CAROLINA HURRICANES
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Why the Hurricanes aren't relaxing after taking 3-1 series lead over Capitals

By: Chip Alexander

Washington Capitals goalie Logan Thompson (48) stops a scoring attempt by Carolina Hurricanes center Jordan Staal (11) in the first period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Washington Capitals goalie Logan Thompson (48) stops a scoring attempt by Carolina Hurricanes center Jordan Staal (11) in the first period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Raleigh

The game was long over Monday but Jordan Staal still had work to do.

The Carolina Hurricanes captain was in an exercise area of the locker room at Lenovo Center, doing pushups, pushing himself. Up, down, up, down ...

Staal is 36 years old. He had just played a little more than 17 minutes, including nearly six minutes on the Canes' penalty kill, the kind of grueling job that can drain you quickly.

Photo gallery: Carolina Hurricanes defeat Washington Capitals 5-2 in Game 4

Carolina Hurricanes center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) reacts after a goal by teammate Shaye Gostisbehere (04) in the first period, to take a 1-0 lead against the Washington Capitals during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willettrwillett@newsobserver.com

But there he was, working, sweating. The unstated message: The Hurricanes still have more to do to finish off the Washington Capitals in the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

The Canes now have a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series after a 5-2 victory Monday in Game 4. Some would call that a cushy, comfortable margin. The Canes do not. They will go to Washington on Thursday with the intent of winning Game 5 at Capital One Arena to close it out, more than aware that the Caps have a tough, talented team and will fight back.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (31) deflects a shot by Washington Capitals right wing Brand Duhaime (22) in the second period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

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"It's never easy to close out a series," said Canes defenseman Dmitry Orlov, who played for the Caps before coming to Carolina. "It's going to be a lot of battles, a lot of scrums, They'll battle for their lives, for their season.

"We cannot come in and expect it to be easy. It's not going to be easy."

Added Canes forward Taylor Hall: "Obviously, we like where we're at. We have a couple of days here to regroup and it's about going into their building and playing the best we can."

The Caps have to believe they have seen the Canes' best, especially from Andersen in net. The Caps' goals Monday came when Jakob Chychrun pounced on a rebound with an open net and later when Alexander Ovechkin scored a 5-on-3 goal on the power play.

Andersen, who shut out the Caps 4-0 in Game 3, took care of the rest and made some testing saves to keep the Caps stifled.

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Taylor Hall (71) reacts after scoring on Washington Capitals goalie Logan Thompson (48) to take a 4-2 lead in the third period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C

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Hall had given the Canes a 3-1 lead about three minutes after Chychrun's goal in the third period, getting open at the Washington blue line, skating in alone to beat goalie Logan Thompson to the blocker side.

But Hall then had the worst seat in the house — in the penalty box, after a tripping call. Orlov soon joined him as the Caps had a two-man advantage, and Ovechkin unloaded a shot from the left circle for his first goal of the series to make it a 3-2 game.

But the Canes had consistently outworked the Caps 4 on 5, killing off a double-minor high-sticking call late in the first period, drawing a standing ovation. After Ovechkin's goal, they killed off the Orlov penalty and then made it 4-2 when defenseman Sean Walker scored with 3:15 left in regulation – Walker's first goal of the playoffs.

"Walks has really been solid," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I think his game has gone up another level. That goal tonight was an indicator of what he's capable of."

Walker took a pass from Hall along the left boards near the Carolina blue line and carried the puck into the Washington

zone. He cut back through the left circle, slowed up near the slot and beat Thompson.

“That’s something that’s really important, especially at this time of year,” Walker said. “You’ve got to answer when teams are making their push.

“Obviously you don’t want to give up those goals, especially in the third. But I think as a whole we kept our composure, didn’t panic, just stuck to our systems.”

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker (26) scores to take a 4-2 lead over the Washington Capitals in the third period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

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That’s what experienced teams tend to do come playoff time when things get tight and playoff games are to won or lost.

“There’s no panic when things don’t go our way or whatever happened tonight (as) they closed the gap,” Brind’Amour said. “Our older guys have been through this and some of our not-so-old guys have been through this for a few years. So I think there’s a bit of maturity there.”

As one Triangle coach might say, it’s now on to Washington for the Hurricanes.

“We still have things we can get better at,” Hall said. “The series isn’t over until it’s over. An elimination game is always the hardest one to win and they’re probably going to play their best game in the series in Game 5, so we have to be ready.”

That’s why Staal was still working after a win, getting in his pushups. Up, down …

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Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the Hurricanes’ move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O’s coverage of the Canes’ 2006 Stanley Cup run.

Hurricanes rookie Jackson Blake oozes ‘hockey sense.’ What is that, exactly?

By: Luke Decock

Carolina Hurricanes right win Jackson Blake (53) skates with Jaccob Slavin (74) during practice as they prepare for their Stanley Cup series against the Washington Capitals on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes right win Jackson Blake (53) skates with Jaccob Slavin (74) during practice as they prepare for their Stanley Cup series against the Washington Capitals on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. rwillett@newsobserver.com

Raleigh

Jackson Blake is small for an NHL player. His father, Jason, was even smaller for an NHL player and carved out a 12-year career as an undrafted free agent. It’s a difficult league for the undersized, where hulking bodies not only jostle for space but get a benefit of the doubt smaller players do not.

Officially 5-foot-11, 178 pounds in a league where the average player is 25 pounds heavier and 3-4 inches taller, Blake’s physical gifts lie elsewhere — in the hand-eye coordination and quick-twitch strength that allows him to maneuver through tight areas and make deft plays with his stick. Not surprisingly for someone with such exceptional fine motor skills, he’s also a scratch golfer. It’s what small players have to be able to do to thrive in a brutal, punishing league. It’s also not what comes up first when hockey people talk about Blake, as impressed as they may be with his talent.

TOP VIDEOS

What sets Blake apart is that rare combination of vision, anticipation and composure that gets mashed together under the broad and sometimes confusing term “hockey sense.” Scouts and executives love to talk about hockey sense. If nothing else, it’s a catch-all adjective to explain why you just took the general manager’s nephew in the fifth round of the draft in the absence of any other evidence. It’s expansive enough to mean whatever you want it to mean, and specific enough that every NHL player has his own definition in his head.

When it comes to Blake, that manifests in different ways. He wasn’t a big kid whose peers outgrew him as teens; he started out small and stayed that way. Because of that, he’s had to learn to dodge contact and find open space, not only to be able to make plays, but to avoid being clobbered. He grew up around the game, hanging around the locker rooms where his father played, mentored by NHL players, immersed in hockey from the time of his earliest memories. You can’t watch that much hockey and not absorb and internalize some of what you’re seeing.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) listens to coach Rod Brind’Amour as they prepare for their Stanley Cup series against the Washington Capitals on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) listens to coach Rod Brind’Amour as they prepare for their Stanley Cup series against the Washington Capitals on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

But there are a lot of small players with hockey pedigrees who didn’t walk into the NHL straight out of college and end up playing alongside stars like Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov on the top line of one of the eight teams still playing in May. Blake scored 17 goals as a 21-year-old rookie for the Carolina Hurricanes this season and one more in the playoffs so far. That’s a lot for what might otherwise have been his junior year at North Dakota.

“He didn’t play a ton early, but that was by design,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “Just kind of get him up to speed and feeling good. But whatever we threw at

him, he just took it in and said, 'OK, give me more.' And we just kept throwing him more ice time and more responsibilities and kept doing well with it."

It's something about the way Blake's brain works that enables him to make plays others cannot, mesh with elite players and survive in a league where players almost a foot taller are trying to knock him through the end boards. It's not just his superlative physical talent that allows him to overcome his size; it's his superlative hockey sense. He wouldn't succeed without both.

"I've always been the smallest guy," Blake said. "Honestly, I think it's kind of an advantage for me. You kind of grow up already being one of the smaller guys and playing against bigger kids. It helped me avoid hits. I learned that at an early age, so now I have that as a skill."

Hockey sense means specifically different things to different people, but it generally means the same thing to everyone, and there's one unquestioned certainty here: Whatever hockey sense is, Jackson Blake has it.

"He's slithery, I think is a good word, in the corners," Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said of his younger teammates. "He's not the fastest player but he can turn on a dime and take three steps. It's hard to read off of guys like that. He turns at the right time and finds a hole at the right moment.

"That's smarts, just understanding how to create room for himself. He does that well on top of being very skilled and being able to make great passes and seeing open players. It kind of creates a deadly animal there."

Nov 5, 2024; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) celebrates his goal against the Philadelphia Flyers during the first period at Lenovo Center. Mandatory Credit: James Guillory-Imagn Images

Nov 5, 2024; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) celebrates his goal against the Philadelphia Flyers during the first period at Lenovo Center. Mandatory Credit: James Guillory-Imagn Images James Guillory James Guillory-Imagn Images

'The puck seems to follow them'

The purest summation of hockey sense comes from the player who most personified it.

"I skate to where the puck is going to be," Wayne Gretzky famously said, "not where it is."

It's a good line, but every player is trying to do that. What distinguished Gretzky from every other player down the sliding scale of hockey sense was knowing better than anyone where it was going.

Anticipation is the core value of hockey sense, but it's only one aspect of something that encompasses far more than that. Ask 20 hockey people — players, coaches, executives, scouts, agents, broadcasters — and you'll get 20 definitions, but they all draw on a few key attributes that can be mixed into a million combinations, like oil paint on a palette: anticipation, composure, concentration, creativity, positioning, teamwork, vision.

Elite players, the best of the best, the 99th percentile, have elite hockey sense. It's one of the things that makes them elite. But among the other 730 or so NHL players, hockey sense exists on a wide spectrum, typically in equilibrium with size or scoring ability. If you're big or can fire a puck over a goalie's shoulder and under a crossbar, you might not need to see the ice all that well. If you're Blake — or new teammate Logan Stankoven, the league's shortest player at 5-8 — it has to be what sets you apart.

"You see a player that maybe isn't the fastest, isn't the strongest, isn't physically ahead of everyone else, but still seems to beat guys wide with their speed and find holes you might not see unless you're way up top," Staal said. "Really, the puck seems to follow them around. They just understand the game and they know where the puck is going before it gets there and they create something out of nothing at times and find open guys when you don't even quite see it."

In Blake's case, it pairs with his hands and his mentality — "Hypercompetitive," Brind'Amour said — to give him the edge he needs to play in the NHL.

"He feels the game the right way," Svechnikov said.

There's no question about that. The evidence is clear. But what does that actually mean?

Hockey sense and the draft

In the draft process, the Hurricanes are often willing to compromise in areas other teams treasure — size, skating ability — for players who exhibit high skill levels and show evidence of exceptional hockey sense. The theory is that so few draft picks actually make the NHL, especially outside the first round, that it's better to focus on players with a chance to become stars, however small that chance may be.

Evaluating hockey sense is a multifold process, which basically involves watching … everything. It defies simple definition, but like obscenity, you know it when you see it.

But what are you looking for?

"How much time do you have?" asked Darren Yorke, the Hurricanes' associate general manager who oversees amateur scouting.

"You're watching his play with the puck and the decisions he's making in terms of vision and playmaking and space-reading," Yorke continued. "If we're sticking to plays with the puck, is he able to make plays with less time and space? Is he able to create time and space? Navigating tight spaces, is he able to use his body to make plays? What if he can't make a play? What about versus a tight gap or loose gap? On the forecheck, can he read handedness and understand where the puck may go, where the defenseman is or where the defenseman's outs are? Defensively, is he able to read where the play is going in a variety of different chaos situations?"

That's a lot of anecdotal evidence, which raises the question whether a franchise as analytically focused as the Hurricanes, run by a chemistry Ph.D., considers it quantifiable?

"Of course it is," Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsky said. "We basically use 'hockey sense' as a synonym for 'decision making.' You could quantify it by grading every

decision as a positive or negative and reporting a percentage."

Even then, it's a difficult element to isolate in a game that moves as quickly as hockey. For Jack Han, a coaching consultant who worked in the Toronto Maple Leafs organization and publishes the indispensable Hockey Tactics e-book, it's almost better to look at surrogates for hockey sense rather than try to assess it in the abstract, because it isn't useful without at least some NHL-level skills.

"You need to pair it with something else at this level, or multiple other attributes," Han said. "One thing teams very much care about are loose-puck recoveries. Something like loose-puck recoveries, at the NHL level or scouting for junior players, I find it to be very telling because it's a composite attribute or analytic.

"Skating ability, hockey sense, the ability to be strong physically, to anticipate what's happening next — so much goes into that one sort of ability. The players who have it tend to translate their games really well to the next level. They're able to draw from several different areas to create competitive advantage."

In Blake's case, it was harder to discern in his draft year. He split time between Minnesota high school hockey, where he dominated lesser competition and won a state title, and junior hockey, where he wasn't used as often in high-leverage situations among older players. His size is one big reason Blake didn't go until the fourth round, with the 109th pick, but the Hurricanes thought they saw a player who saw the game equally well at each level. If his hockey sense continued to translate at North Dakota, it might into the NHL, as well.

It continued to translate. His freshman year in Grand Forks, he scored 16 goals in 39 games. His sophomore year, he was fourth in the country in scoring and a finalist for the Hobey Baker Award, the hockey Heisman. ("And we thought he should have won," Yorke said.) His junior year, he was gone, a professional, criss-crossing the continent with the Hurricanes and making $925,000 to do it.

"Every summer you see kids come in as freshmen who are highly skilled and you're like, 'Wow, these guys are really good,'" said Charlotte Checkers forward Riese Gaber, North Dakota's senior captain during Blake's sophomore year. "A lot of the time, that's just summer skate stuff. You never know what a player is going to be like in games, once he gets some real action. Blaker did everything he did in the summer. He wasn't afraid. He didn't shy away from it in games."

Apr 27, 2025; Newark, New Jersey, USA; New Jersey Devils defenseman Jonas Siegenthaler (71) hits Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) during the first period in game four of the first round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Prudential Center. Mandatory Credit: Ed Mulholland-Imagn Images

Apr 27, 2025; Newark, New Jersey, USA; New Jersey Devils defenseman Jonas Siegenthaler (71) hits Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) during the first period in game four of the first round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Prudential Center. Mandatory Credit: Ed Mulholland-Imagn Images Ed Mulholland Ed Mulholland-Imagn Images

A father's lessons

Blake grew up around the game, especially when his father Jason was finishing up his career with the Anaheim Ducks. Ducks forward Bobby Ryan, then 23, particularly bonded with 8-year-old Jackson, not unlike young Seth Jarvis playing with Brent Burns' kids at the defenseman's house. His father was undrafted out of North Dakota and made the most of every chance, a five-time 20-goal scorer who was always one of the smallest players on the ice, but found a way to play in the NHL until he was 38.

"When I played, I was a little rat. I can admit that now," Jason Blake said. "But I was so competitive and I think that wore off on him, because I demanded so much from him. I knew that he had hands. I knew that he could skate. I just wanted to sharpen everything else up and make it perfect."

Father and son would spend hours on the Sport Court in the backyard working on hockey skills. And every conversation, after every hockey game, started the same way: How do you think you played? But they also watched a lot of hockey together. A lot of hockey.

"He's gifted, but we watched a lot of videos," Jason Blake said. "We watched a lot of hockey every night, and any play that happened, we'd talk: 'See what they're thinking? You always have to be two steps ahead of somebody else.' That's impossible in this league, because you're playing the best of the best. But this is at like 12, 13. So we'd go on the Sport Court and try to emulate someone else. He worked hard."

Jackson Blake's size was the subtext to all of that. He wasn't the kind of player who started out the same size as his peers and watched other players shoot past him; he started small and stayed small. But like his father, he found ways to thrive regardless.

Always the smallest guy

Blake watched bigger players score more, catching the eye of scouts and college recruiters. Even as a pre-teen, he knew he'd have to find a different route to college, let alone the NHL. There was nothing he could do about the attention the bigger kids got. It was frustrating, but it was a reality he could not escape. Not then. Not in the draft. Even now.

