Kayden Jarvis said from the concourse at PNC Arena. It's game five versus the New York Islanders and he's about to take his seat to watch his little brother Seth Jarvis play in person for the first time this post season.

"It's so crazy to think that he's playing in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, it's awesome," Kayden said.

Seth is in his third season with the Canes and at just twenty-two years old has been like the teams little brother, a role he already knew well.

"[Kayden] has been kind of my guy since I can remember," Seth said during a Canes morning skate before the Rangers series. "I've always wanted to be him, he was my role model, he was my hero growing up."

With his playing days over, Kayden is embracing the role reversal now.

"Growing up we did everything together and I'm sure there were times where I'm like 'oh great Seth's coming, my younger brother he's annoying'", Kayden laughed. "Now looking back on it in hindsight it's the biggest complement you can receive as an older sibling."

They grew up in Winnipeg, Canada. Kayden played everything from football to baseball and hockey with his friends. Their parents had one rule for Seth: No whining or complaining.

"As a kid playing against people that are older, that are bigger and stronger than you and knowing that you can't complain," Kayden said. "I definitely think it shaped him, but also internally he's got that drive to him where he's not going to take no for an answer and he's been like that forever."

Seth's competitiveness was forged competing against his older brother. His hockey skills sculpted on the outdoor rink located right behind the Jarvis' family house.

"When he was five or six years old he'd let himself out of the house with his hockey stuff and go to the outdoor ice," Kayden remembered. "We were lucky enough our kitchen you could see the rinks. We'd wake up in the morning and say 'where's Seth?' and look out the window and he's on the ice just messing around."

Kayden went on to play in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League for the Winkler Flyers, his playing style the opposite of Seth's.

"I was way more defensive minded," Kayden said. "I was on the penalty kill, really prided myself taking draws, and just made sure my end was taken care of first before I went on the offensive side of things."

"When Seth was younger he was all offense and goal scoring which I didn't have as part of my game," Kayden said. "Watching him when he was younger it was like 'ah you lost your check in the d-zone, but then he would go down and score a goal."

Kayden just finished his first season as a skills and video coach with the Vancouver Giants of the Western Hockey League. In the summers he will work with Seth and has witnessed his brother's game evolve first hand.

"This past summer in the gym he's always committed, but there was definitely a sense of I want to go back and be the guy there," Kayden said. "Definitely off ice whether it was diet or doing a little bit of extra in the gym that was definitely a little bit of a change from the years before."

Whatever he did worked. Seth put up career highs in goals (33) and points (67) and currently leads the Canes this postseason in both categories as well.

"He's had a great season and obviously first round he was really, really good," Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour said before the Rangers series. "He's a big part of what you're doing as you see. We use him a ton and no matter where we seem to chuck him he finds a way to get it done."

From the frozen pond back home, to the Stanley Cup Playoff stage, the Jarvis brothers are still in this together.

"It's such a neat experience first of all just getting to watch him on TV," Kayden said. "Seeing him live and experiencing it in person is surreal. He's worked so hard to get here so to see that progression from when he was as a little kid running around with a mini stick to all of a sudden he's playing in the Stanley Cup Playoffs it's pretty awesome."

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Canes look to energize power play in return to Raleigh for Game 3

By Ryan Bisesi, WRAL multiplatform producer

New York Rangers

Carolina Hurricanes

TNT | Thursday, May 9th 7:00 PM EDT

Raleigh, N.C. — Through two one-goal losses and a power-play conundrum, the Carolina Hurricanes find themselves trailing by two games in the second-round series against the New York Rangers.

The Hurricanes have gone scoreless on 10 power play opportunities in the first two games and were unsuccessful in trying to snap Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin's streak of 29 playoff games of giving up three or fewer goals in Tuesday night's Game 2. After squandering leads of 2-1 and 3-2, periods of inspired play in the first and second overtimes didn't result in any game-winners as the team's road playoff woes seem to have returned.

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour knows Tuesday night's events signify the momentum swings and razor-thin margins for error that come with the territory in playoff hockey.

"You got to fight for everything," Brind'Amour said. "And then, even then, it's not enough sometimes."

"The games have been real tight," Brind'Amour said. "A play here or there and we got to keep fighting to try to get that extra play because that's really what is coming down to."

Carolina is now 1-3 on the road this postseason, a callback to 2022 when they were 0-6 in two rounds against the Rangers and Boston Bruins.

It's not for a lack of shooting. Shesterkin, who was upended by Andrei Svechnikov behind the net in the first period, stayed even-keeled through a barrage of shot attempts and made 54 saves.

Not wanting to go down 3-0, the urgency toward repairing the power play is at a fever pitch.

"They're keeping us to the outside a little too much and we're settling for that," Brind'Amour said about the power play.

An active net-front presence to create traffic in front of Shesterkin will be key going forward. The Canes had 18 more shots than the Rangers, but didn't consistently get the positioning on screens and tip-ins needed to throw off Shesterkin.

"I thought there was a lot of great shots in that game all alone in front of the net," Brind'Amour said. "You know, he's a great goalie. It's obvious.

"We knew that coming in and we just got to keep, you know, you look at the goals we scored. They've basically been deflections or stuff that you can't do anything about. That's what we're going to have to keep trying to do."

In net, there's a possibility the Canes go back to Pyotr Kochetkov, who hasn't played since April 14. Frederik Andersen made 39 saves in Game 2, but allowed four goals for the second-straight game.

Max Comtois played in place of trade deadline acquisition Evgeny Kuznetsov in Game 2. Kuznetsov could return to action Thursday after scoring goals in Game 1 and Game 5 in the first round.

The Hurricanes did not practice on Wednesday.

Game 3 starts at 7 p.m. Thursday at PNC Arena.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Playoff Notebook: Back On Home Ice

By Walt Ruff

@WaltRuff Hurricanes.com

May 08, 2024

RALEIGH, NC. - The Carolina Hurricanes' trip to the Big Apple did not bear fruit.

Now trailing 2-0 in the second round series, they've got some work to do as the games shift to Raleigh for the first time.

The difference between the wins and losses thus far is clear-cut - special teams play.

Carolina is 0/10 on the power play through two games and has allowed multiple goals to the Rangers man advantage in both contests, including the 2OT winner on Tuesday night.

In desperate need of change in both departments, a bunch of the discussion at Wednesday's media availability surrounded those two things.

"We definitely have to shoot more and go more to the net," Martin Necas answered when asked of the power play, going on to say that if the team had cashed in on even one of their five attempts last night, they probably would've gone on to win the game.

The head coach was aligned in saying that his team is spending too much time on the perimeter during their opportunities.

"We've got to get a little more at the net, or more inside," Rod Brind'Amour answered of a solution. "They're keeping us to the outside a little too much and we're setting for that."

Carolina went 5-for-15 in their opening-round series against the Islanders, after finishing the regular season with the league's second-best man advantage (26.8%).

They had a chance on the power play in both the first and second overtime last night to close things out and head back to Raleigh with a series split, but now their results, or lack thereof, are sticking out like a sore thumb.

"We've definitely got to be sharper," Brind'Amour critiqued following last night's loss. "That's not how we do it. We've got to get back to the way we know how."

The head coach shot down the fact that personnel needed to be changed on the units, but he did reference Tony DeAngelo spending some time quarterbacking the second group later in the game, a change from Brady Skjei.

Skjei finished with 1:18 played on the power play, with 1:08 of it coming in the first period. DeAngelo's night ended with 1:51 of power play time, including time in both the third period and overtime.

As for the penalty kill, the Canes remain unsurprised by what New York has done with their opportunities.

Crediting them for their ability to move the puck quickly, the team has found out the hard way that if you try to aggressively pursue them to make a play and miss, it could end up ugly.

"They're super talented, fast, and they wait for you to make a mistake, which is tough to play against," Seth Jarvis complimented when he was asked of the subject, before going on to give examples of how New York can capitalize. "They have one of the best passers in the NHL in (Artemi) Panarin and (Adam) Fox up top. It's tough to convince yourself to pressure them and go race out there."

Down, But Not Out...

Being two games in the hole is by no means ideal for Carolina, but it also doesn't mean the coffin is closed yet.

The Canes are now wondering, "If the Rangers can win both at home, why can't we?"

"Playing at home, especially here, is always great," Necas said, before referencing that the team was in the same situation two years ago against the Rangers. "Everybody knows it's 2-0, but it's not a big deal. We're going home, we want to start with the win tomorrow, and then think about what's next."

During the 2022 series between both teams, each home team was the winner through the first six games, before New York eventually won Game 7 in Raleigh.

"Game 3 is huge. We're going to take our home crowd's emotion and hopefully stick it to them," Captain Jordan Staal said after last night's loss. "We've got to get better in a lot of different ways, but it's always nice to go home in front of our great fans. [We need to] use that good energy and good emotion to get a win."

The Dallas Stars fell down 2-0 during Round 1 of the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs, before storming back to take down the Vegas Golden Knights in seven games.

"At the end of the day, (our) guys, they know. They believe in there. I know it," Brind'Amour said following Game 2 on the prospect of turning things around. "They understand what we need to do and they feel capable of it."

Game 3 Goalie To Be Determined...

Brind'Amour was asked today if he'll go back to Frederik Andersen for tomorrow's Game 3, but the head coach said that the staff hadn't made a decision yet.

Sharing that a big factor in the decision is finding out how the goaltender feels, the veteran netminder has now started seven games for the team for the first time since last year's playoffs.

"We'll make that decision tomorrow. I think Freddie's been good," Brind'Amour answered.

A follow-up question came asking if there would be any worry about turning to Pyotr Kochetkov, despite the fact that he hasn't played since April 14.

"None... That would not be a concern."

Kuznetsov's Status...

Last night the Canes coaches threw a curveball at the start of warmups, electing to go with Max Comtois instead of Evgeny Kuznetsov at forward.

Eventually revealed later as a healthy scratch for the trade deadline acquisition, Brind'Amour explained the decision today.

"I thought we'd change it up a little. Max had been practicing really well and I wanted to give him a chance," he remarked. "That was really what went into that."

Comtois played just 6:19 in the loss and Brind'Amour said it wouldn't be fair to assess his game, given how little he played.

Now, the question is, will Kuznetsov go back in for Game 3?

Brind'Amour said it is possible, but didn't commit one way or the other.

Kuznetsov had four points in five games during the first round, including a penalty shot goal in Game 5.

Preview: Round 2, Game 3 vs. NYR

By Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, NC. - The Carolina Hurricanes will try to turn the tide of their series against the New York Rangers on Thursday, when they host Game 3 at PNC Arena.

The Series So Far

Game 1: New York goes a perfect 7/7 on special teams, leading the way to a 4-3 series-opening victory.

Game 2: Vincent Trocheck scores the game-winner in 2OT, securing another 4-3 win for the Presidents' Trophy winners.

Last Time Out

Special teams cost the Canes again in Game 2, allowing multiple power play goals and coming up empty-handed on their own man advantages for a second consecutive game.

Jake Guentzel scored twice and Sebastian Aho factored in on all three goals for Carolina, but in 2OT Vincent Trocheck scored the deciding tally.

Igor Shesterkin made 54 saves for New York.

Special Teams Adjustments

The difference thus far in the series has been cut and dry - special teams play.

On the power play, Canes players and coaches want to get more inside toward Shesterkin's crease tonight and spend less time on the perimeter.

On the penalty kill, Carolina will try to find the balance between aggressively pressuring and staying in the passing lanes.

In Net

Frederik Andersen has been the team's workhorse throughout the playoffs but took the loss in both Games 1 & 2. He allowed just two even-strength goals in each game.

Rod Brind'Amour said on Wednesday that the team hadn't made a decision yet as to who would start in Game 3, and some of that answer would be dependent on how Andersen feels. It is the first time since last year's playoffs that Andersen has played seven games in a row.

If it's not Andersen, it would be Pyotr Kochetkov for the first time since April 14, the team's second-to-last regular season game.

On The Other Side

The Rangers' top stars continue to lead the way for them this series, as Mika Zibanejad, Vincent Trocheck, and Artemi Panarin have combined for 12 points through the first two games of the series.

Shesterkin has been fantastic in net as well, stopping 70/76 shots faced.

Their X-Factor has been special teams though, going 4-for-9 on the power play and 10-for-10 on the penalty kill.

Injury Updates

Forward Jesper Fast suffered an upper-body injury in the team's regular season finale on Tuesday, April 16. On Thursday, April 25, Rod Brind'Amour said that he is likely out for the entire postseason.

Defenseman Brett Pesce suffered a lower-body injury during Round 1, Game 2. Brind'Amour said he's not counting on #22 being available this series, but he remains hopeful he may be able to get in at some point.

What Are We Wearing?

The team will be wearing their black sweaters for all home games during the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs, and white for all road games.

Additional Game Information

Coming to tonight's game? Save $15 on parking by purchasing in advance. Click here to buy.

Want to remember tonight forever? Purchase a commemorative ticket here.

Where To Watch

Can't make it to PNC Arena, or looking for a place to watch the road games in the series?

Visit any Carolina Ale House in the state to watch the Canes throughout the playoffs.

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes are scheduled to practice on Friday before returning to action on Saturday for Game 4.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Hurricanes feel good heading home for Game 3 against Rangers

By Shawn P. Roarke

May 08, 2024

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The sun came up for the Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday.

After falling into a 2-0 hole – each a one-goal loss -- and being dominated by the New York Rangers in the battle of specials teams in the Eastern Conference Second Round, the Hurricanes could have been in as bleak a mood as the false dawn that greeted them when they arrived home in the wee hours.

Instead, they shook off a double-overtime 4-3 loss at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday and spoke of how good they feel going into Game 3 at PNC Arena on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; MAX, TNT, TruTV, SN, TVAS, CBC).

“We are confident in our group,” forward Martin Necas said after team met Wednesday morning at its home rink. “It’s not like we are down 2-0 and it’s series over or we are hanging our head down. Tomorrow’s a new day. We have a strong team and I believe we can do this.”

The fact that teams that win the first two games of a best-of-7 series advance 88.6 percent of the time doesn’t matter. The fact that Carolina has won just one of seven playoff series in which it has lost the first two on the road is meaningless.

“You don’t look at the big picture,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. “You’re always, ‘What do we do to win that one game?’ And, then go from there.”

The Hurricanes may not spend time dwelling on the big picture or the past, but they know the numbers and they aren’t sobered by them.

“I don’t really care,” Carolina forward Seth Jarvis said. “We just worry about what’s in our room.”

Jarvis points to two seasons ago.

The Hurricanes played the Rangers in the second round in 2022 and won the first two games at home -- including Game 1 in overtime. They then lost four of the next five and the series.

“We haven’t lost any confidence in our room,” Jarvis said. “We are just excited to get it going at home.”

There are reasons for optimism.

The Hurricanes were the better team at 5-on-5 play for long periods in Game 2, outshooting the Rangers 44-28. They also had 17 more shot attempts at 5-on-5 (92-75).

Despite all their lapses -- on the penalty kill, in taking retaliation penalties and not blocking out in front of their goalie -- the Hurricanes feel they are a bounce away from being at worst even in this series.

“There’s a ton of good parts to our game,” Jarvis said. “We need to keep going. Five-on-five has been pretty good, especially last game; I think we kind of found it and had a lot more success.

“It’s tough to stay positive sometimes, but there are a lot of good things going on in our game right now.”

Carolina’s top line of Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov and Jake Guentzel were a handful all night in Game 2.

Guentzel had two goals and looked like the Rangers killer he was during when he played with the Pittsburgh Penguins, who traded him to Carolina on March 7 ahead of the 2024 Trade Deadline. Aho had three assists and was dangerous nearly every time he touched the puck.

Goalie Frederik Andersen played well enough, making 35 saves, and will likely remain the starter in Game 3.

The temptation to go to Pyotr Kochetkov, who was 23-13-4 and served as the No. 1 while Andersen was out with blood-clotting issues remains just that.

“We’ll see,” Brind’Amour said. “We’ll see how Freddie is feeling today. We’ll make that decision tomorrow, but I think Freddie’s been good so that’s not a concern, it’s more how he is feeling.”

