# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

## Canes to dance with the Devils in the Stanley Cup Playoffs

By: Chris Lea

The first round opponent is set for the Carolina Hurricanes.

The New York Rangers losing to the Philadelphia Flyers Wednesday, clinched the playoffs for the New Jersey Devils, setting up a Canes-Devils first round matchup

Home ice advantage hasn't been set yet. However, as of this writing, the Canes are seven points ahead of the Devils in the standings for second place in the Metropolitan Division.

The Washington Capitals already clinched the Metro title.

The Canes and Devils faced off in the 2023 Stanley Cup Playoffs, where the Canes won the series 4-1.

The regular season wraps up on April 17 and the Stanley Cup Playoffs begin on April 19.

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

### Canes To Face Devils In Round 1 of Stanley Cup Playoffs

By: Walt Ruff

Schedule to be released at a later date

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Stanley Cup Playoffs won't begin until April 19 at the earliest, but the Carolina Hurricanes already know their foe for Round 1.

Although not yet set in order, the Canes and New Jersey Devils are set to battle as the second and third seeds from the Metropolitan Division. Carolina can lock up the second seed and home ice advantage for the series on Thursday night when they take on the Washington Capitals.

The two teams split their four-game regular season series 2-2, with Carolina outscoring New Jersey 13-12.

Going head-to-head in the playoffs for the sixth time, Carolina and New Jersey most recently met in the postseason during the spring of 2023, when the Canes earned a second-round victory in five games.

NJD@CAR, Gm5: Fast deflects PPG to win Game 5 in OT

2024-25 Regular Season Meetings...

October 15: Jackson Blake bagged his first NHL goal in the third period to help the Canes notch their first win of the season, 4-2 over New Jersey at Lenovo Center.

November 21: Carolina was "flat" during its second game in as many nights and came up short in a 4-2 loss to the Devils in Newark.

December 27: Jacob Markstrom stopped 29 out of 31 shots faced for New Jersey, giving his team a 4-2 victory at Prudential Center.

December 28: The Canes scored five times in the final 21:30 to pull past the Devils, 5-2.

Previous Playoff Series Meetings...

The Canes lost to the Devils in six games in the 2001 Conference Quarterfinals.

The Canes defeated the Devils in six games in the 2002 Conference Quarterfinals.

The Canes defeated the Devils in five games in the 2006 Conference Semifinals.

The Canes defeated the Devils in seven games in the 2009 Conference Quarterfinals.

The Canes defeated the Devils in five games in the 2023 Second Round.

25th Moments: Shock at the Rock

Living Loud At Lenovo...

Round 1 tickets will go on sale to the general public on April 10 at 12 p.m. E.T.

To be the first to know when playoff tickets drop, text "TICKETS25" to (919) 705-0896.

A full schedule with exact dates and times will be released by the NHL closer to the end of the league's regular season.

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

### Devils clinch, will play Hurricanes in 1st round of Stanley Cup Playoffs

By: NHL.com

Carolina has won 4 of previous 5 postseason matchups; home-ice advantage to be determined

The New Jersey Devils clinched a berth in the Stanley Cup Playoffs on Wednesday and will play the Carolina Hurricanes in the first round.

Carolina (46-27-4) is second in the Metropolitan Division with 96 points, seven more than New Jersey (41-30-7), which clinched a spot in the playoffs on Wednesday when the New York Rangers lost 8-5 to the Philadelphia Flyers. The team that finishes second in the division will have home-ice advantage in the best-of-7 series.

Forward Sebastian Aho leads Carolina with 70 points (28 goals, 42 assists) in 76 games this season, and forward Seth Jarvis is second with 61 points (30 goals, 31 assists) in 70 games. Ten players have scored at least 10 goals for Carolina this season. Pyotr Kochetkov is 26-15-3 with a 2.58 goals-against average and .898 save percentage in 45 games this season, and Frederik Andersen is 13-6-0 with a 2.11 GAA and .914 save percentage in 19 games, missing 39 games with a knee injury.

The Devils are led by Jesper Bratt, who has a career-high 88 points (21 goals, 67 assists) in 78 games this season, and fellow forward Nico Hischier, who has 67 points (35 goals, 32 assists) in 72 games. Center Jack Hughes had 70 points (27 goals, 43 assists) in 62 games before sustaining a season-ending shoulder injury in March. Goalie Jacob Markstrom, who was acquired from the Calgary Flames in a trade during the offseason, is 26-15-6 with a 2.53 GAA and .899 save percentage in 48 games this season. Jake Allen is 12-15-1 with a 2.59 GAA and .911 save percentage in 29 games (27 starts).

The teams split the season series, each going 2-2-0. Forward Jack Roslovic led Carolina with five points (three goals, two assists) in four games. Jarvis had four points (one goal, three assists) in three games, and Aho and Jackson Blake each had two goals. Kochetkov started two games (1-1-0), allowing six goals, and Spencer Martin (17 saves in 4-2 loss on Nov. 21) and Dustin Tokarski (21 saves in a 5-2 win on Dec. 28) each started once. Andersen, who has been alternating starts with Kochetkov since returning from injury Jan. 20, has not faced New Jersey this season.

The Devils were led by Bratt, who had seven points (two goals, five assists) in four games against the Hurricanes, and Hughes, who had six points (one goal, five assists). Forwards Ondrej Palat and Hischier each had two goals. Markstrom was 2-1-0 with a 2.34 GAA and .916 save percentage in three games, and Allen allowed four goals on 40 shots in his only start, the loss on Dec. 28.

Carolina and New Jersey have met five times in the postseason. The Devils won the first series in six games in the 2001 Eastern Conference Quarterfinals, but the Hurricanes have won the past four. Their most recent series came in the Eastern Conference Second Round in 2023; Carolina won in five games.

The Hurricanes have won at least one playoff round each of the past six seasons and were eliminated by the New York Rangers in six games in the second round last season. The Devils last made the postseason in 2023.

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025


CBS SPORTS

## 2025 NHL playoff picture: Standings, schedule, start date, teams that have clinched, projected series matchups

By: Chris Bengel

The race to the Stanley Cup Playoffs is really heating up. There's just a handful of games left for each team to play as everyone is vying for a chance to win the cup and the seeding in each conference could be very interesting this year.

In the East, only more playoff spot remains up for grabs after the Ottawa Senators clinched a playoff spot with a Detroit Red Wings loss to the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday. It marks the first time that the Senators will appear in the Stanley Cup Playoffs since the 2016-17 season. Meanwhile, the final playoff spot in the East is the Canadiens' to lose as they hold an eight-game advantage over the Red Wings.

In the West, there are three spots left now that the Los Angeles Kings have joined the Vegas Golden Knights as the two Pacific Division teams to seal playoff berths. The Calgary Flames are hanging on by a thread in the Wild Card race, but likely lead to win out in order to leapfrog the Minnesota Wild or St. Louis Blues.

The playoff picture will likely change on a daily basis, so CBS Sports will have you covered with our NHL playoff race tracker. It will be updated daily to show where each potential playoff team sits in the standings as the postseason draws near.

Reminder: Here's how the NHL playoff seeding works

The top three teams in each division automatically qualify for the playoffs.

Each conference has two wild-card spots.

The top division winner in each conference will play the second wild card team, and the other division winner will play the first wild card team.

The second and third-place teams in each division will match up with one another in the first round.

*Regulation wins are the first tiebreaker, and regulation plus overtime wins are the second tiebreaker. Shootout wins are not counted in regulation plus overtime wins. X denotes clinched playoff berth.

Eastern Conference playoff picture

Atlantic Division

1. Toronto Maple Leafs | 48-26-4 | 100 points - X

Points percentage: .641

Regulation wins: 39

Regulation plus overtime wins: 47

Current first-round matchup: Ottawa Senators

2. Tampa Bay Lightning | 45-26-7 | 97 points - X

Points percentage: .622

Regulation wins: 39

Regulation plus overtime wins: 43

Current first-round matchup: Florida Panthers

3. Florida Panthers | 45-29-4 | 94 points - X

Points percentage: .603

Regulation wins: 36

Regulation plus overtime wins: 40

Current first-round matchup: Tampa Bay Lightning

Metropolitan Division

1. Washington Capitals | 49-19-9 | 107 points - X

Points percentage: .685

Regulation wins: 42

Regulation plus overtime wins: 48

Current first-round matchup: Montreal Canadiens

2. Carolina Hurricanes | 46-27-4 | 96 points - X

Points percentage: .623

Regulation wins: 41

Regulation plus overtime wins: 46

Current first-round matchup: New Jersey Devils

3. New Jersey Devils | 41-30-7 | 89 points - X

Points percentage: .571

Regulation wins: 36

Regulation plus overtime wins: 39

Current first-round matchup: Carolina Hurricanes

Wild Card

WC1. Ottawa Senators | 42-29-6 | 90 points

Points percentage: .584

Regulation wins: 33

Regulation plus overtime wins: 41

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

Current first-round matchup: Toronto Maple Leafs

WC2. Montreal Canadiens | 39-30-9 | 87 points

Points percentage: .558

Regulation wins: 29

Regulation plus overtime wins: 37

Current first-round matchup: Washington Capitals

Detroit Red Wings | 36-34-7 | 79 points

Points percentage: .513

Regulation wins: 28

Regulation plus overtime wins: 33

New York Islanders | 34-32-11 | 79 points

Points percentage: .513

Regulation wins: 27

Regulation plus overtime wins: 32

Columbus Blue Jackets | 35-33-9 | 79 points

Points percentage: .513

Regulation wins: 25

Regulation plus overtime wins: 29

New York Rangers | 36-35-7 | 79 points

Points percentage: .506

Regulation wins: 32

Regulation plus overtime wins: 35

Western Conference playoff picture

Central Division

1. Winnipeg Jets | 53-21-4 | 110 points - X

Points percentage: .705

Regulation wins: 42

Regulation plus overtime wins: 52

Current first-round matchup: St. Louis Blues

2. Dallas Stars | 50-22-6 | 106 points - X

Points percentage: .679

Regulation wins: 41

Regulation plus overtime wins: 48

Current first-round matchup: Colorado Avalanche

3. Colorado Avalanche | 48-27-4 | 100 points - X

Points percentage: .633

Regulation wins: 39

Regulation plus overtime wins: 44

Current first-round matchup: Dallas Stars

Pacific Division

1. Vegas Golden Knights | 47-22-9 | 103 points-X

Points percentage: .660

Regulation wins: 43

Regulation plus overtime wins: 46

Current first-round matchup: Minnesota Wild

2. Los Angeles Kings | 44-24-9 | 97 points - X

Points percentage: .630

Regulation wins: 39

Regulation plus overtime wins: 43

Current first-round matchup: Edmonton Oilers

3. Edmonton Oilers | 45-28-5 | 95 points

Points percentage: .609

Regulation wins: 33

Regulation plus overtime wins: 45

Current first-round matchup: Los Angeles Kings

Wild Card

WC1. Minnesota Wild | 43-29-7 | 93 points

Points percentage: .589

Regulation wins: 33

Regulation plus overtime wins: 40

Current first-round matchup: Vegas Golden Knights

WC2. St. Louis Blues | 43-30-7 | 93 points

Points percentage: .581

Regulation wins: 31

Regulation plus overtime wins: 39

Current first-round matchup: Winnipeg Jets

Calgary Flames | 37-27-13 | 87 points

Points percentage: .565

Regulation wins: 28

Regulation plus overtime wins: 33

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025



ESSENTIALLY SPORTS
the fan's perspective


## Carolina Hurricanes Presumed to Strike Big With New Expansion Team in 2026

By: Rahul Goutam Hoom

We're all set for our newest expansion team in hockey! But this time we're not talking about the NHL. Rather it's the ECHL that's bringing in a new franchise in North Carolina. A franchise that has some very interesting and familiar names attached to its ownership. So as we know, a number of NHL franchises maintain affiliations with ECHL teams, such as the Jacksonville Icemen with the Buffalo Sabres, the Toledo Walleye associated with the Detroit Red Wings, and the Florida Everblades connected to the Florida Panthers, among others. And now this newest team will be, as you might have guessed, affiliated with the Carolina Hurricanes.

Watch What's Trending Now!

On X, Cam Robinson of Elite Prospects reported, "Remember that ECHL expansion team that Paul Bissonnette, Ryan Whitney, and the Spittin' Chiclets crew bought? I'm hearing that the Greensboro Gargoyles will be the Carolina Hurricanes' ECHL affiliate next season. Sick name. Sick logo."

Robinson expressed his admiration for the team's name and logo and we can see exactly while! The Greensboro Gargoyles certainly has a nice ring to it and the Gargoyle logo is really just plain cool. And for the Caroline Hurricanes, it appears to be a solid move. The new expansion franchise is linked to a prominent ownership group featuring Paul Bissonnette, Ryan Whitney, and the team from Spittin' Chiclets, who gained attention for acquiring rights to an ECHL expansion team in the past.

Remember that ECHL expansion team that Paul Bissonnette, Ryan Whitney, and the Spittin' Chiclets crew bought?

I'm hearing that the Greensboro Gargoyles will be the Carolina Hurricanes' ECHL affiliate next season.

Sick name. Sick logo. pic.twitter.com/ecOEtbBQBh

— Cam Robinson (@Hockey_Robinson) April 8, 2025

Poll of the day

Poll 1 of 5

Do you think the Greensboro Gargoyles' partnership with the Carolina Hurricanes will elevate their status in the ECHL?

Absolutely, it's a game-changer

Maybe, but it depends on their performance

No, it's just a marketing stunt

I don't care as long as they play well

Do you think the Clippers can secure a playoff spot despite their injury woes?

Absolutely, they have the depth

No, injuries will derail them

It's going to be a close call

Depends on Kawhi and Harden's performance

Whats your Perspective on:

Can the Spittin' Chiclets crew turn the Greensboro Gargoyles into the next big thing in hockey?

Have an interesting take?

With Kawhi Leonard's knee issues, should the Clippers risk playing him against the Rockets?

Yes, every game counts for the playoffs

No, rest him for more crucial games

Let him decide based on how he feels

What do you think Tyreek Hill's cryptic "🤷????" tweet means for the Dolphins?

It's just a playful message, nothing serious

He's unhappy with his contract

It's a distraction the team doesn't need

Should the Miami Dolphins prioritize drafting Kelvin Banks Jr. to protect Tua Tagovailoa?

Absolutely, he's the perfect fit for McDaniel's scheme

No, they should focus on other positions

Maybe, but only if they can't find a better free agent

Drafting him would be a mistake

Want to dive deeper?

Here are the articles that inspired recent polls.

The decision to partner with the Hurricanes may indicate a significant branding and development collaboration, merging the Chiclets' hockey media impact with the Hurricanes' emerging status as one of the NHL's more astute front offices. So what about the team?

Not just the Carolina Hurricanes, the Gargoyles mean business too

The Greensboro Gargoyles, the ECHL's 30th member team, are set to commence their inaugural season in October 2025. The First Horizon Coliseum will host a 36-game home regular-season schedule. In the upcoming months, the Gargoyles are set to unveil their mascot, accompanied by a range of exclusive merchandise, such as jerseys. A head

coach is anticipated to be appointed in late spring or early summer of 2025.

What does co-owner Paul Bissonnette have to say on this matter? "We've been talking all this time about getting involved in the ECHL. Well, it has finally happened. We are co-owners in an ECHL professional hockey team in Greensboro, North Carolina," stated the former Canadian ice hockey player.

"I'm gonna see my role as kind of like a Jerry Jones/Lou Lamoriello. I'm gonna have my fu**ing hands on everything. I will be doing media hits. If any of these media members question the moves I'm making, they will be fired on the spot. I am going to run the shit out of this team to multiple championships. These guys aren't getting paid unless they win."

Bissonnette is certainly taking his new duties seriously! Regardless of whether his comments were made in humor or not, he exudes a strong sense of assurance in his ability to guide the team, much like Dallas Stars GM Jerry Jones or New York Islanders GM Lou Lamoriello. With that kind of chutzpah, we can't wait to see what he gets up to.

Located in Greensboro, North Carolina—a city with a long hockey history—the Gargoyles are set to strengthen the sport's presence in the region while acting as an important developmental pathway for Hurricanes prospects. The team embodies a blend of hockey tradition, media impact, and community-driven growth in one of the NHL's most rapidly developing regions.

**TODAY'S LINKS**

https://www.wralsportsfan.com/canes-to-dance-with-the-devils-in-the-stanley-cup-playoffs/21953048/
https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/canes-to-face-devils-in-round-1-of-stanley-cup-playoffs
https://www.nhl.com/news/new-jersey-devils-clinch-playoff-spot-will-play-carolina-hurricanes-in-first-round
https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/2025-nhl-playoff-picture-standings-schedule-start-date-teams-that-have-clinched-projected-series-matchups/
https://www.essentiallysports.com/us-sports-news-nhl-news-carolina-hurricanes-presumed-to-strike-big-with-new-expansion-team-in-twenty-twenty-six/

# SportScan

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

1347166 Carolina Hurricanes

How Carolina Hurricanes newcomer Logan Stankoven uses his size to his advantage

Chip Alexander

Raleigh-The Carolina Hurricanes season, like all seasons, are producing some unforgettable, keepsake moments.

Here's one: Logan Stankoven being named one of a game's three stars and going on the ice in a hoodie, black shorts, long socks and sneakers to be recognized.

That was after the Canes had beaten the Washington Capitals, 5-1, at the Lenovo Center. Stankoven scored the fourth goal, but what had Canes fans standing and cheering — during and after the game last week — was the winger they call "Stanky" taking on the Caps' Tom Wilson.

A melee broke out in the third period and Stankoven was in the middle of it, shoving Wilson after Wilson cross-checked Canes defenseman Sean Walker from behind. Stankoven locked up with Wilson, who at 6 feet, 4 inches and 225 pounds is one the league's most dreaded bruisers.

Stankoven and Wilson each received 10-minute misconduct penalties and an early exit from the game. Stankoven then changed into workout clothes and watched the game on TV in the locker room before coming out to be feted as the third star.

The confrontation with Wilson and others from that game may be rehashed Thursday before the Canes and Caps go at it again — this time at Capital One Arena in Washington, DC. It could again be a chippy, heated affair.

Canes defenseman Jalen Chatfield drew criticism for his fight with the Caps' Connor McMichael, Chatfield ending it by throwing McMichael — who had lost his helmet — to the ice. That drew the ire of Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour, who said Monday such criticism by some media "morons" was not a "fair characterization" of his player.

Many Canes fans remember former forward Chad LaRose, a feisty type, once going nose-to-navel with towering defenseman Zdeno Chara of the Boston Bruins — LaRose at 5-10 and 180 pounds and Chara 6-9 and 250. That was quite the mismatch.

Stankoven is listed at 5-8 but that's stretching it a bit. He admits it.

"Off skates, I'm 5-7 and three-quarters," he said.

Which might be stretching it a bit.

But Stankoven, 22, has never let his lack of size limit him on the ice. He has that hunger to perform and play well, and does it with a degree of fearlessness that Brind'Amour and his teammates appreciate and respect.

“There is no fear,” said winger Seth Jarvis, another smaller guy who should know.

Stankoven’s size ‘advantage’

And size shouldn’t matter that much, not with the NHL game stressing speed and skill. There are ways, Stankoven said, that a lack of size can be a plus for him.

“It would be great to be a few inches taller but I think it’s just the card I’ve been given and what God has given me, so I have to do what I can with my small stature,” Stankoven said. “Being a smaller guy can mean being quicker out of the corners, being more explosive. So there are things I try to use to my advantage.

“I’ve never been told I was too small to play, but I’ve been told I’m going to get pushed around, along those lines, many times. I’ve seen it posted (on social media) as well. But I think everybody has their own opinion. … You don’t have to agree with it, but when people do say that it lights a fire under me for sure.”

The Hurricanes once had forward Nathan Gerbe, whose height was listed at 5-5 much of his career until he said he was 5-4.

“Being 5-4, I know nothing’s going to be easy,” Gerbe said in a 2016 interview. “Every game, every shift I view as basically a tryout, because I know the second I don’t play well it’s easy to shoot me down the lineup and say ‘Oh, he can’t play, he’s too small.’ I view it as a challenge every day and I relish that.

“I know I can inspire a lot of people. Guys before me inspired me and I think that’s something I can do to inspire young kids.”

Now, it’s Stankoven’s turn to be that kind of role model. Since being traded to the Canes in the March 7 deal that sent disgruntled forward Mikko Rantanen to the Stars, he has brought his quickness, his style of aggressive play to the lineup.

“With the group we have here, I love the way we play and the way we practice, with a lot of pace,” he said.

Drafted by the Stars, he said it was difficult at first to fully process the fact he no longer played for the Stars.

“Especially the first few days, not having green on my jersey anymore and not wearing No. 11 anymore,” he said, smiling.

But Stankoven, wearing No. 22 for the Canes, has settled in nicely with his new team as the start of the Stanley Cup playoffs approaches.

“There’s obviously a learning curve for everybody, but I think he’s really adapted and contributed and looks good out there,” Brind’Amour said. “It’s been real positive.”

News Observer LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347240 New York Rangers

Highly touted prospect Gabe Perreault scratched for Rangers' loss to Flyers

Mollie Walker4-5 minutes 10/04/2025

Just 10 days into his NHL career, Gabe Perreault had his first healthy scratch designation.

The 19-year-old forward, who burned one year off his entry-level contract to report to the Rangers for the remainder of this season, played three games before head coach Peter Laviolette opted to scratch him in favor of Brett Berard in Wednesday night’s 8-5 loss to the Flyers.

As a result, Berard slotted back onto the fourth line next to Sam Carrick and Chris Kreider.

“We’re going to put Berard back in the lineup, so again, 12 forwards.” Laviolette said Wednesday morning when asked of his reasoning behind the decision. “Coming in, I think for a young player — especially straight out of college — there’s going to be times I think where you can teach him and show him and let him watch and learn and practice and play in some games, as well. Where he’s had good impact in the game, where the impact can be more. He’s been good.”

Averaging 13:31 of ice time through his first three appearances, Perreault has had two sets of wingers and has skated in both the top six and bottom six.

After spending his first two games on the left wing of J.T. Miller and Alexis Lafrenière, the 23rd-overall pick in 2023 was then put on the right wing of Carrick and Kreider in the 5-1 loss to the Lightning earlier this week.

Perreault wrapped up his sophomore season at Boston College last month, after the Eagles lost to Denver in the NCAA Tournament Regional Final.

Asked if there’s increased urgency to assess Perreault as much as possible considering how few games he would be around for, Laviolette firmly said no.

Rangers young prospect Gabe Perreault, who played against the Lighting, did not play in the Blueshirts' 8-5 loss to the Flyers on April 9, 2025.

Rangers young prospect Gabe Perreault, who played against the Lighting, did not play in the Blueshirts' 8-5 loss to the Flyers on April 9, 2025. Charles Wenzelberg / New York Post

“When we go back and look at the game, coaches sit down and go through things with him,” he said. “I think it’s a learning process for young players. Whether it be practice, games, video, watching — could be a combination of all of it. Big step coming out of college and right into a lineup. Other players are sitting out, as well, that we want to continue to look at and put them in the lineup, as well.”

Mika Zibanejad earned a penalty shot just 1:15 into the game, but the Swedish center went way wide.

It counted as the Rangers’ 11th straight miss of a penalty shot, with the last successful one coming from Dan Boyle on Dec. 9, 2015.

Mika Zibanejad's penalty shot is stopped by Aleksei Kolosov during the Rangers' 8-5 loss to the Flyers on April 9, 2025.

extension, the team announced Wednesday.

According to PuckPedia, Blidh is guaranteed $385,000 and will make $775,000 at the NHL level and $350,000 in the minors.

In 66 games with the Wolf Pack this season, the 30-year-old has collected 17 goals and 13 assists.

Word out of Hartford is that goalie Louis Domingue is signing with the Kontinental Hockey League’s SKA St. Petersburg next season.

He’ll finish out the rest of the 2024-25 campaign with the Wolf Pack, but his three-season tenure with the Rangers organization is coming to an end.

Domingue played two games for the Rangers when both Igor Shesterkin and Jonathan Quick were unavailable on Nov. 9, 2023, and Jan. 5 this year.