"Growing up, being the smallest guy, there were kids in Peewees (age 11-12) scoring 100 goals, man-childs, and everyone's like 'These guys are so good!'" Blake said. "When you grow up, people start to catch up with their weight and their height. I was always a smaller guy. But now, there are some huge guys, like (6-5 Nikita) Zadorov on the (Boston) Bruins. That's definitely an advantage, being that tall, but I don't look at it as a negative thing. I think it's good that smaller guys have to prove themselves.

"I wouldn't want it any other way, honestly. Same thing with my dad. He wasn't drafted at 5-8, 5-9, whatever. It might say 5-10 but he's not actually. He was the definition of just grinding to get to the league. I wouldn't say I had it as hard as him, but I had to prove myself. Everyone does. But especially for me."

The Hurricanes had been aware of Blake for years, through an unexpected local connection. Colin Muldoon, a longtime Triangle hockey coach, grew up playing with Jason Blake in Minnesota and, later, coached Brind'Amour's son Skyler

here. Muldoon was always a believer in Jackson Blake, even as a 10-year-old.

“He was even smaller back then,” Brind’Amour said, but the coach still had an idea of what to expect when the Hurricanes signed him and brought him in last April.

Blake made his NHL debut in the 82nd and final game of last season, then hung around the team throughout the playoffs along with another prospect, 2023 first-round pick Bradly Nadeau. No one expected Blake to make the team this fall. More likely he’d spend the season in the AHL like Nadeau, who made the all-rookie team there.

As Brind’Amour introduced Blake to the team’s defensive system in training camp, one he had never played before, Blake grasped the concepts intuitively. He got his first opportunity on a defense-first checking line and thrived. Whatever the Hurricanes threw at him, he mastered. By the end of the season, he had played himself onto the top line with Aho and either Jarvis or Svechnikov.

“You may have watched him at North Dakota and questioned his defensive play, but it was so easy and intuitive to put him in an NHL system he’s never played before,” Yorke said. “It’s like ‘Good Will Hunting,’ when Matt Damon is talking about solving math problems and talks about the great composers sitting at a piano. They don’t see notes. They just get it.

“Jackson is like that when it comes to hockey. He just gets it. He was asked to play a role at the very beginning of the year that he’d never done before. He didn’t just do it. He excelled at it.”

Oct 28, 2024; Vancouver, British Columbia, CAN; Carolina Hurricanes forward Jackson Blake (53) checks Vancouver Canucks defenseman Erik Brannstrom (26) during the third period at Rogers Arena. Mandatory Credit: Bob Frid-Imagn Images

Oct 28, 2024; Vancouver, British Columbia, CAN; Carolina Hurricanes forward Jackson Blake (53) checks Vancouver Canucks defenseman Erik Brannstrom (26) during the third period at Rogers Arena. Mandatory Credit: Bob Frid-Imagn Images Bob Frid Bob Frid-Imagn Images

Thinking the game

Hockey, like any sport, will make any number of apologies for the truly talented and the exceptional physical specimens. (In the NFL, former New York Giants general manager George Young had his “Planet Theory:” There are only a certain number of people on the planet big enough and quick enough to play on the line of scrimmage, so you better draft them when you have the chance.) A player who’s 6-5 and 250 pounds and hits like a dump truck going down hill with the hockey sense of a fire hydrant will find a place in the NHL.

“It’s not just size,” said Jim Rutherford, the former Hurricanes general manager and current Vancouver Canucks president. “Energy players — those guys that give it the extra, the hard-working guys, that also get away without it but contribute to winning teams. It may be a guy that’s just a pure goal-scorer. He’s just got to get himself in a position and somebody gets him the puck. There’s lots of guys that play with average or below-average hockey sense and are good contributors to the game. But the guys with real good hockey sense find the game a little easier to play.”

Most sports have a version of this kind of specific nous, but none is as essential to performance as it is in hockey. Basketball scouts love to talk about “basketball IQ,” but it tends to apply more to certain positions than others. The same is true in football, where the closest comparison may be evaluating quarterbacks’ processing ability, since it’s almost impossible to discern whether their decision-making will translate from the slower tempo of college football to the NFL. Soccer also asks players to assume multiple roles, but only hockey does at full speed, in tight quarters, at risk of dismemberment, at all times.

“Hockey is such a composite,” Han said. “You’re doing a bunch of different things and using several skill sets at the same time: Skating plus agility plus toughness, shooting on the backhand or shooting on a screen. Nothing is being done in isolation. And then there’s how fast the game is and how fast the pressure comes.

“If you have amazing hockey sense but zero ability to create separation with skating, or your passing is not accurate, or can’t shoot the puck, or you’re afraid to get hit and get hurt, it’s not going to show. Maybe you’re not dumb, you’re scared. Maybe you’re not dumb, you’re gassed.’

In a 30-year career as an NHL executive, Rutherford said one player stands out above all the others when it comes to hockey sense: Ron Francis. The former Hurricanes general manager was the linchpin of the team’s early days in North Carolina, the free-agent signing who gave the franchise a sheen of legitimacy when it needed it most.

‘Ronnie Franchise’

Francis was a tremendously skilled playmaker, with hands that could make the puck dance. The Hurricanes used to host a fiercely competitive media ball hockey game before training camp, and one day during his tenure as GM, Francis stepped onto the floor in dress slacks and loafers and, without moving his feet, whizzed passes onto the sticks of players — who, in most cases, weren’t expecting them — for tap-in goals.

That’s how Francis played. In 2001, when Jeff O’Neill scored a career-high 41 goals, Francis had the primary assist on 13 of them. His passing ability prolonged his career into his 40s despite the fact Francis was never the best skater on any team he was on. He played on skate blades that had almost no edge to them; he needed to be able to glide more than he needed to stop and start, in part because he had the innate ability to know where he needed to go before anyone else saw that he needed to go there.

As elite as Francis’ hands were, his hockey sense went even a level beyond.

“It’s that anticipating what’s going on in the game, reading the plays,” Rutherford said. “He was a step ahead of other players in thinking the game. And then of course, whatever’s going on in the game, being able to make a quick correction in how the game is played.”

Carolina Hurricanes (10) Ron Francis turns to celebrate his game winning goal in overtime on Detroit goalie (39) Dominik Hasek to give the Hurricanes a 3-2 victory on May 4, 2002 in the first game of the Stanley Cup Championship series at Joe Louis Arena. Robert Willett 2002 NEWS & OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Carolina Hurricanes (10) Ron Francis turns to celebrate his game winning goal in overtime on Detroit goalie (39) Dominik Hasek to give the Hurricanes a 3-2 victory on May 4, 2002 in the first game of the Stanley Cup Championship series at Joe Louis Arena. Robert Willett 2002 NEWS & OBSERVER FILE PHOTO Robert Willett 2002 NEWS & OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Francis became a first-ballot Hall of Famer because hockey sense is not merely what keeps smaller or slower players in the game. It's what turns good players into great ones, and great ones into legends. If you can put Blake's hockey sense in a bigger, stronger or even more skilled player, you end up with a Gretzky or Bobby Orr or Sidney Crosby.

"Those are those elite guys," Staal said.

Over the years, especially in amateur scouting, hockey sense has become a more important element of evaluation. The Hurricanes aren't the only team focusing on it, even if they may prioritize it. Columbus Blue Jackets general manager Don Waddell, the Hurricanes' general manager from 2018-24, said his sense of hockey sense has evolved over the years, and so has the emphasis placed upon it.

"On our scouting reports, it's the No. 1 thing," Waddell said. "It used to be skating was No. 1, then stickhandling, handling the puck. Now hockey sense is the first thing, the first box that you check off. It's something we always talked about but probably didn't emphasize enough, but the game's changed. It used to be size — how big is this guy? Now size has been proven by lots of players that it's just a number. It's how they use that size."

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53), center Logan Stankoven (22), and center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) during practice as they prepare for their Stanley Cup series against the Washington Capitals on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53), center Logan Stankoven (22), and center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) during practice as they prepare for their Stanley Cup series against the Washington Capitals on Friday, May 2, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

360-degree vision

November 11, 2023. Duluth, Minn. North Dakota leads Minnesota-Duluth, 1-0, early in the second period. Gaber chips the puck ahead to Blake in front of the benches, and Blake carries the puck across the blue line into the offensive zone on the right side. Three defenders surround him, one directly in front of him, two just behind on either side. Gaber is coming down the right wing behind him, skating to catch up.

As he reaches the right faceoff circle, Blake, a right shot, cuts inside on his forehand. The defender can't pivot quickly enough to cut off his route, but stays close enough to deny him any room. The move allows the two trailing defenders to close the gap, and as Blake pushes off his right skate to move to the center of the ice, between the circles, the three Duluth players all move toward him.

Just as the space is collapsing, Blake makes a blind backward pass behind him and to his right, on his backhand, between two of the closing defenders to Gaber, who is cruising past the right faceoff dot with speed. The pass is right on Gaber's tape. All he has to do is shoot. Unobstructed, Gaber rips a forehand shot past the goalie, who's desperately lunging across the crease.

"I was just kind of following the play, hoping for some loose change, seeing what Blaker does with it," Gaber said, describing a play he can recreate from memory 18 months later. "It honestly surprised me. I almost wasn't ready for it. Luckily I was."

It's easier to make plays like that in college hockey than in the NHL, where defenders have longer wingspans, nimbler feet and aren't often caught watching the puck like that, but the pass itself is equally stunning in both its execution — a perfectly placed, no-look pass in traffic — and its audacity, to a teammate Blake had no earthly way of knowing was there.

Could he pick up Gaber on the edge of his peripheral vision? Was that a slight turn of head to scan, almost imperceptible on the YouTube highlight? Was it just knowing where Gaber would be if he went where he was supposed to be?

Or was it all of that, because that's just how his brain is wired?

"He sees everything," Yorke said.

Nature vs. nurture

One of the all-time great experiments in hockey sense played out on a sod farm in northern Ontario. If it's hard to define hockey sense, it's equally hard to figure out where it actually comes from. Nature and nurture, to be sure, but a little of both — and sometimes neither.

Staal is a two-time finalist for the Selke Trophy, which goes to the NHL's best defensive forward. In his case, size helps. He's a hulking 6-4 and a stoutly muscled 220-plus pounds, at age 36. Even as his quickness wanes, his wingspan covers an extraordinary amount of ice, and he long ago learned how to use his strength to lean on the opposition's best players, a duty he draws almost without exception. Just as Brind'Amour was one of the great defensive forwards of his generation in his playing career, Staal is his ultimate safety net as a coach, a player he can put out in any situation, to win any faceoff, secure he'll do the right thing.

What makes Staal a great defensive player is not just his physical gifts; it's a sense of defensive expectation that enables him to sense where an opposing player is going even when that player is a swifter skater than Staal, and most are these days. That's hockey sense, in a sense, and Staal can pinpoint where it comes from.

The early days of the four Staal brothers are hockey legend at this point, battles fought day after day, night after night, on the outdoor rink their father built out of plywood and chicken wire on the family's Thunder Bay sod farm. Jordan was the third in a span of four years and the physically strongest, if perhaps not quite as offensively gifted as Eric, the oldest, who the Hurricanes took with the third pick of the 2003 draft and ended up leading the NHL playoffs in scoring as they won the Stanley Cup three years later.

Jordan Staal spent his entire childhood trying to get the puck from Eric, chasing him around the rink along with second brother Marc, a future first-round draft pick and NHL defenseman. None of them needed any time in the minor

leagues; they were all NHL-ready at 18 or 19. Eric was, at his best, an offensive dynamo, fast and nimble for his size with a knack for clutch goals, while both Jordan and Marc built their careers on their defensive prowess.

“He was four years older than I was, and I didn’t have the puck,” Jordan Staal said. “I was constantly reading him, trying to get it off of him. I would 100 percent attribute a lot of how I can angle and read and understand how to get the puck back to that.”

The three oldest brothers all had long NHL careers, playing into their late 30s, a total of 3,829 NHL regular-season and 288 playoff games (and counting, in Jordan’s case), winning three Stanley Cups. But Jared, the youngest, was just as big and had all the same experiences his entire life and played all of two NHL games after being picked in the second round.

They all drew from the same gene pool and had similar experiences growing up, and it was enough for three of the four siblings to make hundreds of millions of dollars playing hockey in the NHL, but not the fourth, and the three who did make it each carved out completely different roles for themselves: the offensive superstar, the two-way workhorse, the defensive stopper.

“Sometimes I’d look up and I’d see my younger brother waiting for a pass and in that brief second, I’d just have to pinch myself,” Eric Staal wrote in The Players’ Tribune, a personal thank-you note to the Carolina Hurricanes organization and Hurricanes fans. Here, Eric Staal (12) confers with his brother Jordan Staal (11) during a game with the New York Islanders at PNC Arena in Raleigh on Feb. 17, 2015.

“Sometimes I’d look up and I’d see my younger brother waiting for a pass and in that brief second, I’d just have to pinch myself,” Eric Staal wrote in The Players’ Tribune, a personal thank-you note to the Carolina Hurricanes organization and Hurricanes fans. Here, Eric Staal (12) confers with his brother Jordan Staal (11) during a game with the New York Islanders at PNC Arena in Raleigh on Feb. 17, 2015. Chris Seward News & Observer File Photo

“They all played the game different, but I think it’s fair to say in that group, hockey sense helped their careers a lot,” said Rutherford, who drafted Eric Staal as Hurricanes GM in 2003 and traded for Jordan in 2012. “They just played different roles.”

The little-brother scenario is not an uncommon one. When the Hurricanes drafted Aho in 2015, he slipped to the second round because of concerns about his size, but the Hurricanes always liked his skill and hockey sense. He also grew up around the game — his father is now the general manager of Finnish club Karpat Oulu — but he didn’t just play hockey. In every sport, he was always looking up at his brother.

“I was always the smaller guy,” Aho said. “I kind of had to find different ways to beat him. It wasn’t size or strength. I got my ass kicked all the time.”

Aho paused, then tapped his head.

“I had to do it up here.”

‘He just gets it’

But it’s facile to assume that older siblings or NHL-playing parents bequeath hockey sense as a rule. There are plenty of examples of players who emerge from such environments unable to see the game at that level, and just as many others who appear to be gifted with hockey sense as if touched by the finger of a god for no apparent reason.

“I think you can make a lot of mistakes if you do it that way,” Yorke said. “That’s a bias. Just because the brother played in the NHL or the father did, that’s an inherent bias that can get you in trouble and lead to mistakes. Obviously Jackson has a dad who was a hell of a hockey player and he grew up around hockey, but that’s not necessarily the reason he’s so smart. Give him some credit for everything he’s accomplished on his own.”

Apr 27, 2025; Newark, New Jersey, USA; Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) skates with the puck as New Jersey Devils defenseman Brian Dumoulin (2) defends during the first period in game four of the first round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Prudential Center. Mandatory Credit: Ed Mulholland-Imagn Images

Apr 27, 2025; Newark, New Jersey, USA; Carolina Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake (53) skates with the puck as New Jersey Devils defenseman Brian Dumoulin (2) defends during the first period in game four of the first round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Prudential Center. Mandatory Credit: Ed Mulholland-Imagn Images Ed Mulholland Ed Mulholland-Imagn Images

Which raises the inevitable next question: Genes and siblings aside, can hockey sense be taught? Some of it is unquestionably innate, but some skills coaches who believe there are techniques a player can work on to improve his or her hockey sense throughout a career. Often, after a player makes a play no one saw coming, a review of the video will reveal a slight turn of the head a moment or two earlier.

This is “scanning,” the ability to look away from the play for a split-second to survey the entirety of the ice, and it’s a skill that can be taught and practiced like any other. “Shoulder-checking” is what fighter pilots call “checking 6,” a glance over the shoulder at what’s happening behind you. Gaber talks about “pre-puck awareness” as well, consciously envisioning where players will be on the ice, so you know what you’re going to do before you even have the puck on your stick.