Carolina’s power play, which was second best in the regular season at 26.9 percent, has gone 0-for-5 in each of the first two games, a trend Brind’Amour believes will change if his team commits to getting to the front of the net and taking away the eyes of Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin, who was brilliant in making 54 saves in Game 2.

If it does, look out.

“You look at the whole series and there is one little play here or there that could change the whole outlook of a game or the whole outlook of a series. We have to find a way to create as many of those opportunities as we can and, hopefully, we will get a break or a bounce here too.”

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

SB NATION CANES COUNTRY

Rangers @ Hurricanes: Round 2, Game 3 Preview

By Bob

The Carolina Hurricanes return to the friendly confines of the PNC Arena to do battle with the New York Rangers on Thursday night in game three of round two in this playoff series.

Game time is 7 P.M. It will be televised by TBS.

The Canes find themselves down 2-0 against the Presidents' Trophy winners.

While the team seems pretty happy with their five on five play, their special teams has been abysmal.

Right now they are 0-10 with the man advantage and they are allowing almost 50% on the penalty kill, (4-9).

The Canes did not practice on the ice on Wednesday but they have plenty of film to look at to see how they can improve play.

One of the complaints about the powerplay has been that the number of shots needs to pick up but it's the quality of shot attempts which is more of the problem.

Carolina had 57 shots on goal Tuesday night and missed the net on another 30 shots. They also had 29 shots blocked. It will be hard to top the total of 116 shots taken, but they should be able to generate better scoring chances. We will see.

On Tuesday, Rod Brind'Amour surprised folk when he replaced Evgeny Kuznetsov with newcomer Max Comtois. The coach would not commit to either player when asked about this game.

It was the same way when asked about goalies, Brind'Amour was coy. "We'll make a decision tomorrow. Freddie has been good."

It is rare that a team rebounds after falling behind 3-0 in an NHL playoff series. The Canes need this one.

The Hockey News

Martin Necas Believes Rangers' Jacob Trouba Tried to Elbow Him in Head

By Karl Rasmussen

New York Rangers captain Jacob Trouba has never shied away from going for a big hit on the ice, and though he's one of the most established defensemen in hockey, he doesn't always square up his target like he intends to.

That could be seen on Tuesday night in Game 2 when Trouba attempted to level Carolina Hurricanes forward Martin Neças but ended up slamming head-first into the boards after miscalculating his hit. During the play, Trouba's elbow could be seen flailing upwards.

When asked about the incident, Neças suggested Trouba was intentionally trying to injure him, per Hurricanes reporter Walt Ruff.

"I don't know, I guess elbow me in the head. Maybe he was protecting himself going into the boards. He knows. Everybody knows what kind of player he is," said Neças when asked what he thought Trouba's intent was.

Trouba's had a history of delivering some controversial hits in the past, and Tuesday's incident involving Neças was mere inches from being another one of those hits.

Neças alluded to the defenseman's checkered past and the belief among some fans that he's a headhunter with his comments. He certainly didn't back away from the notion that the Rangers' captain was looking for more than just a momentum-shifting hit.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Carolina Hurricanes vs. New York Rangers Game 3: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By Ryan Henkel

The Hurricanes will look to turn their fortunes on home ice.

The Carolina Hurricanes will look to defend home ice tonight as they try to dig out of the 2-0 series hole they are in against the New York Rangers.

The Canes have done a lot of good things in the series, but the special teams collapse has put them in a tough spot.

If not for the power play and penalty kill imploding, Carolina could perhaps be up 2-0 but instead now face a tough uphill climb.

They always say a series doesn't start until you lose at home though, so perhaps the Canes can bring it back.

It all starts with one.

Streaks

Sebastian Aho (5a), Jake Guentzel (2g, 1a) and Dmitry Orlov (1g, 1a) have points in back-to-back games.

Milestone Watch

Sebastian Aho set the franchise record for most multi-assist playoff games in franchise history with his seventh Tuesday night.

Sebastian Aho also passed Kevin Dineen for the most three-point games in franchise history with his sixth.

Max Comtois made his playoff debut on Tuesday.

Game Notes

Carolina went 1-2-0 against the Rangers this season, having a 2-1 loss on Nov. 2, a 6-1 win on Jan. 2 and a 1-0 loss on March 12.

The two teams will be meeting in the postseason for the third time ever.

Carolina won the first meeting, a 3-0 series sweep in the 2020 Eastern Conference Qualifying Round and New York won the latest matchup, a 4-3 series win in the 2022 second round.

Sebastian Aho (5g, 19pts in 12 games) and Jake Guentzel (10g, 13pts in 9 games) are playoff point-per-game players against the Rangers.

New York head coach Peter Laviolette coached Rod Brind'Amour and the Hurricanes when they won the Stanley Cup in 2006.

Jack Drury is the nephew of Rangers general manager Chris Drury.

Jesper Fast, Brady Skjei, Tony DeAngelo, Brendan Lemieux and Antti Raanta are all former Rangers while Vincent Trocheck was a former Hurricane and Carolina formerly held the rights to Adam Fox.

Key Matchups

Starting Goalies

Frederik Andersen: 4-3; 0.899 Sv%; 2.58 GAA

Igor Shesterkin: 6-0; 0.929 Sv%; 2.01 GAA

Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (4) / Vincent Trocheck (5)

Points - Seth Jarvis & Sebastian Aho (8) / Mika Zibanejad (11)

Power Play

Carolina - 20% (5/25)

New York - 40% (10/25)

Penalty Kill

Carolina - 65.0% (13/20)

New York - 92.6% (25/27)

Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Jake Guentzel - Sebastian Aho - Andrei Svechnikov

Jordan Martinook - Jack Drury - Martin Necas

Teuvo Teravainen - Jordan Staal - Seth Jarvis

Jesperi Kotkaniemi - Evgeny Kuznetsov - Stefan Noesen

Jaccob Slavin - Brent Burns

Brady Skjei - Tony DeAngelo

Dmitry Orlov - Jalen Chatfield

Frederik Andersen

Pyotr Kochetkov

Injuries and Scratches: Brendan Lemieux, Max Comtois, Dylan Coghlan, Scott Morrow, Ronan Seeley, Bradly Nadeau, Jackson Blake, Spencer Martin, Antti Raanta, Jesper Fast (UBI), Brett Pesce (LBI)

Rangers Projected Lineup

Chris Kreider - Mika Zibanejad - Jack Roslovic

Artemi Panarin - Vincent Trocheck - Alexis Lafreniere

Will Cuylle - Alex Wennberg - Kaapo Kakko

Jimmy Vesey - Barclay Goodrow - Matt Rempe

Ryan Lindgren - Adam Fox

K'Andre Miller - Braden Schneider

Erik Gustafsson - Jacob Trouba

Igor Shesterkin

Jonathan Quick

Injuries and Scratches: Jonny Brodzinski, Adam Edstrom, Zac Jones, Connor Mackey, Chad Ruhwedel, Adam Sykora, Louis Domingue, Filip Chytil (UBI), Blake Wheeler (LBI)

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

'Everybody knows what kind of player he is': Martin Necas Ready to Move On After Attempted Elbow from Jacob Trouba

By Ryan Henkel

The Rangers captain narrowly missed on an elbow that more than likely would have ended Necas' postseason.

In the moment, Martin Necas didn't even know what happened.

The Carolina Hurricanes winger entered the attacking zone in the first overtime period last night at MSG, and as he went to curl up, he saw New York Rangers' captain Jacob Trouba barreling towards him.

Necas pulled up, falling in the process, which may have saved his season as he dropped just under the flying elbow that came his way and Trouba went face-first into the boards.

"In the moment, I didn't even see what happened," Necas said Wednesday afternoon. "I saw it on a replay after the game. I mean it's whatever. Good for him, he ran into the boards head first.

"Good to dodge the hit as it probably wouldn't have ended well, but I'm here, it's fine."

May 7, 2024; New York, New York, USA; New York Rangers defenseman Jacob Trouba (8) goes head first into the boards over Carolina Hurricanes center Martin Necas (88) during the first overtime of game two of the second round of the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Madison Square Garden.

Martin Necas ducks out of the way of Jacob Trouba's hit

Not only had Trouba tried to run Necas through the boards, he also fully extended his elbow, missing the Czech wingers head by barely an inch.

It's a play that if it had connected, would have made both players more than likely miss the remainder of the series.

Necas with a concussion and Trouba with a suspension.

"Elbow me in the head, I guess," Necas said when asked what he thought Trouba's intentions were. "Maybe he was protecting himself from going into the boards, but he knows. He knows. Everyone knows what kind of player he is. I mean good for him. Nothing happened. We're all good and I'm excited for the next game."

Another player who's quite familiar with Trouba's antics is Seth Jarvis who absorbed a hit to the head from the defender in the Canes' 2021 second round series.

Jarvis would not return to that game or series and has stated that he has nor recollection of the play or anything after it.

In addition, Jarvis suffered from headaches and other concussion symptoms for multiple months afterwards.

"That was something," Jarvis said in regards to the hit. "I'm just glad Necas got away. That could have been a little scary for him. I've been on the receiving end of that and I don't remember it. It's not something I want to see any of my friends go through."

Trouba is a physical player who plays hard.

"If he hits me and it's a clean hit, then nobody's got a problem with it," Necas said.

But the New York captain tows the line and more often than not, crosses it as high, explosive hits are par for the course with him.

However, much like the rest of his team, Necas isn't one to dwell on the past and he's already looking ahead to defending home ice in Game 3.

"He didn't even hit me so nothing happened. We're past that. Onto the next game."

TODAY'S LINKS

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

SportScan

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

1311825 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes in wait-and-see mode on starting goalie, Kuznetsov return for Game 3 vs. Rangers

Chip Alexander

Raleigh-Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour left a few doors cracked and a few questions not completely answered Wednesday.

The Canes, after a 4-3 loss in double overtime Tuesday to the New York Rangers, are down 0-2 in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup playoff series. After the first two games on the road, the Canes host Game 3 on Thursday at PNC Arena, then Game 4 on Saturday.

Frederik Andersen has been the starting goalie in each of the seven playoff games for the Canes – the first five in the series against the New York Islanders. Goalie Pyotr Kochetkov has not played a game since April 14, at Chicago in the next-to-last regular-season game.

Might Game 3 be the time for a change in net, Brind'Amour was asked?

"We'll see," Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "We'll see how Freddie is feeling today and we'll make that decision (Thursday). But I think Freddie's been good. That's not a concern. It's more about how he's feeling."

The Canes did not practice Wednesday, going through team meetings. Kochetkov has served as Andersen's backup in the playoffs, although Brind'Amour said Kochetkov not playing in nearly a month "would not be a concern."

One decision Brind'Amour did make Wednesday for Game 2 was making Evgeny Kuznetsov a healthy scratch, replacing him with forward Max Comtois on the fourth line. It was a curious move in that Brind'Amour had said a few hours before game time that he did not anticipate any lineup changes, only to have Comtois – a free-agent signee by Carolina during the season – go in for Kuznetsov.

Comtois was in for nine shifts and 6:19 of ice time in Game 2, with one shift in the third period.

Kuznetsov won a Stanley Cup with the Washington Capitals in 2018 and was a key acquisition by the Canes at the NHL trade deadline this season, someone brought in to add another veteran presence in the playoffs. Comtois was making his playoff debut for the Canes.

Why the Kuznetsov scratch?

"I don't know. I just thought I'd change it up a little," Brind'Amour said. "Max had been practicing well and wanted to give him a chance. That's really what went into that."

Would Kuznetsov return for Game 3?

"Possibly," the coach said.

Regardless of the lineup or starting goaltender, the Canes must find a way to score on the power play to beat the Rangers, who are good at it and have scored two power-play goals in each of the first games. The Canes are 0-10 on the power play, twice taking penalties that negated the man advantage.

"The games have been real tight," Brind'Amour said. "It's a play here or there. You've got to keep fighting to get that extra play. That's really what it's coming down to."

NECAS DODGES BIG ONE

Martin Necas came bounding into the interview area Wednesday at PNC Arena in a T-shirt and shorts, looking energetic. But had the Rangers' Jacob Trouba not missed his mark in Game 2 …

Trouba, never hesitant to make a big hit, launched himself at Necas near the boards, his left arm bent as if aiming at Necas' head. Necas held up just enough and slid under Trouba as the defenseman went flying over him and tumbled head-first into the boards.

Necas said he has seen the replays a few times. His thoughts on Trouba's intent?

"I don't know, I guess, elbow me in head. I don't know," Necas said. "Maybe he protecting himself going into the boards. He knows, he knows. Everybody knows what kind of player he is.

"I mean, good for him. Nothing happened. We're all good and I'm excited for the next game."

Canes forward Seth Jarvis has been on the receiving end of big Trouba blast. In Game 7 of the 2022 playoff series with the Rangers, Jarvis was knocked woozy after an open-ice hit from the D-man.

"That was something," Jarvis said of the Necas-Trouba play. "I'm just glad 'Nechy' got out of the way. That could have been a little scary for him."

Injury update

Brind'Amour said defenseman Brett Pesce, out with a lower-body injury, has not yet skated and remains sidelined indefinitely. Brind'Amour has said he is hopeful Pesce could return at some point in the second-round series.

News Observer LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311826 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL players slow to adopt neck guards. Why one Hurricanes defender wears one anyway

Luke DeCock

Raleigh-To the naked eye, it just looks like Dylan Coghlan is wearing a mock turtleneck under his pads, like European hockey players of old, Alexei Yashin or Tomas Plekanec. It's not for style. Anything but. What he's actually wearing is a high-tech undershirt woven with Kevlar fibers that could save his life.

Coghlan is the only player on the Carolina Hurricanes who wears neck protection, a hot topic in hockey circles since the January death of a player in the British pro league after his neck was cut by a skate. That's always been one of the risks embedded in the game, going back to gruesome, bloody NHL near-misses that still make the rounds on YouTube, like those involving Clint Malarchuk or Richard Zednik.

When a skate blade whirred past Coghlan's throat during an AHL game, close enough to feel the wind in its wake, that was that.

"My mom was hounding me if I would wear one and I kind of brushed it off," Coghlan said. "My girlfriend asked me a couple times and I brushed it off again. Everyone just kept asking me, but now that I wear one now, I'll probably wear one for the rest of my career."

This year, after Adam Johnson's death in England, both the International Ice Hockey Federation and USA Hockey made neck protection mandatory. But other than a few high-profile players — like Washington Capitals forward T.J. Oshie, whose apparel company Warroad makes the cut-protection undershirt he wears — few NHLers have followed suit, even as almost all wear Kevlar-impregnated socks and a few wear Kevlar sleeves on their wrists.

Initially, at midseason, the hockey supply chain couldn't keep up with the sudden, new demand for neck protection, whether full undershirts or sleeves that go around the neck and under the shoulder pads. The Hurricanes have several types and brands available for any player who wants to add that extra layer of protection. Only Coghlan, who appeared in one Hurricanes game this season before joining the Hurricanes from the AHL for the playoffs, has chosen to do so.

"You never know," Coghlan said. "Guys are going pretty hard out there and sometimes you lose the ability to know where your skates are going. It's always better safe than sorry."

A personal decision for hockey players

For now, as the outlier on the Hurricanes — he was not with his AHL club, where wearing neck guards was more common — it does make him the butt of jokes, like the first players to wear helmets and the first players to don visors, both of which have long been mandatory. There is, unavoidably, a macho aspect to this, not wanting to appear vulnerable or admit weakness.

But it's also a deeply personal and professional question for hockey players, whose careers may depend on the finest margin of performance at the narrowest, farthest end of the bell curve, and are loathe to make any changes that could impact that. If a neck guard restricts their ability to turn their head, or hampers their ability to regulate their body temperature, who's to say that won't make a difference to an elite athlete at this level?

European players are more familiar with neck guards, most having grown up wearing them, but they also took the opportunity not to wear them when they came to North America. As long as players believe that little bit of mobility, that little bit of freedom, makes a competitive difference in an arena where the slightest edge could mean an extra goal or extra win (or an extra million), that will remain the case.