Both were Blueshirts wins.

After missing Monday’s game because of illness, defenseman K’Andre Miller took warmups and participated in line rushes but did not play Wednesday.

Zac Jones remained in the lineup.

New York Post LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347241 New York Rangers

Rangers on brink of elimination after disastrous loss to Flyers

Mollie Walker4-5 minutes 10/04/2025

It's almost time to turn the lights off on this already dark Rangers season.

An 8-5 loss to the Flyers Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden pushed the Blueshirts to the brink of elimination, which could become official as soon as Thursday night on Long Island if they lose the second game of this back-to-back slate against the Islanders.

"We haven't really helped ourselves, let's be honest," said Mika Zibanejad, who led all skaters with four assists for his first four-point effort since the 2022-23 season. "We haven't really helped ourselves over the last couple weeks. We've been getting some chances and I felt a couple weeks ago like it was in our hands still to take care of the games that we had.

"But we weren't able to do that and that's why we're in this position. We're not in this position solely because of tonight. It stings. It's frustrating."

It was the visitors who got the better of a back-and-forth third period, in which nine total goals were scored between the two teams.

Philadelphia, already eliminated from playoff contention to match its longest postseason drought of five seasons, managed to find the back of the net six times (two empty-netters) in comparison to the Rangers' three.

Head coach Peter Laviolette took issue with the way his team "attacked" the final frame, noting that it was anybody's game for the taking and the Flyers played a better 20 minutes than the Rangers did.

The second-year Rangers coach didn't want to classify the recurring mistakes as confusion within the system, but instead described them as missed assignments.

"The frustration, the disappointment level has been there," Laviolette said. "So, we're still there."

The Rangers led only once in the third period and it lasted for only a minute before the Flyers tied it up again.

Goals from Jonny Brodzinski and J.T. Miller made it a 4-3 game, but Philadelphia rattled off three straight from Jakob Pelletier, Sean Couturier and Tyson Foerster (game-winner) to take a two-goal lead.

Chris Kreider cut it back to a one-goal deficit with 1:50 left in regulation, but two empty-netters from Foerster and Owen Tippett cleared out the fans who were remaining in the lower bowl of MSG.

The empty-net goal from Foerster completed the hat trick for the 23-year-old wing.

It was a chaotic final 20 minutes of regulation that saw the Rangers zone become the free-for-all it's been so many times this season.

The Rangers did strike first while skating shorthanded because of a too-many-men-on-the-ice call in the first period. Zibanejad pushed the puck up to Vincent Trocheck, who faked the shot before roofing a backhander past Flyers goalie Aleksei Kolosov for the 1-0 lead.

Philadelphia ended up taking their first lead on a shorthanded goal, too. Garnet Hathaway made it a 2-1 game at the 16:43 mark of the second period, with the Rangers having given up four shorthanded goals in their past six games.

Artemi Panarin, however, answered right back for the Rangers less than two minutes later.

Stitched up after taking a puck to the face shortly before, Panarin zeroed in before backhanding his 300th career goal past Kolosov to make it 2-2.

The teams just continued to trade goals from there, but the Flyers ultimately came out on top.

"It's a sh-tty feeling in here, for sure," Adam Fox said. "We're hanging on by a thread at this point. We'll show up [Thursday night] and try to win a game. That's pretty much all we can do right now is try and just turn the page to that."

New York Post LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347242 New York Rangers

Sam Rosen reunites with John Davidson for Rangers vs. Flyers—How to watch

Angela Tricarico3-4 minutes 09/04/2025

After 40 years as the voice of the New York Rangers, Sam Rosen is saying goodbye at the end of this season; tonight, as the regular season comes to a close, a very special reunion is set to take place.

Rosen, who began his tenure with the Rangers in 1984, spent 20 years calling games alongside John Davidson. Davidson, who is now a senior advisor with the Columbus Blue Jackets, will return to the Rangers' broadcast booth for one final game alongside Rosen tonight.

Rosen and Davidson were broadcasting partners from 1986 to 2006; in 1994, they were on the call when the Rangers won the Stanley Cup, leading to Rosen's iconic "This one will last a lifetime!"

what to know about rangers vs. flyers

Date and time: April 9, 7:30 p.m. ET

Location: Madison Square Garden (New York, N.Y.)

Channel: TNT, truTV

Streaming: DIRECTV Stream, Max

Rosen's impending retirement has prompted tributes across the league, including former Ranger (and current Minnesota Wild) Mats Zuccarello taking to the MSG ice in a custom Rosen #40 jersey for warm-ups earlier this month.

What time is today's Rangers game?

The Rangers vs. Flyers game tonight, April 9, begins at 7:30 p.m. ET.

How to watch Rangers vs. Flyers for free:

Tonight's Rangers vs. Flyers game is airing nationwide on both TNT and truTV, so if you don't have cable, you'll need a live TV streaming service to tune in.

Two that we recommend are DIRECTV Stream (five days free) and Hulu + Live TV (three days free), both of which include TNT and truTV.

Though not free, you can save 50% on your first month of Sling TV Orange, which includes TNT and will cost just $23 for the first month. Max Standard ($16.99/month) will also carry tonight's game.

Rangers vs. Flyers announcers:

As noted above, the voice of the New York Rangers, Sam Rosen, will be on play-by-play duties in tonight's nationally televised game, while longtime broadcast partner John Davidson provides color commentary.

Chris Chelios, Rangers hall-of-famer Henrik Lundqvist, Anson Carter, and Liam McHugh will present a pregame show beginning at 7 p.m. ET.

Why Trust Post Wanted by the New York Post

This article was written by Angela Tricarico, Commerce Writer/Reporter for Post Wanted Shopping and New York Post's streaming property, Decider. Angela keeps readers up to date with cord-cutter-friendly deals, and information on how to watch your favorite sports teams, TV shows, and movies on each streaming service. Not only does Angela test and compare the streaming services she writes about to ensure readers are getting the best prices, but she's also a superfan specializing in the intersection of shopping, tech, sports, and pop culture. Prior to joining Decider and New York Post in 2023, she wrote about streaming and consumer tech at Insider Reviews

New York Post LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347243 New York Rangers

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025


Rangers lose third straight, playoff hopes all but over

By Colin Stephensoncolin.stephenson@newsday.comColinSNewsdayUpdated April 9, 2025 11:38 pm3-3 minutes 10/04/2025

It's almost over now.

The Rangers' doomed chase for a playoff spot will come to an end Thursday on Long Island if they don't beat the rival Islanders at UBS Arena.

Wednesday's ugly 8-5 loss to the Flyers at the Garden left the Rangers eight points behind the Canadiens for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot with four games left. The Rangers will be eliminated with any kind of loss in regulation time, overtime or a shootout.

Tyson Foerster had a hat trick and the Flyers scored six goals in the third period to hand the Rangers their third straight loss.

"I didn't like the way we attacked the [third] period,'' coach Peter Laviolette said. "The game's going into that period, it's in the balance of who's going to decide it. They played a better period than we did. We made mistakes and ended up in the back of our net.''

Mika Zibanejad, who had four assists, said: "Over the last couple weeks . . . I felt like it was in our hands, still, [if we] take care of the games that we had. But we haven't been able to do that.''

Tied at 4 midway through the third, Sean Couturier scored on a rebound at 11:55 to put Philadelphia up 5-4. Foerster's second goal, at 15:33, made it 6-4.

With Jonathan Quick (22 saves on 28 shots) pulled for an extra skater, the Rangers got within 6-5 on Chris Kreider's goal with 1:50 left. But Foerster put it away with his third goal with 54 seconds remaining, and Owen Tippett scored another empty-netter with 11.7 seconds left to complete the scoring.

Artemi Panarin scored his team-leading 35th goal of the season late in the second period to tie it 2-2 after two periods. He became the first active undrafted player to reach the 300-goal milestone.

Zibanejad was awarded a penalty shot 1:15 into the game after he was hooked by Cam York while on a breakaway. But Zibanejad shot the puck wide on his attempt. According to Hockey Reference, it was the 11th consecutive penalty shot missed by the Rangers, whose last goal on a penalty shot came from Dan Boyle in December, 2015.

Urho Vaakanainen had two assists for the Rangers.

Colin Stephenson

Colin Stephenson covers the Rangers for Newsday. He has spent more than two decades covering the NHL and just about every sports team in the New York metropolitan area.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347244 New York Rangers

Rangers try to figure out where things went wrong this season

By Colin Stephensoncolin.stephenson@newsday.comColinSNewsdayUpdated April 9, 2025 7:23 pm5-7 minutes 09/04/2025

GREENBURGH – Mika Zibanejad still believed that anything was possible, of course. But the reality of the math facing him, and all the Rangers, was daunting. Eight points out of a playoff spot with five games to go, beginning with Wednesday's home matchup against the Philadelphia Flyers, felt like a hole too deep to climb out of .

"The previous three years… we've been kind of in it, and this time of year getting ready for the playoffs,'' Zibanejad said in a sitdown with Newsday at Wednesday's morning skate. "Obviously, we probably need a miracle here, but at the same time, we have to play. We have a game tonight, and our job is to play well and win the game. And then, obviously, once it's – whenever it's official, playoffs or elimination – then we'll take it from there.''

Elimination seems inevitable, and the Rangers are being forced to come to grips with that. After the Rangers lost to the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday, Artemi Panarin said the obvious: That this season has not been like last season, when the Rangers won the Presidents' Trophy, with club records in wins (55) and points (114).

"We feel like we play the same,'' Panarin said. "We try to play same way, but we're not [playing the same way] this year. I don't know why, exactly.''

Zibanejad couldn't say why things were different, either, though he did point out that the team itself is different. He noted the offseason departure of gritty Barclay Goodrow, a bottom-six forward but an important leader in the locker room, and pointed to the trade in early December of team captain Jacob Trouba and the March trade of top-four defenseman Ryan Lindgren as significant changes. Third-line center Filip Chytil and winger Kaapo Kakko also were traded mid-season.

"So it wasn't just, we had the same exact team from last year, with maybe a couple minor changes,'' he said.

He also pointed to the 4-15 stretch the team went through from mid-November through the end of December, which he said, "kind of killed us a little bit, too.''

"If we come out of that .500, I think we're in much better position than we would have been right now, going into this last stretch,'' he said.

In racking his brain to find some reason things were different this year, Zibanejad suggested maybe elevated expectations for the team played a part.

In their first season under coach Gerard Gallant, in 2021-22, the Rangers surprised everyone with a 52-win, 110-point season and a run to the Eastern Conference finals. Two years later, in Peter Laviolette's first season behind the bench last year, they surprised again in winning the Presidents' Trophy and once again reaching the conference finals, losing in six games to the eventual Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers.

But with expectations higher in the second season under both Gallant and Laviolette, the team faltered.

"Going into the first year [under Gallant], we go out, no expectations, and we do really well, and go far in the playoffs,'' Zibanejad said. "No one expected us to get through that first round. We were down, 3-1 [in a best-of-seven against Pittsburgh]. And then we come back next year, there's a lot more expectations… and how do we react to it?''

Laviolette didn't offer any theories as to what was different this year from last.

"There's no question that no two years are the same,'' he said. "This one certainly isn't the same from last year. This year we've had to work for everything, and at times, it hasn't gone the way we wanted it to go.''

With the exception of second-year forward Will Cuylle, most of the team's highest-profile players have had lesser years than expected, including Zibanejad, who entered Wednesday tied for fourth on the team in scoring with 52 points in 77 games (17 goals, 35 assists). His plus/minus rating was a team-worst minus-22.

"It wasn't, obviously, a good year, personally, with the statistics,'' Zibanejad said. "It's a disappointing, disappointing year. But like I've said before… one thing I do is I care. I care a lot about my game. I care a lot about what I can do to help this team, and I don't back down from anything.''

Perreault scratched

Winger Gabe Perreault, who played the last three games after signing with the Rangers following the conclusion of his college season with Boston College, was a healthy scratch, with Brett Berard re-entering the lineup in his place.

"I think for a young player, especially straight out of college, there's going to be times, I think, where you can teach him, and show him, let him watch and learn in practice, playing some games as well,'' Laviolette said. "He's been good. Just a young player.''

Blue notes

Jonathan Quick got the start in goal, with Igor Shesterkin likely to play Thursday at UBS Arena against the Islanders… Jonny Brodzinski was named as the Professional Hockey Writers Association New York chapter as the Rangers' nominee for the Masterton Trophy, awarded for Perseverance and Dedication to hockey. Brodzinski, 31, is in his 10th professional season, and this is his first exclusively in the NHL. He recently played his 200th NHL game and entered Wednesday with a career-best 10 goals.

Colin Stephenson

Colin Stephenson covers the Rangers for Newsday. He has spent more than two decades covering the NHL and just about every sports team in the New York metropolitan area.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347245 New York Rangers

Reality sinks in for Rangers as New York's last playoff hopes dwindle: Takeaways

Peter Baugh8-11 minutes 10/04/2025

Well, one team in the New York City metro clinched a playoff spot Wednesday. No, it was not the New York Rangers, who sit a whopping eight points out of the second wild-card spot with four games left, but Peter Laviolette's club did a favor for the rival New Jersey Devils. New York's 8-5 loss to the Philadelphia Flyers secured New Jersey a spot in the playoffs.

That's how it's going for the Rangers. They can't even lose in peace without their rivals profiting.

New York isn't technically eliminated, but that will happen soon. The Rangers sit behind the Montreal Canadiens, Detroit Red Wings, New York Islanders and Columbus Blue Jackets for the second wild-card spot. The Canadiens would have to lose out, all in regulation, and the Rangers would have to win all their remaining games for a berth to be possible.

"It's a s—— feeling in here for sure," Adam Fox said. "We're hanging on by a thread at this point."

Here are takeaways from the loss, which came with plenty of defensive blunders, a few career milestones and plenty of questions for the future.

Reality sinking in

A week ago, after an overtime win against the Wild, the Rangers were tied with Montreal in points, and the Canadiens had only one game in hand. But a three-game losing streak paired with a Montreal heater has made it clear: The Rangers aren't making the playoffs.

"Let's be honest, we haven't really helped ourselves over the last couple weeks," a dejected Mika Zibanejad said. "A couple weeks ago, I felt like it was in our hands still — take care of the games that we had. But we haven't been able to do that. … It stings."

"The frustration and disappointment level has been there," Laviolette added.

Missing out on the playoffs means a long offseason ahead. Laviolette's future in New York is in question, and team president Chris Drury will almost certainly make major changes to the roster. That's what happens when a team goes from a league-best record one year to out of the playoffs the next.

Power-play woes continue

Over the past six games, the Rangers have allowed four short-handed goals, including one to Garnet Hathaway on Wednesday.

The Rangers, meanwhile, have only four power-play goals over the past 19 games. Over the past six games, they have been outscored 4-2 when on the power play.

"There have been different ways that short-handed goals have been coming," Zibanejad said. "Obviously, from us not executing and getting into the zone or being over-aggressive and staying in, especially playing against some of the teams that are attacking a lot on their kill. We should've been able to do a better job tonight."

Along with giving up the Hathaway goal, the power play failed to score in three opportunities against the Flyers, who have a bottom-half penalty kill this year. The Rangers only managed one shot in those chances. Along with giving up the short-handed goal, they allowed a short-handed chance to Ryan Poehling that rang off the crossbar.

New York's power play has been one of the main reasons this season has slipped away. The Rangers have scored at only a 17.2 percent rate this year, which ranks 27th in the league. Last year they were third at 26.4 percent.

Brodzinski career-best year continues

Jonny Brodzinski does not hesitate to put the puck on the net, which makes him valuable to a team that's middle-of-the-pack league-wide in goals per game. With the Rangers down a goal in the third period, Brodzinski grabbed an Urho Vaakanainen pass and flung it past Aleksei Kolosov to tie the game. It was Brodzinski's 11th goal of the season, five more than his previous career high.

The 31-year-old Brodzinski, a career journeyman before settling into an NHL role the past two years in New York, earned a nod Wednesday morning as the Rangers' nominee for the Masterton Trophy, which is given to the player who "who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to ice hockey."

Rangers let opponents get to the net in another defensive disaster

The Rangers' defensive structure has been an issue all season, and the Flyers attacked the net and were often rewarded for it. With the score tied in the second, Fox lost track of Noah Cates, who cut to the net. Travis Sanheim found him with a pass. Quick moved across his crease in time to make the save, but the rebound moved right to Sanheim, who buried it.

Then, only a minute after the Rangers took the lead in the third on a J.T. Miller goal, Owen Tippett fired a puck toward the net. Quick allowed a rebound — no Rangers were there to box out Jakob Pelletier and Emil Andrae — and Pelletier pushed the puck over the line.

Both those goals came in a third period that saw the Rangers allow six goals, two of which were on an empty net.

"I feel like we've been struggling back and forth with that all year," Zibanejad said of the breakdowns. "I'm trying to come up with something else to say. I just feel like I repeat myself every time we have these scrums after a loss, and today it's just not good enough."

Will Cuylle said the game snowballed on the Rangers, just as it did Monday against Tampa Bay.

"It's not as good as it has to be," Cuylle said.

When asked if he thought his players were confused within the man-on-man system, Laviolette said, "There's no confusion out there. There's just missed assignments."

A long night for Quick

Quick has been a bright spot for the Rangers the past two years, but he did not have a strong night against the Flyers. He will want back the Hathaway goal, which went through his legs, and he probably should have been able to cover the puck before Pelletier buried it.

Perhaps his roughest moment came when Matvei Michkov put a puck in the vicinity of the net. Quick directed the rebound right to Flyers captain Sean Couturier, who put it back in the net for a go-ahead goal.

Quick finished the night with a .786 save percentage (22 saves on 28 shots) and allowed 3.49 goals above expected, according to Natural Stat Trick.

Zibanejad's tough season with breakaways

Early in the first period, Miller sprung Zibanejad on a breakaway, and Cam York slashed him as he cut to the net. The officials awarded

Zibanejad a penalty shot, but he missed wide, continuing a season of struggles in breakaway situations.

Zibanejad is traditionally excellent on breakaways and has a 40.8 percent success rate in shootouts. This year, though, has been a struggle. None of his 17 goals have come on breakaways despite multiple chances on the year, most notably in overtime in January games against Colorado and Columbus. He also is zero-for-one on his lone shootout attempt, which came against the Blue Jackets.

If he does not score a shootout goal in the next four games, it will be one of only three seasons in his career without one. The others are 2011-12, when he played only nine games and did not get a shootout attempt, and the shortened 2021 season.

Cuylle breaks single-season hits record

Cuylle finished the night with five hits, putting him at 290 on the season. That passed Ryan Callahan (285) for most by a Ranger in a season since the league started tracking the stat in 2007-08.

Cuylle also picked up his 40th point of the season with an assist on Miller's goal.

Perreault scratched

Top prospect Gabe Perreault played the first three New York games after he signed out of Boston College, but Laviolette scratched him Wednesday, putting fellow rookie Brett Berard back in the lineup.

"I think for a young player, especially straight out of college, there are going to be times where you can teach him and show him and let him watch and learn and practice and play in some games as well," Laviolette said. "He's been good. Just a young player who draws out tonight."

Laviolette said the coaches were going to go through video with Perreault. He called it a learning process for young players.

"Big step coming out of college and right into a lineup," Laviolette said. "Other players are sitting out as well that we want to continue to look at and put into the lineup as well."

Peter Baugh is a staff writer for The Athletic NHL based in New York. He has previously been

Published in the Columbia Missourian, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Kansas City Star, Politico and the Washington Post. A St. Louis native, Peter graduated from the University of Missouri and previously covered the Missouri Tigers and the Colorado Avalanche for The Athletic. Follow Peter on Twitter @Peter_Baugh

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347246 New York Rangers

When NHL fighters become teammates — and even friends: 'You jumped me!'

Peter Baugh8-10 minutes 09/04/2025

The realization hit Nicolas Aube-Kubel like a punch. He was driving to the Westchester County Airport on this late-March day, having just been called up to the Rangers, which meant the 28-year-old winger was becoming teammates with a fellow NHL player he had long hated to face.

"Shoot," Aube-Kubel thought to himself. "I have to meet Trocheck now."

Back in December, when Aube-Kubel was on the Sabres, he nailed Rangers center Vincent Trocheck with a reverse hit in his defensive zone, knocking Trocheck down. Trocheck took issue with the check, which caught him high, and charged at his opponent. The two dropped their gloves, and Aube-Kubel landed a couple of blows before Trocheck fell to the ice.

Three months later, on trade deadline day, the Rangers acquired Aube-Kubel from the Sabres for Erik Brännström. Since Aube-Kubel was in the minors at the time of the deal, he initially joined the AHL's Hartford Wolf Pack. The Rangers recalled him before a West Coast road trip, setting up his first encounter with Trocheck since the fight. After arriving at the Westchester airport, Aube-Kubel approached his former foe on the team plane.

"I'm glad I have you on my side now," he told Trocheck.

The pair shared a laugh, reminiscing about the fight; Trocheck brought up how Buffalo Bills offensive lineman Dion Dawkins, a four-time Pro Bowler, had been sitting in the front row that night and evidently loved what he saw, banging on the glass and pumping up the KeyBank Center crowd. Then they settled into being teammates.

"It's not something you're going to hold a grudge over," Trocheck said later. "Part of the game."

And it's far from unique to Aube-Kubel and Trocheck. The continued existence of fighting in the NHL forces players to occasionally join forces with someone they've punched. Aube-Kubel, for example, has now skated alongside three of the seven players he's fought in the NHL. Among them is Sabres defenseman Connor Clifton, with whom Aube-Kubel said he has since become "best buddies."

When Rangers center Sam Carrick was with the Ducks' AHL affiliate in 2021, for instance, he challenged Vincent Desharnais to a bout after Desharnais delivered a knee-on-knee hit to one of Carrick's teammates. Then, after the Oilers acquired Carrick at the 2024 trade deadline, he and Desharnais became teammates themselves. They relitigated the hit, chuckling about Carrick finding it dirty.

"Eventually you always laugh about it," Carrick said. "It's one of those things where maybe in the heat of the moment you're mad, but I think there's a mutual respect there."

Players take different approaches to reuniting with former combatants on the same roster. Some address it as soon as possible. They discuss the plays that led to it, compare perspectives, and share a laugh.

"It's just more of a ball-busting thing," Rangers center J.T. Miller said.

Carrick illustrated as much. With Trocheck in earshot in the Rangers' dressing room, Carrick loudly exclaimed, "I forgot about (Aube-Kubel) beating the wheels off Trocheck earlier in the year." Carrick also mentioned Miller fighting his brother, Trevor Carrick, during their junior hockey days.

"Beat his ass," Miller recalled.

But other players leave their previous encounters unaddressed. While with the Coyotes last season, defenseman J.J. Moser fought Mikey Eyssimont, who was playing for the Tampa Bay Lightning at the time. Then, over the summer, the Lightning traded for Moser. The defenseman said he could have made a joke when he met Eyssimont, but the right opportunity never came up.

"You probably are not talking about any other situation," Moser said. "If you are playing against a guy and you take the puck away from him, you're not going to go back and (say), 'Oh, you remember when I took the puck away?'"

Eyssimont, meanwhile, fought multiple eventual Lightning teammates: Brayden Point in 2023, and Moser and Cam Atkinson last season. "You jumped me!" Atkinson recalled joking when they later met in Tampa. "That's bulls—!" Atkinson had played more than 700 NHL games without a fight before taking on Eyssimont, and found it amusing that "the one guy I get into some sort of scrap with is my teammate the next year."

To Atkinson, keeping the situation light was a way to show there was no bad blood. As if to further demonstrate this point, the winger referred to Eyssimont, who was traded to the Kraken at the deadline, as a great guy.

"Nine times out of 10 there's really no animosity," Miller said. "Have a beer with a guy after. It shouldn't be a problem."

There are times when players who drop the gloves genuinely don't like each other, Miller added, but it's not common. For example, he had nothing against Carson Soucy when they fought in 2022-23. Miller was with the Canucks at the time, and Vancouver had gone winless through its first seven games of the season. Coach Bruce Boudreau had called his players out ahead of a game against the Kraken, Miller remembered, so he felt he needed to do something. Soucy, then with Seattle, just happened to be standing close to Miller early in the first period when

Miller was looking to fight. There was nothing personal to it. Soucy respected Miller for trying to pump up his team.