Just because Gretzky was born with a perfect grasp of it doesn’t mean the rest of humanity can’t try to get better.

“In the summer, there are lots of different things you can do,” Gaber said. “Shoulder-checking. Pre-puck awareness. Scanning the ice constantly. Scanning is something Blaker does really well. He knows where guys are and extends plays. It’s something that makes his hockey sense what it is.”

But there are diminishing returns, and a pro-caliber player may be able to improve his hockey sense, but it’s also not something that can be conjured from nothing.

“We can teach a lot of things in our sport,” Waddell said. “We can make a player a better skater. We can work on his shot. You can’t teach hockey sense. Either you have it or not. Everybody that plays the game has some hockey sense. But some players have more than others.”

In Blake's case, there were so many factors that combined to make him the player he is. His size. His father. His mother, a star athlete in her own right. Growing up around the NHL. Even hockey video games — "You can be creative on that, and learn new stuff," Blake said. But there's also just the mere coincidence of human life, that some people have a genius within them that others do not, even if it's a matter of degrees.

NHL players are the best on earth at what they do, at this particular combination of physical and mental skills, athleticism and intelligence. Even by that standard, Blake stands out.

"It just makes sense," Yorke said. "He just plays. He just gets it."

In the end, no one knows why Blake's hockey sense is exceptional, why he developed an ability to think and see the game that allows him to play a brute-force game without brute force. Only that he wouldn't be here, now, without it.

Hurricanes take Capitals' best shot, then take 3-1 NHL playoff series lead

By: Justin Pelletier

Carolina Hurricanes center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) reacts after a goal by teammate Shaye Gostisbehere (04) in the first period, to take a 1-0 lead against the Washington Capitals during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) reacts after a goal by teammate Shaye Gostisbehere (04) in the first period, to take a 1-0 lead against the Washington Capitals during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Raleigh

In a Hurricanes-Capitals series that's delivered a handful of double-take moments, perhaps the biggest so far came in Carolina's 5-2 win over Washington in Game 4 at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Early in the second period, with Carolina nursing a newly acquired two-goal lead, Washington entered the Canes' zone with numbers. Tom Wilson spun across the blue line, located Alexander Ovechkin at the top of the left circle, and slid the puck to the NHL's all-time regular-season goal-scoring leader.

Ovechkin then … passed?

The Great 8, from as close to his "office" as he'd been all game to that point, didn't pull the trigger, electing instead to move the puck across to Dylan Strome in the right circle. Strome one-timed the puck at the cage, and Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen made the best of his 19 saves to keep the Caps at bay.

There was still plenty of hockey remaining, of course, but no moment encapsulated the Capitals' general mood in the series quite like that one.

Indecisive. Frustrated.

The Hurricanes have a way of doing that to good teams — great teams, like these Capitals. Carolina's done it so well it's pushed Eastern Conference champion Washington to the brink of elimination, snagging a 3-1 series lead behind two dominant home games and an overtime victory back in Game 1 in Washington, D.C.

Andersen, who leads the NHL in all of the major goaltending categories, was stellar again Monday, turning back 19 of 21 shots to earn his sixth win of these 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs. (Pyotr Kochetkov had the win to close out New Jersey in Round 1.)

And for all of those adjectives that described the Capitals' comportment, the opposites were generally true for Carolina.

Decisive. Confident.

Goals from Shayne Gostisbehere in the first period, Seth Jarvis in the second and Taylor Hall in the third were enough on that end of the ice, and the Canes played within themselves — and coach Rod Brind'Amour's much talked-about system — limiting Washington's chances, creating offensive bursts, and allowing Andersen to be comfortable in his crease.

All of that now gives Carolina a chance to close out a second consecutive playoff series in five games. The difference: Game 5 this time around will be in hostile territory.

Carolina Hurricanes center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) checks Washington Capitals right wing Brandon Duhaime (22) in the first period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes center Jesperi Kotkaniemi (82) checks Washington Capitals right wing Brandon Duhaime (22) in the first period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

First period, and a goal?

In a departure from the first three games of the series, a team finally scored in the first period.

After another early flurry from the Capitals, during which Andersen made a handful of stops through traffic, the Canes pushed back. After the Hurricanes' fourth unit of Eric Robinson, Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Jackson Blake hemmed the Caps in their own zone for a spell, the puck found its way out to the center point and Gostisbehere, who ducked and danced his way across the line in a series of moves that left Washington forward Brandon Duhaime looking for a piece of equipment or two.

Gostishebere curled to the top of the left circle and fired a wrister through traffic in front of Logan Thompson, the puck sailing past the screened keeper for a 1-0 lead.

The Caps had the benefit of a pair of power plays in the latter half of the period, the first on a roughing call to Sean Walker and the second a four-minute double minor to Jordan Martinook, who caught defender Jakob Chychrun up high with his stick.

The latter of those bled into the second period, but the Caps did no damage. The Canes, in fact, had more high-danger scoring chances shorthanded than the Capitals did with the extra skater.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (31) deflects a shot by Washington Capitals right wing Brand Duhaime (22) in the second period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (31) deflects a shot by Washington Capitals right wing Brand Duhaime (22) in the second period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Staying engaged

After a flurry of activity that got Andersen engaged early — including a pair of shots that fluttered off his glove and into the corner, shots he would normally snag and hold — the Danish netminder saw little action the rest of the opening period.

But he still had to be sharp, particularly early in the second. On a broken zone entry that saw Wilson finally get the puck to Ovechkin, the NHL's all-time leading goal scorer passed, hitting Strome on the back door to Andersen's left, where he one-timed what he thought was an easy goal toward the cage. Anderson slid hard from right to left, though, and was there in time to square up and knock the shot down with the center of his body and stick paddle.

The Canes doubled their lead early in the second, after the penalty kill time was over, when Seth Jarvis cleaned up an off-the-post rebound in front of Thompson on a blistering shot from Sebastian Aho.

Afterward, the Capitals opened things up a bit, and Andersen saw a bit more action. In addition to the Strome chance, Washington penned Carolina in for a good chunk of time through the middle part of the period. At one point, Jalen Chatfield was on the ice for more than two minutes straight, unable to change with the pressure combined with the long change teams face in the second.

Carolina Hurricanes center Seth Jarvis (24) scores on Washington Capitals goalie Logan Thompson (48) to take a 2-0 lead in the second period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes center Seth Jarvis (24) scores on Washington Capitals goalie Logan Thompson (48) to take a 2-0 lead in the second period during Game 4 of their series on Monday, May 12, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Stretching the lead

After the Capitals broke through with a goal at 5:18 of the third and set the Canes back on their heels a bit, Carolina re-established its two-goal lead thanks to perhaps the longest pass of the night from any player on either team.

Hall got caught up the ice after getting spilled in the corner, leaving the Canes to defend 4-on-5. But they did so, with Sean Walker slinging the puck up the boards to Jack Roslovic. Hall, just then exiting the Caps' zone at the other end of the ice, banged his stick and caught Roslovic's attention. Roslovic fired a 100-foot pass to Hall, who went in alone and scored on Thompson low blocker, pushing Carolina's lead to 3-1.

It was a needed cushion, too. Minutes later, the Capitals fed off a pair of penalties to the Hurricanes and got Ovechkin a much-needed goal — from his office at the left circle on a 5-on-3 power play — to again pull within one at 3-2.

Walker finished off his own rush with the Caps pressing at 16:45, though, to again push the Canes' lead back to two at 4-2. Andrei Svechnikov struck the final nail with an empty-net goal at 17:39.

Alexander Nikishin tease

Sharp-eyed attendees at Game 4 on Monday caught a glimpse of Carolina Hurricanes defender Alexander Nikishin on the ice for warmups. Two days after Chatfield played minimally in Game 3, the Hurricanes deemed him ready to go at morning skate.

But Nikishin, whose arrival in Raleigh has been the subject of much discussion — and debate, with respect to lineup changes — was on the ice for team warmups Monday night ahead of Game 4, fully dressed in his No. 21 jersey and skating alongside the rest of the game-ready Canes.

He did not draw into the lineup.

Capitals felt 'urgency'

With a win on the road in Game 1, the Hurricanes snagged home-ice advantage back from the Capitals, who finished the regular season with the best record in the Eastern Conference. The Capitals righted their ship with a win in Game 2, but the Hurricanes clamped down in Game 3, posting a shutout to take a 2-1 series lead.

Washington knew Game 4 was as much of a must-win as a game can be without truly being an elimination game.

Wilson, 31, stayed out late after morning skate Monday, continuing to work after several players had headed to the locker room ahead of him.

He was in no hurry to leave afterward, either, taking a seat in the room to patiently answer media questions.

"At this point there's urgency with our group, which there needs to be," Wilson said of Game 4. "We need to be dialed in. We know it's going to be a fight for every inch.

"It's another opportunity to go out and leave it all out there, and I think as a group we're ready for that. When you have a group like this and you look each other in the eye, you expect to have a bounce back. It's the recipe you want in your locker room, an accountability and dependability for the guy next to you to show up."

Game 5, then, now truly a must-win, should only amplify that feeling in the Capitals' locker room.

This story was originally published May 12, 2025 at 6:12 PM.

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the Hurricanes' move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O's coverage of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup run.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

Hurricanes hold Capitals' Tom Wilson in check, to delight of Raleigh faithful

By: Chip Alexander

May 10, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) comes off the ice after the warmups before the game against the Carolina Hurricanes in game three of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. Mandatory Credit: James Guillory-Imagn Images

May 10, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) comes off the ice after the warmups before the game against the Carolina Hurricanes in game three of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. Mandatory Credit: James Guillory-Imagn Images James Guillory James Guillory-Imagn Images

Raleigh

Raleigh's Rialto Theater at Five Points had an interesting sign on its marquee the past few days:

"All are welcome except Tom Wilson."

That would be Tom Wilson of the Washington Capitals. That would be the big forward wearing No. 43 who at times can beat you with a hard-working goal or become a heat-seeking missile on the ice who's ready and willing to lay somebody out.

TOP VIDEOS

"He can smoke you," Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Dmitry Orlov said Monday.

Whenever there is antagonism or angry faces or a scuffle on the ice, Wilson always seems to be involved. At 6-foot-4 and 220 pounds, he's hard to miss, and the Caps feed off his energy and a defiant demeanor that some opponents — and opposing fans — would call nasty and the Caps call motivational.

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Jordan Martinook (48) skates away from Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) after checking him to the ice in the second during Game 3 of their series on Saturday, May 10, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Jordan Martinook (48) skates away from Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) after checking him to the ice in the second during Game 3 of their series on Saturday, May 10, 2025 at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

He's the player everyone seems to love to hate, unless you're playing with him.

There were boos Monday at Lenovo Center in the second period of Game 4 when Wilson, during a scrum, pawed Canes captain Jordan Staal in the face. But mostly there were cheers from the home crowd as the Canes took a 5-2 win for a 3-1 win in the second-round series.

Wilson was playing on Dylan Storme's line with Alexander Ovechkin, a change made to load up the top line and find some offense. Ovechkin had 44 goals in the regular season and Wilson a career-high 33. while Strome had 29 goals led the Caps with 83 points.

Oveckin scored a 5-on-3 goal in the third period, but the Caps will need a lot more from Wilson and the Strome line as Canes goalie Frederik Andersen continues to be sharp and the Canes' pressure game is suffocating.

May 8, 2025; Washington, District of Columbia, USA; Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) celebrates with Capitals center Nic Dowd (26) after scoring an empty net goal against the Carolina Hurricanes in the third period in game two of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Capital One Arena. Mandatory Credit: Geoff Burke-Imagn Images

May 8, 2025; Washington, District of Columbia, USA; Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) celebrates with Capitals center Nic Dowd (26) after scoring an empty net goal against the Carolina Hurricanes in the third period in game two of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Capital One Arena. Mandatory Credit: Geoff Burke-Imagn Images Geoff Burke Geoff Burke-Imagn Images

"He's the engine who drives our team," Strome said of Wilson. "When he's going well, I think our whole team is going well.

"He can score, hit and make plays and he plays every situation whether we're up a goal or down a goal late in the game. Power play, penalty kill, he's out there. That's why we follow him."

Wilson led the Caps this season with 233 hits, which surprises no one. He had 11 hits against the Canes in Game 3 of the series.

"I think maybe the casual fan might think he does more hitting than anything else," Strome said. "Obviously his stats this year would lead you to believe that's not the case.

"I think he can do it all. I think when it requires a more physical game, he's going to be right there. In the games we won 6-5 or 5-4, he's right there with a two- or three-point night. That's why he's a great guy to have on your team."

Ovechkin is the Caps' superstar and enjoys superstar status at each spot in the NHL, befitting for the man who has broken Wayne Gretzky's career goal-scoring record. He's the captain of the team, and at 39 has the kind of veteran status that allows him to skate off the ice six minutes into the morning skate, as he did Monday.

Wilson, 31, stayed out, continuing to work after several players headed to the locker room ahead of him.

May 8, 2025; Washington, District of Columbia, USA; Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) c checks Carolina Hurricanes left wing Jordan Martinook (48) in the first period in game two of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Capital One Arena. Mandatory Credit: Geoff Burke-Imagn Images

May 8, 2025; Washington, District of Columbia, USA; Washington Capitals right wing Tom Wilson (43) c checks Carolina Hurricanes left wing Jordan Martinook (48) in the first period in game two of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Capital One Arena. Mandatory

Credit: Geoff Burke-Imagn Images Geoff Burke Geoff Burke-Imagn Images

Nor was he in a hurry to leave, taking a seat in the room to patiently answer media questions.

“When you have a group like this and you look each other in the eye, you expect to have a bounce back. It’s the recipe you want in your locker room, an accountability and dependability for the guy next to you to show up,” he said.

Wilson won a Stanley Cup with the Caps in 2018. The playoff game Monday was the 96th of his career, giving him the experience needed to weather the good and the bad that comes with the playoffs.

Wilson credits such former teammates as Justin Williams as helping him develop that proper mentality and head space. Williams played for the Caps for two seasons before leaving after the 2017-18 season and returning to the Hurricanes, where he became the team captain.

Williams won three Stanley Cups, the first with the Canes in 2006 and later twice with the L.A. Kings, and was the Conn Smythe Trophy winner as the playoff MVP in 2014 with the Kings.

“He could tell a story like, ‘Hey, we were down a couple of games’ and all the different scenarios that can show you how anything can happen,” Wilson said. “He’s one of those guys who was such a great teammate and great for hockey. He had so much composure under pressure and was such a great leader.

“We didn’t win (the Cup) together, but we won right after he left and I think a lot of the qualities and the lessons from him in how to carry ourselves were still in our locker room. He helped change the culture for the better. I still depend on what he taught me.”

The Canes’ Orlov also was on the Cup-winning team in 2018. He spent a decade as Wilson’s teammate in Washington before being traded and later signing with the Canes.

Orlov said Monday before Game 4 that Wilson could be the next to wear the “C” for the Caps as captain.

“He’s grown so much since I saw him young, and we played all those years together,” Orlov said. “He’s playing hard and has become a special player for that organization. When you played with and against a player for so many years, you know what they bring to the table.”

Wilson brings a lot, earning respect from some of his peers, disdain from some and a marquee message from others.

And about that message at the Rialto ...

“The Rialto marquee often aims to serve as the city’s collective conscience, and right now we think most Raleighites agree: we don’t like that guy,” Rialto owner Hayes Permar said Monday. “We would, however, reconsider our stance if he’s willing to participate in the Underwear Run at Friday’s screening of The Rocky Horror Picture Show, that is if the series goes to six games.”

Raleigh’s Rialto Theater had a message for bruising Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson during the Stanley Cup playoff series against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Raleigh’s Rialto Theater had a message for bruising Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson during the Stanley Cup playoff series against the Carolina Hurricanes. Courtesy of Hayes Permar Hayes Permar

Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the Hurricanes’ move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O’s coverage of the Canes’ 2006 Stanley Cup run.