So it's far easier for an outsider to ask, "Why take the risk?" In a fast-moving, physical, violent sport like hockey, players are constantly performing a personal, internal calculus, balancing the risks they take, with their health and their lives, every time they step onto the ice. The razor-sharp blades on their feet are almost the least of it. Almost all players wear the Kevlar socks that protect an area prone to skate cuts (and the Achilles tendon). Some wear the Kevlar wrist sleeves that protect the area above their gloves, which look like big, gray wristbands.

Even that is a balancing act. Jaccob Slavin started wearing the wrist sleeves this season, but he noted they make him substantially hotter when he plays and practices. So he's willing to go that far, but not as far as his neck. At least not with this iteration of the gear, anyway.

"My younger brother (Josiah) wore it the whole year in the AHL," Slavin said. "I'm not against it. But I guess it's got to be comfortable, too."

Eventually, both helmets and visors were imposed only upon players entering the NHL, and inevitably neck protection will, as well, especially as younger players grow up wearing it. The Hurricanes received new protective gear to try recently, from a company called Duzter; the stiffened neck and Velcro straps at the back will likely deter any NHLer from using it, although it would probably be ideal for kids or non-professionals.

The next generation has been the primary focus, anyway, and for good reason. NHL players are fortunate enough to be near expert medical care at all times, trainers armed with portable defibrillators for heart issues and educated to handle life-threatening lacerations. The Toronto Maple Leafs' staff even saved the life of a rec-league player this winter who just happened to be cut while playing at their practice rink. But there's a long list of other players who haven't been so fortunate, including Johnson and a Connecticut prep-school player in 2022.

Still, the Hurricanes as an organization have encouraged their players to wear as much protective gear as possible, not just on their necks but on their wrists and calves, as well. After Johnson's death, the Hurricanes brought in all the neck protectors approved by the league for players to try, and a few did at practice, but none permanently.

"It's probably something you're going to see more and more players wear as time goes on," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "Especially having the summertime, when they're skating before camp wearing these types of equipment, they really get used to it.

"One complaint always with the neck protectors is they overheat, they feel hot in them, but by the time we get through this year and get ready for next year there's going to be so many more options for players. Multiple companies are working on it daily, so somebody's going to hit the home run on it, and eventually you're going to see more and more players wearing it."

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Dylan Coghlan (15) talks with assistant coach Tim Gleason during practice on Thursday, May 2, 2024 at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C. Coghlan wears a high-tech Kevlar undershirt with a collar to protect his neck from a possible skate cut.

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Dylan Coghlan (15) talks with assistant coach Tim Gleason during practice on Thursday, May 2, 2024 at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C. Coghlan wears a high-tech Kevlar undershirt with a collar to protect his neck from a possible skate cut. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Coghlan wasn't the only player on his AHL team to add the additional layer of safety this season, and he said he'd support an effort by the NHLPA to make neck protection mandatory for players entering the league. If nothing else, that might cut back on some of the ribbing he takes in the dressing room. One of the two shirts he rotates has been hidden by his teammates in the past; at practice on Thursday, Brendan Lemieux was trying to pull it off Coghlan's neck.

"Being the only guy that's wearing one, I get a little bit of it," Coghlan said. "It's all out of love, and good jokes, but it just makes me feel safe. I know it makes my mom happy and my dad happy and my girlfriend happy."

For now, he's willing to take the slings and arrows if it means being protected from skate blades as well.

News Observer LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311827 Carolina Hurricanes

Two OT thrillers in NHL playoffs, plus your new 2025 NFL Draft board

Chris Branch

Good morning! Skip OT today, OK?

While You Were Sleeping: Headline

A hot team can crush expectations. A hot goalie can win you a Stanley Cup. The Rangers embody both, currently producing the NHL's best vibes to boot.

Last night's double-overtime win against the Hurricanes proved it:

It took New York and Carolina nearly an hour and a half of game time to decide a winner, which came on this nifty tap-in from Vincent Trocheck. It ended what may have been the best game of these Stanley Cup playoffs, and put the Rangers up 2-0 in what's been an incredible series already.

This is also a legitimate, nasty rivalry, as Mark Lazerus wrote. And that was before we saw what Jacob Trouba tried to do to Martin Necas (both players were OK afterward):

https://t.co/Lra3oeC91B pic.twitter.com/qgvqVqrAw4

— Tony X (@soloucity) May 8, 2024

That it happened at Madison Square Garden was most fitting. The Rangers and Knicks are a combined 7-1 at MSG this postseason, with the Knicks' lone loss coming in a game they absolutely should've won.

The best part? This wasn't last night's only overtime hockey thriller: Late last night, the Colorado Avalanche stormed back from a 3-0 first-period deficit to shock the Stars, 4-3, in overtime on the road.

We also had two NBA games, light on drama as No. 1 seeds cruised to 1-0 leads:

Oklahoma City outlasted the Mavericks at home, 117-95, continuing an impressive 5-0 postseason run for the inexperienced Thunder. OKC is so deep, but can't count on Luka Dončić having another bad game of only 19 points.

Boston breezed past Cleveland, 120-95. This series might be over soon.

Mbappe quells Real talk after PSG loss

Borussia Dortmund outlasted Paris Saint-Germain 1-0 yesterday, winning the pair's semifinal matchup 2-0 on aggregate. It was a frustrating match for PSG on multiple levels: They had a 3.22-0.77 advantage in expected goals while failing to find the net, and Kylian Mbappe played what was likely his final Champions League match for PSG. He prepares to leave on a free transfer this offseason, though he shut down any Real Madrid talk in a postgame presser. Tense times all around for the Parisian side.

Murray fined $100k

The NBA will collect $100,000 from Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, who chucked a towel and heat pack toward the court (in the direction of a referee) during Monday's blowout loss to the Timberwolves. It was just one part of an awful night for the defending champions — coach Mike Malone went ballistic on a ref, Aaron Gordon earned a technical and the team looks like toast right now. Yeesh.

More news

The NFL schedule will be released May 15, per The Athletic's sources.

Knicks center Mitchell Robinson will miss the rest of the postseason with an ankle injury. It's a brutal blow for a team already impacted by injuries.

This season, the WNBA will add charter flights on a full-time basis, which commissioner Cathy Engelbert called a "historic moment for the league."

Officials will not press charges against a young man who admitted to shouting a racial slur at members of the Utah women's basketball team.

No surprise: Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon and Nikita Kucherov are your Hart Trophy finalists.

Yes, Draft Season: Time to start grinding tape again

For real NFL draftniks, the season never ends. Dane Brugler had a 2025 first-round NFL mock draft up three days after 2024's Mr. Irrelevant moment. A week later, Austin Mock premieres the 2025 consensus Big Board, which serves our severe draft withdrawals and provides a road map of who to watch this college football season.

The top five:

1. Will Campbell, OT — LSU

2. Mason Graham, DT — Michigan

3. Will Johnson, CB — Michigan

4. Kelvin Banks Jr., OT — Texas

5. James Pearce Jr., edge — Tennessee

"Branch only listed that because an LSU guy is No. 1," you might say. I can neither confirm nor deny. But I think it's fascinating to see how these boards can evolve, and Austin himself points to, ahem, Jayden Daniels' rise from mid-rounder to QB2 last year as evidence.

The QBs on this list:

10. Carson Beck — Georgia

17. Shedeur Sanders — Colorado

21. Quinn Ewers — Texas

The funny thing is that NFL evaluators seem down on this QB class overall, which might not be totally fair. Beck has all the tools. Sanders, love him or hate him, is a dazzling player when he's not taking a sack. Ewers might have the most upside. And we'll see who else emerges this season.

A fun part of conference realignment: We get to see Beck play Ewers in Austin this October. A signature performance from either could go a long way toward establishing some order on this board.

See the full list here, which includes some more pressing questions about other facets of this draft class.

Watch This Game

Soccer: Bayern Munich at Real Madrid

3 p.m. ET on Paramount+

The Champions League semifinal is tied on aggregate heading into this second-leg match. Sign me up.

NHL: Bruins at Panthers

7:30 p.m. ET on ESPN

Can Boston pull off another stunning upset on the road? Still not over that Game 1 beatdown.

NBA: Pacers at Knicks

8 p.m. ET on TNT

Our only basketball matchup of the night is juicy after this series' controversial ending to Game 1. The crowd should be even more frothy than normal.

Pulse Picks

Dan Lanning knows you thought he'd leave Oregon, just like the last two coaches did. But, as Christopher Kamrani writes today in an excellent profile, all you have to do is check his tattoos — or talk to the guy for 10 minutes — to see he's different.

Speaking of Oregon: the Ducks are No. 3 in Ari Wasserman's post-spring college football top 25, which debuted yesterday.

I was already excited to read Andy McCullough's upcoming book on Clayton Kershaw, but this new excerpt made me pre-order it.

Britt Ghiroli writes about the worrisome NIL deal from Perfect Game and Fanatics that is raising red flags with agents, who fear amateur baseball players are signing away too many rights.

I thought Phil Hay's write-up on an ex-Chelsea coach's secret lifetime ban, based on reporting by Daniel Taylor, was troubling and insightful. Read Phil every day in The Athletic FC newsletter.

Most-clicked in the newsletter yesterday: Our news update on Talor Gooch's invite to the PGA Championship. Still a pleasant surprise to me.

Most-read on the website yesterday: Our NHL Draft Lottery live blog. Now we just have to wonder if Macklin Celebrini will turn pro for next season.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311876 New York Rangers

Rangers' special teams continues to deliver in biggest playoff moments

Mollie Walker

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Rangers' special teams aren't just clicking on all cylinders right now, they're showing up in big moments.

The power play and penalty kill have allowed the Blueshirts to separate themselves from their first two opponents in the playoffs.

Through four games against the Capitals and the first two against the Hurricanes, the Rangers have swung the special teams battle in their favor in convincing fashion.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Vincent Trocheck celebrates with his teammates after scoring the game-winning goal in the second overtime of the Rangers' 4-3 Game 2 win over the Hurricanes. Charles Wenzelberg / New York Post

Game 2 Tuesday night against the Hurricanes was no different, with the power play notching a game-tying goal in the third period and the game-winning goal in double-overtime.

"I think we're confident for sure," Vincent Trocheck said after scoring the game-winner. "I think we do expect to score. Obviously, it's not going to happen every single time. We feel like as a unit, the team relies on us to score on the power play. Especially so far this playoffs, special teams have been so big. Power play, penalty kill are huge in these games. We know we're relied on a lot, and there's a lot of pressure in that. When we have this confidence, this rhythm, we just want to try to keep doing the same things to keep it going."

The power play has recorded four go-ahead goals — two from Mika Zibanejad, one from Trocheck and one from Jack Roslovic — and two game-winning goals — one from Artemi Panarin and the other from Trocheck.

The penalty kill generated two shorthanded game-winning scores in Round 1, from K'Andre Miller in Game 2 Barclay Goodrow in Game 3 in Washington.

Chris Kreider was the one to net the equalizing man-advantage tally in Game 2 Tuesday night.

That's nine goals from special teams that had an immense impact on the outcome of a postseason game.

"That part of the game is going well right now," captain Jacob Trouba said of the power play. "Obviously, that can change. We'd like it to stay this way, but I don't think you can rely on it or want to win games strictly that way. I think we generated a decent amount five-on-five, but when you win the special teams' battle, I think that's proven to be a key part of NHL hockey."

The Rangers were off Wednesday as they ventured to Raleigh for Games 3 and 4 of their second-round series against the Hurricanes.

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311877 New York Rangers

There is no stopping Rangers fans invading Carolina -- even as Hurricanes try

Ethan Sears

Knicks fans took over Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia and the Hurricanes are in danger of succumbing to the same swarm of New Yorkers when the Rangers come to Raleigh for Games 3 and 4 of the second round starting Thursday night.

The Hurricanes are not so terrified that owner Tom Dundon is purchasing tickets himself a la Sixers ownership.

But they are geographically restricting ticket sales to residents of North Carolina, South Carolina and parts of Virginia in an effort to make sure PNC Arena is clad in red.

Rangers fans will be making the trip down to Carolina for Game 3.

That is not new — the Hurricanes and other teams, including the Rangers, have used similar measures — but Carolina has a unique problem on its hands.

There are so many transplanted New Yorkers in the area that geoblocking is, at best, a half-measure.

"I will go out on a limb for anybody with a New York area code or a billing address who is looking to buy away tickets in Raleigh at the PNC Arena," Ryan Somerville, a native Long Islander who moved to Charlotte in 2019, told The Post.

According to Julia Young of Vivid Seats, 24 percent of the seats at PNC Arena are projected to be filled by Ranger fans for Game 3.

Though no one had taken him up on the offer for this series as of Wednesday, Somerville successfully procured tickets for people for past Rangers-Hurricanes games.

"I've actually had quite a few people reach out to me directly," he said. "More personal family and friends, but I've had people from my high school call me and say, 'Hey, any chance we can work something out?' I say, 'Yeah, absolutely.'

"People travel. Don't underestimate the cost of Spirit or Frontier [budget airlines]. People will go down to Raleigh because it is so cheap and I think that was the initial draw for a lot of New Yorkers to move to the Carolinas. But the fandom follows, right?"

Rangers fans will be making the trip down to Carolina for Game 3.

Especially compared to the exorbitant prices at Madison Square Garden, it is relatively affordable to go to a game at PNC Arena.

As of Wednesday afternoon, the lowest ticket price on VividSeats for Game 3 of the series was $127.

To get into Game 5 in New York, the bare minimum was $322, with most tickets listed at over $400, even in the upper bowl.

Two years ago when the Rangers and Hurricanes went seven games in the playoffs, there was a notable away fan presence in Raleigh throughout the series despite the same geoblocking measures being in place, particularly in Game 7, which the Rangers dominated 6-2.

It's estimated Rangers fans could make up close to 25 percent of the crowd at PNC Arena.

It's estimated Rangers fans could make up close to 25 percent of the crowd at PNC Arena. James Guillory-USA TODAY Sports

The home team won each of the first six games in that series.

This time, the Rangers are going on the road with a 2-0 lead after Vincent Trocheck won Tuesday night's Game 2 in double overtime.

Carolina is known as one of the loudest atmospheres in the NHL, but there is worry in the fan community about keeping the building red.

A thread on the Hurricanes' Reddit page leading into the series with over 100 comments slammed those who were reselling tickets.

"Really appreciate them doing their best to get rid of our home crowd advantage for a couple extra bucks," the original poster wrote.

While the tickets sold directly by Carolina are geoblocked, the same does not apply to those on the secondary market.

For those looking to buy at face value, however, there are always middlemen such as Somerville, who will be at Game 4.

"When they see Ranger fans walking through the grass [parking] lots in jerseys and hats and everything, you're gonna get a lot of boos, but you ask for it," Somerville said. "That's pretty much what a rivalry is. You expect that kind of warm welcome."

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311878 New York Rangers

NHL Playoff odds: Rangers now favorites in East after 2-0 start vs. Hurricanes

Dylan Svoboda

The Eastern Conference is the Rangers' to win after going up 2-0 on the Hurricanes.

The Blueshirts are prohibitive favorites to come out of the East, with BetMGM Sportsbook pegging them at +145 to win the conference heading into Wednesday's Stanley Cup Playoff action.

Despite winning the Presidents' Trophy and sweeping the Capitals in the first round, the Rangers were sizable underdogs against Carolina before the second-round series.

But after two straight home wins as an underdog, the Rangers are now in control over the Hurricanes, who have consistently been one of the top Stanley Cup contenders throughout the 2023-24 season.

The Rangers are now a heavy -300 favorite to move on to the conference finals and +425 to finish off the Canes in a sweep.

If they're able to take care of Carolina, the Rangers would face the winner of the Bruins and Panthers sereies.

As the series shifts to Raleigh, the Rangers are again an underdog (+145, BetMGM) ahead of Thursday's Game 3.

It's been a wild ride for the Blueshirts, who came into the season with a shot at winning their first title since 1994 but were far from a shoo-in to make a deep playoff run.

The Rangers were outside the inner circle of contenders in the East preseason, registering the fifth-best odds (+700) to win the conference at open.

By the time the postseason kicked off, the Rangers had become popular with the betting public to walk away with the Stanley Cup.

Before the series against the Hurricanes, the Rangers were the fifth-favorite to win the Stanley Cup at +650, but have quickly vaulted up the odds board and now sit at +425, tied with the Avalanche and Oilers for the best chance in the league.