Soucy signed with the Canucks ahead of the next season, and he and Miller were both traded to the Rangers in separate deals this year. The two teammates joked about their fight early on after Soucy joined Vancouver, but they haven't really discussed it since.

"Guys don't fight each other on the ice because they hate each other," said Rangers winger Brennan Othmann, who fought eventual teammate Casey Fitzgerald in the AHL last season. "They fight each other to get momentum or they're sticking up for a teammate after a hit or whatever it is."

Unsurprisingly, league heavyweights are the most likely candidates to wind up playing with someone they once fought. When Ryan Reaves was traded from the Rangers to the Wild in November 2022, he found himself sharing a dressing room with Marcus Foligno — a player he had fought multiple times, including two months prior to the trade.

Foligno thought about their previous fights as soon as Minnesota acquired Reaves, particularly how the recent punches "stuck with me for about two more weeks on the top of my head." Foligno, still with the Wild, said fans have since asked him to sign a photo that Reaves had posted on his Instagram page in the wake of one of their fights. The two even dropped the gloves again after Reaves left for the Maple Leafs, but they still talk. There are no hard feelings.

"Reavo was awesome and easy to get along with right away, despite having some run-ins with him," Foligno said. "Usually those guys understand what it takes to win and what it takes to bring a team close."

As is the case with Foligno and Reaves, there's plenty of familiarity between frequent fighters. The Devils' Kurtis MacDermid and the Flyers' Nicolas Deslauriers, for example, once lived together as roommates during Kings development camp. The two have gone on to fight five times over their careers.

"Nothing personal," MacDermid said during the 2021-22 season, when he twice fought Deslauriers. "I respect him as a player and a person, and he's a really great guy and good player. It's just a part of the job."

Rangers bruiser Matt Rempe has yet to become teammates with one of his past opponents, but he's encountered plenty away from the rink: While playing junior hockey in the Western Hockey League, he sometimes palled around with them at bars over the summer in his native Calgary.

"You run into guys and (say) 'oh, I fought you! Let me buy you a beer,'" he said.

But the longer Rempe's career goes, the more likely it is that he'll end up playing alongside someone he's tried to beat to a pulp. His reaction then will probably be similar: share a laugh, enjoy a drink and proceed on good terms.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347283 Toronto Maple Leafs

Matthew Knies scores in OT for his second hat trick and the Maple Leafs beat the Lightning 4-3

Erik Erlendsson2-3 minutes 4/9/2025

Matthew Knies scored a game-winning goal in overtime to record his second hat trick of the season, and the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Toronto opened up a three-point lead on Tampa Bay for first place in the Atlantic Division with four games left for each team.

Knies finished off his hat trick with 1:04 left in the overtime.

Mitch Marner had a goal and three points and Auston Matthews had three assists. Anthony Stolarz finished with 25 saves.

Oliver Bjorkstrand, Victor Hedman and Nick Perbix scored for the Lightning, which moved three points ahead of Florida for second place in the division. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 27 saves.

Toronto scored twice in the opening 3:33, with Marner scoring his 25th of the season at 1:13 followed by Knies off a rebound for a 2-0 lead.

Perbix scored with 1:02 left in the first period. Bjorkstrand tied it on a power-play goal 50 seconds into the third before Knies regained the lead on a Toronto power play at 2:02.

Hedman tied the game at 11:05 of the third on the power play.

Takeaways

Maple Leafs: Marner recorded his 202nd career multi-point game and passed Dave Keon for fourth most in franchise history. ... Knies has 10 goals in nine career games against Tampa Bay.

Lightning: Center Luke Glendening left the game in the first period and did not return. LW Jake Guentzel missed the game for family reasons.

Key moment

Brayden Point was cross checked by Bobby McMann and dropped the gloves with the Toronto forward to fire up his team. McMann earned the extra penalty on the play that led to Victor Hedman's tying goal at 11:05 of the third.

Key stat

Toronto finished with 32 blocked shots.

Up next

Tampa Bay hosts Detroit on Friday and Toronto hosts Montreal on Saturday.

Globe And Mail LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347284 Toronto Maple Leafs

Why John Tavares earned the Maple Leafs' Bill Masterton Award nomination

By Kevin McGran

Sports Reporter

There was a lot that could have been on John Tavares's mind through his seventh season with the Maple Leafs.

He was no longer captain, having passed the C on to Auston Matthews. He was in the last year of his contract, with no guarantee he would get an extension. And the contract itself was under investigation by the Canada Revenue Agency, challenging that his initial $15-million signing bonus wasn't taxed properly.

None of it has proven to be a distraction.

The 34-year-old is having close to a career year in terms of his offence. His commitment to the game and his dedication to his fitness have never been in doubt. And for those reasons, the Toronto chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers Association has made Tavares the Maple Leafs' nominee for the Bill Masterton Award.

"I love what I do," Tavares said of his approach to the game. "I feel like it's an amazing opportunity to do something that you first fell in love with as a kid. I feel like a kid every day, getting to play a sport that I love and I get to do it in a tremendous place where I'm from.

"Every day is really exciting and you can't beat it. So I'm very grateful for that."

Tavares isn't the first player to be asked to give up the captaincy. The transition isn't always easy, but Tavares didn't skip a beat.

“There’s a lot of thought behind it,” he said. “There’s a lot of things that go through your head, but you try to do the right thing and what you feel is right for the team to help the team win.

“You recognize the situation, the scenario and what Auston means to this team, the person he is and the player that he is. It made a lot of sense that the time was right for him take the reins and be the captain.

“I never looked at it as something that was going to change my approach, or how I lead or how I play.”

His legal battle with the CRA is tied up in legalese that could take years to sort out.

“It’s a process,” Tavares said. “The people that I have around me understand that world a lot better than I do. It’ll get taken care of and, however it goes, you just kind of keep moving forward.”

Tavares’s season has been so strong — he has a chance at scoring 40 goals for the second time in his career — that it’s hard to imagine the Leafs without him. He has been up front about wanting an extension, while understanding that the team wants to wait until after the playoffs, and perhaps after deciding on Mitch Marner’s fate, before dealing with his future.

“That stuff is outside the boards,” Tavares said. “The mindset of how I play, how I approach the game doesn’t change. And I think that goes back to just my enjoyment, my passion for the game.

“Obviously playing in the NHL at this level, we get paid very well and I’ve been very fortunate throughout my career. I’m in a pretty good spot. I have a lot of trust and belief that it’ll all work out.”

Each of the PHWA’s 32 chapters selects a Masterton candidate, with leaguewide voting to follow after the regular season. Recent Leafs nominees have been Ilya Samsonov (2024), Mark Giordano (2023) and Ondrej Kase (2022). Jason Blake is the only Leaf to have won the award; he didn’t miss a game in the 2007-08 season after receiving treatment for chronic myelogenous leukemia, a rare but treatable form of cancer.

Bill Masterton played for the Minnesota North Stars and died of a brain injury suffered in a game on Jan. 13, 1968. The award in his name honours the player who “best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey.”

Toronto Star LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347285 Toronto Maple Leafs

The Panthers smother the Leafs and debunk the notion they’re tanking to set up a first-round meeting

April 9, 2025

By Kevin McGran

Sports Reporter

If the Maple Leafs were looking for an opponent to push them into playoff-style hockey, they found one Tuesday in Sunrise, Fla.

The Stanley Cup-champion Florida Panthers played to their trademark style: They were physical, they forechecked hard, they went to the net, and they won puck battles.

It was the style that coach Craig Berube craves for his Leafs, but few on the Toronto side could match what Florida threw at them.

A third-period goal by Eetu Luostarinen and an empty-netter by Carter Verhaeghe proved the difference in a 3-1 Panthers decision that ended the Leafs’ four-game winning streak.

“We expect that when we come in here that it’s going to be a hard battle,” Leafs forward Matthew Knies said. “We (knew) it was going to be like this. We tried to push back. We didn’t do a good enough job. Our physicality, we were a little bit soft in some areas. Didn’t play the full 60.

“We’re gonna have to learn to do that when it comes to playoff time.”

John Tavares scored his 37th goal in the second period, and Joseph Woll did everything he could to keep the Leafs in the game by stopping 34 of 36 shots.

The Panthers suffocated the Leafs. It wasn’t suffocating defence; it was suffocating offence. They played in the Leafs end, not really caring about scoring. They were happy to keep the Leafs 200 feet away from their net.

“To me, it just comes down to competitiveness and digging in more,” Berube said. “They seemed like a more desperate team than us. We spent too much time defending, not enough time in the offensive zone.

“They wanted it more.”

The Leafs could have clinched home-ice advantage by taking two points, but instead the jockeying for position at the top of the Atlantic Division will continue with the Leafs facing their closest pursuer, Tampa Bay, on Wednesday.

“We were a little slow to pucks,” Knies said. “We weren’t creating much offence. That bummed us a little bit. We’ve got to know that simple hockey is what’s going to create the offence for us and then create that juice.”

“We’re all hungry and eager to prove that this game was just a fluke and that we can do a lot better.”

Standings talk

There was, understandably, a lot of chatter before the game about playoff positioning.

“It’s obviously such a tight race, with (the Panthers) and the Lightning, and Ottawa’s catching up, too,” Leafs forward Steven Lorentz said. “It’s tight all over. There’s spots to be made up, places to be earned. Teams are going to get jumped (in the standings). There’s going to be a lot of movement.”

One theory from the tinfoil hat crowd had the Panthers tanking to finish fourth in the Atlantic, just so they could play the Leafs in the first round.

More to the truth, the Panthers are banged up and their five-game losing streak coming into the game was evidence of that. They were still without Matthew Tkachuk (groin) and the suspended Aaron Ekblad, among others.

Panthers bite

Any suggestion the Panthers didn’t care should have been out the window after their dominant first period. They got the only goal, on a clean draw from Anton Lundell to Gustav Forsling, outshot the Leafs 14-4, and got 12 of the last 13 shots on net.

“That one’s on me,” Tavares said of his faceoff loss. “I was anticipating something on his end and I completely mistimed it, misread it. I can’t lose it clean like that and give up an opportunity like that.”

Woll got the start, with Anthony Stolarz expected to play Wednesday in Tampa. Leafs coach Craig Berube didn’t get into the whys and wherefores, other than to say Woll hadn’t played Florida yet this season.

That first-period goal wasn’t a good one, a wrist shot with no traffic in front of Woll.

But that was his only sin. He came up big on a couple of chances by Brad Marchand as Florida held a 28-14 lead in shots through two periods and he added to the total in the third.

“He played excellent,” Berube said. “Gave us a chance to get points tonight.”

The Leafs were better in the second. Tavares tied the game early in the second period, an unassisted goal. His shot seemed to both handcuff and surprise Sergei Bobrovsky.

Luostarinen’s winner came early in the third when Morgan Rielly’s clearing attempt behind the net hit a stick and landed on the Panthers forward’s stick alone in front.

“In tight games it’s usually a bounce that goes either way,” Woll said. “And, unfortunately, we were on the wrong side of that bounce.”

Toronto Star LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347286 Toronto Maple Leafs

LEAFS TAKEAWAYS: Matthew Knies catches Lightning in a bottle

Lance Hornby

Published Apr 09, 2025

The win that could turn out to be the most important for the Maple Leafs' first-place hopes was one of their most difficult this season.

Playing Tampa Bay back-to-back after a loss to the Stanley Cup champions in Sunrise, Fla., with the Bolts ready to tie Toronto with a regulation win, required a full 24-hour reset and the Leafs did it.

Our takeaways from a 4-3 overtime thriller that moved the Leafs to 100 points and opened a three-point lead on Tampa and six on the Panthers for home ice in any series:

THAT'S A KNIES FINISH

He hits, he fights, he shoots, he scores.

What's not to like about Matthew Knies, that 'other' Arizonan on the Leafs top line, now on the verge of 30 goals? His first ever overtime goal was of the highlight variety, having just tried a bold between-the-legs pass to Morgan Rielly that would've been a thrilling winner itself. Rielly circled to retrieve his own rebound in the corner, fed it to Auston Matthews who, instead of shooting, fed it to Knies for the tap-in.

All three of his goals came on the doorstep where he doesn't mind wiping his boots. He's the first Leaf with three goals and a roughing minor in a game since Niklas Hagman in 2009 according to NHL Stats.

"He's just a confident person in general," said Matthews. "He has a pretty good idea of who he is and what makes him successful and he really leans into that. He's got a big personality and all the guys on the team really get a laugh out of him. He brings great energy into the room every day."

Knies returned the compliment, having signed two years to the day after leaving the University of Minnesota.

"I've learned from the leadership, a lot of guys here who played a lot of years in this league," he said. "I just have follow their footsteps.

"I've said I want to play my best hockey at this time of year and I think it's really coming along."

Ten goals in nine career games against the Lightning would make him Public Enemy No. 1 in Tampa if the Leafs play them at some point in playoffs. And Matthews would be a handful for the Panthers or Ottawa Senators, too.

DIALING FOR STOLARZ

It was a 1 and 1A horse race most of the year in the Leafs net, especially when it took Anthony Stolarz a little while to get fully healthy from minor knee surgery. While Joseph Woll wasn't the reason Toronto lost the night before in giving up just two goals, Stolarz surrendered just one even-strength in winning his sixth straight.

When he stopped Brayden Point on an overtime breakaway and then stared down Art Ross Trophy winner Nikita Kucherov, it was more evidence the veteran is best prepared to take the Game 1 reins against whoever the Leafs play. Not to say Woll doesn't get back in at some point of a series after playing the Bruins last year and as the rotation has worked so well, but Stolarz just seems to have everything, even luck, going his way with four games remaining.

Stolarz said he figured with all the speed the right-shooting Point was coming in on him with, the Bolts star would try over the pad and under glove.

"I kind of just threw everything out there. (Kucherov) can make plays not many guys can make," Stolarz said. "We did a good job taking away his time and space. I think he got an apple (assist), but at the end of the day, he's a dynamic player.

"Right now, it's all about the two points. We're battling for the division, for home ice and to be able to beat a team of this calibre on the second of a back-to-back, we have to continue to build on that."

LIFE OF RIELLY

Defenceman Rielly, who was part of the breakdown on a goal in Florida, could've been under the hot spotlight again when Point took the puck from him on the breakaway. Yet he led Toronto with seven of their season-high 33 shot blocks and had an assist on the winner as Craig Berube trusted him with Tampa's most dangerous forwards out during 3-on-3 play.

The most interesting part of the Leafs defence, aside from them all embracing Chris Tanev's rubber-eating role, was Berube's new pairings. Simon Benoit and Chris Tanev, Philippe Myers and Oliver Ekman-Larsson and some mixing of Rielly and Brandon Carlo with the others gave the coach a look at other options as the team survived another game without the injured Jake McCabe.

Tampa did hit the net 28 times as the Leafs struggled to clear at times, but it was some good intel for the staff. Still to be determined is if Jani Hakanpaa can make a depth contribution once the end of regular season allows the big blueliner to return from salary cap restrictions.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347287 Toronto Maple Leafs

Matthew Knies' hat trick extends Leafs' division lead on Tampa Bay

Lance Hornby

Published Apr 09, 2025

To invoke the Tragically Hip, Matthew Knies has the Maple Leafs ahead by a century in their pursuit of first place in the Atlantic Division.

His overtime goal, on a tap-in, completed a hat trick on Wednesday night as the Leafs reached 100 points and gained a three-point margin over the Tampa Bay Lightning in a 4-3 final at Amalie Arena.

A night after Knies was one of the most vocal Leafs for their no-show down the road in Sunrise against the Panthers, he delivered his 10th goal in nine games versus the Lightning and first in OT on a nifty Auston Matthews pass.

The extra period produced huge breakaway saves at both ends by Toronto's Anthony Stolarz and the home side's Andrei Vasilevskiy, but the Leafs swept the season series 4-0.

The Leafs top line of Matthews, Knies and Mitch Marner combined for nine points, three by each.

The game began and ended with a flurry of offence sandwiched between a tight scoreless second period.

Tampa opened the third with an Oliver Bjorkstrand power play goal off some nifty puck movement to tie the game 2-2.

But the penalized John Tavares drew a double minor himself seconds later when Emil Lilleberg gave him a nasty nosebleed from a high stick.

Toronto struck quickly on that power-play to regain the lead, Knies poking away at a rebound after Tavares had won a draw to Marner.

The Leafs didn't allow a shot on goal when the Bolts went had another extra man for a minute and a half, but an added Bobby McMann minor in a scrum with Erik Cernak gave Victor Hedman the tying goal.

After a paltry shot count in Florida, just 18, with their Core Four almost completely shut down, the fired-up Leafs had 10 in the opening period and led 2-0 in less than four minutes.

Both their goals were generated by steals, first Matthews at the Tampa blueline for a Marner deke and snap, then the same two players in reverse roles. On the second, Vasilevskiy did get a pad on Matthews' drive, but Knies stuffed in the rebound.

Toronto banged on the door again a few times after that, with Bobby McMann, Tavares on a partial breakaway out of the penalty box and Max Domi passing to the hard-luck Scott Laughton all coming close.

That allowed the Lightning, which was without gunner Jake Guentzel — at home with his pregnant wife — to get its new lines untracked and score late in the first after ringing a couple of posts. Nick Perbix beat Stolarz through a screen with 1:02 to play. That reeled in the free-wheeling a bit, as Toronto circled the wagons and blocked a season-high 33 shots.

While Tuesday's loss wasn't on Joseph Woll's shoulders, the poise of Stolarz shone through again on Wednesday, the whole rink could hear him direct the Leafs defence. He has the inside lane on being the Game 1 starter no matter the foe.

Both teams had made lineup changes, Craig Berube electing to flip bottom six wingers Scott Laughton and Nick Robertson. The coach also shuffled the defence, breaking up Morgan Rielly and Brandon Carlo, the former with Oliver Ekman-Larsson, the latter partnering Simon Benoit as the Leafs continue to compensate for the injured Jake McCabe.

Already without Guentzel and choosing to dress seven defencemen, the Lightning was down to 10 forwards after Luke Glendenning exited less than three minutes into the game.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347288 Toronto Maple Leafs

LEAFS NOTES: Trip back to Florida for playoffs a strong possibility

Lance Hornby

Published Apr 09, 2025

The Maple Leafs likely haven't seen the last of the Sunshine State's palm trees.

While Wednesday night in Tampa Bay wrapped a combined eight games against the Lightning and Panthers this season, the Leafs either draw one of them in the playoffs' opening round or, should they face the Ottawa Senators and get through, the winner of a Bolts-Cats series.

Toronto was stung by a 3-1 loss on Tuesday in Sunrise, the Panthers beating them three of four times this season, this one with the home side a few bodies and nagging injuries shy of a full roster.

Tampa Bay, meanwhile, is near 100 per cent healthy as playoffs loom, led by winger Nikita Kucherov, second in NHL scoring before the game at 115 points, one back of Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon.

Kucherov, who had 144 last season, has 22 points in his past 15 versus Toronto.

"We've got to be hard on him and physical, as much as you can," cautioned Leafs coach Craig Berube to reporters in Tampa Bay Wednesday morning. "He's such a good playmaker. He has eyes in the back of his head almost. He knows where his players are, his linemates. He'll just make a play under pressure to them. We need good stick details to take away his options."

Toronto had beaten the Lightning three times this season before Wednesday, its ability to get behind Tampa's defence being just one of the chief factors why.

"We've done a good job counter-attacking, creating something the other way off it," Berube said, noting that Toronto also forechecked well and killed eight of 11 penalties against a Bolts power play that, like its own, ranks near the top of the NHL.

The Leafs have had recent success against star goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, including their 2023 playoff series. But Vasilevskiy is having another strong season with a save percentage of .923, second only in the league to Connor Hellebuyck of Winnipeg.

"He just cuts the angle so well when coming in and shooting," said Leafs winger Bobby McMann. "You don't see any net, with how big he is. It's changing those angles, getting rebounds, getting in and around his net."

THANK YOU, GREG

Before Wednesday's game, Sportsnet did a live tribute to Greg Millen, who passed away earlier this week, featuring broadcast buddies, Chris Cuthbert and Glenn Healy, who is now executive director of the NHL Alumni.

Both cited his playing career and dedication to the TV booth and rinkside for 30 years, which included often brutal travel back east from western Canada to have extra time with his wife and four kids. But Healy also saluted Millen for keeping an eye on veteran players he'd meet on the road.

"I have my bird dogs everywhere around the league watching players and saying: 'This guy might be in trouble, you might want to give him call'," Healy said. "I had that so many times from Greg. He'd call me about someone, not quite sure if things were going well for him and saying: 'Glen, now might be the right time to pick up the phone'.

"Not many guys do that. They're more worried about their travel. Did they not get a middle seat on the plane? That's what I had done. Not Millsie. He was looking after other players. He was not a taker, he was a giver. So many players didn't know that he called on their behalf that we helped and got them on the right track. He did that for his unique brethren."

HUSTLING FOR A HUNDRED

When the Leafs get to 100 points (safe to say they'll find some way to manufacture two more in their final five games) it'll be a noteworthy feat for Berube.

To start, only three other Toronto coaches ever reached triple digits, all since 2000 — Pat Quinn, Mike Babcock and Sheldon Keefe. But none of them ever duplicated the 100-point season of their immediate predecessor as Berube would do with Keefe.

And according to NHL Stats, Berube will join 35 other coaches in league history who achieved 100 in their first year with a new team, the 12th to do it with a Canadian club, and second this year after Scott Arniel in Winnipeg.

LOOSE LEAFS

Going into Wednesday's game, winger William Nylander was one shot on goal away from 2,000 in his career and the eighth Leaf in team history to reach that mark … Former Leafs captain Dion Phaneuf turns 40 on Thursday … This week nine years ago, the Leafs were cleaning out their lockers, having just finished last in the league. A few days later, they won the NHL draft lottery, picked Auston Matthews first overall and now hold the NHL's longest consecutive playoff appearance streak.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347289 Toronto Maple Leafs

GAMEDAY: Leafs hope bounce back for season sweep of Tampa Bay Lightning

Lance Hornby

Published Apr 09, 2025

WHEN: Wednesday, 7 p.m.

TV: Sportsnet RADIO: TSN 1050

ODDS Toronto +140 Tampa Bay -170

THE BUZZ

Until April, the outlook was this game being the undercard on Toronto's Sunshine State trip. That was before coach Jon Cooper's team got hot and climbed to second place in the Atlantic Division … Toronto has a 3-0 record against the Bolts this year, scoring five in each game … While the Leafs spent Tuesday in a disappointing 3-1 loss to the Panthers, the

rested Lightning have won five of the past seven and increased their conference-best goal differential to plus 74 … Tampa settles in for four games at home, its longest stand since before the 4 Nations Face-Off … Anthony Stolarz will be Wednesday's likely starter in net … The Lightning had three power play goals in their 5-1 over the Rangers, bringing them to sixth in league efficiency, one spot behind the Leafs.

THE NEWS

Leafs are hoping this is the last game that injured defenceman Jake McCabe and centre David Kampf miss … Tampa's Nikita Kucherov with 115 points is one back of Nathan MacKinnon of the Avalanche atop the league and hoping for his second straight Art Ross Trophy … John Tavares's goal Tuesday gave him 37, matching a six-year high.

THE QUOTE

"You love it, but in a couple of weeks (playoffs), it's not going to happen like that." – coach Jon Cooper after a successful road trip, trying to keep his team on task.

THE PROJECTED LEAFS LINEUP

Forwards

Matthew Knies Auston Matthews Mitch Marner

Bobby McMann John Tavares William Nylander

Scott Laughton Max Domi Calle Jarnkrok

Steven Lorentz Pontus Holmberg Nick Robertson

Defence

Oliver Ekman-Larsson – Chris Tanev

Morgan Rielly – Brandon Carlo

Simon Benoit – Philippe Myers

Goalies

Anthony Stolarz

Joseph Woll

Injuries

Toronto: D Jake McCabe (undisclosed), C David Kampf (upper body), LW Max Pacioretty (lower body), D Jani Hakanpaa (knee).