Burns-Ovechkin battle in Hurricanes-Capitals series an old-time physical duel

By: Chip Alexander

May 10, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Brent Burns (8) checks Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) during the second period in game three of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. Mandatory Credit: James Guillory-Imagn Images

May 10, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Brent Burns (8) checks Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) during the second period in game three of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. Mandatory Credit: James Guillory-Imagn Images James Guillory James Guillory-Imagn Images

Raleigh

Jaccob Slavin broke into a smile Sunday when the “game within the game” was mentioned: Brent Burns vs. Alexander Ovechkin.

Burns is 40 years old and Ovechkin 39, but there they were on the ice Saturday, the two veterans jostling for position, looking to hit, accepting hits, each trying to get an edge. The Carolina Hurricanes took a 4-0 victory over the Washington Capitals for a 2-1 lead in their Stanley Cup playoff series, but the Burns-Ovechkin confrontation was a highlight.

TOP VIDEOS

“It’s a battle,” Slavin said. “I’m typically on the ice (with Burns) and don’t see too much of it, but you hear the crowd kind of love it.”

Slavin and Burns have often been the Canes’ defensive pair sent out when the Caps’ Ovechkin takes his shifts. Now the NHL’s career goal-scoring leader, Ovechkin remains a game-changer and potential game-breaker — he scored 44 goals in the regular season and four in the Caps’ five-game series win over the Montreal Canadiens to start the playoffs.

Ovechkin has had eight shots in the three games against Carolina and four came Saturday in Game 3. He had three in the opening period, only to be denied each time by goalie Frederik Andersen, who was sharp for all 60 minutes in earning his fourth career playoff shutout.

Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Ovechkin also was bounced around a bit by Burns.

Consider that Ovechkin is 6-foot-3 and about 240 pounds, and Burns 6-5 and 230. They're two big men and when they collide, it has an impact.

Burns initiated a lot of contact Saturday with Ovechkin, especially along the boards, more than enough to keep the partisan crowd engaged and loud and enjoying it.

"With both of those guys it's incredible that they can still play the game at such a high pace and be as effective as they are," Slavin said.

The two should see more of each other Monday in Game 4 at Lenovo Center. Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour, able to make the last change at home, can slip the Burns-Slavin defensive tandem onto the ice against Ovechkin's line.

"It's not just the D corps," Slavin said. "I think it's the forward group, as well, back-pressuring really hard. I think it's just time and space. I know it's a cliche to say, but with a guy of that caliber and the shot that he has, you have to take it away.

"You always have to be aware when he's on the ice. With any top player in the league you have to be aware of it or you'll get caught staring and watching. When someone like that is on the ice, he has the potential to score from anywhere. He's lethal and you have to be aware of it."

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The Canes got a boost Saturday from its power play, with Jack Roslovic and Jackson Blake picking up goals. Andrei Svechnikov scored the game's first goal and Eric Robinson snipe early in the third period made it a 3-0 game.

One trend that has been constant the first three games has been scoreless first periods. Neither team has been able to jump out to an early lead and make the other team chase.

Just 30 seconds into Game 3, Caps forward Tom Wilson carried the puck in from the right wing, forcing goalie Frederik Andersen into a tough save.

Had Wilson scored, the complexion of the game could have changed. Could have, but didn't.

The Caps had eight high-danger scoring chances to the Canes' two in the opening period Saturday, according to naturalstattrick.com, a hockey analytics site.

"For us, it's about getting to our game right way, not tip-toeing into the game, not almost waiting around to see what kind of game it's going to be like," Slavin said. "It's just taking control right from the start, kind of like the start we have in Game 1, when we were in and on them."

The Canes had an 11-2 edge in high-danger chances in the opening period of Game 1, but did not score until the third period and eventually won 2-1 in overtime on a Slavin goal.

The Caps flipped the script Saturday in the first as Wilson had the early look, was open in the lot and later Ovechkin had good shots against Andersen. But, again, the opening period was scoreless..

"We know how the game is going to go. For us, we need to get to it," Brind'Amour said Sunday. "At some point, why not try to get to it right away? I know the other team is doing the same thing, so they got to it first, obviously.

"I thought we were able to kind of figure our way and get to it in the second half of the game. It's not going to be pretty all of the time."

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Profile Image of Chip Alexander

In more than 40 years at The N&O, Chip Alexander has covered the N.C. State, UNC, Duke and East Carolina beats, and now is in his 15th season on the Carolina Hurricanes beat. Alexander, who has won numerous writing awards at the state and national level, covered the Hurricanes' move to North Carolina in 1997 and was a part of The N&O's coverage of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup run.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

The Athletic

Taylor Hall is a natural Hurricane, and 4 seconds in Game 4 proved it

By: Sean Gentille

RALEIGH, N.C. — Four seconds isn't much time.

On Monday night, that's how long it took for the puck to hit Taylor Hall's stick, for Hall's skates to carry him from the blue line to the high slot, and for his shot to buzz past Washington Capitals goaltender Logan Thompson.

That's also how long it took to land on one particularly timely conclusion: That goal — that sequence, in that moment, at this juncture of the Stanley Cup playoffs — is why Taylor Hall is a Carolina Hurricane.

Hall, a 33-year-old former MVP who'd spent 1 1/2 seasons of his dwindling prime killing time on an NHL bottom-feeder, did in May exactly what Carolina acquired him to do back in January. As an opponent made its push, with the Hurricanes' control of the series in the balance, Hall held the dagger — and he buried it.

"He won the (Hart Trophy in 2017-18) for a reason. He was an elite player. He still is," Seth Jarvis said. "And you love to see a guy like that get rewarded and to come up in a situation like this, when it really matters, was awesome to see."

If it plays out any differently — if Hall slips offside, or if his shot goes wide, or if Thompson guesses correctly — who knows where things go for Carolina?

That could read as hyperbole, and that's not the intent; we've just seen this movie a couple of times before, at least as it relates to the Hurricanes. They were in the second round of the playoffs, outplaying their opponent dramatically, period-over-period and game-over-game, and still one bounce away from heading into Game 5 tied 2-2, moving back into a neighborhood they'd taken great pains to leave behind.

And now, with a large assist from Hall, they're one win away from closing out the Capitals in a series that on merit deserves to be 3-1. For three minutes and six seconds after a goal by Jacob Chychrun cut Carolina's lead to 2-1, it felt like they weren't going to get there.

Washington was buzzing, and the puck was in Carolina's end. On the retrieval, defenseman Sean Walker rimmed it to center Jack Roslovic, who'd clocked Hall waiting on the far blue line. Both knew exactly what they were doing.

"Everyone's asking me if I was cheating," Hall said. He wasn't. Carolina head coach Rod Brind'Amour backed him up.

"If I didn't get a breakaway there, we were going to exit with possession," Hall said. "So I thought it was something to try. And (Roslovic) and I made eye contact, and he made a great pass."

All that — the hockey sense, the creativity, the connection with Roslovic — only got Hall halfway home. He still needed the one-on-one strategy and finishing talent it'd take to beat a high-end goalie who'd already caused Carolina plenty of problems in the first 11 periods.

"I got my head up and tried to look where (Thompson) was. He plays somewhat deep in his net. So shooting is a pretty good option," he said. "If you deke, he's going to have a better chance at it. So, I just picked my corner, and it was a good shot."

Good shot. Big shot.

"It kind of gave us a breath," defenseman Dmitry Orlov said.

For Carolina, it was a shot that took root, at the latest, back in January. In Raleigh, they were in the middle of what's become a typical season: cruising for a playoff berth and doing it in statistically dominant fashion, controlling possession and scoring chance share at a metronomically elite level. That's been the story, more or less, for seven years.

In that span, though, Carolina hasn't made the Stanley Cup Final. It's the sort of stacked-up instances of almost-but-not-quite that dials up the pressure — and Carolina GM Eric Tulsky acted accordingly, trading for Mikko Rantanen and Hall in one swoop on Jan. 24. If you thought the Hurricanes were averse to all-in moves … actually, if you thought that, you missed the Jake Guentzel trade. If you wanted more proof, for whatever reason, the Rantanen and Hall deals provided that in full. More importantly, they added professional goal-scorers.

You know what happened to the first guy. He doesn't work here anymore. Hall remains, and all signs point to him sticking around a while longer; he signed a three-year extension after the Hurricanes' first-round win over New Jersey. As of Monday night, they've already recouped a chunk of it.

There are reasons to think that willl continue, too. Even if Hall's not scoring huge breakaway goals at the most crucial of moments, he is a stylistic and systematic fit. He spent 31 regular-season games showing it, and now nine in the playoffs. All the elements of a Brind'Amour player — the

speed and tenacity necessary to pressure puck carriers, the skill necessary to consistently create chances when the puck changes hands — are present.

Look at Carolina's fourth goal, which (again) restored a two-goal cushion. Watch Hall pressure Capitals defenseman Rasmus Sandin along the boards, dislodge the puck and shuffle it ahead to Walker. That's a lab-quality Hurricanes scoring sequence.

Hall knew the fit made sense well before Tuesday night; he'd played Carolina plenty of times with the Devils and in a playoff series with the Boston Bruins.

"As soon as I got here and they kind of gave the systems rundown and showed some video," he said, "I was even more happy. (The) style of play is aggressive. It's in your face. Once you get the hang of it, there's not a lot of thinking. And that bodes well for my game."

Brind'Amour needed a bit of a refresher. "I obviously know the player, but I didn't know where his game was at," he said. "I hadn't really watched him the last little while."

Getting marooned with the Chicago Blackhawks, as Hall did, will have that effect on a person. The excitement and relief he felt after Tulsky threw him a life preserver were clear, and Brind'Amour made sure the vibes continued to improve.

"It was good to just give him a clean slate. I just kind of said, 'Look, you show us what you have,' and that's kind of what he's done," Brind'Amour said. "I think he's come in here and just wanted to be part of it. Not anything more than that. And he's clearly been a good addition for us."

A good addition at the right time.

(Photo: Grant Halverson / Getty Images)

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Hurricanes demoralize Capitals, put Washington's season in peril: Takeaways

By: Sean Gentille

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA - MAY 12: Shayne Gostisbehere #4 of the Carolina Hurricanes celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal against the Washington Capitals during the first period of Game Four of the Second Round in the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at at Lenovo Center on May 12, 2025 in Raleigh, North Carolina. (Photo by Grant Halverson/Getty Images)

May 12, 2025Updated 10:37 pm EDT

RALEIGH, N.C. — Outside of a couple of periods and a few isolated moments, it would've been unfair for the Carolina Hurricanes not to leave Lenovo Center with a 3-1 series lead over the Washington Capitals.

Despite an expected third-period push by Washington, that's exactly what the Hurricanes earned, holding on for a 5-2 Game 4 win behind another strong night from goalie Frederik Andersen, a great penalty kill and goals from five different players. Strong five-on-five play was once again the foundation for Carolina — you've heard that before, no doubt — but the Hurricanes continue to show off in plenty of different ways.

"There's no panic when things don't go our way. Whatever it is — tonight, they're they're closing the gap. We just keep playing," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Our older guys have been through this. Even our not-so-old guys have been through it here for a few years. So I think there is a bit of maturity there."

Here's what I saw in Game 4.

The Hall way

With 11 minutes, 36 seconds remaining in the game, Taylor Hall showed why the Hurricanes, amid all the Mikko Rantanen drama, made sure to come out of March's NHL trade deadline with Hall in the mix. He remains a legitimate scoring threat on the middle six, and he used that offensive skill to put Carolina back up by a pair 3-1.

With Washington pushing in the immediate aftermath of a goal by Jakob Chychrun that cut Carolina's lead to 2-1, Hall slipped behind the Washington defense, stayed onside and carried a pass from Jack Roslovic in for a breakaway. Goal and — despite a classic Alex Ovechkin power-play goal to cut the lead — game over. That's the sort of dagger Carolina has missed in the Brind'Amour era. It was another big play from Roslovic, too, who had a goal and an assist in Game 3 after being a healthy scratch.

Washington can't capitalize early

For the second straight game, Washington wasted a strong start — and unlike in Game 3, the Capitals couldn't sustain it for a full 20 minutes, either. Washington got prime scoring chances right off the drop for both Connor McMichael and Aliaksei Protas, who blocked a shot, earned a clean chance in transition and hit the post. Sustained zone time followed. After 6 minutes, 34 seconds, the Capitals held a 7-1 lead in scoring chances and 3-0 lead in high-danger chances but couldn't turn any of it into actual goals.

Around that time, Carolina snapped into form, preventing clears and forcing Washington's skaters — particularly center Lars Eller, who unnecessarily played a Carolina high stick to keep the puck in the zone — into poor decisions. With 10:27 remaining, Capitals goaltender Logan Thompson stopped two prime chances in close for Jordan Staal to set up a faceoff in Washington's zone. Less than a minute later, with the pressure still on, Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere made a slick play to keep the puck in, separate himself from Brandon Duhaime and beat Thompson with a well-placed shot from 54 feet.

The goal was the first of the series for either team in the first period.

"I think our starts have been pretty good, maybe beside (Game 2)," Gostisbehere said Monday morning. "I don't know if it really matters if we score or not. It just matters if they don't score, really. For us, obviously it would be nice to get going in the first, but whatever the game has, the game gives us."

Smothering penalty kill meets dismal power play

The bigger killer, though, was Washington's near-total lack of productivity in six minutes of power-play time in the first 20-plus minutes. Carolina's penalty kill is outstanding, but the Capitals barely came close. They had several one-and-done trips with the man advantage — an egregious missed opportunity for a team almost guaranteed to lose the five-on-five battle.

The Capitals' power-play issues were such that it was easy to imagine them carrying over to other phases of the game. Carolina's second goal, making it 2-0 just over a minute into the second period, felt like proof. Carolina started the period on the kill — the Hurricanes' Jordan Martinook had high-sticked Chychrun in the face late in the first — and after 36 seconds of strong work, went back into attack mode almost immediately. Thompson failed to glove a shot by Sebastian Aho, leaving the puck on the doorstep for Seth Jarvis.

The assist gave Aho at least 10 points for the seventh consecutive postseason. It's a little played out to call him underrated; it's also probably still accurate.

Capitals' third-line liability

Last game, we made plenty of Carolina's neutralization of Washington's first line, particularly Ovechkin, and that's no less true after Game 4 — but Washington's third line has struggled mightily as well. The Capitals' decision not to add another center at March's trade deadline, leaving them with Eller as the only option with anything close to a playoff third-line center's profile, is looming large.

In Game 2, a 3-1 Washington win, Eller played for just 9:06. In Game 3, with Ryan Leonard sent to the bench for Taylor Raddysh, the Hurricanes owned heavy advantages in shot attempts (19-4), scoring chances (9-1) and high-danger chances (3-1) with Eller, Raddysh and Andrew Mangiapane on the ice at five-on-five. In Game 4, with Leonard back in the mix, nothing improved; Eller and Leonard were particularly rough in the run-up to Carolina's first goal.

Nikishin watch

For a few minutes ahead of puck drop, it seemed like we were going to get our first real look at Carolina defenseman Alexander Nikishin. The 23-year-old, 6-foot-4 top prospect took Carolina's pregame warmup, possibly in case Jalen Chatfield was unable to play. Chatfield (and everyone else) was good to go, and Nikishin headed back up to the press box, where he's spent games since arriving in North America on April 18.

Given how much practice time Nikishin has under his belt, how the series has gone thus far, and the likelihood that he could help Carolina down the line, it might make sense for Carolina to give him another look for Game 5 in Washington. In the KHL, Nikishin was third league-wide in points by a defenseman in 2024-25 and captained a SKA St. Petersburg team that featured multiple former NHLers. Ahead of the season, this was The Athletic's prospects expert Corey Pronman's assessment of Nikishin: "He has length, mobility and puck-moving skill, and he's mean as hell. He runs over opponents with his physicality, especially with how quickly he closes on checks."