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311879 New York Rangers

Rangers aren't afraid to get down and dirty -- even with Matt Rempe on bench

Larry Brooks

RALEIGH, N.C. — They have done the required in holding serve at the Garden to take a 2-0 lead in the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs, no more than that. But wait a second, the Rangers have done a lot more than that.

In going toe-to-toe with the Hurricanes in the opening set at the Garden, these Blueshirts have demonstrated that they have the right stuff for the playoffs. This is no white-gloves operation. The Rangers have transformed themselves. They can get down and dirty with the best of them and most certainly do at times.

Their next task is to lay down the hammer on the Canes in Game 3 here Thursday, it is to step on their metaphorical throat and not let them up for a moment, not allow the NHL's third-best team to gain hope.

In 2012, the Rangers beat the Capitals in a triple overtime of Game 3 in Washington that should have given the club momentum. It did not. The Blueshirts came out flat in Game 4, were beaten, and were dragged into a enervating seven-game series. If this is going to be the Rangers' time, this is as good a time as any for the club to put their stamp on it.

"I think you build confidence during the regular season, you build that foundation to have the belief that no matter what the situation is in the game we're not out of it, we have the ability to get back in the game and fight to the very last second," Barclay Goodrow said Wednesday in the wake of his team's Game 2, 4-3 double-overtime victory. "I don't know that necessarily needs to be renewed in the playoffs.

"I don't think our confidence has ever wavered throughout the season. You build it through the season. Nothing is going to change."

The Rangers got stronger as Tuesday's 87-minute 24-second marathon evolved. They were quicker to the puck, stronger on the battles and were able to get to the net with more frequency. There is room for improvement in defending through the neutral zone, where Carolina has made the 1-3-1 into a half pound of Lacey Swiss and there's a need for some forecheck containment to at least slow down the Canes, who always operate at one speed.

The Rangers got stronger even as they played with 11 forwards after the 17:27 mark of the second period that marked the end of Matt Rempe's fifth and final shift. If you do the math, that equals to the final 49:57 of the match. Once upon a time, Petr Klima had been benched for the Oilers all but one shift in the three overtimes of Game 1 of the 1990 final against Boston. He got on again and scored at 15:13 — after getting one shift the previous 55 minutes. Maybe that would have been Rempe had the game gone on into the wee hours.

A scuffle breaks out between the New York Rangers and the Carolina Hurricanes during the first period.

It is not ideal to cut down to 11 in a playoff game, but Carolina's Max Comtois got one 32-second shift after the second period while Stefan Noesen got on for 2:09 after the midway mark of the second period and Jesperi Kotkaniemi got just 3:38 over the final 48 minutes.

The Blueshirts pulled it off by mixing and matching among their contracted bottom-five with head coach Peter Laviolette orchestrating the bench, calling for quick shifts. Alex Wenneberg, for example, had 10 shifts in the third period for an average of 25 seconds per. Goodrow averaged 23 seconds on his eight shifts in the third mixing in among Jimmy Vesey, Will Cuylle, Wennberg and Kaapo Kakko, the Fin only getting a total of 5:00 through the first two periods and 11:25 for the game.

Rempe did not get a third-period shift in Game 4 against the Caps or in Game 1 against Carolina. But his minutes — 38:11, total in the playoffs — come with value. He's like Cheers. Everyone knows his name. The Rangers have been working with a shortened bench for a while now and have become adept at it. They have also won 15 straight games with Rempe in the lineup and are 20-2-1 with him overall.

Still, Tuesday may have taken a toll. The Rangers may feel that is not feasible to start with a shortened bench and that, 48 hours later, fresh legs are needed, fresher even than Rempe's should be.

"I'm making sure that we're going into Carolina with a lineup that we want," Laviolette said. "I understand the question [about Rempe,] but I feel [cutting the bench] happens all the time in playoffs when you come down to it.

"Regardless of minutes, it's about winning that hockey game."

Meanwhile, Kelly Sutherland should not be allowed to officiate another Rangers game in the playoffs. He should be suspended without pay. The disrespect the referee showed Rempe by wagging a couple of fingers in the vicinity of No. 73's face while lecturing him after the first-period incident in which he had been knocked down by Jack Drury after perhaps backing into netminder Freddie Andersen was a disgrace.

Sutherland looked like an unhinged father berating a teen who missed curfew with his daughter on prom night. Rempe smiled. The referee is supposed to be the one who is the adult here. He shouldn't be allowed near the Rangers the rest of the way.

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311880 New York Rangers

Jacob Trouba goes viral for 'chin-hunting' hit attempt, flying into boards during Rangers' Game 2 win

Matt Ehalt

Jacob Trouba went for it all … and nearly knocked himself out in the process.

The Rangers defenseman had the internet buzzing during Tuesday's 4-3 double-overtime win over the Hurricanes in Game 2 for what some have deemed a dangerous play on Martin Necas.

Trouba attempted to de-skate Necas with a high forearm in the upper-body area, only to whiff and send himself crashing head-first into the boards while hitting Necas in the head with his foot.

“I don’t know if I’ve ever seen a play where someone almost kills someone else twice and themselves once, but I’m not surprised it involved Trouba,” tweeted hockey analyst Pete Blackburn.

I don't know if I've ever seen a play where someone almost kills someone else twice and themselves once, but I'm not surprised it involved Trouba pic.twitter.com/3dDPfaXcY5

— Pete Blackburn (@PeteBlackburn) May 8, 2024

Trouba, the Rangers’ captain, has developed a reputation for rugged play that sometimes can cross the line and earn him scorn from other fan bases, and Tuesday’s attempted hit came quite close to entering that territory.

As Necas pushed the puck up the ice toward the boards, Trouba launched himself at the center from his right.

The slow-motion replay shows Trouba clearly throwing his left elbow toward the shoulder/head region of Necas, which could have been quite the bad scene.

Necas, showing cat-like reflexes, noticed Trouba coming and suddenly changed direction to fall the other way, which allowed his head to just miss connecting with Trouba’s elbow.

Thanks to Necas getting out of the way, Trouba then came up empty as he left his feet and instead crashed head-first into the boards.

Trouba came up empty on his attempted hit.

But Necas didn’t escape all damage.

As Necas laid there, having just dodged the elbow, Trouba fell back to the ice and his right skate landed on the back of the forward’s head.

Neither player appeared hurt after the incident as play resumed.

Fans on the internet had mixed reactions to the play, with some focusing on the funnier element of Trouba attempting a monster hit only to strike out.

Another angle of Jacob Trouba crashing into the boards.

“Jacob Trouba went FLYING trying to blow up Martin Necas 😳💀,” the @GinoHard_ X account posted.

“This Trouba sequence is straight out of NHL Hitz 😳,” user @BradyTrett posted.

The Pardon My Take account compared it to the famous viral video of a man jumping toward a judge.

Others took greater issue with it.

Former NHLer Jordan Schmaltz criticized Trouba for “chin hunting.”

“This play by #NYR Trouba is so insane. Jimmity Christmas haha. I love a solid hit. Maybe even being a little criminal.. But this is full on chin hunting,” he tweeted. “Look at how he chicken wings his elbow for a last ditch effort to tag Necas on the button. Great chute pull by #88 of #CauseChaos. Whether that was a planned business decision or he blew a tire or a combo. Helluva move.”

Trouba's skates hit Necas in the back of the head.

Barstool’s Ryan Whitney said Trouba is lucky he didn’t connect or he might not have played the rest of the series.

“Trouba train just tried to put his elbow through Necas jugular,” he posted. “That could have been a 5 gamer if he connected.”

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311881 New York Rangers

Rangers' first real taste of 2024 playoff adversity ends with a win

Mark Cannizzaro

It’s easy to view the Rangers ride through the early portion of these Stanley Cup playoffs as smooth and without a lot of bumps in the road.

The Rangers have, after all, now won all six of their playoff games after Tuesday night’s stirring 4-3 comeback double-overtime victory over the Hurricanes in Game 2 of the second-round series at the Garden.

Their four-game sweep of the offensively challenged Capitals in the first round was never truly in doubt.

Rangers celebrate after Vincent Trocheck scored the game-winning goal in double overtime to lead the Rangers to a 4-3 win over the Hurricanes in Game 2.

In their Game 1 win over Carolina Sunday at the Garden, they led 3-1 after the first period and had control of the game throughout.

And their win on Tuesday — made possible in the end by a Vincent Trocheck goal at 7:24 of the second overtime — was their 29th comeback victory of the season.

So, for you dreamers amongst Rangers fans, there surely must be visions of the team mowing through these playoffs without much resistance dancing in your heads.

But no team in NHL history has gone 16-0 in the postseason en route to winning a Stanley Cup.

And, even if the Rangers are good enough (and fortunate enough) to end their 30-year drought without a Cup, they’re not going to win 16 in a row to get there.

Adversity lurks. And the Rangers got 87 minutes and 24 seconds of it on Tuesday night before Trocheck ended it against his former team.

Adversity was there with 5.4 seconds remaining in the first period when the Hurricanes took a 2-1 lead into the intermission after a tip-in goal by defenseman Dmitry Orlov to silence the buzzing Garden.

That marked the first time in six playoff games the Rangers trailed after any period.

Jake Guentzel tip in the puck for a goal on Igor Shesterkin during the first period of the Rangers' Game 2 win.

Adversity was there again with 1:42 remaining in the second period when Carolina’s trade-deadline prize Jake Guentzel beat Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin with a one-timer blast from the left circle for a 3-2 Carolina lead.

The Rangers got their first true dose of postseason adversity on Tuesday night and they didn’t blink.

Now they take a 2-0 lead to Raleigh for Game 3 on Thursday night and Game 4 on Saturday and know they’ll be facing an even more desperate Carolina team than the one that pushed them to the limit on Tuesday night.

“They’re a good team,” Rangers coach Peter Laviolette said afterward. “They’re a really good team. So, this isn’t going to be control all 60 minutes and move on to the next game. You’re going to have to fight.

“It’s probably the way it is from here on out. This game was fast, it was furious, it was physical, there was a lot of energy and emotion inside the game. It’s everything that you would want in a playoff game.”

And this resilient, talented and confident Rangers team looks like everything Laviolette could want in the playoffs.

Teams with 2-0 leads in best-of-seven series have won 86 percent of those series in Stanley Cup playoff history.

That, of course, won’t be the way the Rangers are thinking when they lace up their skates for Game 3, because the Rangers know, as good as things look now, adversity lurks on the next shift, in the next game, in the next series … if there is a next series.

Jacob Trouba delivers a hard check on Martin Necas during the first period of the Rangers' Game 2 win.

Nothing that’s as difficult to win as the Stanley Cup — arguably the most difficult trophy to win in all of team sports — comes easy.

“There’s never any panic in the room in between periods or whenever it may be,” Rangers captain Jacob Trouba said after the game.

“Confidence is something you build throughout the course of the year, and I don’t think we ever feel like we’re out of games. We have high-end players that have the ability to put the puck in the net.”

So, there was Chris Kreider, their all-timing leading scorer in the playoffs, burying a rebound to tie the game at 3-3 with 13:53 remaining in the third period. It was his 43rd career playoff goal, 18th on the power play.

And it gave the Rangers life. Got them to overtime.

So, too, did Shesterkin, who for the first time this postseason was asked to put the team on his back. And he did, saving 54 of 57 Carolina shots, and making some positively stunning stops in overtime.

“It’s tough to beat our team when he’s making saves like that,” Trocheck said.

Asked what the discussion inside the dressing room between the end of regulation and overtime is like, Trouba smiled and said, “The intermission before overtime is always like, ‘All right, here we go. It’s playoff time.’ It’s an emotional ride. It’s fun.”

This Rangers team is built for this, beginning with Laviolette, who’s been there and done everything in the league, and including his veteran leadership amongst the players, who don’t blink.

Adversity?

Bring it on.

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311882 New York Rangers

Rangers-Hurricanes Game 2 battle reaches new level for chippiness

Ethan Sears

A day that started with a conversation around Matt Rempe ended in the big man being only an extra in the most physical match of these playoffs for either team so far.

There was Igor Shesterkin getting taken out and nearly becoming a participant in the ensuing scrum just 12:05 into the match.

There was Rempe snowing Frederik Andersen a few minutes later.

Rangers and Hurricanes players get into a scuffle after Igor Shesterkin was taken out by Andrei Svechnikov in the firs period of the Rangers' Game 2 4-3 win over the Hurricanes in double overtime.

There was Tony DeAngelo telling K’Andre Miller, “I’ll fight you anytime,” which was picked up by ESPN’s microphones.

There was Jake Guentzel punching Adam Fox in the face, and Carolina feeling like the defenseman went down a little too easy in drawing a roughing penalty.

There was Jacob Trouba and Dmitry Orlov trading punishing hits in overtime.

This was playoff hockey, and at the end of it all, there was a 4-3 Rangers victory in double overtime and a 2-0 series lead.

Afterward, Shesterkin would say of Andrei Svechnikov — who sent him flying behind his own net some four hours earlier — “It’s playoffs. No friends in a game. I just told him, ‘Let’s play hockey.’ Not to do like this. Stupid penalties.”

And Carolina captain Jordan Staal would say of the Rangers’ penchant for drawing penalties — Fox included — “Good question. It is what it is. There’s penalties, but it’s hard for us to know how hard guys hit other guys. It is what it is.”

It is only to be expected that a seven-game series with the season on the line will feature heightened animosity from both sides. But the heat has been set to high early in this second-round matchup between Metropolitan Division rivals.

Things were noticeably more physical in Game 1 than they had been during either teams’ first-round series, but things got taken up a notch on Tuesday when Svechnikov caused every Ranger on the ice to jump to Shesterkin’s defense and the infraction was reviewed for a major before the referees determined it was only worthy of a tripping minor.

“I think it’s just natural to stick up for your goaltender, guys are gonna jump in there,” coach Peter Laviolette said. “They know how important he is to this team and they’re gonna defend him.”

Rempe, presumably in response, stopped short of Andersen a few shifts after the ensuing power play, to which Jack Drury took exception.

Referee Kelly Sutherland gave Rempe a talking to (which Svechnikov did not receive after felling Shesterkin) and No. 73 was mostly quiet for the rest of the night, with his final shift coming in the second period.

But it was not just Rempe leading the charge Wednesday.

It was the Rangers one and all.

New York Post LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311883 New York Rangers

Best: Special teams may lead Rangers to special season

By Neil Best

GREENBURGH — The numbers are cartoonish, and certainly not sustainable.

Right?

We shall see about that in the days and perhaps weeks to come. But for now, the Rangers’ special teams performance in their second-round playoff series against the Hurricanes has been extraordinary — and the primary reason they lead it, 2-0.

“Obviously, that part of the game is going well right now,” captain Jacob Trouba said late Tuesday night, after the Rangers’ 4-3 double-overtime victory in Game 2.

That is an understatement.

The Rangers tied the score at 3 with a power-play goal by Chris Kreider in the third period. Then they won the game with a power-play goal by Vincent Trocheck 7:24 into double overtime.

If you’re keeping score at home, that makes the Rangers 4-for-9 on power plays in the series against a Hurricanes penalty kill that led the NHL in the regular season at 86.4%.

In Game 1, the Rangers were 2-for-2 on power plays and required a total of 23 seconds to convert those chances. They are 10-for-25 overall in the playoffs.

The Hurricanes were 0-for-5 on power plays in Game 2, making them an even 0-for-10 in the two games at Madison Square Garden. They ranked second in the NHL on power plays in the regular season at 26.9%. (The Rangers were third at 26.4%.)

“I think there’s a confidence throughout the penalty kill,” Barclay Goodrow said on Wednesday before the team left for Game 3 in Raleigh on Thursday night. “A big part of that is obviously Shesty [goalie Igor Shesterkin] . . . When you have a goalie like that that’s kind of anchoring the whole unit, that provides an extra sense of comfort and confidence throughout everyone.”

The Hurricanes realize they have a problem here. “Everyone in the room knows our special teams have to get better," captain Jordan Staal said after Game 2.