Tampa Bay: No injuries.

THE PREDICTION

Leafs, with a record of 4-0-1 in the second game of back-to-backs in the New Year, add another win 4-3 in overtime.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347290 Toronto Maple Leafs

Maple Leafs report cards: Matthew Knies hat trick helps Toronto weather storm

Omar White7-9 minutes 4/9/2025

This was a must-win game with the regular season coming to its end and the battle for the Atlantic Division title getting murkier by the day.

The Toronto Maple Leafs did just that. They may not have finished the game in regulation, winning 4-3 in overtime Wednesday, but they secured both points in a tough game that could've seen the Tampa Bay Lightning complete a third-period comeback.

The start was exactly what the Leafs needed with their top line scoring twice in the opening five minutes. They took the game to Tampa and capitalized on mistakes made. However, a slow shift was brewing and the Lightning began taking back control. The shots evened up, though Tampa was getting the majority of shot attempts and some of its better ones hit the post instead of goalie Anthony Stolarz.

The second and third periods were impressive in their own way. Tampa led the charge offensively while the Leafs buckled down and weathered the storm at five-on-five. The Lightning did get two goals on the power play, but the Leafs, especially the blue line, made a number of well-timed defensive plays in their own end to keep the majority of chances on the outside. And at the same time, Tampa's best and most dangerous chances at five-on-five either went high or wide of the net.

The penalty kill was a different story. Tampa has its weapons but some miscues and poor decisions gave Oliver Bjorkstrand and Victor Hedman the opportunity to score. The power play remains a difference-maker for the Leafs, though their short-handed units allow teams to get back in the game.

Final Grade: B+

Unit reports

Matthew Knies – Auston Matthews – Mitch Marner: A

The top line set the tone for the night and Knies of course led the way offensively.

MATTHEW KNIES 🎩🎩🎩

OVERTIME HAT-TRICK WINNER! pic.twitter.com/SnJZOUsWKG

— Omar (@TicTacTOmar) April 10, 2025

All three of his goals came from right in front of goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, with his second requiring a net-front battle to complete the sequence. Matthews was key in stealing and picking off pucks by the offensive blue. That led to both Marner's and Knies' goals. Matthews also felt the sting of a blocked shot on the penalty kill, though luckily he was back on the ice to finish the third and get the primary on Knies' game winner.

Marner's game-opening goal was impressive, and with another 3 points, he's even closer to hitting the century mark (97 points). His slap shot off the rush is becoming a habit for him and he nearly beat Vasilevskiy with it in the second.

MITCH MARNER 🚨

1:13 to start the game! pic.twitter.com/qFqv4B771a

— Omar (@TicTacTOmar) April 9, 2025

Anthony Stolarz: A

Luck was on Stolarz's side with all of those high-danger chances that hit the post for Tampa. However, he was steady for the Leafs as he kept the score as close as he could with what was working in front of him. Although the shots were relatively even at 31-28 in the Leafs' favour, he faced 90 shot attempts and the Lightning really started to attack the front of the net in the latter half of the game. His biggest save was in overtime, stopping Brayden Point on the breakaway.

game-saving stop by Stolarz pic.twitter.com/N8HDJbMVlJ

— Omar (@TicTacTOmar) April 10, 2025

Brandon Carlo – Morgan Rielly: B+

The pair combined for 11 blocks on the night. Rielly led all defencemen with seven, including five in the first period. Carlo had some well-timed blocks as well, including a block on Ryan McDonagh after recognizing he was screening Stolarz. Stolarz had to bail Rielly out after his overtime turnover, but all in all, it was a steady game from the pair.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson – Chris Tanev: B+

Block, check, box out, repeat. Ekman-Larsson has done a good job filling in for Jake McCabe, and the way he uses his stick to completely disrupt plays, or at least threaten to do so, was noticeable. Nikita Kucherov had a great chance to score off an extremely rare Tanev mistake and shot high. Ekman-Larsson didn't get his stick on the puck, but he was close.

Simon Benoit – Phillipe Myers: B

Benoit stood out offensively, but especially defensively. The Lightning managed to get the Kucherov line on against his pair and he did a good job sticking to the assignment one-on-one.

Benoit stays with Kucherov pic.twitter.com/Wf639WIv9m

— Omar (@TicTacTOmar) April 10, 2025

Calle Järnkrok – John Tavares – William Nylander: B

Relatively even game for this line with little moments of flash. Nylander had a good look on Vasilevskiy but was stopped by the blocker and got another shot on net from Järnkrok in the second. Tavares went to the box for the team's first penalty, and after the Leafs got the kill, he had a chance to extend the lead to three. It was also a much better night for Tavares in the faceoff dot, finishing the game at 80 percent with one of his wins leading to Knies' second goal.

The line was more noticeable in the third. Nylander got an end-to-end rush for himself while the three almost connected on a tic-tac-toe play. Järnkrok is obviously the new addition to the line, perhaps for matchup purposes. He's better than Pontus Holmberg defensively, but similarly gets in good spots to score and didn't have the finish. That said, no one on this line scored.

Scott Laughton – Pontus Holmberg – Steven Lorentz: B

I liked what I saw from this line, especially the rush chances they created. Holmberg had one from Laughton after saucing a pass to him and it was Lorentz's speed off the defensive-zone draw to attack the point that made it happen. Holmberg returned the favour to Laughton twice and almost got him a tap-in after trying to create a rebound off his shot. Laughton also had a well-timed block to rob Yanni Gourde from scoring into an empty net.

great stick from Laughton

Gourde had an empty net pic.twitter.com/ksrcZvEicJ

— Omar (@TicTacTOmar) April 10, 2025

Bobby McMann – Max Domi – Nick Robertson: C+

The speed was there for the reunited third line. Domi had two scoring chances off his stick in the first: one for himself sending a backhand on net off the rush, and the second on an odd-man rush with McMann, who was stopped by Vasilevskiy.

Outside of that, the third line spent the majority of the game in its end chasing the puck and surviving extended minutes on defence. It was good to see them get the defensive edge at times when the whole team was focusing on that in the second. Robertson had a good sequence throwing a big hit on Gage Goncalves and disrupting his shot attempt seconds later.

Robertson sent Goncalves flying pic.twitter.com/TqiodUeB1s

— Omar (@TicTacTOmar) April 10, 2025

Robertson and McMann finished the game with two shots apiece, and more of what we saw in the third could keep them together.

Game Score

What's next?

The Leafs are at home at 7 p.m. Saturday for a clash against the possibly playoff-bound Montreal Canadiens on CBC.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347291 Toronto Maple Leafs

John Tavares earns the Maple Leafs' Masterton Trophy nomination

Jonas Siegel4-5 minutes 4/9/2025

It was four minutes before noon last Friday and just about every player from the Maple Leafs had long since scattered following practice.

Not John Tavares.

The former Leafs captain was scooping up the last remaining pucks from a post-practice skills session and stuffing them into a white bucket.

With help from Patrick O'Sullivan, the former NHL player that Tavares once idolized and who's now a player development coach with the Leafs, as well as teammate Philippe Myers, Tavares had just completed a post-practice shooting session.

In what's become a regular part of his routine, even with nearly 1,200 NHL games under his belt, Tavares replicated the kind of shots — from the slot and around the net — that come his way during games. The 34-year-old, the player with the third-most goals in the NHL since his career began in 2009, is a big believer in ensuring that strengths remain strengths.

Work like this, he believed, helped with that.

Tavares has no doubt enjoyed the best shooting luck of his NHL career this season en route to the second-most goals by a Leaf. But there's no getting around the fact that Tavares has earned that luck, too.

His continued commitment to the craft is what earned him the nod as the Leafs' representative for the Masterton Trophy, which goes to the NHL player "who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to hockey."

Tavares still ranks among the NHL's highest-paid players: His $11 million cap hit is tied with Drew Doughty and Rasmus Dahlin for ninth overall this season. Yet it was always assumed that by this stage of his contract — the seventh and final year of the $77 million deal he signed with the Leafs in 2018 — Tavares would no longer be an impactful player and maybe even an anchor on the Leafs' books.

It hasn't happened.

Though he's no longer at the level of his earliest years with the Leafs, or the level that once saw him contend for the Hart Trophy as New York Islanders captain, Tavares has staved off major decline in his 16th NHL season by controlling every little thing he could in his preparation. Not just his shooting and skill work, but perhaps just as significantly, the ongoing refinement of his skating. Tavares still works frequently on his form there with Paul Matheson, one of the team's skating consultants. You may even catch him hopping across the ice on one foot during pre-game warmups, one among the many drills he'll attend to day after day.

He continues to be one of the NHL's strongest and most effective board battlers.

"He wins so many battles with his stick — heavy stick, strong," Leafs coach Craig Berube said, raving about Tavares after one game recently. "He's so great in tight around the net scoring goals; that's where he gets most of his goals. Faceoff circle, he's one of the best in the league; every night he's 50 percent or better it seems like.

"It's all the little things he does that really make him a great player."

Anthony Stolarz is perhaps the only other viable Masterton candidate for the Leafs. After an injury-plagued career, which has seen him perform exclusively as a backup, Stolarz has emerged as the team's top option in goal, with numbers that rank near the top of the NHL, at age 31.

His case isn't as compelling as Tavares', though.

Long dubbed a "hockey robot" by those who know him well, Tavares continues to ensure his software is up to date — and still excels because of it.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347309 Websites

The Athletic / How the Canadiens' deal to bring over Ivan Demidov from the KHL came together so quickly

By Pierre LeBrun

April 9, 2025Updated 2:43 pm EDT

The reality is that it all happened pretty darn quickly this week.

No one involved in Ivan Demidov's release from his KHL contract knew for sure it was happening until Tuesday.

Were there conversations before then? Of course. But neither the Montreal Canadiens nor the player's agent had any certainty until Tuesday. Which tells you how fast this came together.

From the moment Demidov was drafted by the Canadiens at No. 5 last June, the player's agent, Dan Milstein, planned to try to bring him to the NHL as soon as his KHL season ended this year.

But he couldn't guarantee it, because there are no guarantees with these delicate and complicated situations in Russia.

All of which is why the Habs weren't planning on it happening this season, either. The more likely scenario always felt like next season.

That didn't stop the Canadiens from inquiring. My understanding is that Canadiens general manager Kent Hughes broached the idea with Demidov's KHL club, SKA St. Petersburg, right before the KHL playoffs, simply asking if it would be an option to release him from his contract if the team was eliminated before Montreal's season ended. Hughes didn't get a response at the time, but conversations on the matter started Monday, a day after SKA was eliminated, and advanced significantly Tuesday.

The first seeds were planted by Milstein last June. And he credits SKA for how they responded.

"Around draft time, SKA asked if he wanted to extend, and Ivan said no," Milstein told The Athletic on Wednesday. "Usually with other KHL clubs, the player doesn't play or he's basically the scapegoat (when a player wants to leave to the NHL). But they were so loyal that throughout the year, not once did they come and offer another contract. Because the kid said, 'Look, it's my dream. I want to go play in Montreal. This is something I want to work toward.'

"(Roman) Rotenberg, the coach, helped him to develop. I know Montreal fans didn't like his ice time and what have you at the beginning of the season, but this was all part of the development. And they basically never gave us a hard time, never twisted his arm, never threatened with anything. The bottom line is, they worked with us basically the entire year."

Rotenberg suggested the same in an interview with Martin Lemay and former coach Bob Hartley on BPM Sports in Montreal.

"We've been in great communication with everyone in Montreal," Rotenberg told BPM. "We discussed the development of Ivan on a daily basis. He did a great job, Ivan. He developed himself into a strong playoff player. He showed his best skills in the playoff series. He was our best forward in the series. … I think he's a very good student. He listens. He's doing things I'm asking him to do.

"He's so keen to learn. And he's doing things. For example, his (defensive) game, he improved that a lot. He's blocking shots. He's winning battles one-on-one. All these 50-50 situations, he's winning them. … All season we worked really hard, and that's how he became our best player. He was our MVP in our series against Dynamo Moscow, which is a very defensive team."

Milstein felt it was important to clarify some of that because of the way things were portrayed throughout the season.

"Ivan has nothing negative to say about it," he said. "They were more than loyal, and most importantly, there was never a pressure to sign through this year."

i▼an de▼idov#GoHabsGo pic.twitter.com/h2qqbVBxUY

— Canadiens Montréal (@CanadiensMTL) April 8, 2025

But it would be naive not to think the situation didn't weigh on Demidov to some degree. Hughes felt the need to go to Russia in December and meet with SKA and Demidov. Part of that was the Habs wanting to continue to build a relationship with the player, letting him know they're there for him and making sure he was OK with how the season was going. But some of it was also Hughes getting a better sense from SKA about Demidov. That trip probably helped pave the way for SKA to be comfortable releasing him early this week.

And why would SKA decide to allow Demidov to get out of his contract six weeks before it expired?

I think the answer is clearly that SKA wanted to send a message to NHL teams that they shouldn't be concerned about drafting their players — that they are willing to play ball.

Whatever the case, there were never any guarantees of it happening. Milstein said it all came together in a matter of hours Tuesday.

Milstein still wasn't exactly sure as of Wednesday morning when Demidov would be arriving in Montreal and when things would get ironed out with Canadian government officials on a work visa and other important paperwork, which the Habs are helping work on.

All things being equal, it seems most probable that Monday night's home game against the Chicago Blackhawks could be Demidov's debut.

Coincidentally, the Blackhawks made a play for Demidov at the draft in June, offering their 2026 first-round pick, unprotected, to the Columbus Blue Jackets for their No. 4 pick in 2025. If the trade had happened, Chicago would have taken Demidov with that pick after drafting defenseman Artyom Levshunov second. That would have been quite the pair of picks for Chicago, and you can't blame Blackhawks GM Kyle Davidson for trying to make it happen. But the Blue Jackets resisted the trade offer, choosing instead to take Cayden Lindstrom at 4.

Obviously, as his agent, Milstein is high on his client. But he's known Demidov for a long time and said Habs fans are going to love him.

"I met Ivan and his family at a Moscow hotel when the kid was 12 years old," Milstein said. "Usually, I don't sign players until they're like 16 or 17. In this particular case, I had to rush to Russia because what I had seen was unbelievable."

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347310 Websites

The Athletic / Five U.S. forwards making their case for the Olympics after 4 Nations snubs

Five U.S. forwards making their case for the Olympics after 4 Nations snubs

By Pierre LeBrun

April 9, 2025 7:00 am EDT

We took a look at Team Canada's Olympic bubble forwards earlier this week, and now let's do the same with Team USA ahead of next February's Winter Games.

But first, a reminder that countries have until June 15 to name their first six players.

Last June, the first six players the U.S. named for the 4 Nations Face-Off were Jack Eichel, Auston Matthews, Matthew Tkachuk, Quinn Hughes, Charlie McAvoy and Adam Fox.

My six for June 15, as of today, would be Eichel, Matthews, Matthew Tkachuk as well as brother Brady, Hughes and McAvoy. So just the one change: Brady Tkachuk in for Fox. I'm not worried about going up to four forwards in my first six. Those four forwards are 100 percent locks.

I was torn here between McAvoy and Connor Hellebuyck as the last pick, but I went with the Bruins defender because my feeling is Team USA management will again avoid the goalie position in its first six picks — considering you're locking in six guys eight months before puck drop in Italy and the goalie position is so volatile around the NHL.

The counterargument is that even if, say, Jake Oettinger ends up passing Hellebuyck as the No. 1 by the February Olympics, Hellebuyck is obviously still on the roster. I mean, the dude is about to win his third Vezina Trophy. He's a safe pick, but all things considered and knowing Team USA wanted to avoid a goalie pick in its first six last year, I think management will do the same again.

The rest of the Olympic roster must be named by Dec. 31. Unlike the 4 Nations, which had a 23-man roster (13 forwards, seven defensemen

and three goalies), the Olympic roster will be 25 players (14, eight and three).

With that in mind, let's look at bubble forwards for Team USA.

There's an extra forward spot available because of the expanded roster, and I think it's mostly a given as of today that Chris Kreider will get knocked off the roster for Italy. So that means at least two forward spots up for grabs.

Obviously, that's subject to change with injury and performance. There's lots of opportunities for this to play out, between the Stanley Cup playoffs and IIHF World Championships.

Kyle Connor struggled at the 4 Nations, but I find it hard to believe he won't be on the Olympic roster. He's just too good. His 92 points are second only to Eichel this season among U.S. skaters. And I still think it was a mistake to scratch him for the championship game against Team Canada in Boston. He's got his first taste of best-on-best hockey under his belt; he'll be better next time around.

Brock Nelson and Vincent Trocheck are not locks by any means, but I know Team USA management really values what those two guys bring, and if they were picking the Olympic team today, I think both would be on the team again.

So, again, I think there are two forward spots available for now. There may potentially be more, obviously.

Here are five forwards who didn't make 4 Nations that have helped their stock with their play this season:

1. Tage Thompson, Buffalo Sabres

Thompson's already got 40-plus goals in 2024-25 — for the second time in three seasons. I would have had him on the 4 Nations roster, too. The biggest thing working against him is that he's never played in the Stanley Cup playoffs. That's probably unfair, but I get that Team USA values big-game experience. Still, I just don't think you can ignore this goal machine — and his size and talent. If he's off to another 40-goal pace next season, he's got to be on the Olympic roster.

2. Clayton Keller, Utah Hockey Club

Keller is the highest-scoring U.S. forward this season who wasn't on the 4 Nations roster. He's shifty and creative and a wonderful playmaker. I would have him on one of the two Team USA power-play units. His Stanley Cup playoff resume consists of nine games with Arizona in 2019-20, so like Thompson, there's a big-game resume lacking. But also like Thompson, that's through no fault of his own.

3. Jason Robertson, Dallas Stars

A slow start to the season kept Robertson from making the 4 Nations roster, but he's been terrific in the second half of the season and now he could potentially benefit from another deep playoff run with the Stars. He's already played 45 career playoff games, putting up 14 goals and 38 points. Spring hockey could be a time for Robertson to further his case to Team USA.

4. Cole Caufield, Montreal Canadiens

Second only to Thompson for goals scored by U.S. forwards who didn't make the 4 Nations roster, the 24-year-old winger has gained valuable experience during Montreal's torrid stretch run, playing important minutes in critical, pressure-packed games. He has a potential opportunity to play in the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since his first entry into the league back in 2020-21. My concern in Caufield's chances of cracking the Olympic roster is figuring out which player he either knocks out or pushes down the lineup as far as the kind of role he would play, and I think it's something Team USA management struggles with as well. That's really his biggest challenge in going to Italy next year. But he's definitely improving his chances with his play this season.

5. Matthew Knies, Toronto Maple Leafs

This is probably a long shot, especially given that he's only completing his second full NHL season, but what I would say is this: If the Maple Leafs were to go on a deep playoff run (I know, I know), there's no question in my mind that the 22-year-old Knies will have distinguished himself in said run. He's getting his third taste of the Stanley Cup playoffs, and his game and 6-foot-3, 227-pound frame are meant to translate to this time of year. So, this is all tied to the Leafs finally getting over the hump, but if they do, it could really bump Knies up the Olympic radar.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347311 Websites

The Athletic / With Wayne Gretzky's goal mark gone, how many NHL records are truly unbreakable?

By Sean McIndoe

April 9, 2025Updated 10:57 am EDT

And just like that, Wayne Gretzky's unbreakable record has been broken.

Well, one of them. Gretzky had more than his share. But for hockey fans of my generation, it really is hard to believe that Alexander Ovechkin actually did it. He broke Gretzky's career goals record. That wasn't supposed to be possible.

For decades, old-timers like me figured there was just no way anyone could get to 894. Not in the Dead Puck Era, which eventually gave way to the Only Comatose Puck Era. Not when it meant scoring at a 45-goal pace for 20 consecutive seasons. Not in an era where players were bigger and stronger, meaning just staying healthy was a challenge. Not in a league where forwards were supposed to peak in their mid-20s and then give way to the next generation.

But here we are. So now we have to ask: What other "unbreakable" records could we be wrong about?

We've had some fun in the past with unbreakable records, as well as a few breakable ones. But today, let's look at some of the sport's marks that have at some point seemed unreachable, and try to figure out if they could actually be in play.

Jesse already took a look at Gretzky's other records, and I'm mostly on the same page. I'd argue the nine Hart Trophies is probably unbreakable, given how much modern sportswriters seem to value the novelty of getting new names on their ballots. But I'd agree that the career points and assists records are untouchable, and I like Jesse stopping just short of taking the 92-goal regular-season record off the table.

What about the records that aren't Gretzky's? Let's have a look at 15 of the most imposing and determine if we think they can be broken one day.

Consecutive starts

The record: From 1955 through 1962, goaltender Glenn Hall started 502 consecutive games in the regular season (and 50 more in the playoffs).

I figured we'd start with an easy one, just to set the baseline. In an era where even workhorse goalies get 15 or 20 nights off, we'll probably never see anyone start 50 straight games again, let alone 500. This one is right up there with the most unbreakable records in all of pro sports.

Verdict: Unbreakable.

Sticking with the goalies …

Career shutouts

The record: Martin Brodeur's 125 career shutouts is the all-time mark, well ahead of Terry Sawchuk's 103.

This one's a tougher call. I'm old enough to remember when Sawchuk's record was considered unbreakable. But the combination of Brodeur's magnificence, his durability and the Dead Puck Era added up to the record being shattered.

Could it happen again? It feels unlikely. Brodeur lasted 22 years and hit double-digits in shutouts on four occasions, while nobody in the NHL has had 10 in a year since Marc-Andre Fleury a decade ago. Maybe more daunting, Brodeur often played 70 games in a season, a mark nobody in the NHL has touched since 2016-17. It all adds up to a massive hill to climb — remember, Dominik Hasek had "only" 81 shutouts, and Patrick Roy just barely hit half of Brodeur's total with 66.

All that said, is it possible the next Hasek or Brodeur could arrive someday and challenge the mark, especially if scoring rates plunge again? All we're looking for today is a sliver of possibility, and I think we can find it here. Barely.

Verdict: Breakable.

That said, let's circle back to that games played record …

Career games played (goalie)

The record: Brodeur's 1,266 stands well above the field, with Fleury, Roy and Roberto Luongo the only other goalies to even hit 1,000.

Brodeur played 20 full seasons, which is almost unheard of for a modern goalie. He had years in which he appeared in 78 games (once) and 77 games (twice) and hit the 70-game mark a dozen times. Fleury is the closest modern equivalent, and he's going to finish 200 games behind Brodeur. This one's an easy call.

Verdict: Unbreakable. And for the same reasons, we can lump Brodeur's 691 wins in here, too.

OK, enough of those low-life goalies, let's move on to the guys who are fun …

Points in a single game

The record: Darryl Sittler set the mark with 10 points in a 1976 game.

Sittler's mark will turn 50 next year. And not only did it manage to survive through the scoring explosion of the 1980s, but nobody has even come within a point of it. There have been 13 regular-season games in which a player has had eight points, plus two more in the playoffs. But nobody else has even managed nine points, let alone Sittler's 10.

That said … I mean, one of those eight-point games came from Sam Gagner. Two defensemen have done it. Patrik Sundstrom did it in a playoff game. Two brothers did it in the same game when they were rookies.

I'm just saying, if Gagner's best night can get 80 percent of the way there, surely Connor McDavid or Nikita Kucherov are in the realm of possibility.

Verdict: Certainly matchable, and probably even breakable, although it would take one of those weird nights where everything broke just right.

Single-season plus-minus

The record: Bobby Orr was a plus-124 for the 1970-71 Bruins.

Yes, we all know that plus-minus is a flawed stat. But it can still tell us something at the extremes, and there's never been a season more extreme than Orr's plus-124. This one was actually nearly broken by Larry Robinson, who was plus-120 for the 1976-77 Canadiens. Meanwhile, the record for forwards is Gretzky's plus-100 in 1984-85.

But wait, those numbers only tell half of the plus-minus story. We can't celebrate the "plus" part of the equation without also mentioning the minus record. That would be Capitals' defenseman Bill Mikkelson, who was minus-82 for the expansion Capitals in 1974-75.