Sounds like someone you'd like to have as ready as possible, and Carolina might need him sooner rather than later. Chatfield missed shifts down the stretch after spending 2:33 on the ice at the end of the second period.

"He did (tweak something)," Brind'Amour said, "but he seemed fine after, so I guess we'll find out more tomorrow."

(Photo: Grant Halverson / Getty Images)

Sean Gentille is a senior writer for The Athletic covering the NHL. He previously covered Pittsburgh sports with the The Athletic and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the NHL for Sporting News, and he's a graduate of the University of Maryland. Follow Sean on Twitter @seangentille

Revisiting oddly specific 2024-25 NHL predictions: The right and mostly wrong (but maybe right?)

By: Sean McIndoe

Every year, just as the regular season is set to begin, I make oddly specific predictions for each NHL team. It's one of my very favorite columns to write each year.

And then in the spring, I have to see if I actually got any right. That's today's column, and it is not one of my favorites.

But we have to do it because accountability matters, so here we go. If you're new to the Oddly Specific prediction game, it's exactly what it sounds like: A prediction for each team that gets a little too detailed. It's not enough to say a team will have more points; we need an exact total. Don't tell us something will happen; give us the specific game. Anyone can predict an Alexander Ovechkin goal; let's see you plant the flag for Joel Hanley.

That last one, of course, is maybe our most memorable hit: In 2022, I didn't just predict that defensive defenseman Hanley would finally score his first regular-season goal, but I also gave you the exact game it happened in. It was pretty amazing. I've been chasing that high ever since.

I'll save you the suspense: This year's predictions, which you can go back and read here, don't have any Hanley-level miracle calls. At least … not yet. But we'll get to that.

As always, we'll do this in tiers, starting with the boring one you can honestly skip.

Tier 1: Garden-variety wrong

Utah Mammoth

Lawson Crouse did not score the first NHL goal for Utah; Dylan Guenther did. Crouse scored the last goal in their first game, which is apparently what I meant.

Anaheim Ducks

None of the players who scored an overtime goal for the Ducks were subsequently traded, meaning none are scoring playoff OT winners for their new teams.

Carolina Hurricanes

They did not start the season 5-4-1.

Boston Bruins

I predicted that Jeremy Swayman would get pulled in his first game after signing his big new extension. He wasn't great, giving up four goals, but stuck around in a win. He did get yanked from an 8-2 loss to the Hurricanes later in October, but by then it was too late for me.

St. Louis Blues

Not only did the Penguins and Blues not manage a four-on-four goal in either of their two games against each other, but the refs didn't even give them an opportunity. (The last game did end on a four-on-three goal, though.)

Minnesota Wild

The Wild didn't play a game in which they had the same number of shots as their opponents until mid-December.

Vancouver Canucks

Thatcher Demko did not return to the lineup with a shutout in his first start. He gave up a goal nine minutes in, one of four he allowed on the night.

Buffalo Sabres

The Sabres did not lose both games of their season-opening homestand.

Los Angeles Kings

There were no shutouts in the Kings' early road trip, although five of the seven games featured a team scoring exactly once. (And then one of the games finished 8-7, because hockey.)

New York Islanders

The Islanders did beat the Avalanche in Patrick Roy's early-season return to Colorado, but they did not need a 40-save performance to do it. (Ilya Sorokin had 32 that night.)

Detroit Red Wings

It's an annual Oddly Specific tradition that I pick one team and predict they'll finish with the same point total as the year before. The Red Wings were that team this year, but they dropped from 91 points to 86.

Colorado Avalanche

There were no six-on-three goals in games involving the Avalanche, or, for the third straight season, any other team.

Pittsburgh Penguins

I predicted that the Penguins would finish with only 87 points. They wish; they dropped all the way to 80.

Winnipeg Jets

The shootout-averse Jets only won two games that way all year, and neither against the teams I'd predicted.

Patrik Laine scored in his Canadiens debut on Dec. 3, 2024. (David Kirouac / Imagn Images)

Montreal Canadiens

Patrik Laine did not score on his first shift as a Hab, although he did get one in his first game.

Florida Panthers

It was the first season to feature multiple goalie goals, but Sergei Bobrovsky did not score one of them. I continue my lifetime streak of going o-fer at predicting goalie goal scorers. Yes, I plan to continue trying next year.

Tier 2: Not just wrong, but almost impressively wrong

Tampa Bay Lightning

I predicted that Jake Guentzel and Steven Stamkos would finish tied in goals. Not quite, as Guentzel ran away with the race, winning 41 to 27.

Chicago Blackhawks

Connor Bedard did not score the winning goal at the Winter Classic. Or any goals in that game. Or any goals at all, apparently, based on how some Blackhawks fans were acting.

Dallas Stars

Miro Heiskanen did not finish third in Norris Trophy balloting, and his injury-shortened season means he probably won't even get a single vote.

San Jose Sharks

I predicted they'd get out of the first month with a .500 record; they started the season with a nine-game losing streak, so that would be a no.

Tier 3: Wrong, but at least a little close

Philadelphia Flyers

I predicted Matvei Michkov would mirror Pavel Bure's rookie season, with 34 goals and 60 points. Nope, although with 26 goals and 63 points, I wasn't that far off.

New Jersey Devils

Oddly specific prediction legend Jacob Markström had four shutouts, and one of them did indeed come against a former team. But that was the Canucks, and I predicted he'd have a shutout against the Panthers.

Ottawa Senators

I swung big on the most far-fetched prediction we've ever had, but no, of course Linus Ullmark and Jeremy Swayman did not drop the gloves and hug it out in a line brawl. It felt like we were close when a January game started to get ugly, and Swayman even got involved in the action. But even if the goalie fight had happened, it was Leevi Meriläinen in net for Ottawa that night, not Ullmark.

Calgary Flames

I predicted our old friend Joel Hanley would score his lone goal of the season in his 23rd game. He waited for his 28th, which is close. But then he let all that offense get to his head and scored a second goal at the end of the season. OK, Bobby Orr, maybe settle down and let the rest of the kids touch the puck too.

Tier 4: Wrong, and more than a little close

Toronto Maple Leafs

I predicted Mitch Marner would finish exactly 20 points ahead of William Nylander in scoring, even though the latter was

coming off a 98-point season. This one got very spicy down the stretch, and I almost nailed it — Marner ended up with 102 points while Nylander had 84, a gap of 18.

Nashville Predators

Steven Stamkos did not score in overtime in his return to Tampa. The game did go to OT, though, and Stamkos even had one decent scoring chance to make me look smart.

Seattle Kraken

I noticed the Kraken hadn't scored a wraparound goal all year in 2023-24 — and, in fact, had only five attempts — and then said they'd score one this year. They did get one — exactly one, on six attempts this time — but it didn't come against the Jets, the team I'd specifically predicted.

It turns out I was off by one game; Kaapo Kakko scored one on March 14 against Utah, the game before Winnipeg came to town. OK, fine, but Utah used to be the Jets, so I should get partial credit.

Tier 5: Completely wrong but almost sneaky right

New York Rangers

I predicted the Rangers wouldn't win the Presidents' Trophy, but rather would finish sixth. The context makes it clear that I meant sixth overall, which would leave me off by 16 spots after the Rangers' disastrous drop all the way to 22nd. That's some very bad prediction work.

But! For a while, I could have claimed I meant they'd finish sixth in their division, which would have been a massive long shot of Nostradamus-like levels, and I absolutely would have milked it for all it was worth. Tragically, the Rangers edged out the Islanders and finished fifth in the Metro instead. Yet another reason they should have let the Islanders win one of those games.

Tier 6: Correct, but only vaguely impressive

Vegas Golden Knights

I noted that the Golden Knights had gone a league-worst 0-5-0 in 2023-24 in games in which they had exactly three days' rest, then predicted they'd win both of the two such games they had in October. They did, beating the Kings 6-1 and then using a late third-period comeback to beat the Senators.

Tier 7: Correct, and moderately impressive

Edmonton Oilers

I predicted Leon Draisaitl would win the Rocket Richard, despite the oddsmakers having Auston Matthews as a prohibitive favorite. He did, and it wasn't all that close, with Draisaitl's 52 goals putting him a comfortable seven ahead of runner-up William Nylander.

Tier 8: Still to be determined

Columbus Blue Jackets

I said the Blue Jackets' brutal early schedule would yield a win against the eventual Cup winner. They racked up more wins than we'd expected over that stretch, although victories against the Avalanche, Sabres and Islanders don't help us. But they also beat the Oilers and the Maple Leafs, so we've got two cards still in play to put this one in the win category.

Tier 9: Definitely wrong … FOR NOW

Look, we all hate replay review, but I think we can agree that the most important thing is to just get it right …

Washington Capitals

I predicted Pierre-Luc Dubois would have four points in the eight games combined that the Caps played against his former teams: the Blue Jackets, Jets and Kings. Then I went even more specific and said it would be exactly one goal and three assists.

Dubois' actual totals in those eight games: One goal and four assists. That's agonizingly close to nailing an all-timer. Sadly, close enough is not enough in Oddly Specific world, so this one goes into the "wrong" bin with all the others.

EXCEPT!

I mean, let's all watch this goal from the Nov. 2 game between the Caps and Blue Jackets:

First of all, it's already 5-1, so why are you even trying to score? But more importantly, that's Dubois at the very beginning of the play, poking the puck up to Tom Wilson and Connor McMichael, who do all the work. They can't convert on the two-on-one, but the puck eventually bounces off Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson and back to McMichael, who buries it.

Are we sure Johnson doesn't have possession there? I think he might. And if he does, that would make McMichael's goal unassisted, taking a helper away from Dubois and landing this prediction in the Oddly Specific hall of fame.

Look, I'll just say it: I'm calling on Dubois to do the right thing here, and publicly renounce this secondary assist on a meaningless goal from a blowout win. It's not all about the individual stats, Pierre-Luc, and I think this move would send a strong message that you're more about the team than about personal glory.

We await your confirmation of this decision. Until then, this one will have to be grudgingly filed as (just barely) wrong.

(Top photo of Connor McMichael and Pierre-Luc Dubois celebrating a goal: Geoff Burke / Imagn Images)

NHL Mock Draft 2025: Frondell to Chicago, Martone to Utah? Pronman projects Round 1

By: Corey Pronman

With the draft lottery done, we have a template of the selection order ready for the 2025 NHL Draft. Unless Radim Mrtka breaks things up in the top 5-7, we expect a run on forwards early in the draft, especially with so many good centers available. The order in which these forwards go is the most interesting thing about this draft and will be debated by teams and fans in the coming weeks. This mock is my best attempt to project how I think the first round of the 2025 NHL Draft will transpire on June 27.

1. New York Islanders: Matthew Schaefer, LHD, Erie (OHL)

Schaefer gives the Islanders a true No. 1 defenseman prospect to build around. His high-end mobility, intelligence and competitiveness project him as a cornerstone on the blue line for years to come and he is highly likely to be the pick despite the limited number of games he played this season.

2. San Jose Sharks: Michael Misa, C, Saginaw (OHL)

Misa's elite speed and creativity give San Jose a franchise-caliber center. The addition of Misa gives the Sharks flexibility to move either him or Will Smith to the wing long term. He can break games open with his skill and vision and will be a foundational offensive piece for a rebuilding Sharks squad.

3. Chicago Blackhawks: Anton Frondell, C, Djurgården (Allsvenskan)

Frondell brings high-end skill and a complete 200-foot game and fills Chicago's need for a strong two-way pivot to pair with Connor Bedard, who may end up as a long-term winger in the NHL.

4. Utah Mammoth: Porter Martone, RW, Brampton (OHL)

Utah prioritizes being hard to play against, and Martone will provide a lot of size and a high compete level while also being very skilled for a big man. It's easy to envision him next to Logan Cooley on a top line for the next 10 years.

5. Nashville Predators: James Hagens, C, Boston College (Hockey East)

Nashville adds high-end skill and speed down the middle with Hagens, even if his game needs more inside presence. He brings the potential to be a major point producer and address a critical need for the Predators at center, even if not every NHL scout is convinced he's an NHL center.

6. Philadelphia Flyers: Caleb Desnoyers, C, Moncton (QMJHL)

Desnoyers' stock continues to rise with his great playoff run for Moncton. He's a complete center with the size, skating, skill and off-puck play to be a big-minute NHL center, which is something Philly truly craves.

7. Boston Bruins: Jake O'Brien, C, Brantford (OHL)

O'Brien is a cerebral, playmaking center with top-line upside. His skill and vision are clear NHL traits and address Boston's massive need for a center who can drive play and create offense.

8. Seattle Kraken: Brady Martin, C, Sault Ste. Marie (OHL)

Martin brings an intense, physical two-way game that complements all the skill Seattle has drafted in recent years while also bringing plenty of puck play himself and the ability to be a top-six forward, be it at center or wing.

9. Buffalo Sabres: Radim Mrtka, RHD, Seattle (WHL)

Mrtka is a 6-foot-5 defenseman who skates well and has offensive flashes, giving Buffalo a rare right-shot blueliner with top-four upside. He compares to a Sabres pick from a long time ago in Tyler Myers.

10. Anaheim Ducks: Roger McQueen, C, Brandon (WHL)

A 6-foot-5 center with speed, hands and bite, McQueen gives Anaheim a potential massive talent down the middle. He would have gone top five if it weren't for a concerning back injury. With superb young talent in the organization, Anaheim can afford the gamble on McQueen.

11. Pittsburgh Penguins: Kashawn Aitcheson, LHD, Barrie (OHL)

Aitcheson adds significant physicality to Pittsburgh's system while also having the size, mobility and skill of a top-four NHL defenseman.

12. New York Rangers: Braeden Cootes, C, Seattle (WHL)

Cootes brings speed, compete and two-way versatility to the Rangers' forward group, giving them a hardworking center with offensive potential and addressing an important need at center.

13. Detroit Red Wings: Victor Eklund, RW, Djurgården (Allsvenskan)

Eklund's speed, high motor and ability to create offense gives Detroit an important addition of offensive talent to its system while continuing with a trend of prioritizing compete in its picks.

14. Columbus Blue Jackets: Cameron Reid, LHD, Kitchener (OHL)

Reid is a dynamic skater who closes well defensively and can generate clean exits and secondary offense. I could see him or Jackson Smith as the Jackets' pick here as they try to add young depth to their blue line.

15. Vancouver Canucks: Cole Reschny, C, Victoria (WHL)

Reschny is a very skilled and intelligent player who plays hard and was as good as any junior player in the second half of the CHL season. He theoretically gives Vancouver a much-needed young center of the future, although not everyone in the league is convinced he's a pro center.

16. Montreal Canadiens: Carter Bear, LW, Everett (WHL)

A competitive and highly skilled winger who plays a physical game, Bear could provide a lot of elements to Montreal's top six.

17. Montreal Canadiens: Jackson Smith, LHD, Tri-City (WHL)

Smith brings size, skating and offensive tools to the Canadiens blue-line pipeline as they continue to build a very strong group of young defensemen.

18. Calgary Flames: Justin Carbonneau, RW, Blainville-Boisbriand (QMJHL)

A fast, strong winger with a dangerous shot, Carbonneau adds a scoring element and high-energy game to Calgary's top six, even if he's slightly redundant with someone like Matt Coronato.

19. St. Louis Blues: Lynden Lakovic, LW, Moose Jaw (WHL)

Lakovic is a big man with legit speed, skill and goal-scoring ability. He would be a highly talented forward addition to the Blues' system, even if his compete level still draws some debate.

20. Columbus Blue Jackets: Joshua Ravensbergen, G, Prince George (WHL)

Ravensbergen is a big, athletic goaltender with starter upside — the type of swing Columbus can afford to take on a second first-rounder.

21. Ottawa Senators: Blake Fiddler, RHD, Edmonton (WHL)

Fiddler's size, defensive ability, skating and hardness make him exactly the type of defenseman Ottawa has coveted. Ideally, the Senators would add some skill to their forward group, but a run on forwards before their pick left them without any of the top-tier forward prospects.