The Rangers’ reputation all season has been overreliance on power-play goals over five-on-five ones. It is one reason the Hurricanes were favored entering the series by oddsmakers and analytics geeks alike.

The theory is that not only are special teams an unpredictable route to success, but also that in the playoffs referees become more reluctant to blow whistles.

That was the way it used to work in hockey, but it certainly has not worked that way so far.

In Game 2, there was a penalty on Carolina with 1:38 left in regulation time, then one in each overtime period against the Rangers and finally the backbreaker — a cross-checking call on the Hurricanes' Brady Skjei 6:37 into the second overtime.

It hardly was a violent act against Trocheck, and it was the sort of play in which referees would have looked away in that situation for most of the past century.

Not this time.

When asked whether the Rangers might be going down a little too easily on some of these fouls to draw calls, Staal said, "Good question."

Then he hesitated before going on: "I mean, good question. It is what it is . . . It's hard for us to know how hard guys hit other guys, and it is what it is."

Trocheck made the Hurricanes pay, another triumph for the No. 1 unit of Kreider, Trocheck, Mika Zibanejad, Artemi Panarin and Adam Fox.

So much for that stuff about relying too much on special teams. It is akin to a baseball team being viewed as a playoff liability because it relies too heavily on home runs. But what if it just keeps hitting home runs? Problem solved.

If this is the way NHL playoff games are to be officiated, perhaps the Rangers can win 10 more games relying on their extra-man prowess. There were 14 penalties called in Game 2.

"We've got to definitely be sharper," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said of his power-play unit. "We've got to get inside. We're all on the outside. That's just not how we do it."

Trouba said of the special teams dominance, "That can change. Obviously, we'd like it to stay this way, but I don't think you want to rely on it or want to win games strictly that way."

Maybe not, but so far, so good.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311884 New York Rangers

Rangers top Hurricanes in Game 2 on Trocheck's goal in 2OT

By Colin Stephenson

Vincent Trocheck wasn't speechless, exactly. He just couldn't find the right words to describe what had just happened, and how, exactly, his Rangers had just won their sixth straight playoff game, a 4-3, double-overtime thriller in Game 2 of their second-round series against the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday night at Madison Square Garden.

"I thought we were very resilient,'' said Trocheck, who jammed in a rebound to score the winning goal, on a power play, at 7:24 of the second extra period. "We went down a goal a couple of different times, stuck with it. Obviously Shesty [goalie Igor Shesterkin] played outstanding. He kept us in the game multiple different times. Then on the goal, I couldn't tell you what happened. It went in.''

The Rangers had to rally from deficits of 2-1 and 3-2, and they needed Shesterkin to make 54 saves to give them a chance. In the end, the same thing that made the difference in Game 1, special teams, made the difference in Game 2.

The Rangers' power play, which had gone 2-for-2 in Game 1, was 2-for-7 this time, but the two goals were Chris Kreider's, at 6:07 of the third period, which tied the game 3-3 and forced overtime, and Trocheck's, which won it.

The penalty kill, for the second straight game, snuffed out all five Carolina power plays, including one in each of the two overtime periods.

"That part of the game's going well right now,'' said captain Jacob Trouba, who took three minor penalties in the game, including one in the first overtime, for tripping. "Obviously, you don't want to rely on it, you don't want to win games strictly that way . . . but winning the special teams battle is proven to be a key part of winning NHL hockey games.''

The victory gave the Rangers a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series, sweeping the first two at the Garden. The scene now shifts to Raleigh for Games 3 and 4. Game 3 is Thursday.

Trocheck, who leads the Rangers in goals in the preseason, with five, has scored in five straight games, tying the longest playoff goal streak in franchise history. Cecil Dillon scored in five straight in 1933.

The Rangers also became the fourth Presidents' Trophy team to open the playoffs with six straight wins, following the 2021 Colorado Avalanche, the 1999 Dallas Stars and the '94 Rangers, who won their first seven playoff games. The '99 Stars and '94 Rangers won the Stanley Cup.

The Rangers opened the scoring in the first period, when Alexis Lafreniere, who had two goals in the game, beat Carolina goalie Frederik Andersen (35 saves) with a precise shot through a screen at 10:53 after Alex Wennberg chased down a long pass from Trouba, controlled it on the corner boards and sent it back to the point for K'Andre Miller. Miller's shot was blocked in front, but Lafreniere got the loose puck and fired from a sharp angle. Andersen never saw it.

The Rangers had a chance to double the lead when Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov was sent off for tripping Shesterkin behind the net at 12:05. Shesterkin wanted to chase after Svechnikov, but was stopped, and cooler heads prevailed.

The power play moved the puck around and looked great, but it didn't score, and little more than a minute after the power play expired, Jake Guentzel scored his first of two goals, a tip-in of a shot by Sebastian Aho at 15:07, to tie the score 1-1. The Hurricanes then took the lead when defenseman Dmitry Orlov scored with 5.4 seconds left in the opening period, deflecting in a shot from former Ranger Brady Skjei to make it 2-1.

Lafreniere's second goal, a backdoor tap-in of a pretty feed from Adam Fox, tied the game 2-2 at 7:32 of the second, but Guentzel put Carolina back in front with his second goal. He skated right to the middle of the slot, unchecked, and hammered home a feed from Aho to put Carolina back in front 3-2 with 1:42 left in the second period.

"As the game went on, I thought we stayed with it, maybe even got better through the overtimes,'' Rangers coach Peter Laviolette said. "We had to kill a couple penalties in the overtime, so you've got to fight through that, and then get the power-play opportunity ... It was a roller coaster a little bit. For the guys to stay in there, locked in, and focused like that was a pretty big effort.''

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311885 New York Rangers

Best: Shesterkin saves Rangers with big night in net

By Neil Best

"I-gor! I-gor! I-gor!"

It was the soundtrack of Madison Square Garden on Tuesday night, and it was a sound that never gets old for the man who goes by that name.

"It's an unbelievable feeling every time — every time," Igor Shesterkin said. "I was almost crying."

This was after the goaltender's 54-save performance in a 4-3, double-overtime victory over the Hurricanes in Game 2 of the teams' second-round playoff series.

The Rangers now lead the series 2-0, but they were not the better team on this night, and Shesterkin saved them again and again.

“Igor played an Igor-esque game,” said Vincent Trocheck, who scored the game-winner on a power play at 7:24 of the second extra period.

Trocheck called Shesterkin’s saves total “insane.” He became the first Rangers goalie with multiple playoff games of 50-plus saves. He recorded 79 in a triple-overtime loss to the Penguins in 2022.

“When he’s on like that, it’s tough to beat him,” Trocheck said. “It’s tough to beat our team whenever he’s making saves like he was tonight.”

Shesterkin admitted being tired when it was over, saying, “It was a pretty tough game.” But he also said, “I just know if your team scores, you get a lot of power right away, and MSG was electric tonight. So happy to win tonight.”

The ghost of goaltending stars past was in the building on Tuesday in the form of Henrik Lundqvist, who received the biggest cheer of the night among celebrities shown on the video board.

But for all Lundqvist did for the franchise, he last played in the 2019-20 season. Shesterkin’s Game 2 masterpiece was another sign that the transition from the Lundqvist era to his is complete.

“He’s done that as long as I’ve been here,” said captain Jacob Trouba, who arrived in ’19-20, the same season Shesterkin did. “It’s been talked about enough what he brings to the team — or maybe never enough.”

Trouba cited “the level he brings, how badly he wants to win, the commitment I think he has that not a lot of people see, in the gym, outside the rink, when he gets on the ice . . . It’s not a mistake that he’s as good as he is.”

On top of doing his job of stopping pucks, Shesterkin showed his feisty side.

After Andrei Svechnikov took him out behind the net with what was called a tripping penalty, Shesterkin skated nearly halfway across the ice to confront Svechnikov as other Rangers went after him.

Later, Shesterkin took offense to Svechnikov in front of his net and took a Billy Smith-style swipe at him with his goalie stick.

“It’s the playoffs,” Shesterkin said when asked about those incidents. “No friends in a game. I just told him, ‘Let’s play hockey and do not do these stupid penalties.’”

Said Trouba, “He’s intense. That’s what you want out of teammates and players. You want them to care, and he cares. He shows it and plays with some passion.”

Frederik Andersen made his share of big saves for the Hurricanes, too, but the edge in goal that most gave the Rangers entering this series is playing out.

“He was fantastic tonight,” coach Peter Laviolette said of Shesterkin. “Both goaltenders had to make big saves or the game would have gone in a different direction.”

Laviolette added, “I thought we got better as the game went on, and I think he got better as the game went on, too.”

Trocheck’s game-winner came after what appeared to be a borderline cross-checking penalty on Brady Skjei, under the double-overtime circumstances.

But it was another example of the drastic edge the Rangers have had in special teams, scoring regularly on power plays and keeping Carolina from doing so.

That is a dangerous thing to rely on, just as it is dangerous to rely on a goalie bailing a team out.

But for now, it’s all working perfectly. Shesterkin and the Rangers are 6-0 in the playoffs, and Carolina now must beat them four times in five games.

“We never give up, so we play ‘til the end,” Shesterkin said. “Everybody plays our game. So we deserved that win tonight.”

Perhaps, but one guy deserved it more than anyone else.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311886 New York Rangers

Two OT thrillers in NHL playoffs, plus your new 2025 NFL Draft board

Chris Branch

Good morning! Skip OT today, OK?

While You Were Sleeping: Headline

A hot team can crush expectations. A hot goalie can win you a Stanley Cup. The Rangers embody both, currently producing the NHL’s best vibes to boot.

Last night’s double-overtime win against the Hurricanes proved it:

It took New York and Carolina nearly an hour and a half of game time to decide a winner, which came on this nifty tap-in from Vincent Trocheck. It ended what may have been the best game of these Stanley Cup playoffs, and put the Rangers up 2-0 in what’s been an incredible series already.

This is also a legitimate, nasty rivalry, as Mark Lazerus wrote. And that was before we saw what Jacob Trouba tried to do to Martin Necas (both players were OK afterward):

https://t.co/Lra3oeC91B pic.twitter.com/qgvqVqrAw4

— Tony X (@soloucity) May 8, 2024

That it happened at Madison Square Garden was most fitting. The Rangers and Knicks are a combined 7-1 at MSG this postseason, with the Knicks’ lone loss coming in a game they absolutely should’ve won.

The best part? This wasn’t last night’s only overtime hockey thriller: Late last night, the Colorado Avalanche stormed back from a 3-0 first-period deficit to shock the Stars, 4-3, in overtime on the road.

We also had two NBA games, light on drama as No. 1 seeds cruised to 1-0 leads:

Oklahoma City outlasted the Mavericks at home, 117-95, continuing an impressive 5-0 postseason run for the inexperienced Thunder. OKC is so deep, but can’t count on Luka Dončić having another bad game of only 19 points.

Mbappe quells Real talk after PSG loss

Borussia Dortmund outlasted Paris Saint-Germain 1-0 yesterday, winning the pair’s semifinal matchup 2-0 on aggregate. It was a frustrating match for PSG on multiple levels: They had a 3.22-0.77 advantage in expected goals while failing to find the net, and Kylian Mbappe played what was likely his final Champions League match for PSG. He prepares to leave on a free transfer this offseason, though he shut down any Real Madrid talk in a postgame presser. Tense times all around for the Parisian side.

Murray fined $100k

The NBA will collect $100,000 from Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, who chucked a towel and heat pack toward the court (in the direction of a referee) during Monday’s blowout loss to the Timberwolves. It was just one part of an awful night for the defending champions — coach Mike Malone went ballistic on a ref, Aaron Gordon earned a technical and the team looks like toast right now. Yeesh.

More news

The NFL schedule will be released May 15, per The Athletic’s sources.

Knicks center Mitchell Robinson will miss the rest of the postseason with an ankle injury. It’s a brutal blow for a team already impacted by injuries.

This season, the WNBA will add charter flights on a full-time basis, which commissioner Cathy Engelbert called a “historic moment for the league.”

Officials will not press charges against a young man who admitted to shouting a racial slur at members of the Utah women’s basketball team.

No surprise: Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon and Nikita Kucherov are your Hart Trophy finalists.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

Yes, Draft Season: Time to start grinding tape again

For real NFL draftniks, the season never ends. Dane Brugler had a 2025 first-round NFL mock draft up three days after 2024's Mr. Irrelevant moment. A week later, Austin Mock premieres the 2025 consensus Big Board, which serves our severe draft withdrawals and provides a road map of who to watch this college football season.

The top five:

1. Will Campbell, OT — LSU

2. Mason Graham, DT — Michigan

3. Will Johnson, CB — Michigan

4. Kelvin Banks Jr., OT — Texas

5. James Pearce Jr., edge — Tennessee

"Branch only listed that because an LSU guy is No. 1," you might say. I can neither confirm nor deny. But I think it's fascinating to see how these boards can evolve, and Austin himself points to, ahem, Jayden Daniels' rise from mid-rounder to QB2 last year as evidence.

The QBs on this list:

10. Carson Beck — Georgia

17. Shedeur Sanders — Colorado

21. Quinn Ewers — Texas

The funny thing is that NFL evaluators seem down on this QB class overall, which might not be totally fair. Beck has all the tools. Sanders, love him or hate him, is a dazzling player when he's not taking a sack. Ewers might have the most upside. And we'll see who else emerges this season.

A fun part of conference realignment: We get to see Beck play Ewers in Austin this October. A signature performance from either could go a long way toward establishing some order on this board.

See the full list here, which includes some more pressing questions about other facets of this draft class.

Watch This Game

Soccer: Bayern Munich at Real Madrid

3 p.m. ET on Paramount+

The Champions League semifinal is tied on aggregate heading into this second-leg match. Sign me up.

NHL: Bruins at Panthers

7:30 p.m. ET on ESPN

Can Boston pull off another stunning upset on the road? Still not over that Game 1 beatdown.

NBA: Pacers at Knicks

8 p.m. ET on TNT

Our only basketball matchup of the night is juicy after this series' controversial ending to Game 1. The crowd should be even more frothy than normal.

Get tickets to games like these here.

Pulse Picks

Dan Lanning knows you thought he'd leave Oregon, just like the last two coaches did. But, as Christopher Kamrani writes today in an excellent profile, all you have to do is check his tattoos — or talk to the guy for 10 minutes — to see he's different.

Speaking of Oregon: the Ducks are No. 3 in Ari Wasserman's post-spring college football top 25, which debuted yesterday.

I was already excited to read Andy McCullough's upcoming book on Clayton Kershaw, but this new excerpt made me pre-order it.

Britt Ghiroli writes about the worrisome NIL deal from Perfect Game and Fanatics that is raising red flags with agents, who fear amateur baseball players are signing away too many rights.

I thought Phil Hay's write-up on an ex-Chelsea coach's secret lifetime ban, based on reporting by Daniel Taylor, was troubling and insightful. Read Phil every day in The Athletic FC newsletter.

Most-clicked in the newsletter yesterday: Our news update on Talor Gooch's invite to the PGA Championship. Still a pleasant surprise to me.

Most-read on the website yesterday: Our NHL Draft Lottery live blog. Now we just have to wonder if Macklin Celebrini will turn pro for next season.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311887 New York Rangers

Igor Shesterkin's 'Igor-esque' outing gives Rangers a Game 2 win and hopes for more

Peter Baugh

NEW YORK — Before Vincent Trocheck became the hero, before his stick found the loose puck in double overtime and placed it in the Carolina Hurricanes net, before the Madison Square Garden sky bridge quaked from an explosion of cheers, Igor Shesterkin needed to keep the Rangers alive. Again and again and again and again.

Each time, each dangerous Hurricanes chance, he delivered.

Shesterkin saw 15 shots in overtime. None went in his net, buying New York enough time to break through and snag a 4-3 win. The Rangers lead 2-0 in the second round and have yet to lose in the playoffs.

They're the hottest NHL team left standing, and they have their world-class goalie to thank.

"Igor played an Igor-esque type of game tonight," Trocheck said. "Whenever he's on like that, it's tough to beat him. It's tough to beat our team whenever he's making saves like he was tonight."