That's a horrifying number. (The worst mark of the cap era is a relatively mild minus-47.) But it actually looks sort of reasonable if you remember the context. Those Caps had a team goals differential of minus-265, so Mikkelson was only on the hook for less than a third of that. Similarly, Orr's Bruins routinely outscored their opponents by well over 100 goals, including a plus-192 mark in that 1970-71 season. You just don't see those sorts of extremes in today's parity-stricken league, which means …

Verdict: Unbreakable.

Most Cup rings

The record: If you're only counting rings earned as a player, it's Henri Richard's 11. But Jean Beliveau has a total of 17 — 10 as a player and seven more in the front office.

These days, we argue about whether a team is a dynasty if they win two Cups in a row. Next.

Verdict: Completely unbreakable.

Shots on goal in a game

The record: Believe it or not, this one belongs to a defenseman. Ray Bourque had 19 shots on goal in a 1991 overtime game against the Nordiques.

That easily broke the previous record of 16, held by Rod Gilbert. And nobody else has passed Gilbert since, although he's been tied once. Even Ovechkin, the most prolific shooter of his era by far, never got past 15 in a single game.

That said, the one other player to get to 16 was Marian Hossa in 2006, so we're at least talking about the cap era, if only barely. And seeing players get well into the double-digits isn't all that rare; Jack Hughes had 13 in a game in December, and Brady Tkachuk had 12 in a game three times in 2024. That's not all that close to the record, and there aren't any teams in today's league that are as bad as those awful Nordiques were. Still, this feels like Sittler's single-game mark: It would take a night where everything went right, but it doesn't feel impossible.

Verdict: Breakable

Goals scored by a rookie

The record: Teemu Selanne debuted with 76 goals in 1992-93.

That shattered the previous mark, which was Mike Bossy's 53. That's still the second-highest total ever, by the way. Ovechkin's 52 and Joe Nieuwendyk's 51 are the only other 50-goal seasons by a rookie. Meanwhile, only three players have ever scored more than Selanne's 76 goals in a season — Gretzky (twice), Mario Lemieux and Brett Hull.

Ovechkin's 52 in a high-scoring 2005-06 season feels like a reasonable benchmark for modern snipers, and even that's tough. (Auston Matthews has come closest since, and he "only" had 40.) Getting to the Ovechkin level, and then adding 25 more goals on top of that, seems … difficult.

Verdict: Completely unbreakable.

Goals and points by a defenseman

The records: Paul Coffey's 48 goals in 1985-86 and Bobby Orr's 139 points in 1970-71.

Yikes. At first glance, both of these seem out of reach. Orr and Coffey dominate the top of the leaderboard; take them out, and the highest goal total is Doug Wilson's 39, and the points leader is Al MacInnis way back at 103.

It's tempting to look at what Cale Makar is doing this year and wonder if he could have yet another level he could get to, especially if the league ever starts handing out power plays again. Then you wonder what happens if the next McDavid/Lemieux-level megastar is a defenseman instead of a forward and scoring inched up a bit, and maybe expansion diluted the talent pool … I mean, maybe, right?

A more likely scenario might be that someday we see a star who spends time at both forward and defense depending on the situation. This wouldn't just be a guy who changes position over the course of his career, like Red Kelly or Brent Burns, but someone who can actually be deployed differently shift-to-shift as a matchup nightmare. Sort of like how the Red Wings briefly used Sergei Fedorov, but all the time. Would that count as a defenseman scoring record, though? I'm not sure it would.

Verdict: At least theoretically breakable.

Most consecutive point-per-game seasons

The record: It was set by some guy named Sidney Crosby, way back in the bygone era of, uh, March. By scoring his 80th point of the year, he became a point-per-game player for the 20th straight season (and counting).

It's a genuinely impressive record, but it also feels like the mark should be higher. Granted, not many forwards last 20 years in this league, and far fewer are productive for that entire stretch. But because this is a rate-based stat, it at least doesn't insist on players staying healthy. The fact that guys like Gretzky and Gordie Howe couldn't do it should tell us how difficult the mark is to reach. But especially in an era where scoring is on the rise, it certainly doesn't feel impossible.

Verdict: Breakable, and not just by Crosby next year.

Undefeated streak

The record: The Flyers set the mark to start the 1979-80 season, going 35 games before finally losing.

We've seen the records for both consecutive wins and losses set or challenged in recent years, so they're clearly in play. But the Flyers' mark is different territory.

There are two reasons for that. The first is parity, or the lack thereof when the Flyers were rolling over the league. That year had seen four teams enter the league in the WHA absorption, to go along with the 11 expansion teams from the 1970s. Many of those teams were very bad, easy pickings for a legitimate contender like the Flyers.

But more importantly, you'll notice that this is an "undefeated" streak, not a winning streak. That's because we still had ties back then. The Flyers won 25 games and had 10 ties during their streak. Nobody beat them, but then again, there was no overtime that season, let alone three-on-three or shootouts.

That means some of this gets into semantics, and what exactly we mean by "undefeated." Are we counting an overtime loss as a loss? In today's NHL, a team that gets a loser point has still lost, a fact on which everyone agrees except for society's worst monsters. But if you want to change the phrasing a bit and call the Flyers' stretch a points streak, then OTLs wouldn't end it. The 2012-13 Hawks started the season 21-0-3, which didn't quite have those old Flyers sweating but was at least within range.

Verdict: If we mean games without a loss, it's unbreakable. If we mean games with at least one point, I think it's in play.

And finally, since we just mentioned the 1970s Flyers …

Penalty minutes

The records: Let's end this on a two-for-one. Dave Schultz holds the single-season record with 472 for the 1974-75 Broad Street Bullies, while Tiger Williams has the career mark at 3,971.

By comparison, the career leader among active players is Tom Wilson's 1,520, and Micheal Haley's 212 minutes in 2017-18 was the last time anyone even got to a third of Schultz's single-season mark.

Verdict: Quite possibly more unbreakable than Hall's games streak.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347312 Websites

The Athletic / When NHL fighters become teammates — and even friends: 'You jumped me!'

When NHL fighters become teammates — and even friends: 'You jumped me!'

By Peter Baugh

April 9, 2025Updated 10:57 am EDT

The realization hit Nicolas Aube-Kubel like a punch. He was driving to the Westchester County Airport on this late-March day, having just been called up to the Rangers, which meant the 28-year-old winger was becoming teammates with a fellow NHL player he had long hated to face.

"Shoot," Aube-Kubel thought to himself. "I have to meet Trocheck now."

Back in December, when Aube-Kubel was on the Sabres, he nailed Rangers center Vincent Trocheck with a reverse hit in his defensive zone, knocking Trocheck down. Trocheck took issue with the check, which caught him high, and charged at his opponent. The two dropped their gloves, and Aube-Kubel landed a couple of blows before Trocheck fell to the ice.

Three months later, on trade deadline day, the Rangers acquired Aube-Kubel from the Sabres for Erik Brännström. Since Aube-Kubel was in the minors at the time of the deal, he initially joined the AHL's Hartford Wolf Pack. The Rangers recalled him before a West Coast road trip, setting up his first encounter with Trocheck since the fight. After arriving at the Westchester airport, Aube-Kubel approached his former foe on the team plane.

"I'm glad I have you on my side now," he told Trocheck.

The pair shared a laugh, reminiscing about the fight; Trocheck brought up how Buffalo Bills offensive lineman Dion Dawkins, a four-time Pro Bowler, had been sitting in the front row that night and evidently loved what he saw, banging on the glass and pumping up the KeyBank Center crowd. Then they settled into being teammates.

"It's not something you're going to hold a grudge over," Trocheck said later. "Part of the game."

And it's far from unique to Aube-Kubel and Trocheck. The continued existence of fighting in the NHL forces players to occasionally join forces with someone they've punched. Aube-Kubel, for example, has now skated alongside three of the seven players he's fought in the NHL. Among them is Sabres defenseman Connor Clifton, with whom Aube-Kubel said he has since become "best buddies."

When Rangers center Sam Carrick was with the Ducks' AHL affiliate in 2021, for instance, he challenged Vincent Desharnais to a bout after Desharnais delivered a knee-on-knee hit to one of Carrick's teammates. Then, after the Oilers acquired Carrick at the 2024 trade deadline, he and Desharnais became teammates themselves. They relitigated the hit, chuckling about Carrick finding it dirty.

"Eventually you always laugh about it," Carrick said. "It's one of those things where maybe in the heat of the moment you're mad, but I think there's a mutual respect there."

Players take different approaches to reuniting with former combatants on the same roster. Some address it as soon as possible. They discuss the plays that led to it, compare perspectives, and share a laugh.

"It's just more of a ball-busting thing," Rangers center J.T. Miller said.

Carrick illustrated as much. With Trocheck in earshot in the Rangers' dressing room, Carrick loudly exclaimed, "I forgot about (Aube-Kubel) beating the wheels off Trocheck earlier in the year." Carrick also mentioned Miller fighting his brother, Trevor Carrick, during their junior hockey days.

"Beat his ass," Miller recalled.

But other players leave their previous encounters unaddressed. While with the Coyotes last season, defenseman J.J. Moser fought Mikey Eyssimont, who was playing for the Tampa Bay Lightning at the time. Then, over the summer, the Lightning traded for Moser. The defenseman said he could have made a joke when he met Eyssimont, but the right opportunity never came up.

"You probably are not talking about any other situation," Moser said. "If you are playing against a guy and you take the puck away from him, you're not going to go back and (say), 'Oh, you remember when I took the puck away?'"

Eyssimont, meanwhile, fought multiple eventual Lightning teammates: Brayden Point in 2023, and Moser and Cam Atkinson last season. "You jumped me!" Atkinson recalled joking when they later met in Tampa. "That's bulls—!" Atkinson had played more than 700 NHL games without a fight before taking on Eyssimont, and found it amusing that "the one guy I get into some sort of scrap with is my teammate the next year."

To Atkinson, keeping the situation light was a way to show there was no bad blood. As if to further demonstrate this point, the winger referred to Eyssimont, who was traded to the Kraken at the deadline, as a great guy.

"Nine times out of 10 there's really no animosity," Miller said. "Have a beer with a guy after. It shouldn't be a problem."

There are times when players who drop the gloves genuinely don't like each other, Miller added, but it's not common. For example, he had nothing against Carson Soucy when they fought in 2022-23. Miller was with the Canucks at the time, and Vancouver had gone winless through its first seven games of the season. Coach Bruce Boudreau had called his players out ahead of a game against the Kraken, Miller remembered, so he felt he needed to do something. Soucy, then with Seattle, just happened to be standing close to Miller early in the first period when Miller was looking to fight. There was nothing personal to it. Soucy respected Miller for trying to pump up his team.

Soucy signed with the Canucks ahead of the next season, and he and Miller were both traded to the Rangers in separate deals this year. The two teammates joked about their fight early on after Soucy joined Vancouver, but they haven't really discussed it since.

"Guys don't fight each other on the ice because they hate each other," said Rangers winger Brennan Othmann, who fought eventual teammate Casey Fitzgerald in the AHL last season. "They fight each other to get momentum or they're sticking up for a teammate after a hit or whatever it is."

Unsurprisingly, league heavyweights are the most likely candidates to wind up playing with someone they once fought. When Ryan Reaves was traded from the Rangers to the Wild in November 2022, he found himself sharing a dressing room with Marcus Foligno — a player he had fought multiple times, including two months prior to the trade.

Foligno thought about their previous fights as soon as Minnesota acquired Reaves, particularly how the recent punches "stuck with me for about two more weeks on the top of my head." Foligno, still with the Wild, said fans have since asked him to sign a photo that Reaves had posted on his Instagram page in the wake of one of their fights. The two even dropped the gloves again after Reaves left for the Maple Leafs, but they still talk. There are no hard feelings.

"Reavo was awesome and easy to get along with right away, despite having some run-ins with him," Foligno said. "Usually those guys understand what it takes to win and what it takes to bring a team close."

As is the case with Foligno and Reaves, there's plenty of familiarity between frequent fighters. The Devils' Kurtis MacDermid and the Flyers' Nicolas Deslauriers, for example, once lived together as roommates during Kings development camp. The two have gone on to fight five times over their careers.

"Nothing personal," MacDermid said during the 2021-22 season, when he twice fought Deslauriers. "I respect him as a player and a person, and he's a really great guy and good player. It's just a part of the job."

Rangers bruiser Matt Rempe has yet to become teammates with one of his past opponents, but he's encountered plenty away from the rink: While playing junior hockey in the Western Hockey League, he sometimes palled around with them at bars over the summer in his native Calgary.

"You run into guys and (say) 'oh, I fought you! Let me buy you a beer,'" he said.

But the longer Rempe's career goes, the more likely it is that he'll end up playing alongside someone he's tried to beat to a pulp. His reaction then will probably be similar: share a laugh, enjoy a drink and proceed on good terms.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347313 Websites

ESPN / NHL playoff standings: What to watch Wednesday – ESPN

ESPN staff

Following a busy 10-game Tuesday night in the NHL, it's a relatively quiet five-game evening Wednesday.

Nevertheless, there are playoff and draft lottery ramifications aplenty, so let's hit all five matchups rapid-fire:

Toronto Maple Leafs at Tampa Bay Lightning

7 p.m. (ESPN+)

While the Leafs appear destined for a top-two spot in the Atlantic, the Lightning can still catch them for the No. 1 seed. If the Lightning are going to do it, a game like this is a prime opportunity to make up ground with a regulation win.

Philadelphia Flyers at New York Rangers

7:30 p.m. (TNT)

The Rangers lost their two most recent games by a combined score of 9-1, and their playoff hopes are dwindling quickly. A win over the Flyers would be a good step toward potentially climbing back into the playoffs. Philly is fourth in the draft lottery order heading into this matchup -- and bear in mind the Flyers also own the first-round picks of the Colorado Avalanche and Edmonton Oilers.

San Jose Sharks at Minnesota Wild

8 p.m. (ESPN+)

Speaking of occupying a great place in the draft lottery order, the Sharks are No. 1, and they are four points clear of the Chicago Blackhawks for that spot. The Wild are holding on to the second Western wild-card spot, and they enter the evening four points up on the Flames.

St. Louis Blues at Edmonton Oilers

10 p.m. (TNT)

The Blues' 12-game winning streak came to a halt Monday at the hands of the Winnipeg Jets, and they'll be looking to start another one here against the Oilers. St. Louis is in the first wild-card position, two points ahead of the Wild. The Oilers appear to be a lock for the No. 3 spot in the Pacific, bringing on a first-round matchup with the Los Angeles Kings for the fourth straight postseason.

Calgary Flames at Anaheim Ducks

10 p.m. (ESPN+)

Calgary's chances to jump into wild-card position have faded recently, so getting two points out of this game is crucial. As noted above, they are four points back of the Wild for that final spot. The Ducks enter the contest in the No. 8 spot in the lottery order, right in a jumble of teams between 73 and 76 points, so they can move up pretty easily based on their performance in the final five games.

With the regular season ending April 17, we'll help you track it all with the NHL playoff watch. As we traverse the final stretch, we'll provide details on all the playoff races, along with the teams jockeying for position in the 2025 NHL draft lottery.

Note: Playoff chances are via Stathletes.

Jump ahead:

Current playoff matchups

Today's schedule

Yesterday's scores

Expanded standings

Race for No. 1 pick

Current playoff matchups

Eastern Conference

A1 Toronto Maple Leafs vs. WC1 Ottawa Senators

A2 Tampa Bay Lightning vs. A3 Florida Panthers

M1 Washington Capitals vs. WC2 Montreal Canadiens

M2 Carolina Hurricanes vs. M3 New Jersey Devils

Western Conference

C1 Winnipeg Jets vs. WC2 Minnesota Wild

C2 Dallas Stars vs. C3 Colorado Avalanche

P1 Vegas Golden Knights vs. WC1 St. Louis Blues

P2 Los Angeles Kings vs. P3 Edmonton Oilers

Wednesday's games

Note: All times ET. All games not on TNT or NHL Network are available to stream on ESPN+ (local blackout restrictions apply).

Toronto Maple Leafs at Tampa Bay Lightning, 7 p.m.

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

Philadelphia Flyers at New York Rangers, 7:30 p.m. (TNT)

San Jose Sharks at Minnesota Wild, 8 p.m.

St. Louis Blues at Edmonton Oilers, 10 p.m. (TNT)

Calgary Flames at Anaheim Ducks, 10 p.m.

Tuesday's scoreboard

Buffalo Sabres 3, Carolina Hurricanes 0

Montreal Canadiens 4, Detroit Red Wings 1

Florida Panthers 3, Toronto Maple Leafs 1

Boston Bruins 7, New Jersey Devils 2

Columbus Blue Jackets 5, Ottawa Senators 2

Pittsburgh Penguins 5, Chicago Blackhawks 0

Nashville Predators 7, New York Islanders 6 (OT)

Vancouver Canucks 6, Dallas Stars 5 (OT)

Utah Hockey Club 7, Seattle Kraken 1

Colorado Avalanche 3, Vegas Golden Knights 2 (SO)

Expanded standings

Atlantic Division

x - Toronto Maple Leafs

Points: 98

Regulation wins: 39

Playoff position: A1

Games left: 5

Points pace: 104.4

Next game: @ TB (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

x - Tampa Bay Lightning

Points: 96

Regulation wins: 39

Playoff position: A2

Games left: 5

Points pace: 102.2

Next game: vs. TOR (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

x - Florida Panthers

Points: 94

Regulation wins: 36

Playoff position: A3

Games left: 4

Points pace: 98.8

Next game: vs. DET (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

x - Ottawa Senators

Points: 90

Regulation wins: 33

Playoff position: WC1

Games left: 4

Points pace: 94.6

Next game: vs. MTL (Friday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

Montreal Canadiens

Points: 87

Regulation wins: 29

Playoff position: WC2

Games left: 4

Points pace: 91.5

Next game: @ OTT (Friday)

Playoff chances: 97.7%

Tragic number: N/A

Detroit Red Wings

Points: 79

Regulation wins: 28

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 5

Points pace: 84.1

Next game: @ FLA (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0.4%

Tragic number: 2

e - Buffalo Sabres

Points: 76

Regulation wins: 28

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 5

Points pace: 80.9

Next game: @ CBJ (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

e - Boston Bruins

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 25

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 3

Points pace: 75.8

Next game: vs. CHI (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

Metro Division

y - Washington Capitals

Points: 107

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

Regulation wins: 42
Playoff position: M1
Games left: 5
Points pace: 114.0
Next game: vs. CAR (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A
x - Carolina Hurricanes
Points: 96
Regulation wins: 41
Playoff position: M2
Games left: 5
Points pace: 102.2
Next game: @ WSH (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A
New Jersey Devils
Points: 89
Regulation wins: 36
Playoff position: M3
Games left: 4
Points pace: 93.6
Next game: vs. PIT (Friday)
Playoff chances: 99.9%
Tragic number: N/A
New York Rangers
Points: 79
Regulation wins: 32
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 5
Points pace: 84.1
Next game: vs. PHI (Wednesday)
Playoff chances: 0.7%
Tragic number: 3
New York Islanders
Points: 79
Regulation wins: 27
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 5
Points pace: 84.1
Next game: vs. NYR (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0.8%
Tragic number: 2
Columbus Blue Jackets
Points: 79
Regulation wins: 25
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 5
Points pace: 84.1
Next game: vs. BUF (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0.3%
Tragic number: 2
e - Pittsburgh Penguins
Points: 76
Regulation wins: 22
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 3
Points pace: 78.9
Next game: @ NJ (Friday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: E
e - Philadelphia Flyers
Points: 71
Regulation wins: 20
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 5
Points pace: 75.6
Next game: @ NYR (Wednesday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: E
Central Division
x - Winnipeg Jets
Points: 110
Regulation wins: 42
Playoff position: C1
Games left: 4
Points pace: 115.6
Next game: @ DAL (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A
x - Dallas Stars
Points: 106
Regulation wins: 41
Playoff position: C2
Games left: 4
Points pace: 111.4
Next game: vs. WPG (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A
x - Colorado Avalanche
Points: 100
Regulation wins: 39

# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2025

Playoff position: C3
Games left: 3
Points pace: 103.8
Next game: vs. VAN (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A

St. Louis Blues
Points: 93
Regulation wins: 31
Playoff position: WC1
Games left: 3
Points pace: 96.5
Next game: @ EDM (Wednesday)
Playoff chances: 97.2%
Tragic number: N/A

Minnesota Wild
Points: 91
Regulation wins: 33
Playoff position: WC2
Games left: 4
Points pace: 95.7
Next game: vs. SJ (Wednesday)
Playoff chances: 91.8%
Tragic number: N/A

Utah Hockey Club
Points: 84
Regulation wins: 28
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 4
Points pace: 88.3
Next game: vs. NSH (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0.1%
Tragic number: 1

e - Nashville Predators
Points: 64
Regulation wins: 23
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 4
Points pace: 67.3
Next game: @ UTA (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: E

e - Chicago Blackhawks
Points: 54
Regulation wins: 19
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 4
Points pace: 56.8
Next game: @ BOS (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: E

Pacific Division

x - Vegas Golden Knights
Points: 103
Regulation wins: 43
Playoff position: P1
Games left: 4
Points pace: 108.3
Next game: vs. SEA (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A

x - Los Angeles Kings
Points: 97
Regulation wins: 39
Playoff position: P3
Games left: 5
Points pace: 103.3
Next game: vs. ANA (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A

Edmonton Oilers
Points: 93
Regulation wins: 32
Playoff position: P2
Games left: 5
Points pace: 99.0
Next game: vs. STL (Wednesday)
Playoff chances: 99.6%
Tragic number: N/A

Calgary Flames
Points: 87
Regulation wins: 28
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 5
Points pace: 92.7
Next game: @ ANA (Wednesday)
Playoff chances: 11.3%
Tragic number: 6

Vancouver Canucks
Points: 85
Regulation wins: 27
Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 4

Points pace: 89.4

Next game: @ COL (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0.1%

Tragic number: 2

e - Anaheim Ducks

Points: 76

Regulation wins: 24

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 5

Points pace: 80.9

Next game: vs. CGY (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

e - Seattle Kraken

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 28

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 3

Points pace: 76.8

Next game: @ VGK (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

e - San Jose Sharks

Points: 50

Regulation wins: 14

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 5

Points pace: 53.3

Next game: @ MIN (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

Note: A "y" means that the team has clinched the division title. An "x" means that the team has clinched a playoff berth. An "e" means that the team has been eliminated from playoff contention.

Race for the No. 1 pick

The NHL uses a draft lottery to determine the order of the first round, so the team that finishes in last place is not guaranteed the No. 1 selection. As of 2021, a team can move up a maximum of 10 spots if it wins the lottery, so only 11 teams are eligible for the No. 1 pick. Full details on the process are here. Matthew Schaefer, a defenseman for the OHL's Erie Otters, is No. 1 on the draft board.

1. San Jose Sharks

Points: 50

Regulation wins: 14

2. Chicago Blackhawks

Points: 54

Regulation wins: 19

3. Nashville Predators

Points: 64

Regulation wins: 23

4. Philadelphia Flyers

Points: 71

Regulation wins: 20

5. Boston Bruins

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 25

6. Seattle Kraken

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 28

7. Pittsburgh Penguins

Points: 76

Regulation wins: 22

8. Anaheim Ducks

Points: 76

Regulation wins: 24

9. Buffalo Sabres

Points: 76

Regulation wins: 28

10. Columbus Blue Jackets

Points: 79

Regulation wins: 25

11. New York Islanders

Points: 79

Regulation wins: 27

12. Detroit Red Wings

Points: 79

Regulation wins: 28

13. New York Rangers

Points: 79

Regulation wins: 32

14. Utah Hockey Club

Points: 84

Regulation wins: 28

15. Vancouver Canucks

Points: 85

Regulation wins: 27

16. Calgary Flames

Points: 87

Regulation wins: 28

ESPN LOADED: 04.10.2025

ESPN / NHL Urgency Index: Who needs to win the Stanley Cup now? – ESPN

Neil Paine

Neil Paine writes about sports using data and analytics. Previously, he was Sports Editor at FiveThirtyEight.