22. Calgary Flames: Milton Gastrin, C, MoDo (Sweden Jr.)

A responsible, hard-nosed, two-way center, Gastrin adds leadership traits and versatility to the forward group.

23. Carolina Hurricanes: Logan Hensler, RHD, Wisconsin (Big Ten)

Hensler fits the type of defenseman Carolina has liked to target: He's mobile, has skill and can make a reliable pass.

24. Philadelphia Flyers: Daniil Prokhorov, LW, Dynamo St. Petersburg (MHL)

Prokhorov's size and physicality fit the typical Flyers draft pick, and he has enough touch and speed to complement their skilled forwards.

25. Philadelphia Flyers: Sascha Boumedienne, LHD, Boston University (Hockey East)

One of the better-skating defensemen in the class, Boumedienne provides transition ability with the potential for some offense at the NHL level as well.

26. Nashville Predators: Jack Nesbitt, C, Windsor (OHL)

Nesbitt is a heavy center with strong puck skills and playmaking vision. Despite questions about his skating, his offense and physicality make him a legit first-round pick as Nashville builds out its center depth in this draft.

27. Los Angeles Kings: Jakob Ihs-Wozniak, LW, Luleå (Sweden Jr.)

The Kings take a swing on a tall winger with NHL-caliber feet, hands and scoring ability, hoping he becomes a future middle-six scorer.

28. San Jose Sharks: Henry Brzustewicz, RHD, London (OHL)

Brzustewicz is a smart, mobile right-shot who adds a steady two-way game to a Sharks system that needs quality blueliners.

29. Chicago Blackhawks: Malcolm Spence, LW, Erie (OHL)

Spence brings high effort, responsible two-way play and a solid track record for Canada. He's not the flashiest forward but he has legit enough talent to play in a middle six.

30. Nashville Predators: William Horcoff, C, Michigan (Big Ten)

A big, skilled forward with great hands, Horcoff needs to work on his skating but has the potential to be a legit scorer as a pro and looked quite good at the college level as a 17-year-old.

31. Washington Capitals: Cullen Potter, C, Arizona State (NCHC)

Potter's great skating and puck skill give Washington a dynamic, high-upside forward, but his size and perimeter play does worry teams too.

32. Winnipeg Jets: Bill Zonnon, LW, Rouyn-Noranda (QMJHL)

Zonnon is a big winger who skates and shoots well enough to be a middle-six contributor in Winnipeg's forward pipeline.

(Illustration: Dan Goldfarb / The Athletic; Photos of Porter Martone, Matthew Schaefer and Michael Misa: Michael Miller / ISI Photos / Getty Images)

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Hurricanes push Capitals to brink with 5-2 Game 4 win | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

Hurricanes forward Taylor Hall celebrates after his goal with Capitals defenseman Matt Roy nearby during Carolina's 5-2 win Thursday in Game 4 of its playoff series with the Capitals. The Hurricanes lead the best-of-seven series 3-1. (Karl DeBlaker / AP Photo)

RALEIGH — Many saw this season as a retooling year for the Carolina Hurricanes. After winning Monday's Game 4 over the Capitals 5-2, they are within one victory of reaching the Eastern Conference final.

Taylor Hall and Sean Walker both cleanly beat Washington goalie Logan Thompson — earning assists on each other's goals — in the third period as Carolina responded each time the visiting Capitals scored to build a 3-1 series lead with a win at Lenovo Center.

"Certainly there's no panic when things don't go our way," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Whatever it is — tonight, they're closing the gap. We just keep playing."

After the Capitals scored for the first time in more than five periods on Jakob Chychrun's goal at 5:18 of the third period to cut Carolina's lead to 2-1, the Hurricanes responded just over three minutes later thanks to a good read by Hall.

Hall hung back near the Capitals' blue line as the Hurricanes prepared to exit the defensive zone — a good read, Brind'Amour said — and Jack Roslovic's pass up ice sent him in on a breakaway. The former Hart Trophy winner and deadline acquisition shot and beat Thompson to reestablish a two-goal lead.

"He plays somewhat deep in his net," Hall said of Thompson, "so shooting is a pretty good option. If you deke, he's going to have a better chance at it. So I just picked my corner, and it was a good shot."

Washington got within one again with under eight minutes left when Alex Ovechkin — to that point blanked in the series — scored on a 5-on-3 power play.

But Carolina again had a response, with Walker winning a puck battle against two Capitals in the defensive zone and then beating them up ice to create a 3-on-1 rush. Walker carried the puck up the left wing, hesitated, cut to the inside of the left circle, and beat Thompson's glove to extinguish Washington's comeback by making it 4-2 at 16:45 of the third.

"I tried to be patient," Walker said. "Once I stepped inside, I felt like I had a good lane, so I shot it. Just happy it went in."

Patient is a good way to describe Carolina's play through four games in the series.

"It's playoffs, and momentum swings are everything," Hall said. "So it's about managing those and trying to just step on the pedal no matter what the score is."

After a strong start for the Capitals during which Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (19 saves) made seven stops in the first six-plus minutes, a dominant shift by the top line of Sebastian Aho, Seth Jarvis and Andrei Svechnikov helped the home team seize control.

Carolina's fourth line kept the pressure on in the Capitals zone, and Shayne Gostisbehere held the puck near the blue line and created a space with a nifty series of moves. He then wristed a shot from the left point through a screen by Jesperi Kotkaniemi, beating Thompson short side just past the midway point of the opening period. Gostisbehere's goal, his third of the playoffs, was the first scored in the opening 20 minutes of any game by either team in the series.

"It's just a different game when you can play from in front, that's for sure," Brind'Amour said.

Carolina then ended the first period killing off the majority of a four-minute high-sticking penalty by Jordan Martinook, finishing it off to start the second. That led to them doubling the lead shortly thereafter when an Aho shot went off Thompson's glove. The puck fluttered in the air and grazed the crossbar, and Jarvis found the rebound and put it in for his third goal of the postseason.

"You never want to do that," Jarvis said of killing the penalty. "But when the time comes, everyone answered the bell really well."

The Hurricanes are now 25 of 27 on the kill in the postseason, a league-best 92.6% after being tops in the NHL during the regular season.

Svechinkov added his team-best seventh goal of the playoffs into an empty net at 17:39 of the third to send Carolina back to Washington with a chance to close out the Capitals on Thursday.

“We’re happy right now where we are in the series,” Hurricanes defenseman Dmitry Orlov said. “But the series is not over. It’s always hard to finish it.”

Jarvis added, “We’re expecting their best next game, but it’s a good step in the right direction.”

Notes: Hurricanes forward Eric Robinson finished with a career-high nine hits. … Thompson has allowed 15 goals with an .871 save percentage in four road playoff games this postseason compared to seven goals and a .954 in five home games. … Washington’s Nic Dowd was 17 of 21 on faceoffs, while Kotkaniemi won just 3 of 16.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025



Walker, Svechnikov score late as Hurricanes push Capitals to brink of elimination in 5-2 win

WRAL

By AARON BEARD, AP Sports Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. — RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Sean Walker cut to the middle of the ice and beat Logan Thompson for a critical late goal, then Andrei Svechnikov followed with an empty-net clincher to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Washington Capitals 5-2 on Monday night and take a 3-1 lead in their second-round playoff series.

Carolina improved to 5-0 at home in the playoffs and can clinch a second trip to the Eastern Conference final in three years by winning Game 5 in Washington on Thursday.

“If I'm just honest with how I feel about it, I thought our first two games (on the road) might've been better than some of these games — just the chances we've given up, a little too much here for me,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. “But obviously at this time of year, it's about results. I like where we're at, that's for sure.”

Walker's score was a big one, coming after the Capitals had pulled to within 3-2 on Alex Ovechkin's one-timer blast on a 5-on-3 power play with about eight minutes left. It started on a puck battle and the unusual sight of Washington's Rasmus Sandin skating in only to get the blade of his stick stuck in a gap along the boards, allowing Taylor Hall to collect the puck and flip a pass to the surging Walker up the left side.

Walker hesitated to cut behind Jack Roslovic and score at the 16:45 mark to push the lead back to 4-2, marking his first career postseason goal.

Svechnikov followed with his seventh postseason goal shortly after the Capitals pulled Thompson, the capper after Carolina twice led by two goals but had to hold on through the final 10 minutes.

“I think as a whole, we kind of kept our composure,” Walker said. “Didn't really panic, just stuck to our systems.”

Hall, Seth Jarvis and Shayne Gostisbehere also scored for the Hurricanes, while Frederik Andersen carried a shutout into the third before finishing with 19 saves.

Just as importantly, the Hurricanes twice responded as the Capitals inched within a goal in the third. Hall's score on a 1-on-1 chance came less than three minutes after Jakob Chychrun had brought the Capitals to within 2-1, sprung on a long pass from Roslovic after he was slow coming back and Washington's defense lost track of him.

Walker's score came about 4 1/2 minutes after Ovechkin's goal.

Ovechkin's blast got the NHL's career goals leader on the scoresheet for the first time this series. Thompson finished with 32 saves.

“We're giving ourselves some opportunities, we're just not executing, making the play, whatever you want to call it,” Washington coach Spencer Carbery said. “And making some mistakes — and they're capitalizing.”

To that point, the Eastern Conference's top seed got a quick start after a Game 3 shutout, starting with Connor McMichael getting a 1-on-1 chance on Andersen in the opening minute. Aliaksei Protas followed by ringing the right post shortly after.

Washington also managed just one shot on goal during a 4-minute power play, the first 3 1/2 minutes of those coming to close the first period.

“Their penalty kill is excellent, best in the league, has been for the last, whatever, five years call it,” Carbery said. “But it can't look like that. It cannot look like that.”

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AP NHL playoffs: https://apnews.com/hub/stanley-cup and https://apnews.com/hub/nhl

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025



Recap: Canes Stay Hot At Home With Game 4 Win

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Hall, Walker net two points apiece as Carolina takes 3-1 series lead

© Josh Lavallee / Carolina Hurricanes

By Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Hurricanes.com

May 12, 2025

RALEIGH, N.C. - Twelve different Carolina skaters recorded a point as the Hurricanes thumped the Washington Capitals 5-2 in Game 4 of their second-round playoff series, taking a 3-1 advantage in their best-of-seven battle and remaining perfect at Lenovo Center this postseason.

GAME SUMMARY | BOX SCORE | PLAYOFF TICKETS | PLAYOFF HUB

For the first time this series, a goal was scored in the opening 20 minutes as Shayne Gostisbehere got the Canes on the board with a seeing-eye shot at 10:24. A pair of penalties - including a double-minor that sandwiched the first intermission - soon threatened Carolina's lead, but 41 seconds after the Canes completed their four-minute kill, Seth Jarvis made it a two-goal game, stashing a Sebastian Aho rebound at the side of the net 1:05 into the middle frame.

The Canes carried that 2-0 lead into what became a back-and-forth third period.

When the Hurricanes conceded their first goal in six periods of play at the 5:18 mark, they struck back three minutes later on a Taylor Hall breakaway beauty to restore the multi-goal advantage. And when Washington clawed back again, this time via an Alex Ovechkin 5-on-3 power-play blast, the Canes again had a response as Sean Walker lit the lamp late, netting his first of the postseason.

Having held off the Caps' charge, Andrei Svechnikov put the icing on the Canes' cake with an empty-netter in the final moments of play.

Frederik Andersen was stellar again, turning aside 19 of 21 shots for his sixth win in eight starts this postseason.

WSH at CAR | Recap

Stats & Standouts

Shayne Gostisbehere scored his third goal of these playoffs, tied for the third-most by a Hurricanes/Whalers defensemen in a single postseason. He trails Sean Hill (4 in 2002) and Frantisek Kaberle (4 in 2006).

Seth Jarvis scored and recorded his 49th career playoff point, tying Sebastian Aho's franchise benchmark for most postseason points by a player at age 23 or younger.

Sebastian Aho picked up an assist on Jarvis' goal, becoming the first player in franchise postseason history to record 50 helpers, as well as the first to reach 80 points. He's the fifth Finnish player in Stanley Cup Playoffs history to reach 50 assists, and the sixth to net 80 points.

With that assist, Aho became the seventh player in NHL history to record 10 points in seven straight postseasons, joining Peter Forsberg, Wayne Gretzky, Bernie Geoffrion, Brad Marchand, Mark Messier and Mikko Rantanen.

Frederik Andersen held the Caps scoreless for more than 45 minutes on Monday, stretching his career-best shutout streak to 123:24. That's the fifth-longest shutout streak in franchise history - the all-time mark sits at 143:55, set by Kevin Weekes in 2001-02.

Taylor Hall posted his second multi-point performance (1G, 1A) of the playoffs, including the game-winner. Now with six points in nine games thus far, Hall is two points shy of matching his career-high in points in a single postseason, set in 2022-23 with Boston.

Sean Walker recorded his first two career playoff points (1G, 1A) in his 22nd career postseason outing on Monday.

The Hurricanes have now won five straight games at home, two games shy of their franchise record of seven, set in 2022. The team's current streak is the third in franchise history of at least five games.

They Said It...

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

Rod Brind'Amour on the experience of his players showing up this postseason...

“There’s no panic when things don’t go our way. Tonight, they’re closing the gap, we just keep playing...Our older guys have been through this, or even our not so old guys have been through it for a few years, so there’s a little bit of maturity there.”

Sean Walker on his club's ability to answer Washington's goals in the third period...

“I think that’s something that’s really important, especially this time of year. You’ve got to answer when teams are making their push, obviously you don’t want to give up those goals, especially late in the third, but as a whole, we kind of kept our composure. We didn’t really panic and just stuck to our systems. Hallsy made a great play on his goal, and I’m happy that I got mine too. It worked out well.”

Dmitry Orlov on the team's defensive play in the series...

“It’s what we try to do. It’s playoff hockey. You just try to leave everything out there and sacrifice for your teammates. It’s how you win. Sometimes you have a sh*t game, but you put your faith in try to stop the puck and make a big hit, or take a hit to make a play and all of the small things make a big difference in the playoffs. It’s what you try to do and we need to keep doing that.”

Seth Jarvis on Taylor Hall's showing in Game 4...

“He won the Hart [Trophy] for a reason, he was an elite player and still is. You love to see a guy like that get rewarded, and to come up in a situation like this, when it really matters, was awesome to see.”

Taylor Hall on being able to contribute in the playoffs...

“It’s what you kind of train for and look forward to when you’re in the summer and when you’re in the dog days. Certainly when I was in Chicago at the bottom of the league, bottom of the standings. I kind of knew I was going to get traded here, and I didn’t know what to expect from the group or from the fans. Obviously I think that I felt really comfortable here. It’s an amazing group of guys and it’s been a lot of fun to get to this point and know that we have a lot more left.”

Rod Brind'Amour on Sean Walker's performances in the playoffs...

“Walks has just been solid. I think his game has gone up another level, so he’s earned that ice time and the trust from the group. Clearly, that goal tonight is an indicator of what he’s capable of. I know his numbers maybe weren’t great this year that way, but you watched him all year. He had a lot of good opportunities and he’s capable of doing that.”

Seth Jarvis on if the Canes feel like they are breaking the will of the Capitals...

“No. There’s still another game, it’s still - the hardest game to win is the one to close it out. We know their experience, they’ve been through a lot of playoff runs, so we’re expecting their best next game. But [winning Game 4 is] a good step in the right direction.”

Rod Brind'Amour speaks on tonight's 5-2 win over the Washington Capitals.

What's Next?

The Canes are next scheduled to practice on Wednesday before traveling to Washington ahead of Game 5 on Thursday.