The Hurricanes were as dangerous, if not more, than the Rangers for most of the night. The Jake Guentzel-Sebastian Aho-Andrei Svechnikov line generated frequent offense, at times caving New York in its own end, and Carolina led 57-39 in shots. The Hurricanes got a serviceable effort in net from Frederik Andersen, who stoned Mika Zibanejad twice in overtime to keep the game going.

But Andersen, who played excellent hockey down the stretch of the season, is not Shesterkin: a Vezina Trophy-winning goalie who has a case for best in the world when he's at his best.

Opposing coach Rod Brind'Amour called Shesterkin great in his postgame news conference. Adam Fox described him as New York's backbone, and Rangers' captain Jacob Trouba said that it's perhaps never talked about enough how much Shesterkin brings to the team.

"I feel like it's always the same thing: just the level he brings, how badly he wants to win, the commitment I think he has that not a lot of people see," the defenseman said. "It's not a mistake that he's as good as he is."

Shesterkin was engaged with the game early, and that extended beyond his crease. When Svechnikov tripped him behind the net midway through the first, the Rangers goalie followed the scrum of jostling Rangers and Hurricanes all the way to the blue line. Svechnikov gave Shesterkin a poke later in the game after he had already made a save, and the goalie leaped out of his crouch and right into his opponent's face.

A little spice from Shesterkin towards Svechnikov
pic.twitter.com/hpO1Eqdyql

— Shayna (@hayyyshayyy) May 8, 2024

It's the playoffs, Shesterkin told reporters postgame. He has no friends on the other team.

“That’s what you want out of teammates and players,” Trouba said. “You want them to care. He cares. He shows it.”

The goals that got past Shesterkin would not have been easy saves. The first two were tip-ins, and the third came after Aho whipped a pass to Guentzel in the slot. Shesterkin got better as the night went on, coach Peter Laviolette said. The goalie, though, was far from the reason the Rangers trailed entering the third.

Perhaps no one has better insight into Shesterkin’s capabilities than his backup, Jonathan Quick. The veteran goalie, who has won three Stanley Cups and a Conn Smythe Trophy, quickly saw how his teammate always tries to improve when he’s on the ice. That mentality hasn’t shifted as the games have risen in importance.

“It doesn’t matter if it’s April, May or September, October,” Quick said ahead of Game 2. “I think that’s what allows him to have the success he does this time of year.”

Shesterkin stopped 2.43 goals more than expected over the course of the night, according to Natural Stat Trick. His 54 saves are the most a Rangers goalie has ever had in a playoff victory. (Shesterkin had 79 saves in a first-round game against Pittsburgh two years ago, but that came in a loss.)

The degree of difficulty on his saves was not easy, either. Toward the end of regulation, with the Rangers on the power play, the Hurricanes generated a pair of dangerous looks. On one, Jordan Staal set up Seth Jarvis on a two-on-one. On the next, Jalen Chatfield fired a puck on net after a rebound.

On both, Shesterkin came through, stopping what likely would have been game-winning goals.

“You’re not always going to have your A-game for 60 minutes,” Fox said. “You need him to be sharp, for sure. Rarely is he not.”

His play continued in overtime when he halted Aho on a partial breakaway and then again on a dangerous chance in front of the net.

“When you’re in the second period, you’ve got maybe half a game to fight back (if you allow a goal),” Laviolette said. “But in overtime, those saves have to be made, and he was fantastic.”

The crowd recognized as much, chanting “I-gor! I-gor! I-gor!” at points throughout the game. Shesterkin said afterward that the synchronized cheers left him “almost crying.”

With a player like Shesterkin, the fans’ adulation makes total sense. He gives the Rangers reason to dream, reason to believe this could be a year to reach heights they haven’t since 2014, the last time they made the Stanley Cup Final. Or, just maybe, since 1994, the last time they won.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311939 Websites

The Athletic / Utah officially launches survey to help name its NHL team

By Ian Mendes

Utah’s NHL team officially launched a survey on Wednesday to help choose its nickname.

Team owner Ryan Smith posted a link on his social media channels, encouraging fans to participate in the survey. This first round will be open until May 22 and is an attempt to help pare down the number of team names that will actually be considered by the club.

On Wednesday, Smith Entertainment Group touted this as a “multi-phase branding process for fans to vote on the name.”

“Utah’s NHL team is a community asset, and we want to make sure that the community has a say in what the name is,” Smith said in a statement on Wednesday. “Utah has shown up for this team from the moment the NHL awarded us the franchise less than three weeks ago, and it is only fitting that our fans get the rare opportunity to help name the team they’ll be cheering for. ”

In the initial voting process, fans are invited to choose up to four potential names from a list of 20 options. The club compiled this list of 20 potential names after conducting initial research on social media.

Survey names for Utah's NHL team

Black Diamonds

Blast

Blizzard

Canyons

Caribou

Freeze

Frost

Fury

Glaciers

Hive

Ice

Mammoth

Mountaineers

Outlaws

Powder

Squall

Swarm

Utah HC

Venom

Yeti

Fans are only permitted to vote once in this process, with the guidelines stating that Qualtrics — which is Smith’s company — will ensure there is a “prevention of ballot box stuffing.” The club also stated that “backend analysis will also include deduplication and best practice statistical methods to ensure data integrity.”

This is only the first step in the selection process, with another round of voting on a shorter list of potential team names taking place at a later date this summer. The club has confirmed it will play its initial season in 2024-25 with jerseys that simply display “UTAH” on the front. After a nickname is selected, Smith Entertainment Group says they will “work diligently to craft the team identity — logo, mascot, collars and other branding elements” — which will be ready in time for the 2025-26 NHL season.

Earlier this spring, Smith told The Athletic that choosing the name for the team is something he believed was vitally important to establishing a connection with the community in Utah and Salt Lake City.

“It’s got to be something that drives people to want to be a part of it, from all ages. It’s got to be a momentum builder,” Smith said. “The sky is the limit on this one. We’re going to have to approve it and the league would have to approve it.”

The Athletic LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311940 Websites

The Athletic / Alexis Lafrenière’s breakout season a lesson for NHL’s Draft Lottery teams

By Mark Lazerus

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 9, 2024

NEW YORK — Alexis Lafrenière is 22 years old. That's it, just 22. Seems like he's older than that, doesn't it? Like he's in his mid-20s and already hurtling toward the aging curve. But he's not. He's 22. Not a kid, exactly, but a very young adult. In the real world, maybe he'd be just coming out of college, trying to land an internship or an entry-level job. In the NFL, maybe he'd have just been drafted last month.

In the NHL? He was a bust. Or something akin to one. That's how it goes when you're drafted No. 1 and you're not quite the "generational" talent you were hyped to be at 16 and 17 years old. Life comes at you fast, and judgment comes even faster, especially when you're playing in the nation's biggest market. It's not that Lafrenière was a failure or anything like that, but three seasons into his NHL career, he was a sturdy and unspectacular bottom-six winger, a depth scorer, a useful but ultimately disappointing player who'd never live up to the hype or maximize his natural gifts. Heck, for a while there, his name was tossed around as possible trade bait. Nineteen goals as a 20-year-old? Pfft. Time to move on. It's not gonna happen for the guy.

But a funny thing happened this Rangers season. It started to happen for the guy.

Lafrenière took a new tack in his offseason training. He got a new coach in Peter Laviolette, who put him in a new role on a line with Artemi Panarin and Vincent Trocheck. And suddenly, Lafrenière looked the part — the top-liner, the top producer, the top pick.

"It's always been there," Rangers captain Jacob Trouba said after Lafrenière potted a pair of goals in the Rangers' 4-3 double-overtime victory over the Carolina Hurricanes, giving them a 2-0 lead in the second-round series. "Coming into the league at a young age, into New York, is not the easiest of roles to be put in."

Laf with an absolute SNIPE. pic.twitter.com/3M1Vd1BErm

— x – New York Rangers (@NYRangers) May 7, 2024

By the standards of Connor McDavid or Auston Matthews, two top picks who leaped right over the learning curve, Lafrenière's regular-season total of 28 goals and 29 assists are modest at best. But watching Lafrenière in these playoffs, you can see the player the Rangers envisioned when they drafted him four years ago. And he might be just getting started.

Witness the way he calmly and coolly collected the puck and himself before snapping off a snipe that beat Carolina's Frederik Andersen high on the short side midway through the first period in Game 2. And then the way he crashed the net and knocked in an Adam Fox centering pass in the second period to tie the game 2-2. That was something that made Lafrenière so appealing as a draft prospect, the way he can score on both ends of the pretty-to-gritty spectrum. He's got that skill all the high picks have, but he has more than that. There's some grit to his game. He skates hard, he works hard, something Trouba said is "overlooked" about Lafrenière. He now has two goals and five assists in six playoff games — all of them wins. (And he came inches away from a hat trick early in the third period when his goalmouth chip went just over the net).

A Foxy feed ➡️ Laf on the doorstep. pic.twitter.com/VNQuFXIp8L

— x – New York Rangers (@NYRangers) May 8, 2024

Lafrenière isn't a depth scorer, he's a goal-scorer. He isn't a bust, he's busting out. And he's only 22.

It's a point worth hammering home on the night of the draft lottery, which put Macklin Celebrini — the next great young player in the NHL, we've been told for two years now — in the lap of the San Jose Sharks, and the likes of Ivan Demidov and Artyom Levshunov in talent-starved markets Chicago and Anaheim. Patience always has been a virtue when it comes to prospects, an obvious one at that, but it's become a lost one. We've come to expect instant greatness from our top draft picks, and when we don't get it, we cast instant judgment.

We should know better. As a scrawny 18-year-old, 2019 first-overall pick Jack Hughes scored seven goals in 61 games. The next season, he had 11 goals in 56 games. By the time he hit 21, he was one of the very best players in the world. Will Lafrenière, picked one year after Hughes, make that same leap? Maybe, maybe not. The leap he's made is both significant and instructional, regardless.

"He grew up, you can see it, this year," said Panarin, who was still eight years away from his own NHL debut when he was 18, playing in the second-tier Russian league. "He's an unbelievable player. Hits everything and can help a lot for the team."

Sometimes it takes a year. Sometimes it takes three. But it can be well worth the wait.

There's another lesson here, too. It's no coincidence that Lafrenière's breakout season came on a line with Panarin (a perennial MVP candidate) and Trocheck (a productive and savvy veteran). He's been there pretty much all season, playing more than 85 percent of his five-on-five minutes this season on Panarin's line. It's the kind of opportunity he just wasn't going to get under previous coach Gerard Gallant, who had made up his mind on Lafrenière. Laviolette came in with fresh eyes and a blank slate, and it gave Lafrenière new life. The Rangers had made some hay with their so-called "Kid Line" of Lafrenière, Filip Chytil and Kaapo Kakko under Gallant, but great players need to play with great players to be great.

It's why Connor Bedard "only" scored 22 goals with the Blackhawks this season. Bedard was playing with Philipp Kurashev and a rotating cast of left wings such as Nick Foligno, Anthony Beauvillier and Rem Pitlick. And on the flip side, it's part of the reason why every youngster who walks into the Dallas Stars roster — like Wyatt Johnston and Logan Stankoven — seems to take off right away. It takes nothing away from their evident excellence to point out it's a lot easier to realize your potential when you're put in a position to succeed, when you start your career on a good team with good habits and good linemates. Lafrenière didn't have that when he walked into a fifth-place team as an 18-year-old. He has that now.

Celebrini won't. Just like Bedard didn't in Chicago this past season, Celebrini is going to a Sharks team that openly and blatantly tanked to get him, flaying the roster down to the bone. The Sharks were abysmal this season, and won't be much better next season. Tomáš Hertl isn't walking back through that door. Every opponent will gameplan around stopping Celebrini, the way they did Bedard. Celebrini will be asked to elevate his linemates the way Bedard did Kurashev, instead of the other way around. It won't be easy. There will be growing pains. There will be scoring droughts.

That's just the reality of the modern-day NHL, where tanking is very much en vogue. It doesn't just matter who you pick, it matters who's making the pick. And the best prospects are consistently going to some of the worst teams we've ever seen, and their production — and development — inevitably will take a hit as a result. Which brings us right back to patience. To giving these kids a little grace, a little leash, a little time to find their games.

Remember, Lafrenière is just 22. And he's just scratching the surface of what he might be.

"Honestly, he's a kid at heart," Trouba said.

Honestly, he's barely more than a kid at all. Still. Remember that the next time a teenager stumbles out of the gate. Sometimes it just takes a little longer to find your footing.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311941 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'It's character': Canucks quiet disbelievers with resilient Game 1 win

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — If they didn't already know, the Edmonton Oilers discovered Wednesday who they're playing. Everybody did.

The Vancouver Canucks, widely dismissed like spam from your inbox ahead of their series with Edmonton, did what they have done since the National Hockey League season began by stunning the Oilers (and probably a lot of other people) by winning 5-4 in Game 1 of the teams' second-round playoff series.

And it wasn't just that the Canucks won, although given the Stanley Cup tournament and all, that would have been enough.

It's that Vancouver won by scoring four goals over the final 23 minutes to erase a 4-1 deficit. They scored three times in five minutes in the third period before Edmonton even managed a shot on net.

They won by limiting the mighty Oilers' attack to 17 shots, only seven of which occurred in the final two periods. And they won while holding Connor McDavid without a shot and to just a single, secondary assist. Edmonton's other megastar, Leon Draisaitl, had three shots and two assists but clearly was struggling through something physically over his modest 16:43 of ice time.

So, maybe this series is not a mere formality in the Oilers' coronation as Canada's last team standing.

"It's character," Canuck defenceman Nikita Zadorov said after scoring the tying goal on a slapshot with 6:13 remaining. "That shows the character inside the room. I think this team has been facing a lot of adversity throughout the year. . . a lot of adversity through the first round. And now this game shows us, too. We stick to it. A lot of guys stepped in individually and got us big goals."

Almost universally, Canuck players will say they don't care about the skepticism beyond their dressing room.

The Canucks were supposed to be a bubble team in the playoff race before the season, then won 50 games.

The soaring and scoring Nashville Predators were a popular pick to upset the Canucks in the playoffs' first round, but managed only 12 goals and were eliminated in six games. As Vancouver went through three goalies.

Canuck players don't listen to the outside noise. But they hear it.

"Some guys don't even read the media," Zadorov said. "I mean, I do. It's extra motivation. I see what they're doing; (Edmonton) has two of the best players in the world on that side, and guys want to see them win.

"Every media person, every individual who ever works in the hockey industry, they have their own opinions. We can't control them. We can control what we can control inside the room. It's our work ethic. It's showing up every day, working hard and playing for each other. If we keep doing that through the series, through the whole playoffs, good things will happen."

"I think we're in a good spot to be the underdog," centre Elias Lindholm said. "Obviously, a lot of people didn't think we would go through Nashville. You know, Nashville is one of the better teams since halfway through the season. But we like being the underdog. It's fine. I think people in here know how good of a team we are. We don't listen too much to the outside. I think this team is realizing that we have a shot."

And this shot isn't merely beating the Oilers to advance to the Western Conference Final.

"I think all year, like I said, it's a resilient group," Canucks coach Rick Tocchet said. "Sometimes we're not pretty. Sometimes things happen. But I just feel like it's a real close group. This is when you need a close group, in these situations. I thought everybody did something to contribute. I don't think we had any passengers tonight."

The worst thing the Canucks did in Game 1 was take a penalty for too many players just 40 seconds after the opening faceoff when defencemen Ian Cole and Carson Soucy botched a line change. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins beautifully set up Zach Hyman on the power play as the Oilers went ahead 1-0 at 2:11.

Mattias Ekholm made it 2-0 at 15:01, a few seconds after Cole's poorly-aimed clearance went straight to Draisaitl.

And despite the Canucks' superior five-on-five play in the middle period, the deficit peaked at 4-1 when Oiler Cody Ceci's slapshot skipped in off Cole at 12:26 and Hyman dribbled a shot through goalie Arturs Silovs pads at 13:11.

But Lindholm banked a centring pass off Oiler goalie Stuart Skinner's stick at 17:01, and 9:38 into the final period J.T. Miller deftly chipped Brock Boeser's shot-pass behind Skinner from an acute angle. Then Zadorov tied it on a drop pass from Teddy Blueger, before Conor Garland won it for Vancouver at 14:26.