Reactions

The 2024-25 NHL regular season has certainly been a journey, between the emergence of unexpected Stanley Cup and MVP contenders, an incredible 4 Nations Face-Off, blockbuster trades, big winning streaks and, most recently, Alex Ovechkin breaking Wayne Gretzky's record for career NHL goals.

But we all know the real hockey season starts April 19 when the puck drops on the Stanley Cup playoffs. With it will come the intensity and rugged play that we've come to expect over the years as teams make their quest for the Cup.

Oh, and there will also be pressure. Lots and lots of pressure.

To quantify exactly how much weight each team is under to win the Cup right now, I developed the Urgency Index. In it, every playoff team is graded on a 0-10 scale (relative to other playoff squads) in different categories representing reasons why they need to win ASAP:

-- Contender status (based on their Elo rating-based odds to win the Cup)

-- Market pressure (based on a combination of fanbase and market size)

-- Current Cup drought for the franchise

-- Recent playoff frustrations (based on total postseason wins over the past five years without a Cup)

-- Average roster age (where older = more pressure)

-- Contract urgency (average remaining years for the team's top three active players by goals above replacement before they hit free agency).

Since some situations imply more urgency to win than others, double weight has been added on the contender status, team age and market pressure categories and half-weight on the average free agent years remaining (since teams can often find a way to extend stars if they need to). Then, the totals have been added up to arrive at this semi-scientific ranking of the top playoff teams that have to win a championship this season -- or else.

Jump to a team:

Carolina | Dallas | Edmonton

Los Angeles | Minnesota | Tampa Bay

Toronto | Winnipeg | 8 more teams

1. Edmonton Oilers

The Oilers' Cup chances have slipped in recent weeks, which caused their contender rating to dip here -- for what it's worth, they're still tied for fifth in ESPN BET's odds -- but they didn't need it to rank first on the Urgency Index anyway. This is the oldest playoff roster in the league, trying to win the first titles for two of the game's greatest players (Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl) in a hockey-obsessed market, not having won a Cup since 1990, and coming fresh off a Game 7 loss in the Finals last season.

Add in that the Oilers need to work out contract extensions soon for McDavid and Evan Bouchard, and Edmonton is the model of a franchise that's at the peak of its contending era. If not this season, when will they finally win one?

Playoff outlook: As the likely third-place team in the Pacific, Edmonton will get a very familiar first-round foe: the Los Angeles Kings, whom they've defeated each of the past three seasons.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the Oilers are dealing with injuries to McDavid and Draisaitl, and their 46.2% win percentage against above-average Elo teams is well below any other top contender's mark this season. It would be tough to see another season of McDavid's prime be derailed at the very end.

2. (tie) Dallas Stars

The Stars would make this list just for the bold deadline trade that produced Mikko Rantanen from the Carolina Hurricanes, but they solidify their spot by virtue of not making the finals since 2020 despite having knocked on the door so often with this group in recent postseasons. And even if that Cup Final trip is included, the Stars had the third-most playoff wins (45) by any NHL team in a six-season span from 2019 to 2024 without a ring to show for it.

They're still young -- 12th youngest in the league overall, to be exact, and one of the youngest playoff teams -- so there's plenty of runaway ahead for Jake Oettinger, Jason Robertson, Thomas Harley and the rest. (But the latter two of those do need new contracts after 2025-26, and captain Jamie Benn is up this summer.) After a pair of losses in the conference finals, Dallas might not get a better Cup chance than it has right now.

Playoff outlook: Dallas is pursuing Winnipeg for both the top spot in the Central and the No. 1 seed in the West, which matters quite a bit -- it means the difference between playing one of the wild-card teams (St. Louis or, most likely, Minnesota) as a heavy first-round favorite, and having to deal with Cale Makar, Nathan MacKinnon and the Colorado Avalanche in Round 1.

The Stars are better than Colorado by metrics such as Elo ratings and Hockey-Reference's simple rating system (SRS), but the prospect that their run could end right away ratchets up the pressure in Dallas even higher.

2. (tie) Toronto Maple Leafs

When is there ever not crushing pressure on the Leafs to win the Cup? No need to belabor the details here, but Toronto hasn't seen a championship parade for this team down Bay Street since the spring of 1967 -- and mix in the size and avidity of the Toronto market, and these are the kings of both our "Cup drought" and "market pressure" stats.

The only mitigating factors might be that this team is still relatively young, so it will have more chances down the road, and Leafs fans have seen seasons like this go sideways so many times before that they tend to temper their expectations with the hardened cynicism that comes with decades of heartbreak. But make no mistake, with Mitch Marner's contract situation hanging over the future of the Leafs' core, there is as much urgency to win now as usual.

Playoff outlook: With what will probably be the No. 2 seed in the East, Toronto is looking at a likely first-round matchup with the wild-card Ottawa Senators. The Leafs ought to be favored on paper, and an uncharacteristic balance between offense and defense might offer this version of the team a higher postseason ceiling than usual.

But who are we kidding? It's the Leafs. They're not under pressure to win so much as to outrun the cloud of doom that has followed the franchise everywhere.

4. Winnipeg Jets

As far as best chances to win go, it's hard to top what Winnipeg is facing this season. While there are still questions about whether it is ready to make a deep postseason run -- it has won one playoff round since going to the conference finals in 2018 -- the Jets are as poised on paper to win the Cup as any team, with the league's top SRS (by far) being driven by the league's best goalie, Connor Hellebuyck.

They might also be underrated by our system for a few reasons. First, for the purposes of their Cup drought, we're using Hockey-Reference's definition of the Jets franchise, which extends to the Atlanta Thrashers, rather than the Utah Hockey Club/Coyotes incarnation that includes the original Jets. Second, Winnipeg gets dinged for being the league's only market under a metro population of 1 million -- but although we also adjust for fan avidity, it still might undersell the support the Jets receive while carrying the banner for that long-awaited Canadian Cup win.

Playoff outlook: If they can hold off the Stars in the Central division, the Jets will set themselves up to face Minnesota in Round 1 -- a favorable matchup between a goaltending stalwart and a team struggling to score with Kirill Kaprizov on injured reserve. After that, though, all bets are off in the tough West.

But unlike Edmonton above, the Jets have the best winning percentage against good opponents (73.8%) of any NHL team this season.

5. Los Angeles Kings

There is built-in urgency when you've lost to the same opponent in three -- going on four -- consecutive postseasons. In fact, that might be the main factor the Kings are confronting in the 2025 playoffs: Can they finally beat the Oilers? (Admittedly, this is a way in which the "recent frustration" category lets us down -- you can't rack up playoff wins if you keep losing right away ... to the same team.)

But beyond that, the Kings have uncertainty with their core after next season -- how long will the Anze Kopitar era last? -- and they do play in the NHL's second-largest market. L.A.'s renaissance in recent seasons is a great story, but if they want it to produce anything beyond early playoff exits, the clock is ticking.

Playoff outlook: Again, the most immediate concern is whether L.A. can finally get past Edmonton, in a battle of teams who each have their own sources of pressure to win right now. Beyond that, the Kings still have the same limitation as last season: Their top-5 defense is held back by an inability to score (No. 18 in goals per game) despite getting a 20-goal season from Warren Foegele after poaching him from the Oilers, of all teams.

But if there's hope for L.A. to finally get its breakthrough over Edmonton, it's that they will go into the playoffs in better form (according to Elo) than they did a year ago.

6. Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina often strikes a similar profile to Dallas, in terms of highly talented teams that have been trying again and again for that Cup breakthrough in recent years -- and their connection was deepened further through the Rantanen trade. So it's a bit surprising that Carolina's urgency index is so much lower than that of Dallas. Certainly the teams are similar in terms of contender status, as well as recent frustration: the 2018-19 to 2023-24 Hurricanes have won the second-most playoff games (38) in any six-season span by a team that made zero finals trips over the same range of years. The Canes even check in with an older roster, No. 7 in the league by average age.

One difference is the Raleigh, North Carolina market is among the smallest in the playoff field, even though it punches above its weight in terms of attendance, slicing into the pressure in our formula. And the other is a testament to the job done by former general manager Don Waddell and his successor Eric Tulsky, who reduced the amount of free agent urgency around this core by locking Sebastian Aho, Seth Jarvis, Shayne Gostisbehere, Jaccob Slavin and Andrei Svechnikov into deals that keep them with the club for at least the next two seasons after 2024-25.

Playoff outlook: Carolina will face the New Jersey Devils in Round 1, matching it with a team that has injury problems -- Jack Hughes is out for the season and Dougie Hamilton will sit out a chunk of the playoffs as well -- but also the No. 4-ranked defense by goals allowed per game.

The Canes are favored as long as they can play their usual puck-control game, and they've taken two of three from the Washington Capitals so far in the regular season, which might become pertinent in Round 2. Another trip to the conference finals is very possible, as is the urgency that comes with it.

7. (tie) Tampa Bay Lightning

A lot of the Lightning's placement comes from ranking as the fourth-oldest team in hockey this season. Though the Bolts have added players since their run of three straight Cup Final appearances in 2020-22, the most notable being Jake Guentzel, each of their other top-10 players by GAR were with the team in at least one of those dynastic seasons.

All of this underscores just how much Tampa Bay is still powered by Andrei Vasilevskiy, Nikita Kucherov, Brayden Point, Victor Hedman and the rest of the core that was so dominant earlier in the decade. But the downside of that reliance is that it comes with urgency to win while they're all still together and producing, because one never knows when it will end.

Playoff outlook: The Battle of Florida has been a staple rivalry in recent postseasons, with either the Lightning or the Panthers ending the other's season in 2021, 2022 and 2024 -- and we're probably due for another installment this spring. Although Florida is still the defending champion, Tampa Bay has the better goal differential and Elo rating, as well as far better health as the playoffs near.

Unless Matthew Tkachuk and Sasha Barkov can come back and play well again quickly for the Panthers, the Bolts' early playoff outlook is far from gloomy.

7. (tie) Minnesota Wild

The Wild seldom have huge expectations as a Cup contender, so it can be difficult to think of them as a team with urgency to win. But although they check in with just a 1% chance to make the Final, Minnesota checks off a lot of the other boxes defining a team under pressure. The Wild are the league's eighth-oldest team, and they must make deals soon with a number of their key players, from Filip Gustavsson in net to prime-age star Kirill Kaprizov and young Marco Rossi at forward.

And then there's the building pressure for a team in hockey-mad Minnesota to make a dent in the postseason: In their 23 previous seasons, the Wild have won four playoff series, half of which came in a single magical 2003 postseason. Success for this franchise is long overdue.

Playoff outlook: Said success is, admittedly, not overly likely in 2025. Though they are a good bet to hold the last wild-card spot in the West, the Wild probably will draw either the Jets or Stars in Round 1, where they would be big underdogs in either scenario. Kaprizov hasn't played since late January because of a lower-body injury, and he will have to shake off the rust even if he returns by the playoffs.

Again, the expectations aren't necessarily there for a deep playoff run -- or else we might really be talking about how badly this team needs to win a playoff series.

Ranking the rest

I was a little surprised Washington didn't crack the top eight, as this unexpectedly amazing season -- capped off by Ovechkin's record goal -- creates plenty of pressure to cash in with a Cup. But the truth is, Washington's front office has done an excellent job of building a bridge to a sustainable post-Ovechkin future, which reduces the franchise's urgency index. (And they won a Cup fairly recently anyway.)

The rest of the list is a mix of other recent winners (Vegas, Florida, Colorado, St. Louis) or just longshots to win. And the Devils and Canadiens are especially interesting cases -- the former is a team that has gone from young and up-and-coming to one of the oldest rosters in the league, increasing the urgency level; the latter made a surprising late-season run in one of the league's top hockey markets, though their youth might mean the future really begins next season and beyond.

ESPN LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347315 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Connor McDavid's timely return provides injury-plagued Oilers with massive boost

Mark Spector

Like finding out that someone has a sore throat, and you're only getting The Two Tenor. Or winning a trip for two to a ballgame in Chicago — only to discover it's the White Sox, not the Cubs.

In fact, when McDavid found out on Wednesday morning that Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (illness) and Jake Walman (injured) were both going to miss the game against St. Louis that evening, even he couldn't bear to watch the Oilers play without their captain anymore.

"It was a difficult situation for our group as a whole. Guys coming in and out of the lineup, sick, hurt, whatever… We had to go with five (defencemen)," began McDavid, after a three-assists night in a 4-3 Oilers win.

McDavid was slated to play Friday night against San Jose. But when he saw that his team would be forced to play with 11 forwards and five defencemen, he lobbied hard for a spot in the lineup.

On a team that has recently seen Leon Draisaitl return from injury, then get hurt again after a few games, and Trent Frederic re-injure his high ankle sprain on the first shift of his return, pushing up return dates is a touchy subject with the medical staff.

“He wouldn’t have been cleared just because he felt like playing. The medical staff obviously felt he was in good hands and would not create any more damage,” said head coach Kris Knoblauch, on an injury that has never been disclosed but is believed to be soft tissue groin or core.

“He really felt that he was ready and wanted to play, especially with losing another centreman, and it was going to be as good as it was going to be.”

Like a kid making a deal with his parents to push back bedtime so he can watch the third period, McDavid pulled out all the stops on Wednesday afternoon.

“I wasn’t taking anyone’s spot (in the lineup),” he reasoned. “I thought it was an opportunity, and if it was no good, (he would) take a couple shifts and come off.

“Obviously, it felt good, no problems.”

It looked even better.

On a night when the Blues' top line of Robert Thomas with Pavel Buchnevich and Jordan Kyrou was unstoppable (two goals, seven points), McDavid’s presence finally gave the injury-plagued Oilers a first-line presence of their own.

He set up Connor Brown for the game-opener and the winner, which Brown slipped past Jordan Binnington with just 20 seconds left in regulation.

While the regulation loss saw St. Louis fall into eighth place behind Minnesota, the Oilers’ win combined with Calgary’s overtime loss in Anaheim shrunk Edmonton’s magic number to clinch a playoff spot to one point gained by Edmonton, or lost by Calgary.

On defence, Brett Kulak (29:04), Darnell Nurse (28:06), and Evan Bouchard (28:15) all did yeoman’s work, losing Walman after the morning skate.

McDavid didn’t have a shot on goal, but watched his old Erie Otters teammate Brown score twice to sink a very good St. Louis club.

“It was massive,” McDavid said of the winner. “That’s what it is all about, guys stepping up, and we’ve had different guys stepping up throughout this injury and sickness bug.”

Like everyone, Brown left the rink after the morning skate under the impression that McDavid would not play. When he arrived for the game, the whiteboard had him on McDavid’s right wing.

“We kind of knew that he was itching to play. It was just a matter of if they let him,” said Brown.

Is that the kind of thing a captain does, when he sees that his team is short-handed?

“I think he's the true embodiment of a captain,” said Brown. “Unselfish, hard-working, leads by example.”

So, having all but clinched a playoff spot and a fourth straight matchup with Los Angeles, the Oilers still have to work some major pieces back into their lineup. Leon Draisaitl, Mattias Ekholm, Stuart Skinner, Trent Frederic and Evander Kane are all yet to return.

With four games to play, can they integrate all of those players and be ready to win a playoff round that will begin in about 10 days?

“It would be great to have our full lineup in, and get everybody up and running together and rolling like a big machine,” McDavid said. “Obviously that’s not the case, and it falls on everybody as individuals to make sure they’re doing whatever they’ve got to do to be ready come that opening game.

“I know I’m doing everything I can and I see guys around here doing everything they can. It’s obviously not ideal timing but we’re a good team in here and we’ll figure it out.”

This last stretch without several key players had breathed some confidence into the depth players, Brown said.

“The last couple of weeks, a lot of guys have been finding their game, especially offensively. Guys have been finding a little touch with a few extra minutes.”

Sinking to third place after an uneasy season, and now enduring a wicked run of injuries, Edmonton’s stock as a true Stanley Cup contender has taken a hit across the league.

Not so much inside the room, however.

“Extremely confident,” Brown said. “We had a good road trip together — I thought we bonded. The level of belief is extremely high in our group.

“We understand that we’ve got a lot of dogs and guys that are hungry.”

Of course, it’s always better when the biggest dog scratches his way into the lineup.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347316 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Matthew Knies backs up talk in Maple Leafs’ biggest win of season

Luke Fox

TAMPA, Fla. — And for Knies’ next trick…

He will pass a puck to Morgan Rielly between his legs at full speed, park himself net-front, then slam home an Auston Matthews feed for a hat-trick game-winning overtime goal in the Toronto Maple Leafs’ most important game of the season.

The one that, in all likelihood, seals top seed in the Atlantic Division and, at the very least, slaps a giant exclamation mark on the most impactful 24 hours of Matthew Knies’ burgeoning NHL career.

“I was just hopping on the ice, and I was having trouble believing what I was seeing in front of me,” Matthews would later say of the artful orchestration by the youngest and largest member of the team.

“I’m not sure I recommend that play,” said coach Craig Berube, who hugged the OT hero on his way out of the interview room anyway. “But guys try things, you know? What’d he try, the Michigan the other night? I mean, he’s got confidence right now.”

Heck, the only folks playing with more confidence than Toronto’s super sophomore these days are the investors getting the heads-up on Trump’s next move.

One night before Knies hung three clutch goals on the rival Tampa Bay Lightning — leaving his fingerprints all over a 4-3 road win and becoming the first Leaf to cap a hatty in OT since Mats Sundin scored his 500th in 2006 — he was giving the harshest and most urgent assessment of the club’s lacklustre loss to Florida Panthers.

Knies had used the word soft to describe the group’s effort, then joined his teammates in playing hard. He demanded more juice, then strode into Amalie Arena with his head high and his arms toting gallons of the stuff.

Toronto’s top line of Knies (three goals, plus-3), Matthews (three assists, plus-3), and Mitch Marner (one goal, two assists, plus-2) set the bounce-back effort’s tone early, beating Andrei Vasilevskiy twice on the team’s first four shots. Then delivered under pressure late, the joyous celebrations washing away the threat of a blown lead — in the game and in the standings.

“We brought a lot of energy the first five minutes,” Knies said, “and I think we did a great job of shutting down their best players. It’s the kind of effort that we’re going to need on a daily basis. Especially when it comes to playoff time, we’re going to need to step up and provide those big moments.”

Knies talked that talk, then walked that walk, barking at Erik Cernak and dribbling between the legs all the way.

“The whole reason is for his success is his competitiveness,” Berube said. “It’s really, really high-end, in my opinion. Like, he wins battles. He

skates through people all night, gets in there on the forecheck, wins battles down low, hangs on the pucks. I mean, he's a highly competitive player."

Fans saw the germination of playoff-ready Knies in last spring's Boston series, when he fearlessly got up in the face of David Pastrnak and began to dent the scoresheet in must-win games.

Today, he's a first-line fixture, a multi-tool power forward who has already racked up 29 goals and 55 points with runway to spare.

"He's just a confident person in general," Matthews says. "He's got a pretty good idea of who he is and what makes him successful, and I think he really leans into that — which is really great.

"He's got a big personality, and all the guys on the team really get a laugh out of him. He brings great energy into the room every day. So, it's not really a surprise to me. A guy like him, he's just going to continue to get better and better. His ceiling is extremely high, and he's been taking some really big steps this year."

So have the Maple Leafs, in terms of digging in under pressure, battling for a premium playoff position, and blocking shots.

They set a single-game franchise record in that regard Wednesday with 33 blocks, and goaltender Anthony Stolarz was superb in mopping up most of the ones that did seep through.

"It feels incredible just getting this win against a rival team. It's a good feeling that locker room," Knies smiled.

So… what was he thinking mixing in that trick pass to set up his own hat trick to cap off the most exciting game of Toronto's season?

"I'm not too sure. Just thought I'd try it. I saw that the D kind of flipped his hips and that the play was open," Knies said.

"Not sure what I was thinking."

When you're as confident as Knies is these days, you don't think.

You just play.

Fox's Fast Five

But Anthony Stolarz zoned in and predicted the all-star's move: "He was coming down with a lot of speed. He's a righty, and guys tend to like to go over the pad, under the glove. So, I kind of just threw everything out there — and luckily it hit the pad."

Morgan Rielly owes the goalie a bundt cake or something.

• Tampa has made remarkable strides defensively this season.

The club ranked 23rd in goals against per game in 2023-24 (3.18) and has buckled down to third in the critical category (2.58).

How'd that happen?

A full season of healthy Vasilevskiy, some of the league's best defensive forwards, a top-five penalty kill, improving young D-men, and the return of a familiar defensive stalwart.

"A Norris Trophy will be given out, and it's not going to Ryan McDonagh. Because Ryan McDonagh will never get enough points to be in the realm of that award," Cooper said of Tampa's Masterton nominee. "But I'm a big believer that there should be another award for Best Defensive Defenceman out there.

"You ask anybody on the team, especially the goaltenders, how valuable he is."

• Death, taxes, and Matthew Knies scoring in Tampa.

Ten of the power forward's 44 career goals (22.7 per cent) have been scored against the Lightning.

• Bobby McMann dropped the gloves with Brayden Point and joined Berube's Fight Club.

Thirteen different Maple Leafs have scrapped this season.

• While the Maple Leafs' odds of claiming the Atlantic crown have spiked to 83.9 per cent, according to MoneyPuck.com, the Lightning's favourable schedule offers a sliver of hope.

Toronto's visit marked the beginning of a four-game homestand in which the Bolts catch their opponent on a sluggish end of back-to-back, fresh off facing Florida. Tampa's finale will be in New York against a gutted Rangers squad.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347317 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames' playoff hopes hanging by a thread after epic collapse vs. Ducks

Eric Francis

Gone in eight seconds.

That may be the epitaph of the Calgary Flames' playoff hopes, as written in Anaheim, of all places.

An epic collapse against the Ducks late Wednesday quite likely put an end to Calgary's hopes of catching Minnesota for the final wild-card spot.

A few hours after the Wild won in overtime to move six points ahead of the Flames, Calgary got, well, Flamed.

After a full month of late Calgary comebacks, the Ducks turned the tables on a desperate visiting club that appeared to have the win secured after scoring two late goals to lead 3-1 with less than five minutes left.

That's when disaster struck.

With four minutes left Frank Vatrano and Cutter Gauthier scored eight seconds apart, tying the Flames' franchise record for the second-fastest pair of goals ever scored against them.

Shocked by the rapid turn of events, the Flames went into overtime with heads spinning, fully comprehending the season hung in the balance.

Yet, one minute in, Gauthier converted a slick pass from Leo Carlsson by sniping the winner over Dustin Wolf's glove from the high slot.

As part of his celly, the rookie drew a heart with his gloves and promptly punched right through it.

A heartbreaker, indeed.

A backbreaker, too, as the Flames' 4-3 overtime loss now has them sitting five points back of Minnesota with four games remaining

Sure, the Flames have a game in hand and a marquee matchup with the Wild Friday at the Dome.

But the Wild hold the tiebreaker, meaning a win by the Wild Friday would officially end the Flames' chances of catching them.

The Blues also sit five up on the Flames following a loss in Edmonton, but they too hold the tiebreaker over Calgary.

"Disappointing," said MacKenzie Weegar, whose club outshot the Ducks 39-23 and appeared to have the game well in hand after late goals by Yegor Sharangovich and Matt Coronato.

"Up 3-1 with I don't even know how many minutes left. That's when leadership and everybody has to step up and shut that game down.

"Unfortunately, it's going to cost us big time."

Huge.

"It's hard, it's tough," said Mikael Backlund, searching for words in the quietest of dressing rooms.

"Up 3-1 with 5 minutes left is a tough one to swallow.

"Up 3-1 you've got to find a way to shut it down.

"It doesn't matter how you play the first 55 minutes if you don't win."

Like their overtime loss to Vegas Saturday, there's no solace in snagging a point.

They needed both.

The only way to even attempt to make up six points on the Wild is for the Flames to win on Friday and run the table the final three, while hoping the Wild falter in their last two games.

It's a lot to ask, especially considering the Wild got top-liners Kirill Kaprizov and Joel Eriksson Ek back from injury Wednesday, who promptly combined for six goals, including the OT winner in an 8-7 game.

Catching St. Louis is equally as challenging given they're the hottest team in hockey and still have two games left.

"We should be disappointed, it's 3-1 and the game should be over," said Ryan Huska, lamenting his power play units squandered several opportunities to put the game away by going 0-for-6.