Next Game: Thursday, May 15 | Round 2, Game 5 at Washington | 7:00 p.m. ET

Next Home Game (if necessary): Saturday, May 17 | Round 2, Game 6 vs. Washington | Time TBD | Tickets | Parking

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

Hurricanes push Capitals to brink with Game 4 win in Eastern 2nd Round

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Hall, Walker each has 2 points for Carolina, which is 5-0 at home this postseason

Capitals at Hurricanes | Recap | Round 2, Game 4

12:05 AM

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Sean Walker and Taylor Hall each had a goal and an assist, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Washington Capitals 5-2 in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Second Round at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Shayne Gostisbehere, Seth Jarvis, and Andrei Svechnikov scored, and Frederik Andersen made 19 saves for the Hurricanes, who are the No. 2 seed from the Metropolitan Division.

“[Andersen] has had our back this whole series, it’s about time we helped him out a little bit," Jarvis said. "It’s nice to see (goals) go in, and it’s good to contribute offensively and not have to rely on him so much.”

Jakob Chychrun had a goal and an assist, and Alex Ovechkin scored for the Capitals, who are the No. 1 seed from the Metropolitan and the Eastern Conference. Logan Thompson made 32 saves.

"We're giving ourselves some opportunity," Washington coach Spencer Carbery said. "We're just not executing, making the play, whatever you want to call it, and making some mistakes, and they're capitalizing,”

The Hurricanes lead the best-of-7 series 3-1. Game 5 will be at Capital One Arena on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; MAX, truTV, TNT, SN, TVAS).

Carolina took a 1-0 lead at 10:24 of the first period. Gostisbehere stickhandled away from Capitals forward Brandon Duhaime and scored with a wrist shot through traffic from the top of the left circle.

WSH@CAR, Gm4: Gostisbehere rips it in to put the Hurricanes on the board

The Hurricanes killed off two penalties later in the first after Gostisbehere put them in front, including a double minor for high-sticking on Jordan Martinook that ended 24 seconds into the second period.

“The kill was huge tonight,” Carolina coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “It’s all about timing, too. Six minutes of penalties in the first period, that takes you right out of anything. To be able to come out with the lead was a big key.”

WSH@CAR, Gm4: Jarvis stuffs it home to double the lead

Jarvis made it 2-0 at 1:05 of the second period. Sebastian Aho’s initial shot deflected off Thompson’s glove and the crossbar and landed at the right post, where Jarvis shot it in off the Capitals goalie.

"It's a product of the way they play,” Capitals forward Dylan Strome said. “I think a little bit is self-inflicted, but we had chances. Games have not been pretty for us in this rink over the years that I've been here, and these two games felt like a step in the right direction of playing good hockey in this room.”

Washington cut the lead to 2-1 at 5:18 of the third period. Matt Roy took a pass from Pierre-Luc Dubois and then sent a feed to a driving Chychrun for a shot into an open net from the right circle.

The Hurricanes responded to make it 3-1 at 8:24. Hall took a stretch pass from Jack Roslovic at the offensive blue line and scored on a breakaway with snap shot below Thompson's blocker.

“I got my head up and tried to look at where the goalie was,” Hall said. “He plays somewhat deep in his net, so shooting is a pretty good option. If you deke, he’s going to have a lot better chance at it. I just picked my corner and it was a good shot. ‘Rosie’ and I made eye contact, and he made a great pass.”

Ovechkin scored on a 5-on-3 power play with a one-timer from the top of the left circle to make it 3-2 at 12:14.

However, the Hurricanes again answered back to push it to 4-2 at 16:45. Walker led a 3-on-2 rush before keeping the puck and scoring from the left circle. The play started after Hall poked the puck free along the boards in Carolina’s

defensive zone and pushed a backhand pass ahead to Walker.

"'Hallsy' made a great play to keep it going," Walker said. "He saw me coming. I tried to be patient. Once I stepped inside, I felt like I had a good lane, so I just shot it."

WSH@CAR, Gm4: Svechnikov stretches the lead with an empty net goal

Svechnikov scored an empty-net goal with 2:21 remaining for the 5-2 final.

"When we get within a goal we've got to find a way to keep the momentum on our side, and we just didn't do that tonight," Capitals forward Tom Wilson said. "Whether it's the four-minute power play or a big PK or whatever it is, those moments are huge and we've got to pull more of those our way because they're getting too many of those big moments in their favor and it's helping them win games."

The Hurricanes, who defeated the New Jersey Devils in five games in the first round, now have to chance to do the same against the Capitals.

"If I'm just honest how I feel about it, the first two games might have been better than some of [Games 3 and 4]," Brind'Amour said. "Just the chances we've given up are a little too much for me. But obviously at this time of year it's about results. I like where we're at, that's for sure."

NOTES: Carolina is 5-0 at home this postseason. ... Ovechkin scored his 77th career postseason goal to pass Mario Lemieux for 12th in NHL history. ... Washington has had 21 shots on goal in each of the past three games after registering 14 in Game 1 of the series. … Ten players have scored Carolina's 12 goals in the series. … Hurricanes forward Eric Robinson had nine hits.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Timely 3rd-period goals from Hall, Walker keep Hurricanes in control of playoff win against Capitals | AP News

By: Aaron Beard

Updated 11:55 PM EDT, May 12, 2025

RALEIGH, N..C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes twice found their two-goal margin halved in the third period of their latest playoff game with the Washington Capitals.

Each time they found a prompt response.

And that pushed the Hurricanes within a win of the Eastern Conference final for the second time in three seasons.

Taylor Hall scored on a breakaway chance roughly three minutes after the Washington Capitals scored their first goal, then Sean Walker added one minutes after NHL all-time goals leader Alex Ovechkin struck with a 5-on-3 one-timer. Those kept the Hurricanes in control on the way to a 5-2 win Monday night, securing a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven second-round series.

“We get an individual effort, and that’s really what those were, good plays,” Carolina coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “But burying it, finishing your chances at a crucial time in the game. ... Both of those goals were huge for us.”

Both Hall and Walker finished with two points, with Walker getting the second assist on Hall’s score and Hall returning the favor by springing Walker’s surge up the ice on the way to the first career postseason goal. But the timing of the goals stood out, with each blunting the momentum of a Washington team that had been shutout for five straight periods going back to Saturday’s 4-0 loss in Game 3.

Carolina carried a 2-0 lead into the third before Jakob Chychrun beat Frederik Andersen on a feed from Matt Roy after Roy had denied Carolina’s chance to clear the zone. That score came at the 5:18 mark of the third to add a jolt of tension rippling through the Lenovo Center after Carolina had kept a firm grip on the game to that point.

But Hall — acquired in January in the blockbuster deal that brought in Mikko Rantanen as the headliner — made a veteran read to blunt that momentum.

After being knocked to the ice in the offensive zone, Hall was getting up as the Capitals pushed the puck toward the other end. But as Hall got to center ice, he was completely alone — Washington coach Spencer Carbery said the defense lost track of Hall behind the forecheck and were too deep in the zone — and the Hurricanes were on the verge of collecting the puck as it went around the wall.

So Hall turned in back toward the blue line, straddling it long enough to stay onside until Jack Roslovic’s long pass arrived to spring the breakaway chance.

“Yeah, everyone’s asking me if I was cheating for offense,” Hall said, adding; “I thought it was just something to try.”

Hall skated in and beat Logan Thompson to the glove side at the 8:24 mark, pushing the margin back to 3-1.

“It’s a read, we had possession of the puck,” Brind’Amour said. “So that’s actually a good play by him.”

The Capitals again kept the pressure on with Ovechkin’s blast past Andersen on the two-man advantage at the 12:14 mark, dampening the rowdy zeal in Carolina’s home arena. But that’s when Hall and Walker teamed up for the goal that would reassert control.

It started on a puck battle and the unusual sight of Washington’s Rasmus Sandin skating in to get the puck from Walker, only to get the blade of his stick stuck in a gap along the boards. Walker got to his feet as Hall collected the puck, then flipped a pass to Walker as he charged up the left side.

Walker hesitated to cut inside Roslovic toward the slot and beat Thompson at the 16:45 mark, pushing the lead back to 4-2 in what became a back-breaking score.

“I feel like they were backchecking really hard, so I kind of just read that,” Walker said. “Tried to be patient. Once I stepped inside, I felt like I had a good lane so I shot it, and just happy it went in.”

Andrei Svechnikov added the empty-net clincher less than a minute later to deny Washington’s bid to retake home-ice advantage, the capper to Carolina’s steady response amid growing third-period danger.

“I think that’s something that’s really important, especially this time of year,” Walker said. “You’ve got to answer when teams are making their push.”

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AP NHL playoffs: https://apnews.com/hub/stanley-cup and https://apnews.com/hub/nhl

Walker, Svechnikov score late as Hurricanes push Capitals to brink of elimination in 5-2 win | AP News

By: Aaron Beard

Updated 10:55 PM EDT, May 12, 2025

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Sean Walker cut to the middle of the ice and beat Logan Thompson for a critical late goal, then Andrei Svechnikov followed with an empty-net clincher to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Washington Capitals 5-2 on Monday night and take a 3-1 lead in their second-round playoff series.

Carolina improved to 5-0 at home in the playoffs and can clinch a second trip to the Eastern Conference final in three years by winning Game 5 in Washington on Thursday.

“If I’m just honest with how I feel about it, I thought our first two games (on the road) might’ve been better than some of these games — just the chances we’ve given up, a little too much here for me,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “But obviously at this time of year, it’s about results. I like where we’re at, that’s for sure.”

Walker’s score was a big one, coming after the Capitals had pulled to within 3-2 on Alex Ovechkin’s one-timer blast on a 5-on-3 power play with about eight minutes left. It started on a puck battle and the unusual sight of Washington’s Rasmus Sandin skating in only to get the blade of his stick stuck in a gap along the boards, allowing Taylor Hall to collect the puck and flip a pass to the surging Walker up the left side.

Walker hesitated to cut behind Jack Roslovic and score at the 16:45 mark to push the lead back to 4-2, marking his first career postseason goal.

Svechnikov followed with his seventh postseason goal shortly after the Capitals pulled Thompson, the capper after Carolina twice led by two goals but had to hold on through the final 10 minutes.

“I think as a whole, we kind of kept our composure,” Walker said. “Didn’t really panic, just stuck to our systems.”

Hall, Seth Jarvis and Shayne Gostisbehere also scored for the Hurricanes, while Frederik Andersen carried a shutout into the third before finishing with 19 saves.

Just as importantly, the Hurricanes twice responded as the Capitals inched within a goal in the third. Hall’s score on a 1-on-1 chance came less than three minutes after Jakob Chychrun had brought the Capitals to within 2-1, sprung on a long pass from Roslovic after he was slow coming back and Washington’s defense lost track of him.

Walker’s score came about 4 1/2 minutes after Ovechkin’s goal.

Ovechkin’s blast got the NHL’s career goals leader on the scoresheet for the first time this series. Thompson finished with 32 saves.

“We’re giving ourselves some opportunities, we’re just not executing, making the play, whatever you want to call it,” Washington coach Spencer Carbery said. “And making some mistakes — and they’re capitalizing.”

To that point, the Eastern Conference’s top seed got a quick start after a Game 3 shutout, starting with Connor McMichael getting a 1-on-1 chance on Andersen in the opening minute. Aliaksei Protas followed by ringing the right post shortly after.

Washington also managed just one shot on goal during a 4-minute power play, the first 3 1/2 minutes of those coming to close the first period.

“Their penalty kill is excellent, best in the league, has been for the last, whatever, five years call it,” Carbery said. “But it can’t look like that. It cannot look like that.”

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AP NHL playoffs: https://apnews.com/hub/stanley-cup and https://apnews.com/hub/nhl

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

2025 Stanley Cup playoffs: Second-round takeaways so far - ESPN

Ryan S. Clark, Kristen Shilton, Greg Wyshynski

Multiple Contributors

May 13, 2025, 09:30 AM ET

The second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs has passed the midway point, with all but one series through Game 4.

What have been the biggest lessons learned through the first part of the second round? Which teams and players have surprised (in either a good or bad way)? How will all of it matter when it comes to the rest of the postseason?

ESPN reporters Ryan S. Clark, Kristen Shilton and Greg Wyshynski break it all down:

Could a recent playoff trend be a good omen for the Stars?

Of course, there's still quite a bit that can change in the Winnipeg Jets-Dallas Stars series. But let's just say that the Stars go on to win the series and advance to the Western Conference finals. It would be their third consecutive conference finals appearance, and their fourth visit since 2020. While they have yet to win the Stanley Cup during that window, does that level of consistency make them the preeminent team in the West?

There's no shortage of challengers, with the Vegas Golden Knights winning the Cup in 2023, and the Edmonton Oilers coming within a game of doing so last season. If Dallas makes it to the next round, it will face one of those two.

But what makes the Stars' situation one worth contextualizing is how it compares to other teams' since the NHL moved to the Eastern/Western format in 1994. Beating the Jets and getting to a third straight conference finals would make the Stars just the fourth team under the current format to earn that distinction. The Detroit Red Wings did it first (from 1995 through 1998) and won two Stanley Cups. They did it again from 2007 through 2009, winning another title in 2008.

The most recent team was the Chicago Blackhawks, who did it from 2013 through 2015 and won two Cups. -- Clark

Toronto needs a new tactic

The Maple Leafs looked like fish out of water in Game 4 against the Florida Panthers, a brutal 2-0 shutout loss in which the reigning Stanley Cup champions were in top form. Florida smothered Toronto with sustained offensive zone pressure, leading the Leafs to take multiple penalties and generally kill any ounce of momentum they tried to generate.

If it weren't for a stellar (wasted) performance from goaltender Joseph Woll, the final score would have been a blowout, because Toronto had no answers for Florida's heat.

Sam Bennett nets goal to double Panthers' lead

Sam Bennett's goal gives the Panthers a 2-0 lead halfway throughout the third period.

Unlike earlier in the series, when the Leafs were capitalizing on rush chances and literally spinning Sergei Bobrovsky in circles, the Panthers battened down the hatches to keep Toronto on the outside while boxing out better in front of Bobrovsky. If they can maintain that, and the Leafs can't make adjustments, the Panthers are looking at a third straight Eastern Conference finals appearance.

Should Toronto want to make one of its own, it's time to make some changes, and for its top skaters to step up. Mitch Marner doesn't have a shot on goal since he scored the winner in Game 2. Auston Matthews doesn't have a goal yet in the second round and hasn't registered one against Florida in nine career postseason tilts.

Toronto coach Craig Berube said after Sunday's loss that there are players the Leafs need more from -- no names required. It's clear. Both teams have owned home ice in the series so far. Toronto has that advantage still as this one becomes a best-of-three. The question is, what sort of counterpunch will the Leafs throw now that Florida's claws are out and sharpened? -- Shilton

Can Hellebuyck be trusted for the Olympics?

The first question Team USA's brain trust will need to answer before the 2026 Winter Olympic men's hockey tournament: Are the contests in Milan considered home games or road games? Because the answer could determine its starting goaltender.

At this point, Winnipeg Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck's struggles on the road in the Stanley Cup playoffs have reached the point of absurdity. He has won the Vezina Trophy twice in his career and will win it again this season. He's a finalist for the Hart (MVP). There isn't much debate, statistically or anecdotally, that he's the best goaltender in the world ... in the regular season.

In his past 20 playoff games, Hellebuyck is 7-13 with a .866 save percentage and a 3.90 goals-against average. The balance of those putrid numbers have come on the road, where Hellebuyck has lost eight of his past nine starts with an .835 SP and a 5.20 GAA.

After the first round of the playoffs against the St. Louis Blues, the bar for Hellebuyck was set at "can he get through

a road game without being pulled?" The good news in Game 3 against Dallas is that he cleared that bar. The bad news is that he lost again and wasn't very good, letting in a fluttering Roope Hintz shot for Dallas' first goal, and then scoring what the NHL ruled was an own goal on Alex Petrovic's kicked puck in the third.

"He had to make some big stops. Him and [Dallas goalie Jake] Oettinger, they were going kind of toe to toe," Jets coach Scott Arniel said after the game. "But we're going to be judged -- not just Connor -- by what happens on the road. We've got to win."