With a half-step on Edmonton defenceman Darnell Nurse, Garland pump-faked a shot from the right-wing circle, took another stride and then shot the puck through Skinner as the goalie moved to his left.

"I've scored that goal a couple times in my career," Garland said. "You try to open up the goalie and slide it through and see where it takes you. I thought our game was pretty good throughout the night. Just when they start going in, obviously you get your confidence."

Silovs' best save came with 13 seconds from the end against Draisaitl's back-side one-timer as the Oilers attacked six-on-five. Edmonton's first shot of the final period didn't arrive until there were four minutes remaining.

"Every game is different," Tocchet said. "It's one game; you've got to think that way. Tonight, obviously we liked the way we defended. All year we were a good, defending team. We have something to fall back (on) if things don't go our way. That's sort of our foundation."

Each game may be different, but many of them are familiar for the Canucks. They scored two goals in 12 seconds in the third-period of Game 1 against the Predators to win 4-2. With their goalie on the bench, they scored twice in the final two minutes of Game 4 to force overtime in Nashville, then won 4-3.

"There's a lot of belief in this group," Zadorov reiterated. "You know, we've done it before against Nashville."

The Canucks believe what they believe, and they don't much care what other people say or write.

"We're trying to win a Stanley Cup," Garland explained. "That's enough fuel for anybody. We're all focused and we're ready to play."

The Oilers found out in Game 1. Game 2 is Friday.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.09.2024

1311942 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers must embrace playoff journey after frantic fold job in Game 1

Mark Spector

VANCOUVER — This, friends, is the playoff journey. How are you enjoying it so far?

A game well in hand turns into a crazy, frantic fold job. A lead you've been holding for a few months now sifts through your fingers on the latest, greatest, most important game of the season.

A goalie who's been stellar for most of six months gets burned for the second time on an Opening Night in Vancouver, scorched for three goals inside five minutes as a 4-1 lead somehow morphs into a 5-4 loss in Game 1.

"We definitely gave them this one."

That was the voice of goaltender Stuart Skinner, who was level-headed and thoughtful in describing what happened here, as the Oilers let shaky Canucks rookie goalie Arturs Silovs off the hook with just seven shots on goal in the last 40 minutes.

"A little bit too passive," said Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch. "It wasn't how we wanted to play. We could be a little more assertive."

Meanwhile, Skinner put his team on the hook by steering a harmless pass into his own net before getting fooled on the game-winner by a nice shot fake and five-hole groove courtesy Conor Garland.

"Stu has won us so many games; he's played so spectacular through the year," Knoblauch said. "There are going to be games that aren't his 'A' game, and he'll be the first to admit today wasn't his 'A' game."

"(Garland) held on to it and I lost my patience. I got bit for that. Lesson learned for me," said Skinner. "Unfortunate for myself with that fifth that gave them a ton of momentum."

Over the course of what Edmonton hopes to be a lengthy playoff run, you're going to win some games that it looked like you'd lose. And there will be nights like this one, where a lead evaporates.

Games where you play pretty well and lose. Games you don't love that end up with the music blaring post-game, and a bus running outside the rink so you can get outta Dodge.

"I loved the way we played the first eight, nine minutes of that third period. They had nothing," said Mattias Ekholm. "I thought we were doing all the things you're supposed to do when you have a two-goal lead."

But then J.T. Miller scored the 4-3 goal on a bad angle deflection. It was a deft, skilled play by Miller, but not even a scoring chance surrendered by the Oilers.

After that, the floodgates opened.

"When they score, it's all about that next shift," said Ekholm. "They're going to score — it's not like we're going to keep them to nothing here. But we let him get three goals and put ourselves in a really tough spot.

"Kind of gave it away. That's the disappointing part."

In their seventh playoff series in the past three seasons, Edmonton knows one thing for sure: Win Game 2 and you'll come home to feeling completely in control of this series.

This was as weird a playoff game as we've witnessed this spring, with more than one writer — both Vancouver and Edmonton — muttering on the way down to the dressing rooms, "I'm not even sure how to write this one."

It started weird, on a Canucks too-many-men penalty just 40 seconds into the game, got stranger when Cody Ceci's shot was deflected last Silovs by his own D-man, and stayed weird when Skinner returned the favour late in the second period.

In between that was the rarest of goalie penalties, issued to Skinner for playing the puck outside the trapezoid (he tripped and fell, touching the puck) and a Zach Hyman goal that Silovs shouldn't let in.

And things finished with the Garland goal that Skinner wants back.

"Strange goals all around," said Connor McDavid, after his quietest game of these playoffs, another oddity. "We scored some strange ones too. Kind of a frantic game — some weird ones, some preventable ones too."

The one mistake here by Edmonton was trying to make a 4-1 lead stand-up, while Silovs was standing in the Canucks net, surely feeling less than great about his game.

"When you get up, you can't just shut it down and hope that we're going to be able to stifle teams. You know that Vancouver is going to bring it," Skinner said. "There's definitely a lesson learned here for us: no matter what the score is, you've got to know that the other team is not going to just let you win."

Leon Draisaitl was hurt midway through the second period, but finished the game. He was not made available to media post-game, instead sequestered in the trainer's room.

Draisaitl played just 16:43, had two assists, and had the Oilers' final chance, a one-timer with the goalie pulled that Silovs denied.

Is he injured?

"Nothing," Knoblauch said. "Cramping and equipment issues."

Hey, this is the playoff journey.

Guys get hurt. Goals go in. Wins turn into losses.

Nobody said it was going to be stress free.

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1311943 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Four Mitch Marner trades the Maple Leafs could consider

Ryan Dixon

For as flip as people have become about the idea of trading Mitch Marner, it's critical to remember there's nothing easy about this kind of transaction.

First off, let's not bury the lede. No matter the context, dealing away a 95-point player who gets Selke votes and turned 27 one day after the Toronto Maple Leafs were eliminated by the Boston Bruins on Saturday night requires a GTA-sized gulp on the part of the club shipping him out.

There's also the reality that the Leafs winger has a full no-move clause and an agent, in Darren Ferris, that Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman keeps reminding us tends to encourage his clients to use the trade protection negotiated on their behalf and ultimately guides them toward the open market, which Marner can hit in a little less than 14 months.

And, for as much value as Marner has, the pieces have to line up. You can't just walk into the Right Shot Defenceman Store and say, "I have a Mitch Marner to spend, gimmie a 25-year-old, top-pair RHD!"

Friedman also raised a great point on the Real Kyper and Bourne Show on Monday: Prior to the Leafs inking William Nylander to an in-season extension, they were resolute in the idea that — if they went down the trade path — it was only going to be for a clear win. As in, we'll trade you Nylander, but you'll be sending us a player who brings equivalent value on the blue line.

But in the case of Marner — given all the caveats surrounding this potential transaction — the pertinent question Friedman posed is this: Would Toronto be willing to lose a Marner deal?

That doesn't mean exactly what it sounds like because, of course, it doesn't. No team sets out to lose swaps. But the immediate optics of a Marner deal are unlikely to make Blue and White supporters start turning backflips. It's almost certainly not going to be for the Mitch Marner of defencemen or the six-foot-three version of Marner up front because it's so unlikely another team would be willing to move that player.

It might be four quarters for a dollar. It might involve draft picks that can be flipped later. Most critically, it might be to free up cap space to make a real run at inking potential UFA defencemen like Chris Tanev, Brandon Montour or Brett Pesce.

So, with all that in mind — and with some help from Sportsnet.ca senior editor Josh Beneteau — let's take that deep breath and whip up some Marner trade proposals.

(Also, since Marner would have to give a thumbs up to any swap, let's assume he'd also be inking an extension with his new squad).

Columbus Blue Jackets get: RW Mitch Marner

Toronto Maple Leafs get: 2024 fourth-overall pick, C/W Kent Johnson

Why the Leafs do it: You're probably clearing upwards of $9.5 million in cap space that you could immediately turn around and throw at the blue line. Free up a little more space and you might be able to take a legit run at two right-shot, Ontario guys in Tanev and Montour.

Johnson is an RFA who seems very much in line for a short, bridge contract. He's got loads of skill, but things haven't gone smoothly in Ohio for the 21-year-old.

The Leafs could dangle No. 4 pick for an immediate return or take a blue-liner in this defenceman-rich draft who won't help them right now, but could be a major fixture from 2026-2040.

Why the Blue Jackets do it: First off, if Mark Hunter is named Columbus' new GM in the next little while, get ready for this to become an actual rumour. Hunter, of course, was with the OHL's London Knights when Marner landed there as a major junior player and guided the Leafs toward Marner when the former was part of Toronto's front office in 2015 and the latter was available at — wait for it — fourth overall.

The Jackets could sit tight and select a prime prospect at No. 4, possibly Knights defenceman Sam Dickinson. But this franchise — unlike others at the top of the board — did not intend to be picking this high in 2024. Columbus — which had no shortage of bad press over the fiasco of hiring Mike Babcock last summer and wound up axing long-time GM Jarmo Kekalainen in-season — wants to get better yesterday, as indicated by the big moves it was making last year around this time to land defencemen Damon Severson and Ivan Provorov.

Marner would be an enormous addition to the forward group for a team that doesn't really need another top prospect thanks to the presence of centre Adam Fantilli and right-shot defenceman David Jiricek.

Columbus is also not the kind of team that's going to be scared off by any perceived shortcomings Marner has in the playoffs. The Jackets just want to get to the post-season; how everybody does once they're in is a tomorrow question.

Seattle Kraken get: RW Mitch Marner

Toronto Maple Leafs get: C Shane Wright, D Adam Larsson

Why Toronto does it: Larsson is a large, right-shot defenceman who logs significant minutes. He turns 32 in November and is eligible to become a UFA after next season, so you'd certainly hope to extend him three years beyond that.

Wright has been through it. The Toronto-area kid was projected to go No. 1 in the 2022 draft for years in advance of the event, then fell to No. 4 on draft day. His development has been hindered by pandemics, trades, bouncing between leagues, etc. But last year he spent more or less the entire winter in the AHL and looked good when he joined Seattle for the final days of the schedule and notched four goals in five games. It sure seems like the righty has a future as a reliable 2C and he's on an entry-level deal for the next two seasons.

Why the Kraken do it: They've already fired a coach, so Seattle is obviously itching for more. This squad has a framework in place, but lacks high-end talent. Marner adds a serious dose of just that.

Calgary Flames get: RW Mitch Marner, C Fraser Minten, LW Nick Robertson, D Timothy Liljegren

Toronto Maple Leafs get: G Jacob Markstrom*, D Rasmus Andersson

*Flames retain 25 per cent of Markstrom's remaining salary

Why the Leafs do it: Both Markstrom and Andersson are under contract for two more seasons. You're adding a goalie who had great underlying numbers last year — albeit at age 34 — and a right-shot D-man who plays big minutes. With Calgary retaining a bit on Markstrom, it's basically a wash cap-wise and you're adding big pieces in two areas of need.

Minten is a quality prospect, but the emergence of 2023 first-rounder Easton Cowan and the presence of youngster Matthew Knies gives you enough next-generation guys up front.

Why the Flames do it: Every transaction Calgary has made in the past 12 months indicates the club is not interested in a tear-down rebuild. Marner has three more seasons left in his 20s, so he's a guy who helps now and down the road.

Liljegren is no Andersson, but he's a right-shot guy who can slot in on the bottom pair and try to sketch out a new chapter of his career having just turned 25. Robertson has shown goal-scoring potential and Minten is a plug-and-play prospect who, at worst, will be a fantastic third-line centre and leader.

Both Robertson and Liljegren are RFAs this summer and both should be relatively simple signs.

Philadelphia Flyers get: RW Mitch Marner

Toronto Maple Leafs get: C Scott Laughton, D Mario Ferraro, San Jose's 2024 second-round pick

San Jose Sharks get: D Oliver Bonk

Why the Leafs do it: Laughton's name was out there before the deadline, but only if somebody blew Philly away with an offer. That's because he's a hard-to-play-against centre who could settle in as a great 3C or play up in the two-hole — especially if one of his wingers was as talented as his fellow Oakville native John Tavares or stud William Nylander. Laughton turns 30 this summer and makes $3 million against the cap for two more seasons. Ferraro, meanwhile, is a 25-year-old lefty who counts for basically the same number, also for two more years. You could probably add these guys and still take a run at Tanev or flip San Jose's second-rounder — which would be the 33rd overall selection in the draft — for help in goal or on the blue line.

Why the Flyers do it: Philly is making future-focused moves while also reconciling the fact it came so close to making the playoffs this year. Even if GM Daniel Brière remains committed to long-term solutions, could you see them coming back next September with lottery aspirations? Marner, at 27, is just young enough that you'd be OK sending a package this significant out the door for a difference-maker who can help you for the next decade.

Bottom line: Philly covets more skill.

Moving Bonk would hurt, but the Flyers still hold the 12th pick in the upcoming draft, which is loaded with quality D-men.

Also, Marner and John Tortorella on the same bench? Yes, please.

Why the Sharks do it: On one hand, having just won the right to draft Macklin Celebrini, you could see San Jose's desire to keep quality, young-ish bodies like Ferraro around. Still, you might as well lean in and opt for the upside of Bonk, a rangy righty who could wind up anchoring your first or second pair for a long time.

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Sportsnet.ca / Playoff Takeaways: Panthers finally solve Swayman as Game 2 gets rowdy

Ryan Dixon

NHL Game 2 Highlights: Panthers 6, Bruins 1

Sasha Barkov and Sam Reinhart each finished with four points, and Sergei Bobrovsky only had to make 15 saves to lift the Florida Panthers to a 6-1 win over the Boston Bruins in Game 2.

Normally, a team wouldn't get too concerned about falling behind its opponent 1-0 in the first period; especially a squad as talented as the Florida Panthers.

But the Panthers — already down 1-0 in their series versus the Boston Bruins after losing Game 1 on home ice — had to know the margin for error when you're facing Jeremy Swayman is slimmer than some of those beach bods in South Florida.

So credit the Cats, in a game they had to have, for figuring out a way to get to Swayman on a level nobody else has in this post-season. Entering Tuesday night's game in Sunrise, Swayman had allowed two or fewer goals in each of his seven playoff starts. That changed, though, in Florida's resounding 6-1 series-evening victory in Game 2.

In fact, Swayman's night ended early when Florida's fourth goal went in 1:28 into the third period and Boston coach Jim Montgomery — probably to give Swayman some rest and himself some time to unload F-bombs on his plodding team, as much as anything — pulled the MVP of the playoffs so far to get Linus Ullmark some work.

Swayman, no doubt, will be back in the twine when the series shifts to Boston for Game 3 on Friday night. Before we get there, though, here are some takeaways from Florida's critical Game 2 victory, which marked its first win over Boston this year in six tries.

Cats muck it up

At their best, the Panthers are a pain to play against. And the biggest ache of all, Matthew Tkachuk, showed early on Florida would be bringing the nasty by bumping Swayman post-whistle and triggering a scrum that led to a roughing penalty being called against Boston's Justin Brazeau just 17 seconds into the game.

The Panthers knew they may have to make it ugly to get anything past Swayman, who's been stopping everything he can see this spring. After falling behind 1-0 in the opening period, Florida tied the game 1:56 into the middle frame when fourth-liner Steve Lorentz went to the net after a Boston giveaway and tipped a Brandon Montour shot past Swayman.

At the midway point of the second, on the goal that gave Florida the lead for good, Kyle Okposo started the play by pasting Boston D-man Charlie

McAvoy to the boards and forcing a turnover. The puck swung out to Sam Reinhart for a clean look and when Swayman stopped that, Aleksander Barkov fought off McAvoy to get to the loose puck and deposit the rebound.

By the last half of the third period — with the game out of reach — things were boiling over. Serious scrums broke out after play stoppages, including following Florida's sixth tally. By the time David Pastrnak (yep) and Tkachuk were chucking knuckles, it was abundantly clear to anybody watching this series had become the hate-fest it was probably always destined to be.