"But right now there is nothing we can do about it.

"All we can do is make sure we're ready to go for our next game against Minnesota."

And pray.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347318 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 32 Thoughts: Montreal electrified by stud prospect Ivan Demidov

Elliotte Friedman

There is one Greg Millen memory ALWAYS good for a laugh.

Our Anaheim hotel during the 2007 Stanley Cup Final had an outdoor basketball court, inevitably leading to testosterone-fuelled trash talk. Finally, it was time to put up or shut up: Millen, Kelly Hrudey and then-executive producer Joel Darling vs. myself and two other producers — Mike Dodson and Brian Spear.

There was slight generational divide. Millen was about to turn 50. Hrudey was 46, Joel in the same range. (Sorry for the old-school basketball reference, but he was the Tree Rollins of their team: a big body to commit illegal screens and flagrant fouls.)

I was 36. Dodson was the same age, Spear a little younger.

We got our asses kicked. I was horrendous — as bad as I could possibly play — and they destroyed us.

Elite athletes may retire, but their fire never fizzles. It wasn't enough for Greg and Kelly to win. They desired to inflict a beatdown of epic proportions, which they did.

Kelly is more of a silent assassin. He spent the whole game smiling at the carnage.

Millsie let me have it. After every bucket, he'd say, "Just let the ball do the work."

Then, it was: "Just let the ball do the work, right Kelly?"

Or: "Elliotte, just let the ball do the work."

I wanted to work the ball right down his throat, but if you walk the walk, you get to talk the talk. Endlessly, it seemed.

Greg loved that story, and to be honest, so did I. We all need a butt-kicking from time-to-time. As I moved from rinkside to the studio, we worked with each other less, but whenever we caught up, rarely did it go unmentioned. "Showed you a thing or two," he'd laugh.

You've probably heard about his love for practical jokes. We played in the Kathy Morrison Memorial Golf Tournament one year. As I was headed to the shower, he had a smile on his face, so he was up to something. When he saw me moments later, he looked confused.

"How did you get the shaving cream off so fast?"

I had no idea what he was talking about, and he raced to the rack to prevent the towel he'd stuffed full of shaving cream from being used by someone else.

Being the victim of a Millen prank — or an attempt at one — showed he was on your side. The first time Greg and I worked together at Hockey Night, I didn't know them that well. He went to meet with a coach, and I hung back. He asked what I was doing; I said I was giving him his space.

He wouldn't have any of it. "You're part of the team, you come." Small thing, but a big thing.

He took his work very seriously. On a flight or a long drive, out came his computer so he could critique his work. The Athletic's Chris Johnston wrote Tuesday how Millen would let him know if he disagreed with something Chris said or wrote. I smiled because I was on the receiving end of those, too.

He wasn't afraid to challenge you if he felt you swerved from the proper path. We didn't always agree, but it never got personal and it never affected our relationship. I liked that.

But nothing brightened his face more than talking about his family — wife Ann, his four children, and eventual grandchildren. He won 232 regular-season and playoff NHL games, but no victories were bigger than the success of their children and births of their grandchildren. He could talk about them for hours.

That's the hardest thing about this, that such a family man had even more family to love.

32 THOUGHTS

1. Doesn't take much to feel the energy in Montreal when the team is making a late-season playoff charge, but downtown was absolutely electrified by Ivan Demidov's shocking signing. It's a massive "W" for the Canadiens, particularly since multiple sources felt as recently as Monday that it was unlikely to happen this season.

It's a reminder about two things when it comes to KHL negotiations. First, what's true now might not be true in 15 minutes and, second, NHL teams don't like to say anything is done until it is absolutely, positively 100 per cent done.

A few people were asking about Demidov's $525,000 Conn Smythe Trophy bonus for this spring. Washington agreed to something similar with Ryan Leonard, at $275,000. When players sign this late in a season, bonuses that can't be achieved are wiped out. By including the "Conn Carrot," teams allow a player to make more in years two and three of their entry-level deals. (There is a limit on how far apart values can be in different years of a contract.) The other thing that stood out was St. Petersburg's announcement: "He will return to Saint Petersburg if he doesn't gain a foothold in the NHL." That indicates a European assignment clause. If he's not in the NHL, he goes back to Russia. Not that anyone is expecting him to be sent down.

2. Anyone I know who's seen Demidov play this year says he's a stud. The buzz in the press box Tuesday night is that a) the hot dogs are still great and b) Demidov could play as soon as Monday versus Chicago. We'll see.

3. Was talking with a few teams about the Demidov signing. It's believed there were two aborted trades at last year's draft that could have changed history. First was Chicago's offer to trade their 2026 first-rounder (unprotected) for the fourth pick, which the Blue Jackets turned down. (They took Cayden Lindstrom.) Second was the Canadiens' own attempt to acquire Trevor Zegras. I've never received complete clarity on why that deal didn't happen, but I suspect it's because the Canadiens changed their minds when they realized Demidov would fall to five — although they were not offering that particular pick in the Zegras deal.

4. Hurricanes and Devils fans are now wondering about Alexander Nikishin and Arseny Gritsyuk. Tripp Tracy said during the broadcast of Tuesday's 3-0 Carolina loss in Buffalo that the Hurricanes are talking with Nikishin's reps every day. Because Gritsyuk is 24, he can only sign a one-year contract, and it might be better for both him and the Devils to wait for a full season.

5. A couple of weeks ago, one source said to watch for Gabriel Landeskog joining AHL Colorado, because the Avalanche's schedule is such that he won't be able to practice at the level he needs. "If that

happens, you'll know this is real," he said. Well, now he's being loaned there. Game 1 of the playoffs?

6. Alexander Ovechkin's historic goal wasn't the only record he set on Sunday. Fanatics indicated he launched the most merchandise sales ever by an NHL player in one day. Ovechkin was the top-selling athlete across all sports and the Capitals were the top-selling team across all sports.

7. I'm unconvinced Ovechkin breaks the record this year if the Capitals continued to look as bad as they did at the start of last season. As the team surged towards the playoffs, he scored 23 goals in his last 36 games. They hit multiple home runs with their off-season moves, energizing him even further. That's a huge part of this. There are others who believe he is being undersold in the Hart Trophy race, considering Washington is second in the league and he's second in goals-per-game behind Leon Draisaitl.

Ovechkin is at 1,022 goals for his professional career (regular season, playoffs and Russia). Wayne Gretzky's final goal put him at 1,072 (regular season, playoffs and World Hockey Association), beating Gordie Howe by one. Ovechkin could break that one too. (Someone asked me about Jaromir Jagr. I counted him at just under 1,050. If you credit goals scored at international tournaments, he reaches 1,100.)

There was a lot I liked about the last week: Ovechkin refusing to break the record on an empty net or sit out road games; Gretzky wearing the Gordie Howe pin; that it came on a shot from the left circle. People are free to be critical as they wish, but I dislike jealousy. There was none from Gretzky, not that I expected anything different. I'm Michael Jordan for life, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate what LeBron James has done. The negativity towards basketball's current stars from other generations is gross.

8. It was signed two weeks ago, but there's a lot of interesting discussion surrounding Jakob Chychrun's eight-year, $72 million extension in Washington. At the start of the season, if you would have told everyone across the industry this would have happened, I don't think anyone would have believed it. But: he played extremely well, the cap took a massive jump, the Capitals are second overall the league and John Carlson is 35.

I believe Washington knew for some time this was the price to get him signed. Initially they balked, but the more they considered all factors, they came around. The Capitals generally make good decisions, so this really piqued everyone's interest. What really stands out is the amount of executives who have said (with time to think about it) they see this negotiation in their own futures. You have to re-calibrate your mind, a few said to me, that if the cap keeps going up, $9 million in a few years is not $9 million as it looks now. Not every team will be comfortable with these jumps, but for your eventual number one defenceman, you will need to be.

Carlson eventually will be a huge loss on their back end. When Washington scoured the free-agent/trade market, was there any better option than what they knew?

9. I'm not yet sure how it is all going to work out between Vancouver and Rick Tocchet, but I do think this will be the end of one-sided, non-mutual options in coaching contracts. As Tuesday night's historic comeback showed, the Canucks still play hard for Tocchet.

10. There will be more time to sort this out over the next week, but this is the time of year where we begin to get a better handle on the potential for change across NHL front offices and benches. I don't like to guess, and a lot of mixed signals exist right now. There are some franchises awaiting ownership to make a final decision.

11. On that topic, we are taping some playoff preview stuff right now. Here's Winnipeg owner Mark Chipman with as strong as an endorsement I've ever heard, for Kevin Cheveldayoff: "We've never even come to the last year of one of his contracts and we won't. This is Kevin's job. When you're fortunate enough to work alongside somebody who cares as much as Kevin does, who knows as much as Kevin does, you hang on to those people…in any other business, you don't just move off from people because things didn't go the way it expected to occur in a certain year or two…Kevin has grown every year, and got better at his trade every year. And honestly, I'm not starting over with somebody else. I'm at an age where I feel certain he will outlast me in this organization."

12. Finally some clarity on Isaac Howard: he is planning a return to Michigan State. Tampa Bay's 2022 first-rounder can be an unrestricted free agent if unsigned by Aug. 15, 2026. I admit to being a little bit surprised, as the Lightning were promoting his Hobey Baker candidacy (Howard is a finalist). But word in NCAA circles is the team and Howard weren't simpatico on where everything stood at this time. We will see how things proceed from here, especially if other teams are interested.

13. At this time of year, with so much misinformation about injuries, I basically put everyone into two buckets. Bucket A is "concerned they will not be able to start the playoffs." Bucket B is "not that concerned." For example, Gabe Vilardi moved from Bucket A towards Bucket B this week when Jets coach Scott Arniel said he is getting closer to skating. New Jersey's Sheldon Keefe said there's a chance Dougie Hamilton could return for round one, but that's still Bucket A. Dallas GM Jim Nill told ESPN's Leah Hextall last weekend the Stars "don't expect" Miro Heiskanen in the first round, very un-good.

Two we're still waiting on are Dylan Holloway and Matthew Tkachuk. As Jim Montgomery said, Holloway will be out longer than St. Louis wanted or hoped, as we wait for a more definitive timeline. There's a reason everyone looks for multiple opinions. Tkachuk — who has skated — sought out several different opinions, including overseas.

14. Rangers coach Peter Laviolette took some heat after Monday's loss to Tampa Bay when he said he didn't have a message for his team right now, because "I don't go into the locker room after the game." I can't give you an exact percentage, but that's not uncommon among coaches — especially after a loss. I've dealt with Laviolette enough over the years to know it's not what he says, but how he says it (or how he looks when he says it). The look on his face said it all.

15. When the GMs wanted to discuss goaltender interference at the recent meetings, one of the things they wished to address was goalies who embellished to get calls. I heard some clips of Elvis Merzlikins were sent out. First was the controversial one with Kyle Palmieri that still has Islanders fans raging (although he gave the goalie an out by tiptoeing into the crease) and then contact with Vancouver's Kiefer Sherwood that was outside the crease and not a penalty. Well, Merzlikins was called for tripping during Saturday's loss in Toronto. Our guys in-studio did not like the penalty; what it said to me was GMs got their wish — that just as some players get embellishment reps, goalies can now get them, too.

16. The Jets enter Wednesday's games three points clear of Washington for first overall. We've discussed before how honest their exit meetings were after losing to Colorado. During a recent trip to the Manitoba capital, a few of them went more in-depth, saying the focus was, "Could everyone get one per cent, five per cent or 10 per cent better?"

"You're just trying to figure out what went wrong," captain Adam Lowry said. "Obviously, we had a really good regular season. We ran into a really good Colorado team and they seemed to be able to flip the switch and take their game to another level. We weren't able to match that and you have to do some reflection…(Nathan) MacKinnon's line really had their way with our line. He's a world-class player. He plays with world-class teammates. At the same time, that's what we (go against) all year. How do we find a way to keep them off the board more?"

Head coach Scott Arniel said the players themselves learned a big lesson from Colorado's best. "We saw a Stanley Cup champion team…they lost to Seattle the next year. We saw a team that was very, very upset…We had finished the year really well and we went in there, I don't know if you'd call us the favourites. But we went against Colorado and we saw their experience. We saw their ability to play to the moment. We saw Nate McKinnon dumping pucks in. We saw third- and fourth-line players become huge factors for their group. There are elite players doing things that maybe they don't always do for 82 games. They were playing a pretty strong team game. That was something we have to get to. That was why (we had) to be able to do this over 82 games. We know there's still another level, we've done it a few times this year. Those are the lessons we're going to use. Hopefully that is going to be good for us come playoff time."

Arniel was particularly happy with a 3-2 win over Washington on March 25, calling it the kind of intense, fight-for-ice game that you're going to have to win in the post-season.

17. During the summer, Arniel flew to Calgary to meet with Lowry, Josh Morrissey and Mark Scheifele. What they discussed there became the bedrock of training camp. There weren't a lot of roster changes, but Lowry wasn't concerned about that.

"I think what's made our team so good over the years is the continuity of the players we bring back year-in, year-out. We understand the structure, we understand the expectations, and we're able to accommodate those new players coming in. They know what's expected here, how we practice, how we play, the mantra of the 10 per cent better, and things like that. And then we have a meeting once the team's made, what are things players want to own? What are things that we want to hang our hat on? And I feel like from that meeting moving forward, we've really carried those messages into the games, and the results have followed."

"Josh and I spend a lot of time together in the summers and that's something that we talk about a lot," Scheifele said. "That's an everyday thing, whether it's in the gym, whether it's treatment, whether it's on the ice, it's not about I need to change my game completely, it is a matter of how can I make this a little bit better and this a bit better — faceoff is a little better, D-Zone battle is a bit a better. When someone comes back and improves a little bit in every area, all of a sudden it pushes everyone's level up. That's what we've done here this year."

"We've had a successful year, but it's never felt like we've been too high or too low," Morrissey added. "We're working towards Game 83…It feels like our group has taken a step from a sense of maturity. And that's why I feel confident we're ready to go into the playoffs."

18. One of the words the Jets use is relentless. "The way I view it, the 10 per cent more is a critical," Lowry said. "But as we're heading to the ice, the word relentless is plastered on the wall above it. When we're at our best, when we were playing the style we expect, we're relentless. We're a great skating team. We're hard on the forecheck. We smother teams in the neutral zone, and then defend really hard…We have a few star players that really carry the mail offensively, but defensively, we're a real stingy team. That's all four lines, all three defence pairings, and both of our goalies. We're relentless in our puck pursuit on the forecheck, on the backcheck. It's a real long night when we're playing that way."

19. A couple more on Winnipeg. Asked a few Jets what makes Lowry mad. The most consistent answer was if a teammate gets cheap-shotted. Does he get mad in the room? Answer: Nowhere near as much as you'd think. Lowry laughed.

"No one likes to get embarrassed, right?" he said. "You make a mistake on the ice or you do something wrong. Generally, we know what we did wrong. But now you have someone yelling at you or calling you out in front of 18 other guys. And sometimes there's a time and place for that because he might have made the mistake, but 12 other guys have made a mistake, and now you need to make a point where, as a team, this isn't our standard, but...It doesn't help them. People get defensive…We're not mad at you. We just expect this. We expect you to play a certain level. I expect you to hold me accountable. I think it's just a lot easier for people to receive the information when it comes from a place where they can let their guard down. They can kind of mentally think about it, and they don't have to respond instantly, right? So I think the great thing about our locker room is we're such a tight-knit team that people feel comfortable telling people when things aren't going their way or when they feel like something needs to change, you can have those conversations. It doesn't take weeks for it to become a habit or things like that."

20. Finally, Arniel had some great comments about the 4 Nations and how it affected four of his players. Scheifele was not selected for Team Canada. Morrissey came down with that awful flu going around and missed the final. Kyle Connor was scratched for the final. Connor Hellebuyck and Team USA lost the championship in overtime.

"I knew that (Scheifele) was in the mix and and I told him as much. He was doing everything possible. He really wanted to play on that hockey team." He was going to replace Sidney Crosby if Crosby's injury kept him from playing.

"That was a big disappointment for me. I really felt he deserved an opportunity. No discount to any of the players that were there and obviously Canada winning was special. But at the end of the day, I was really hoping that just because of what he's done in this league, what he's done for the Winnipeg Jets and then the year he's having. So I know he was really down, but he's done a great job of trying to prove people wrong. And he's trying to play to the best of his abilities every single night. With Josh, that was a tough phone call. He called me from Boston the afternoon (of the final). He had tried to get to the warmup and kept throwing up. And I knew how devastated he was. (Connor) not playing that game. It came down to numbers, whatever it might be. And then (Hellebuyck), losing in overtime. I did get to talk to them all. Just the experiences, what I'd of mentioned to those guys that you're around greatness. You're around great players, great situations and absorb that stuff because we're going to need it in Game 83 and on from you guys. That's the stuff they can bring back for themselves individually or for our group. That was stuff that we needed. And at the end of the day, it didn't work out perfect for all of them, but they were in those situations, which was to me is the best part for their growth."

21. Most impressive off-ice accomplishment of the season: Darnell Nurse read War and Peace. I know university students assigned to read it who couldn't finish. The Oilers have quite the book club going.

22. Leon Draisaitl on the possibility of winning the Selke Trophy: That would be "almost more important than any other (individual) trophy at this point in time. Obviously, there's been a lot of chatter about when we were younger that we can't defend. And the reason we don't win is because Connor and I can't defend or don't defend. And I think we've really changed that narrative around the league and especially the last couple of years. We're both really, really good defenders when we want to be. I think it's just the consistency part of doing it every night. And I think I've done that for the most part this year."

23. With the de-centralized draft looking more and more like a one-year wonder (thank God), there was a suggestion made during a smaller group at the GM conversations to do what baseball does with its winter meetings. That's a four-day palooza featuring all teams, free agents and their representatives with wall-to-wall coverage. In hockey's case, that would include awards, draft and July 1 free agency in the same city. Not sure how to handicap the likelihood, but it will be discussed. It's a great idea. After the Sphere draft last year, Toronto was one team that stayed in Vegas for free agency, so it is not such a huge leap.

24. In the aftermath of Rogers' Canadian television extension with the NHL, Commissioner Gary Bettman and Deputy Bill Daly were asked if they remembered getting it done so early. The current 12-year contact was signed in November 2013 — seven months before the previous one expired. ESPN (March 2021) and TNT (April 2021) announced their American partnerships late in the last season of NBC's run. We are 14 months ahead of schedule. I don't remember that happening…ever. Bettman and Daly didn't either.

Rogers carefully separates church and state. It was Bettman who revealed during a television interview he was headed into a negotiation window with our bosses, and we didn't know it was extended until last Wednesday's announcement. (To be honest, when one NHL coach asked a few weeks ago if I thought a new deal would get done during that exclusivity, I laughed and said, "That never happens. The NHL always takes these to market.")

The bigger question for fans is: what does this mean, big-picture? I have theories. First, it means Bettman got a number that made him (and the owners) happy. That's obvious. Second — and this is more important to the hockey-loving public — it is another major financial cornerstone secured as serious CBA negotiations begin. That's not a coincidence. The cap is set the next three years. Bettman can present a major media rights deal to the players and expansion is on the horizon. (Another one of my theories is that these negotiations have been going on at the highest levels of the NHL and NHLPA for a bit longer than anyone cares to admit, but that's another story.) What is there to fight about?

25. Here's my expansion prediction: the NHL adds two teams, but not at the same time. I've heard there's real concern about dilution of talent with two teams at once. My guess is the first is Houston, with 2028-29 a desire, although that means everyone's got to get going. Price: Approximately $2 billion.

26. Bettman did not like "Future of Winnipeg" questions while discussing the TV deal. "It's not an issue," he said. "I don't understand why people are questioning that."

27. Speaking of the KHL, there were reports Carolina's Dmitry Orlov was headed back there for next season, but I was told he's going to stay in the NHL. He is an unrestricted free agent.

28. Colorado's Cale Makar has 30 goals. AHL Colorado's Jacob MacDonald has 29. If MacDonald scores one more, I believe it's the first time an organization has had a defenceman reach 30 in both the NHL and the AHL during the same season. I can't find another example. Columbus coach Dean Evason on what he told his players before facing

Makar: “Don’t lunge. Yes, he’s going to beat you sometimes. Don’t make it worse by lunging at him.”

29. Not get getting enough attention: Karel Vejmelka’s made 21 straight starts for the Utahns — closing to within 481 of Glenn Hall’s NHL record. His save percentage is above .900 during that span, too. In an unrelated story, sports scientists are choking on their proteins.

30. Final arguments on the Ryan Johansen grievance will be heard next week.

31. Lane and Cole Hutson’s undrafted older brother, Quinn, who will play for Boston University at the Frozen Four this week, has serious Western Conference interest.

32. Congratulations to Ottawa’s director of sports medicine, Gerry Townend, retiring this summer from this phase of his life after almost 35 years with the CFL’s Toronto Argonauts and then the Senators. We rarely get to call our own shots, but he’s getting to do it. I remember only one angry text: when he thought I questioned a legitimacy of an injury suffered by a player. Really enjoyed seeing him around.

33. Just an awful week with the news Ray Shero passed away. I wasn’t even aware that he’d been ill. There are three things that immediately came to mind. First is the family tree of Stanley Cups with father Fred winning as coach of the Flyers and Ray following as GM of the 2009 Penguins. Second was during his time as GM of the New Jersey Devils. When he traded for PK Subban at the 2019 draft, he said, “You want to see the text message I got from Taylor Hall?” No words, a simple green checkmark icon. He loved that. Third, I met his sons at one of the NHL Drafts and mentioned that to him the next day. He was so proud of them and talked for about 10 minutes about how great they were. It’s a brutal way to end the blog. But one thing Greg Millen and Ray Shero had in common — they loved their families.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347319 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Hughes feeling weight of Canucks' season: 'This year has been hard'

Iain MacIntyre

DENVER — The term “heavy lies the crown” is derived from a line in Shakespeare’s play Henry IV, Part 2. Had The Bard — tell me that’s not a great hockey nickname — been a fan of our game, he’d have written: “Uneasy lies the head that wears the ‘C.’”

Quinn Hughes has felt the weight of that lettered patch this season, even when not wearing his Vancouver Canucks’ jersey.

Being captain has made the 25-year-old feel acutely the sting of this National Hockey League season, which the Canucks began with Stanley Cup aspirations after Vancouver’s best season in a decade but will almost certainly end with the team missing the playoffs for the eighth time in 10 years.

Hughes feels responsible as captain, and said Wednesday that burden affected him down the stretch as the reality of the season sunk in.

Importantly, this same responsibility also affects Hughes’ outlook as far as the team’s future and his role in it.

Without making any sweeping declarations about what he plans to do in two years when he is eligible for unrestricted free agency, Hughes told Sportsnet he feels there is an “obligation” attached to the C the Canucks gave him.

“This team named me captain, and I feel obligated to be a successful team here,” Hughes told Sportsnet. “That weighs heavily on me; I want to do something here.

“Like, they made me captain. Are you going to do what you said you would do? Are you going to help the situation and make this a successful organization? Obviously, one guy can't do that. But I definitely feel obligated, where that weighs heavy on my mind that they entrusted me with that. This year has been hard, and I want to find a way to put us in a situation where we can be really successful and ultimately win (a Stanley Cup). I appreciate the fans and the fact that there's never been a Cup in Vancouver. I definitely think about that quite a bit, as well.”

This is not a promise by Hughes. But it is a compelling statement about what he believes, and it should provide some context as speculation about his future becomes feverish over the next 15 months — until July 2026, when one of the best two defencemen in the NHL can sign a long-term extension in Vancouver. Or not.

Both Canucks general manager Patrik Allvin and president of hockey operations Jim Rutherford have been clear about wanting to create a positive, winning environment in Vancouver so that the best player in franchise history will want to stay.

This season, full of drama, key injuries and plot twists that even Shakespeare would have been challenged to conjure, hasn’t helped the landscape.

But Hughes clearly believes in his team and especially his coach, Rick Tocchet.