Barkov a Beast

In a game his team had to have, Florida captain Aleksander Barkov was the best skater on the ice. The big Finn's second-period tally was one of four points he potted on the night as he dominated in all aspects of the game and led by example. His second goal of the contest — which put Florida up 5-1 in the third — also busted the power play slump the Panthers had been in. Entering the night, the Cats had gone 1-for-9 in their past four games on the man advantage and failed to convert their first four opportunities in Game 2 before Barkov snapped a beauty home from the slot. (Florida had also gone 0-for-18 on the man advantage versus Boston this entire season before Barkov's snipe).

Florida needed its captain and he delivered.

Speaking of Penalties…

Late in the second period, still trailing by only one goal, Boston got mixed up and nailed by the officials for having too many men on the ice. Somehow, this was the fifth time this post-season the Bruins have been called for having an excess of bodies on the ice. At the time, the score for too many men infractions in the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs was Boston 5, Rest of the League 4. However, the Vancouver Canucks evened things up early in their contest with the Edmonton Oilers thanks to a botched line change.

This puzzling trend is something the B's need to end immediately.

Top Florida D-men shine

Despite the lopsided final score, this game was setting up for a nail-biter of a third with Florida leading 2-1 on the cusp of the second-period horn sounding. At 19:58 of the frame, though, Gus Forsling unloaded a one-timer from the blueline that beat a screened Swayman.

Forsling and partner Aaron Ekblad both picked up a point on the night, as the former led the Cats in ice (24:36) with the latter right behind (24:06). It was a nice bounce-back game for everyone on Florida, including a top defence pair that didn't have its best outing in Game 1.

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Sportsnet.ca / Who's coming back?: A look at all 12 Maple Leafs free agents

Luke Fox

TORONTO — Change is coming.

The Toronto Maple Leafs' off-season has begun.

While the fate of the 12(!) impending free agents on the club's roster will be influenced by higher priorities — i.e. what happens with Mitch Marner — and who else becomes available on the trade and free-agent markets over the next several weeks, it's worth taking a peek at where things stand with the Maple Leafs whose current contracts expire on June 30.

(Note: Player-turned-scout Jake Muzzin, rehabilitated goaltender Matt Murray, and offensive defenceman John Klingberg will all be coming off the books as well and, thus, no longer sapping the Leafs' LTIR space.)

Here's a rundown of where things stand with all of Toronto's impending free agents and our (early) sense of what their futures may hold.

UFAs

Tyler Bertuzzi ($5.5 million cap hit in 2023-24): Bertuzzi was searching for term as a UFA last summer before settling on his one-year rental contract in Toronto.

And although he was slow to find chemistry and the back of the net, the fearless winger peaked at the perfect time, delivered on the snot, and was one of the Leafs' best forwards in the post-season. (His four points co-led the team.)

Moreover, the 29-year-old has never been so healthy; his 80 games played set a career high.

"It was just a great year," Bertuzzi said as he cleaned out his locker. "I got better as the season went on. Just trying to get acclimated in a new spot. Eventually I turned my game around and thought I did a good job at playing my game."

How badly would Bertuzzi like to re-sign in Toronto?

"That's definitely something I'm open to," Bertuzzi replied. "Coming into a new place, especially Toronto, it's not easy. It took me a little bit on the ice to get going. But off the ice, the guys were great. Everything was top notch. Me and my family really enjoyed our time here."

Our hunch: Bertuzzi signs a bigger deal elsewhere, as the Leafs spend their UFA dollars on D-men and bet on left wing Matthew Knies taking on more minutes.

Max Domi ($3 million cap hit in 2023-24): Wearing the logo his father made proud was a dream of Domi's. His playmaking and offensive versatility were a welcome addition, particularly when Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner went down to injury, and the 29-year-old says he "enjoyed every second" of life as a Leaf.

No pending UFA who can play centre registered more assists (38) than Domi this season.

"Do I want to come back? Absolutely. I think this team has everything it takes to do something special, and I would love to help them do that," Domi said Monday.

"But that's obviously beyond my control, so I leave that up to my agent and management here and go from there. But I've got nothing but great things to say about this group of guys in here and the organization as a whole."

Domi's previous two contracts were one-year pacts; the two before that were only for two years. Does he want some term on his next deal?

"All that stuff is over my head. So, whatever happens is out of my control," Domi said.

Uh, he's a free agent. He literally has some control in this decision.

Ilya Samsonov ($3.55 million cap hit in 2023-24): Here's a fun fact. Among all pending UFA goalies, only one had more wins (27) than the adventure that was Samsonov (23). That would be L.A.'s Cam Talbot, who is nine years older than the affable Russian.

"I need to play better, and this is true," said Samsonov, a rare Leaf who took accountability for his own play following Game 7's disappointment. "I need to be better for this team and in this series."

What is Samsonov's greatest priority in free agency?

"You guys know my answer, yeah? I love this city. I love everybody on this team. But I never know. If it's serious, I didn't talk about this with my agents because we just get some time for rest my mind. If we get some more chance to come to this locker room and just put on this jersey, I will be happy," he said.

Samsonov has completed two one-year deals with Toronto, and the Maple Leafs have completed their commitment to him. He'll be searching for a two- or three-year contract on the open market.

"I want to get some more stability," he said. "This will be good for my family."

T.J. Brodie ($5 million cap hit in 2023-24): This will be the second summer that Treliving lets Brodie walk out the door. He did it in Calgary, now he'll do it in Toronto.

The GM never seriously entertained extension talks with the 34-year-old defenceman, who slid from the top pair to a healthy scratch over the course of his most troubling campaign.

Still, Brodie rates fifth among all pending UFAs in average ice time (21:43). A lower salary, a lessened role, a fresh city, and he could be worth a one-year flyer.

Joel Edmundson ($3.5 million cap hit in 2023-24): It's all about price, not fit, for the ring-bearing Edmundson.

Clearly, the veteran's size and nasty style of play is right up Treliving's alley.

But with his salary retained twice over, the Leafs were getting the services of a $3.5-million third-pair guy for a tidy $875,000 against their cap.

"I was always curious of what kind of dressing room it was," Edmundson says. "For me, coming in three quarters of the way through the year, they made me feel really welcome. And it's a great locker room. Everyone's really tight.

"You never know when you have guys making the big money — they might do their own thing. But, no, it's definitely a family in this dressing room."

Edmundson enjoyed his time. Toronto fans enjoyed seeing him clear the crease and lay the lumber.

Mark Giordano ($800,000 cap hit in 2023-24): We couldn't be more thrilled that Giordano achieved his goal of playing NHL games into his forties and recovered from his mid-season concussion in time to score a goal for Dad.

The former Norris champ was the eighth defenceman on a team that failed to survive Round 1. We suspect he hangs up his golden shinpads and the NHL becomes a worse place without him.

Ilya Lyubushkin ($2.75 million cap hit in 2023-24): Considering salary-retained rental Lyubushkin only cost $687,500 against Toronto's cap, he was incredible value.

The Boosh — a physical, stay-at-home righty — led all Maple Leafs in the playoffs with a plus-4 rating and co-led the club with three assists. Teammates love the guy, but in a UFA market thin on right defencemen, 30-year-old Lyubushkin won't have to take a pay cut.

Remember: Justin Holl, who was a year older than Lyubushkin when he hit the market last summer, got three years at $3.4 million from Detroit.

Is Lyubushkin a top-pair D-man on a contender? Nope.

For the right price, could he serve a role on this roster? Absolutely.

Martin Jones ($875,000 cap hit in 2023-24): The 34-year-old filled a clutch regular-season role, pitching 11 wins in relief when the Leafs were leaning hard on goaltending depth and their playoff position was yet to be secured. A shrewd pickup by Treliving.

If Jones is willing to accept a similar one-year deal, bring him back. Otherwise, scour the market for a suitable replacement. League-wide, 2023-24 reinforced the need for keeping three capable goalies in the system.

RFAs

Timothy Liljegren ($1.4 million cap hit in 2023-24): Management must decide how much more to invest in a drafted-and-developed defenceman who has shown more hope and promise than clutch highlights and consistency.

Liljegren's right shot will always be of benefit. He's 25 years old, and the idea that he may never crack the top four is settling in. Toronto's 2017 first-round pick was scratched, for Brodie, one game into the Bruins series.

Don't expect a long-term commitment here; it's either another bridge deal or trade calls.

Connor Dewar ($800,000 cap hit in 2023-24): Minnesota made Dewar available at the trade deadline because GM Bill Guerin had no intention of re-signing the scrappy defensive forward this summer, when he'll earn arbitration rights. Dewar understands his role.

The scrappy Dewar's penalty-killing ability and straight-line mindset were a nice fit at the bottom of the lineup. Worth keeping on a one- or two-year extension.

Nick Robertson ($796,667 cap hit in 2023-24): Unlike fellow RFAs Simon Benoit and Bobby McMann, Treliving didn't initiate serious extension talks with Robertson's agent in-season.

"I want to play and let him worry about that," Robertson said in April, before the playoffs began. "That's something that I'm gonna figure out, how I take it during the summer. I'll want to know what will be going on."

Popping in and out of the lineup, Robertson upped his value by staying healthy and ripping 14 goals and 27 points in limited minutes spread over 56 games.

The 22-year-old has no arbitration rights coming out of his entry-level deal and his body of NHL work is still small. Expect Treliving to push for a modest raise on a bridge deal.

Noah Gregor ($775,000 cap hit in 2023-24): Arriving in Toronto as Treliving's lone handpicked tryout candidate, Gregor won a job out of camp and helped push the competition at the bottom of the lineup. Keefe turned to the fourth-line speedster — over tone-setter Ryan Reaves — late in the Bruins series.

Gregor holds arbitration rights and is a fine depth option if he's willing to re-sign for similar term and money. Otherwise, Toronto's pro scouts need to uncover the next Gregor on the open market.

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Sportsnet.ca / What we learned about the Senators and new head coach Travis Green

Rory Boylen

Heading into the 2023-24 season, the Ottawa Senators were full of potential and promise. The young team had hung around the 2023 playoff race longer than it had in recent seasons, finishing with 86 points — the most since their last playoff appearance in 2017. The rebuild was trending up and, with the core one year older, wiser and more experienced, the Senators were seen as a playoff contender.

But just about nothing went according to plan from there. Shane Pinto, an important centre, was suspended 41 games for violating the NHL's gambling policies before the season even started. Former GM Pierre Dorion was fired less than a month into the season after the league penalized the team one of its next three first-round picks for mishandling Evgenii Dadonov's no-trade clause. About a month and a half after that, head coach DJ Smith was let go, replaced by Jacques Martin for the rest of the season. And then right near the end of the season, Josh Norris, another key centre, had to undergo his third shoulder surgery to end his campaign.

It was a roller coaster of a year for Michael Andlauer, his first as the new owner of the team.

The page will turn on a disappointing season that stepped back to a 78-point finish, but the expectations next October will only continue to grow. Though they hold a high draft pick at seventh overall, these Senators are supposed to be through the rebuild.

On Wednesday, Travis Green was introduced as the 14th coach in team history, signed to a four-year contract GM Steve Staios said will give Green time to nurture his system and style. With the next coach in place, all eyes (for now) return to Staios, who still has a mountain of work ahead of him. The team as it stands is not likely to be the same one Green will be coaching in the fall, but he's the one who's already setting the tone for that group.

"Not always do you land on what we feel is a perfect fit for our group," Staios said. "This is also a massive step for our organization. The work now becomes for me to be able to support Travis, build out the coaching staff, and continue to look forward."

With Green in place, here are some of the things we learned at his introductory press conference.

WHY THE SENATORS THINK GREEN IS THE GUY

While some in the Ottawa market were hoping for a bigger name, someone with more experience, or a Stanley Cup winner, Green comes to town with just one post-season appearance on his NHL head coaching resume — and that came with Vancouver in the pandemic-shortened 2019-20 season.

In four full seasons as head coach with the Canucks, Green missed on the post-season three times and was fired in his fifth season after a 8-15-0 start. Two years later, the Canucks are the top seed in the Pacific Division.

Prior to his time with the Canucks, Green made a Calder Cup Final appearance with Utica, but again, missed the playoffs in two of four seasons. And, in 2023-24, Green started as an associate coach with the New Jersey Devils, who fired Lindy Ruff in March as an expected playoff bid faded away. Green stepped into the interim position and led the Devils to an 8-12-1 record.

"You gotta look at what the team was at the time, all the circumstances behind it, the age of the group, the talent of the group," Staios said. "I know coaches get judged on their coaching records, but there's also a lot more to it. I think, as we watch the Stanley Cup Playoffs right now, you could look at a few or a handful of coaches that are contending for a Stanley Cup now that were in the exact same position as Travis is right now after their first coaching stint. So it's a lot deeper than just looking at win-loss records."

Peter DeBoer, for instance, whiffed on the playoffs in his first three years as an NHL head coach with the Florida Panthers, missed in two of three years with New Jersey, and then won six round in four years with San Jose, including an appearance in the Stanley Cup Final. Rick Tocchet missed the post-season in two years with Tampa Bay, then in three of four years with the Coyotes and didn't win a playoff round. Now he's a Jack Adams finalist.

Meanwhile, when Green was with the Canucks, it was a tumultuous time with management struggling to balance rebuilding and pushing ahead. The team turned around after Green left, yes, but that also happened under new management and with several changes made to the roster.

"I think I'm just a better coach from experience," Green said. "It's like anything in life, the more you have experience the better you're going to get. I look at myself as someone who's able to self-evaluate, have a bit of a growth mindset and try to improve.

"I just know through experience, through some positive times and adversity — you learn a lot when you go through adversity — I'm confident I'm a much better coach today than I was 6-7 years ago."

WHAT DOES GREEN THINK IS MISSING FROM THE SENATORS?

The Senators missed on the playoffs by 13 points, finished 20th in goals for, 28th in goals against, 23rd in power-play efficiency, and was 29th on the penalty kill. So what is Green going to start with?

"Defensively is part of where we need to get better," Green said. "You see that a lot with young, skilled players, getting them to grasp the commitment level to play in their zone. For me that's number one.

"I remember being a young player at 19 or 20, being used to scoring goals. If you talked to me about defence, I was probably not listening. And a lot of coaches would say at 25 I probably wasn't listening either, so I get that part of it. If you want to win you have to play a 200-foot game."

There's an idea that these Senators needed a "tough" coach to push and get the most out of a group that started slow and chased the entire 2023-24 season. Green may not have that exact reputation as someone like Craig Berube does.

Green doesn't describe himself as a "tough" coach, but a "demanding" one.

"When you talk about a tough coach I think that gives you a persona of a certain type of person or coach," Green said. "I'm just a demanding coach that wants the best out of my players. I want to push them to be their best, to tap their potential, but also work with them and make them understand what that is.

"Being a demanding coach isn't always yelling at a player or sitting out a player. It's sometimes giving a player confidence if they're feeling down. And there are times when good players lose their confidence and now they need a coach that's not looking at them in an negative way. Being a demanding coach comes in a lot of different ways and I think if you're good with people and have good people skills to read the player, you figure out what the player needs to be pushed to their max. And I take a lot of pride in being that type of coach."

GREEN'S COACHING STAFF IS STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS

Green may be in place, but decisions still need to be made on who will be working alongside him on the bench.

"I'm going to be very thorough, work with Steve to put together the right staff for our group," Green said. "We'll talk to the people who've been here first and foremost, but I want to make sure we do a thorough job in that process in getting a perfect staff around me, but also for our group."

One of the positives of this season and the early Andlauer ownership era is how some past franchise icons have been welcomed back and integrated into the hockey operations side of the business. Daniel Alfredsson returned in October in a player development role, but when the coaching staff was changed in December, he moved to the bench as an assistant.

In March, Alfredsson told our Wayne Scanlan that he had caught the "coaching bug" and that a future in that role intrigued him more than he initially thought. Green was asked if Alfredsson might be in consideration to continue on as an assistant.

"I really look forward to speaking with Daniel," Green said. "We texted back and forth yesterday to get this thoughts and ideas, where he wants to go, if he wants to be a coach full-time. I'm open to everything he wants to do.

"When I was in Vancouver it was similar with Hank and Daniel (Sedin). I had them as players my first year and then they retired. Now, obviously our Daniel's been out for a while, but they mean something to the team, they mean something to the organization."

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