“I believe that with Rick and Footy (assistant coach Adam Foote) and the way that they coach and structuring how we are defensively,” Hughes said, “if we add another player or two and have some guys within our group play better next year than they did this past season, I think we can be a really, really successful team. We're very structured, we don't give up much, we have maybe the best goalie tandem in the league, and we have a great D-corps and others that are coming that will help us. The point is, if we get Rick back and add a piece or two, we can be very successful.”

Although it’s clear where he stands, Hughes said Tocchet’s future will be decided by coach and management. The Canucks have a club option on the head coach for next season, but are eager to negotiate a long-term extension. Tocchet, however, has delayed those discussions as he and the players focused on trying to save their season.

Tocchet told Sportsnet two weeks ago in New York that he needs to fully debrief with Rutherford and Allvin after the season and see what management’s plans are for the roster and next season.

“He's an amazing coach,” Hughes said. “You look at me individually and my game, he's been amazing for me — amazing for a lot of guys. He's just a great person, first of all. That's a guy you want to compete for, you want to play for. And he's a terrific coach.

“I think just the way Rick coaches, how solid we are defensively and structured, he gives us the chance to win every night. At times (with injuries this season), we might have been a little outmatched. But I think he's a terrific coach. Last year, he won the Jack Adams Award, and this year, I think he's probably been even better. But whatever he does, it's his decision. Obviously, I'd like to have him back. And I think he knows that.”

The Canucks extended their season by at least a day by rallying, magnificently or miraculously or both, to beat the Dallas Stars 6-5 in overtime Tuesday night. Minus injured top two centres Elias Pettersson and Filip Chytil and 20-minute defenceman Tyler Myers, Vancouver became the first team in NHL history to win a game by overcoming a three-goal deficit in the final minute of regulation time.

The Canucks visit the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday.

“Kind of a crazy game, but like I've been telling you all year, there's no quit, and we're always going to compete,” Hughes said. “We have a lot of competitive guys and to see where we are now is definitely disappointing. I don't want to talk like the year's over because there’s still four games left. After the season, I think there will be different conversations about how we can get better, and taking advantage of the summer because we do need guys to elevate (their training) and come back better.”

Preparation has been a theme for both Tocchet and Allvin this season when discussing where the Canucks need to improve.

“If I didn't agree with that, I wouldn't train the way I do,” Hughes said. “I've seen (Sidney) Crosby and the (Nathan) MacKinnons — that's the blueprint. We have to continue to get better every season. You look at Crosby, and he's one of the greatest players ever, but the way he competes in the summer and tries to improve his game year after year, I mean, that's what you have to do to continue to get better and expand

your game. Because the league gets better every single year. We need everyone to understand that and be hungry."

Hughes significantly changed his diet and training two years ago, and last season played all 82 games on his way to the Norris Trophy.

This season, he was injured three times. Hughes missed four games with a serious hand injury before returning on Jan. 6 with a heavy brace. But he suffered a strained oblique muscle on Jan. 31 and missed six games, then three games into his return, suffered a related injury that kept him out another four.

Still, with 74 points in 64 games, Hughes leads the Canucks in scoring by 25 points, even if his struggle at times to defend since his last return on March 12 is evidence that he is probably not fully healthy.

"It's just been a long year, and I think that the position where we are, that realization, probably has rattled me more than it needed to," he said. "I would say it has hurt me just where we are in the standings. I just thought we would be a contender this year.

"As far as the oblique and the injuries, injuries happen. A couple were unlucky, like with my hand, that was just a weird thing. Last year, I played all 82 games and this year I've been a little unlucky. But I don't think anything is going to eat away at me (in the summer) because I know that I've tried my best and tried to prepare my best."

Like you'd expect of a leader.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347320 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' John Tavares talks Masterton nod, unsettled contract, lost captaincy

Luke Fox

TAMPA BAY, Fla. — The stereotypical and slightly cynical view of the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy is that it should be awarded to the NHLer who overcame the most debilitating of ailments and rallied through gruelling rehab and a string of doctors' appointments to compile a decent season.

Battle a career-threatening illness? Suffer a gruesome on-ice injury? Well, jump to the front of the line.

But what of the wounds we can't see?

By definition, the award goes to the "player who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to ice hockey."

Tavares is not only wholly deserving of his 2024-25 Masterton nomination from Toronto's chapter of hockey writers, but his candidacy should be taken seriously league-wide.

"He's the ultimate professional," says Max Domi, echoing a sentiment that has sprung from the mouths of Tavares's teammates for 16 seasons and counting.

"You hear that thrown around a lot. It's kind of overrated nowadays. 'Oh, this guy's a pro.' No. He's a pro, and he's the definition of it. The way he prepares. The way he recovers. He's a special guy."

A special guy quietly, consistently thriving in a uniquely challenging season.

Physically, Tavares started behind the 8-ball, his energy sapped by an October illness. And he missed another half-dozen games in January due to a leg injury suffered in practice.

But it's the veteran's mental toughness, relentless practice habits, and insistence on sticking it to Father Time that make him worthy here.

The Masterton campaign Tavares didn't know he was building (but is tremendously honoured to accept) began in the summer.

Strip a proud player of his captaincy. Ask him to pass the torch publicly. Force-feed him a giant slice of humble pie.

How would you react? Would it be with as much external class and grace and as much internal desire to dig in as Tavares?

"There's a lot of things that go through your head, but you try to do the right thing… doing everything you can to help the team win," Tavares said this week, reflecting on his passing of the 'C' to Auston Matthews.

Tavares, 34, simultaneously recognized the dominance of prime Matthews and hoped the transition of leadership might somehow improve the group, but resolved that a degrading of letters would in no way sap his passion or affect how he leads.

"I never looked at it as something that would change my approach," Tavares explains. "Just believed it was the right thing to do. Didn't worry about what people were saying."

Then alternate captain Tavares went out and started filling the net more frequently than the Leafs' (injury-hampered) new captain.

Tavares has racked up 71 points in 70 games. His 37th goal Tuesday in Florida — a bullet past Sergei Bobrovsky — makes Year 7 of his Maple Leafs contract the most productive since Year 1 and puts the lie to the theory that, surely, the centreman's value would dip on the back end of the frontloaded deal.

"I almost want to say that he looks like he's getting younger every year. He keeps getting better," teammate Calle Järnkrok says. "When I see him doing it, I think maybe I can do it too."

Tavares is winning 58.5 per cent of his faceoffs, stuffing the net at even strength (24 goals — fourth-most in his career), and tracking his third-best plus/minus rating (plus-10) despite starting more shifts in the defensive zone (42 per cent) than any other season as a Leaf.

"As a coach, you love it. You love a player like that," Craig Berube beams. "You love his professionalism and the mindset he has day in and day out. You know, he's almost like having another coach around, asking what his thoughts are.

"When I watch John, it's just the preparation daily. It never changes. It's always his routine that allows him to be successful at a later age."

Tavares chuckles at the notion of coaching. For one, the father of three's focus away from the rink is directed at his young children. Moreover, he's still got plenty of juice in the tank as a player climbing up the all-time points chart (No. 67 and humming) and is hungry to see what a conference final tastes like.

"I love what I do," Tavares says. "I kinda just feel like a kid every day, getting to play a sport and a game that I love.

"Every day is really exciting. You can't beat it."

There are disappointments along the way, though.

Tavares, who captained Team Canada at the '24 world championships, wanted desperately to skate his way onto the national roster that defeated Matthews' Team USA for gold at the 4 Nations Face-Off. He didn't watch the overtime — and Canada's golden goal — in real-time, choosing his bedsheets instead.

"I would have loved to have been there. But it is what it is. I got to spend some extra time with my family, which I really enjoyed," Tavares says. "Nine or 10 days off to lay low, rest up, get away from it mentally a bit.

"A lot of trust and belief in my game and what I can do."

As badly as Tavares — who got injured during Canada's golden Olympic run at Sochi 2014 — wanted to participate in the best-on-best, Berube believes the time off helped.

"A lot. That 4 Nations takes a lot out of the players, and it takes more time than you think to get it back," Berube says. "So, I think the break for Johnny was really important."

Tavares's scorching play in March earned him the NHL's second star of the month, and he has formed one of the league's most dynamic second lines alongside wingers William Nylander and Bobby McMann.

"Johnny's just on another planet right now," Domi says. "Everything he touches goes in. It's great to see. He's one of the hardest-working guys I've ever played with, so it's great to see him get rewarded."

Whether the pending UFA will be rewarded with a second contract in Toronto is still to be determined.

Leafs management wants to see (a) how the group fares in the post-season and (b) how the Mitch Marner deal shakes out.

Despite being willing to negotiate and having his file pushed to the back burner, the Toronto native remains confident that his contract will work out.

“Year 16, I’ve done very well in the league financially,” says Tavares, who has $111,041,463 in career earnings (before endorsements and the CRA’s clawback, which he is leaving to professionals who understand tax nuance better than him).

“There will come a time when it’ll get addressed and it’ll get taken care of. So, I just go out and enjoy playing.”

(Happily acknowledging the Blue Jays’ recent half-billion-dollar extension for Vladimir Guerrero, Tavares chuckles: “I wouldn’t mind a 14-year deal, but good for him.”)

In the meantime, the man who used to be captain, who used to play for Team Canada, whom most assumed would fade in the face of age, remains dedicated to getting his boyhood team over the hump.

To persevere, one goal at a time.

“If he can bring that fire to the playoffs,” Simon Benoit says, “we’ll be happy for sure.”

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347321 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'I was pretty speechless': Kirkland's comeback story earns Flames' Masterton nod

Eric Francis

CALGARY — For a lad who is just four months into a nine-month recovery from knee surgery, good news of any kind is cherished.

So when Justin Kirkland was informed he was Calgary’s nominee for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy, he was understandably overwhelmed.

“Finding out, I was pretty speechless,” said the Calgary Flames centre of an award given annually to the player who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey.

“And then when I had the time to sit down and reflect, it’s amazing from two years ago to where I’m at now. I always believed in myself, but I didn’t know that I’d ever get to this point.

“So, to get nominated for an award like this is definitely special, and hits close to home.”

Kirkland’s story helped set the underdog tone in Calgary this season when he made good on an early-season call-up by scoring his first NHL goal following a five-stop, eight-season journey through the minors.

He was 28 years old.

He followed up his memorable night in Edmonton on Oct. 13 by scoring on three of four shootout attempts, using the same move every time.

The kid they call "Costco" was quickly becoming as popular as the store's Kirkland products.

As part of a journey that saw his previous NHL stint in Anaheim cut short by head trauma suffered in a serious car accident on the way to the rink in 2023, he was savouring all the spoils that come with it.

He even got an offer from Costco to partner up on a charitable endeavour.

But just as he was finally establishing himself as an NHL regular, he was dealt another cruel blow when he suffered a season-ending ACL injury in late November.

“Having a taste of it, and settling into a role here, to all of sudden the season is over and that’s your new reality ... it’s definitely a lot to process,” said the Winnipeg native.

“It’s still a challenge, even right now.

“It’s been such a rollercoaster of emotions from the start of the season. Up until this point, there are still good days and still bad days.

“I keep reminding myself of those good times, and that’s the continuing driving factor for me is, ‘Yeah, this is going to be a long process, but having a taste of it, that’s exactly to where I want to get back to.’”

Rehabbing regularly with teammate Anthony Mantha has helped him through another arduous road back to the NHL, as has the support of his wife, parents and sister.

An unrestricted free agent at season’s end, he’s hoping to re-sign in Calgary so he can pick up where he left off.

“This is where I want to be, it feels like home,” he said.

“My wife and I have made this our off-season home. Hopefully, something works out as I’d love to continue being a full-time Flame.”

Given the nod by the Calgary chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers’ Association, Kirkland will vie for the award with nominees from the 31 other teams.

Speaking of a little taste, Kirkland was recently able to make good on his day at a local Costco, which included serving up samples as part of a charitable visit.

His name tag read, simply, "Costco."

“I got the full employee experience for the day, doing everything from stocking shelves to greeting people to packing groceries and handing out samples,” he said with a laugh.

“It was a lot of fun and we got to do it for a good cause, for a little donation to charity, which made it even more special.”

Asked if he was recognized, he suggested the bevy of cameras following him around likely had more to do with it.

“There was some recognition, which was cool — I haven’t really gone through a whole lot of that in my career," he said.

"So you have fun with it, and I got to meet some great people.

“I got a coupon for a free hot dog, so I will be cashing that in.”

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347322 Websites

TSN.CA / Leafs vow to up the urgency in Tampa

Mark Masters

The Lightning skated at Amalie Arena on Wednesday. The Leafs held a team meeting.

The Leafs need a big bounce-back performance on Wednesday night in Tampa if they want to retain top spot in the Atlantic Division.

"Usually we do respond really well," said winger Bobby McMann. "[I'm] looking forward to how it’s going to be tonight. We usually recognize when things aren’t going well and I think that’s a sign of a good team. You’re not going to have your best every single night, but you’re going be able to bring it shortly after."

The Leafs were far from their best during Tuesday's 3-1 loss to the Florida Panthers. The defending Stanley Cup champions dominated possession right from the drop of the puck.

"They wanted it more than us," coach Craig Berube declared at the start of his post-game media availability. "It starts in a faceoff circle. They're 70 per cent. It just comes down to competitiveness and digging in more. They seemed like a more desperate team than us."

The Panthers, who got captain and top-line centre Aleksander Barkov back from injury, snapped a five-game skid (0-4-1) and avenged last week's loss in Toronto.

Despite missing Matthew Tkachuk, Sam Bennett and Aaron Ekblad among others, Florida outshot Toronto 37-18 and also outhit the Leafs 43-29.

"Our physicality, I think we were a little bit soft in some areas and, you know, not through the full 60," said winger Matthew Knies. "So, yeah, we're going to have to learn to do that when it comes to playoff time."

'We were a little soft': Panthers 'wanted it more' than Leafs

'We were a little soft': Panthers 'wanted it more' than LeafsAfter their loss to the Panthers, Matthew Knies said he felt the Leafs played "soft," with coach Craig Berube adding he thought the Panthers "wanted it more" than his team. Bobby McMann and Oliver Ekman-Larsson also discussed what they felt went wrong in the defeat.

Back in November the Leafs got pumped by the Panthers 5-1 in Sunrise, Fla. before responding with a big win in Tampa. Toronto is hoping a similar story plays out as they aim to salvage this two-game swing through the Sunshine State.

Toronto leads Tampa Bay by just two points (98-96) heading into Wednesday's final head-to-head showdown of the regular season. The two teams have the same number of regulation wins (39), which is the first tiebreaker if they are knotted in points.

"It's a big game for us," said defenceman Oliver Ekman-Larsson. "We got to come out and respond, play better to get a win here tonight."

How did Berube address what happened with his team?

"Move on," the coach stated. "It's a big game tonight. First place. Very good team, Tampa. We know what they're all about. We got to be a lot more competitive and we got to win more puck battles than we won last night and have more urgency in our game than we had last night. That's really what it boils down to."

Both the Leafs and Lightning have five games left, but Tampa Bay will be home for four games while Toronto only has two home dates remaining.

'Usually we do respond really well': Leafs raise urgency level

'Usually we do respond really well': Leafs raise urgency level It was an ugly performance last night for the Maple Leafs against the Panthers, and now a regulation loss tonight against Tampa would have the Lightning pass them and take over first place. What sort of response should we expect from Toronto? TSN's Mark Masters has more.

---

The Leafs have won all three games against the Lightning this season while outscoring them 15-8.

"When you drive your car do you look in the rear-view mirror the whole time or do you look out the windshield?" Lightning coach Jon Cooper asked rhetorically. "I'm more of a windshield guy."

So, the Lightning aren't dwelling on what happened earlier this season, but the Leafs are certainly looking to replicate the game plan.

"We did a good job of counter attacking them," Berube said. "We checked well and we were able to create something the other way off it. I think we did a good job of that in the three games this year."

Both McMann and Ekman-Larsson pointed to pace as a big factor in the wins over the Lightning.

"We've played really fast," McMann said. "We've played behind them, tried to play quick ups a lot, a lot of pucks [moved] without letting them get set in their neutral zone forecheck or getting set on their forecheck. We're just trying to move pucks up and get it past them and then be hard on their D."

The Leafs looked slow on Tuesday as the Panthers forecheck consistently hemmed in the Leafs and forced flip outs.

"Playing fast," Ekman-Larsson said of the key against Tampa. "That's our style. That's how we want to play. But last night I felt like we were kind of dragging the puck back a little bit too much instead of attacking them, so that's our mindset."

The Leafs generated only 1.2 expected goals, per NaturalStatTrick.com, which was a season low. Florida's suffocating approach seemed to wear down the Leafs mentally.

"We weren't creating much offence, so I think that kind of bummed us a little bit," said Knies, who plays on the top line with Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner. "I think we've just got to know that the simple hockey is what's going to create the offence for us and create that juice."

Matthews was limited to just one shot against the Panthers. He has two goals and three assists against the Lightning this season.

Marner did not register a shot on Tuesday and saw his seven game point streak snapped. But he has one goal and six assists against the Lightning.

William Nylander was also held without a shot in Florida. He has four goals and one assist against the Lightning.

Why have Leafs had so much success against Lightning, Vasilevskiy?

Why have Leafs had so much success against Lightning, Vasilevskiy?Bobby McMann, Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Craig Berube discussed why they believe the Maple Leafs have had so much success against the Lightning and Andrei Vasilevskiy.

---

Andrei Vasilevskiy has allowed eight goals in two starts against the Leafs this season. The only time he was pulled this season came in Toronto back in October.

Does those results give Toronto's stars more confidence?

"Yeah, for sure," Berube said. "I mean, they're confident anyhow. It's about traffic and rebounds and things like that against him. You gotta outcompete the goalie and we gotta get pucks to the net with traffic and then win those battles. I can think of two or three goals we scored against them this year with those types of situations."

The Lightning opted to start backup Jonas Johansson in the last game with the Leafs.

But Vasilevskiy will make his league-leading 61st start on Wednesday. Despite the heavy workload, the Russian ranks second overall in save percentage (.923).

"He just cuts the angle down so well," said McMann. "Coming in and shooting on him, you don't see any net. That's the biggest thing that you see, just how big he is (6-foot-4, 228 pounds), and how good he is at finding those angles. So, it's changing the angles, getting rebounds, and getting in and around his net that is going to bring us success."

---

The Leafs stars have feasted in the season series against Tampa Bay, but Lightning winger Nikita Kucherov has been relatively quiet. He picked up a primary power-play assist in the first game in October and a secondary assist in the most recent game in January. Kucherov missed the matchup in November due to injury.

"You gotta be hard on him and physical, as much as you can," said Berube. "At the same time, he's such a good playmaker and he has eyes in the back of his head almost. He knows where his linemates are and he'll just make a play under pressure to them. He's very good at it. He's an elite, elite player. We all know that. But, at the same time, we gotta go at him. We gotta take time and space away from him. We gotta have good sticks against him. That's important. Good stick details and taking away his options, and getting sticks on pucks, and things like that."

Kucherov is second in NHL scoring with 115 points in 73 games. Since the start of March, no one has produced as many points as Kucherov (29 in 18 games).

"He can make plays at any point," said McMann. "He can make a pass cross-ice through a couple sticks, and you never know when he's going do it either, so it's just playing him tight, being in his space, being in his hands and not letting him make those plays. Even when it's on the wall he can make plays to the middle so it's just being smart and being on him."

---

John Tavares lost a draw cleanly to Anton Lundell, which resulted in Florida's first goal by Gustav Forsling on Tuesday. The Leafs centre, who is wining 58.1 per cent of his draws this season to lead the team, barely reacted when the puck was dropped.

"That one's on me," said Tavares. "You understand tendencies of guys you go against and what they do, and I was anticipating something on his end. I completely mistimed and misread it. It's on me. Obviously, you can't lose them clean like that and give them opportunity in the middle of the ice."

Tavares went 4-for-12 at the dot against the Panthers.

'We were a little soft': Panthers 'wanted it more' than Leafs

'We were a little soft': Panthers 'wanted it more' than LeafsAfter their loss to the Panthers, Matthew Knies said he felt the Leafs played "soft," with coach Craig Berube adding he thought the Panthers "wanted it more" than his team. Bobby McMann and Oliver Ekman-Larsson also discussed what they felt went wrong in the defeat.

---

Lines at Lightning skate:

F

Guentzel - Point - Kucherov

Hagel - Cirelli - Goncalves

Bjorkstrand - Gourde - Paul

Girgensons - Glendening - Atkinson

Chaffee

D

Hedman - Moser

McDonagh - Cernak

Lilleberg - Perbix

Raddysh

TSN.CA LOADED: 04.10.2025

1347323 Websites

TSN.CA / Kirkland’s comeback earns him Flames’ Masterton nomination

Salim Valji

Two years after a car accident nearly robbed him of his hockey career, Justin Kirkland is the Calgary Flames’ nominee for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy, which goes to the player who “best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey.”

The nominee is voted on by members of the Calgary chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers Association.

“It's amazing, from two years ago, where I was at, to now,” Kirkland said last week. “I always believed in myself, but I didn't know that I'd ever, ever get to this point.”

Not long ago, Kirkland didn’t know if he’d live a normal life again, let alone be an NHL regular.

Then with the Anaheim Ducks organization, he had just gotten called up in Jan. 2023 and was driving on a California freeway to suit up for his eighth NHL game.

He didn’t make it to the rink.

Kirkland got into a serious car accident that left him with head trauma and facial fractures. He was unsure he’d ever get a chance to live out his NHL dream again.

Kirkland spent months in rehab and eventually signed with the Arizona Coyotes the following campaign, playing in two NHL games in 2023-24. Last off-season, Kirkland rejoined the Flames. He had previously spent three seasons with the franchise’s farm team in Stockton, Calif., after signing in 2019. Kirkland was originally drafted in the third round by Nashville in 2014.

He was assigned to the AHL at the start of this season, but was called up after fourth-line centre Kevin Rooney was hurt in the season opener. Kirkland quickly cemented himself as a regular. He scored his first-career goal in the Battle of Alberta on Oct. 13, and soon became a shootout threat. Fans lovingly dubbed him Costco, a nod to the chain’s Kirkland brand.

Unfortunately, Kirkland’s fairytale season ended abruptly. He tore his ACL just weeks after the emotional high of his first goal, ending his season and once again putting his career in limbo. Kirkland’s stat line ended with two goals and eight points in 21 games.

“Having the taste of it, and kind of settling into a nice role here to, all of a sudden, the season’s over, and that's a new reality,” Kirkland said of his season in Calgary.

He allowed that there have been some tough moments on the road to recovery. The key during those lonely days of rehab, Kirkland said, was being frank with his feelings and leaning on a support system that includes Flames teammates and staff, his family, and close friends.

“Being able to be open with my life,” he said. “Yeah, you know what? Today, say it was a s-----y day. Didn't feel like going into the rink. I didn't feel like doing rehab. But again, today, it's my job, so I gotta show up and do it.”

He has also relied on forward Anthony Mantha, who also suffered a season-ending knee injury in early November. The two have rehabbed together at the Saddledome while their teammates fight for a playoff spot.

“[I] poke his brain,” Kirkland said. “He's a fantastic guy that’s really taken me under his wing. We've made these workouts fun. We find a way to have some laughs throughout the day.”

Kirkland said his recovery is on track.

“In terms of where I'm at and kind of where they wanted me to be at, we're right on par,” he said. “So, I'm happy with how it's gone. It's been a long–a very, very long–road. But with where I'm at right now, I'm very excited.”

The season-ending injury did come with some silver linings. It allowed Kirkland experiences he normally wouldn’t have had during the grind of a professional hockey season.

He travelled with his wife, Madison, to Italy for Valentine’s Day. He spent more time with his loved ones. Kirkland even picked up a side hustle, spending a day at a local Costco.

“I got the full, full employee experience for the day,” he said with a grin. ”It was really cool. I did everything from stocking shelves to greeting people to packing groceries, handing out samples. It was a lot of fun.”

Kirkland, who was raised in nearby Camrose, is a free agent at the end of the year. He made it clear he prefers to be in the city he’s made his off-season home.

“Being with the organization in previous years and then coming back here, it just felt right,” he said. “This is where I want to be…hopefully something works out.”

TSN.CA LOADED: 04.10.2025