Oettinger, by contrast, is 12-11 with a .909 SP and a 2.63 GAA in his past 23 road playoff games. That's not great, but it certainly isn't getting pulled three times in the first round, either.

The U.S. has a deep goalie pool, but Oettinger is seemingly the next man up, having served as Hellebuyck's backup at the 4 Nations Face-Off in February. His play in this series and in other clutch moments -- like the Stars' Game 7 win against Colorado in Round 1 -- should spark a conversation about the American's Olympic starter, given Hellebuyck's struggles when the games matter most.

However, it should be noted that Hellebuyck was outstanding at 4 Nations, with a 1.59 GAA and .932 SA in three games. Which begs the question: Perhaps you can trust him more playing in back of an All-Star team rather than the Winnipeg Jets, no matter where the games are played? -- Wyshynski

The depth that has given the Oilers life could be the death of the Golden Knights

Seeing Adam Henrique score the first two goals in Game 4 before Evander Kane scored another did more than stake the Oilers to a 3-0 victory that now has them a win away from a second consecutive Western Conference finals appearance. It once again reinforced how the Oilers can rely on a level of depth that, by comparison, is lacking for the Golden Knights.

The statistic that has made that most clear is how the Oilers' generational duo of Leon Draisaitl and Connor McDavid have combined to score just three of their team's 15 goals. Draisaitl scored in Game 1, but the rest of those contributions, including the game winner, came from elsewhere in the lineup. Draisaitl did score the game winner in Game 2, but the previous four goals were scored by his teammates. In Game 3, Corey Perry scored the first two goals.

Now compare that to the Golden Knights. The trio of Ivan Barbashev, Tomas Hertl and Brett Howden combined to score 78 regular-season goals. They have been goalless through the first four games of their series against the Oilers. Vegas' six primary defensemen combined to score 35 regular-season goals, with 17 of them belonging to Noah Hanifin and Shea Theodore. The group has only one goal in the series.

It's a lack of scoring depth that has been further compounded by the fact that Jack Eichel, who led the Golden Knights with 94 points in the regular season, hasn't scored in the series. Meanwhile, leading goal scorer Pavel Dorofeyev, who missed the first two games with an injury, has also been blanked since his return. -- Clark

Own goals for everyone?

Fans love seeing goals scored as much as players enjoy scoring them -- except when it's on their own net. And we've seen some doozies in that latter category this round.

There was the own goal in Game 3 between Dallas and Winnipeg on Sunday, when Petrovic's go-ahead goal was found (after a lengthy official review) to have gone off Hellebuyck's stick into the net. The night before, it was Draisaitl's stick that put a puck past Stuart Skinner to give Vegas a buzzer-beating goal (with 0.4 seconds left on the clock) and its first win of the series.

Golden Knights stun Oilers with Reilly Smith's buzzer-beating goal

Reilly Smith scores a miraculous goal for the Golden Knights with 0.4 remaining to give them the win.

Morgan Rielly's stick guided a puck in past Woll in Game 3 of Toronto's series against Florida to cut into the Leafs' 2-1 advantage. Toronto eventually lost 5-4 in overtime.

It's not like there's a good moment to score on your own net, but could the timing on any of them have been worse? If you've ever wondered why "just put pucks on net" is a time-honored hockey cliché, here's your answer: Because anything can happen. -- Shilton

It's Mikko Rantanen's MVP to lose

Coaching in his 10th postseason, Dallas Stars coach Pete DeBoer has witnessed some startling individual playoff performances from his players. Like Ilya Kovalchuk's 19 points in 23 games for the Devils in 2012. Or Joe Pavelski's 14 goals in 24 games for the Sharks in 2016.

But nothing like the postseason that Rantanen is putting together for the Stars.

"It's the best performance I've gotten to witness, standing where I'm standing," DeBoer said after Dallas' Game 3 win. "But for me, he's just getting started. He's just warming up here. I think he's on a mission."

Through 10 games, Rantanen leads the playoffs in goals (nine) and points (18). At one point, he had scored or assisted on 15 of 16 goals for the Stars, dating back to the first round. He's the first player in Stanley Cup playoffs history with five three-point games through a team's first 10 playoff games.

"Huge pickup at the deadline. He's been awesome for us," defenseman Alexander Petrovic said. "He's a great guy in the room. He's been on a tear."

Steve Levy to McAfee: We should be talking more about Mikko Rantanen, Stars

Steve Levy joins Pat McAfee and breaks down Mikko Rantanen's hot play in the postseason for the Stars.

He has done all of this after a turbulent season in which he was traded twice -- from Colorado to Carolina and then to Dallas -- before signing a blockbuster extension with the Stars. He has answered questions about his offensive prowess without having the benefit of Nathan MacKinnon on his team. He entered the playoffs as one of the NHL's best

postseason scorers of the past several seasons. He has blown away those expectations and is the current leader for the Conn Smythe Trophy (postseason MVP).

Yet though all of this torrid scoring recently, the Jets blanked him in their Game 2 shutout in Winnipeg.

"The biggest thing is time and space," Arniel said. "I know that you hear that a lot in hockey, but at the end of the day, the more he holds onto it, the more he's comfortable, the harder it is to deny what he's trying to do next."

But The Moose was back on the loose in the Stars' Game 3 win, with a goal and two assists.

"I'm trying to stay in the moment. I'm happy to help the team and try to keep doing that as much as I can, both ends of the ice," Rantanen said.

It's certainly Mikko Rantanen's moment. -- Wyshynski

Ovechkin, Perry defying Father Time

Corey Perry will turn 40 on Friday, while Alex Ovechkin will hit that milestone in September. Perry and Ovechkin are part of a five-member group of players age 39 or older who have played more than one game this postseason. But to suggest Ovechkin and Perry are each having strong postseason campaigns for players their age only partially explains what they have done so far.

In fact, they're having two of the best postseason campaigns for two players in their age-39 season in NHL history.

Perry, a Stanley Cup winner who ranks 38th in career playoff goals, has scored five times this postseason. Ovechkin, a fellow Stanley Cup winner who is tied with Mario Lemieux for 12th in playoff goals, has four. They're both within striking distance of the most playoff goals in an age-39 season, per Quant Hockey. That mark is currently held by Jean Béliveau, with Le Gros Bill scoring six goals in 1971. -- Clark

But have the Hurricanes solved Ovi?

Some might accuse Ovechkin's game of being increasingly "one note." But when played right, it's a damn good note. And right now, the Washington Capitals are desperate for more of his contributions to their orchestra, at least at even strength.

Ovechkin's line has been stifled by Carolina's defense -- namely Jaccob Slavin and Brent Burns -- so far in the series, and they've had far fewer shot attempts and chances than the opposition at 5-on-5. Ovechkin and linemate Dylan Strome especially thrive on creating chances off zone entries, and the Hurricanes aren't giving them much in that respect.

Ovechkin continues to fight for open ice and does lead the Capitals in even-strength shots, but that hasn't materialized into anything on the scoresheet; Ovechkin's only goal of the series has been on the power play in Game 4.

Considering the Caps were just whacked 4-0 in Game 3 and 5-2 in Game 4, they are searching for consistent offensive contributions to carry them through. This is when Ovechkin has to start spinning his proverbial straw into gold again at full strength.

Washington got lucky in Game 2 after it was outshot 33-14 by the Hurricanes but still managed to come away with a 3-1 victory. If Carolina is finding its offensive groove now and beginning to solve Logan Thompson, then Washington must find ways to generate more offensive opportunities. That's easier said than done against the Hurricanes' smothering collective defensive game. -- Shilton

Carolina is no joke

If you've been following the second round, you've undoubtedly come across a joke or two (or 10) about the relative quality of the Carolina Hurricanes' series against the Washington Capitals compared to that of the other three playoff series. Perhaps you've made a few yourself.

Monday night's Game 4 was the outlier in what has otherwise been a grinding, tight-checking series in which four or fewer total goals were scored in each of the first three games, including a 4-0 shutout by goalie Frederik Andersen in Game 3.

The Hurricanes are the Hurricanes. Coach Rod Brind'Amour couldn't care less about the entertainment value of this series or any series. His team's mission is to vampirically suck the life out of opponents with a combination of puck possession, defensive zone coverage, reliable goaltending and elite penalty killing. Through four games, it has been mission accomplished.

Brind'Amour was asked about fans and media from other markets boiling down the Hurricanes' virtues to simply being a monotonous "shot volume" team.

"It's lazy. It's lazy. Because you're not really watching the game then. You're picking out part of it," he said. "But there's a method to all of it. It doesn't irk me."

When the Canes don't have the puck, they're preventing shots: Carolina is allowing an average of 24.6 shots per game this postseason, third best among active teams.

"There have been times through this series when I've thought in my head, 'shoot the puck.' But then we have to get that puck through," Washington coach Spencer Carbery said.

Again, this is what the Hurricanes do. This is what the Hurricanes have done. And this is what they'll continue to do in the Eastern Conference finals unless the Capitals have a rally in them. Which would be exciting. But the Hurricanes aren't about that excitement.

"You don't want to give them any life or give them any hope," Canes winger Seth Jarvis said of Thursday's Game 5 back in D.C. -- Wyshynski

Canes get 'huge' goals from Hall and Walker, push Capitals to brink - ESPN

By: Greg Wyshynski

ESPN News Services

May 12, 2025, 11:30 PM ET

RALEIGH, N..C. -- The Carolina Hurricanes twice found their two-goal margin halved in the third period of their latest playoff game with the Washington Capitals.

Each time they found a prompt response.

And that pushed the Hurricanes to within a win of the Eastern Conference finals for the second time in three seasons.

Taylor Hall scored on a breakaway chance roughly three minutes after the Washington Capitals scored their first goal, then Sean Walker added one minutes after NHL all-time goals leader Alex Ovechkin struck with a 5-on-3 one-timer. Those kept the Hurricanes in control on the way to a 5-2 win Monday night, securing a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven second-round series.

"We get an individual effort, and that's really what those were, good plays," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "But burying it, finishing your chances at a crucial time in the game. ... Both of those goals were huge for us."

Both Hall and Walker finished with two points, with Walker getting the second assist on Hall's score and Hall returning the favor by springing Walker's surge up the ice on the way to his first career postseason goal. But the timing of the goals stood out, with each blunting the momentum of a Washington team that had been shutout for five straight periods going back to Saturday's 4-0 loss in Game 3.

Carolina carried a 2-0 lead into the third before Jakob Chychrun beat Frederik Andersen on a feed from Matt Roy after Roy had denied Carolina's chance to clear the zone. That score came at the 5:18 mark of the third to add a jolt of tension rippling through the Lenovo Center after Carolina had kept a firm grip on the game to that point.

But Hall -- acquired in January in the blockbuster deal that brought in Mikko Rantanen as the headliner -- made a veteran read to blunt that momentum.

After being knocked to the ice in the offensive zone, Hall was getting up as the Capitals pushed the puck toward the other end. But as Hall got to center ice, he was alone -- Washington coach Spencer Carbery said the defense lost track of Hall behind the forecheck and were too deep in the zone -- and the Hurricanes were on the verge of collecting the puck as it went around the end wall.

So Hall turned in back toward the blue line, straddling it long enough to stay onside until Jack Roslovic's long pass arrived to spring the breakaway chance.

"Yeah, everyone's asking me if I was cheating for offense," Hall said, adding; "I thought it was just something to try."

Hall skated in and beat Logan Thompson to the glove side at the 8:24 mark, pushing the margin back to 3-1.

"It's a read, we had possession of the puck," Brind'Amour said. "So that's actually a good play by him."

The Capitals again kept the pressure on with Ovechkin's blast past Andersen on a two-man advantage at the 12:14 mark, dampening the rowdy zeal in Carolina's home arena. But that's when Hall and Walker teamed up for the goal that would reassert control.

It started on a puck battle and the unusual sight of Washington's Rasmus Sandin skating in to get the puck from Walker, only to get the blade of his stick stuck in a gap along the boards. Walker got to his feet as Hall collected the puck, then flipped a pass to Walker as he charged up the left side.

Walker hesitated to cut inside Roslovic toward the slot and beat Thompson at the 16:45 mark, pushing the lead back to 4-2 in what became a backbreaking score.

"I feel like they were backchecking really hard, so I kind of just read that," Walker said. "Tried to be patient. Once I stepped inside, I felt like I had a good lane so I shot it, and just happy it went in."

Ovechkin's blast got the NHL's career goals leader on the scoresheet for the first time this series. Thompson finished with 32 saves.

"We're giving ourselves some opportunities, we're just not executing, making the play, whatever you want to call it," Washington coach Spencer Carbery said. "And making some mistakes -- and they're capitalizing."

To that point, the Eastern Conference's top seed got a quick start after a Game 3 shutout, starting with Connor McMichael getting a 1-on-1 chance on Andersen in the opening minute. Aliaksei Protas followed by ringing the right post shortly after.

Washington also managed only one shot on goal during a 4-minute power play, the first 3½ minutes of those coming to close the first period.

"Their penalty kill is excellent, best in the league, has been for the last, whatever, five years call it," Carbery said. "But it can't look like that. It cannot look like that."

Andrei Svechnikov added the empty-net clincher less than a minute later to deny Washington's bid to retake home-ice advantage, the capper to Carolina's steady response amid growing third-period danger.

"I think that's something that's really important, especially this time of year," Walker said. "You've got to answer when teams are making their push."

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

NHL playoffs 2025: Bracket, schedule, scores, highlights - ESPN

ESPN staff

ESPN staffMay 13, 2025, 05:15 AM ET

The 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs are here. The Winnipeg Jets are the NHL's top overall seed, having finished the regular season with the most points in the standings, and the Washington Capitals earned the No. 1 seed in the East.

This page will be your home throughout the postseason, including schedules, scores, highlights and other preview content.

Read on for the full playoff coverage from every first-round series all the way through the Stanley Cup Final.

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Full schedule

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Megapreview

Top 50 players

Lapsed fan's guide

Expert picks

Wyshynski's bracket

Contender flaws

Second round

Atlantic Division

A1 Toronto

Maple Leafs

vs.

A3 Florida

Panthers

Path to Round 2:

Maple Leafs: Defeated Senators in six

Panthers: Defeated Lightning in five

Leading scorers:

Maple Leafs: William Nylander (six goals, seven assists)

Panthers: Sam Bennett (five goals, three assists) and seven others tied with eight points

Schedule (Series tied 2-2):

Game 1: Maple Leafs 5, Panthers 4 | Recap

Game 2: Maple Leafs 4, Panthers 3 | Recap

Game 3: Panthers 5, Maple Leafs 4 (OT) | Recap

Game 4: Panthers 2, Maple Leafs 0 | Recap

Game 5: Panthers at Maple Leafs | May 14, 7 p.m. (ESPN)

Game 6: Maple Leafs at Panthers | May 16, TBD (TNT)

Game 7: Panthers at Maple Leafs | May 18, TBD (TNT)

Sam Bennett nets goal to double Panthers' lead

Sam Bennett's goal gives the Panthers a 2-0 lead halfway throughout the third period.

Metropolitan Division

M1 Washington

Capitals

vs.

M2 Carolina

Hurricanes

Path to Round 2:

Capitals: Defeated Canadiens in five

Hurricanes: Defeated Devils in five

Leading scorers:

Capitals: Dylan Strome (two goals, eight assists)

Hurricanes: Sebastian Aho (three goals, six assists)

Schedule (CAR leads 3-1):

Game 1: Hurricanes 2, Capitals 1 (OT) | Recap

Game 2: Capitals 3, Hurricanes 1 | Recap

Game 3: Hurricanes 4, Capitals 0 | Recap

Game 4: Hurricanes 5, Capitals 2 | Recap

Game 5: Hurricanes at Capitals | May 15, 7 p.m. (TNT)

Game 6: Capitals at Hurricanes | May 17, TBD

Game 7: Hurricanes at Capitals | May 19, TBD (ESPN)

Washington Capitals vs. Carolina Hurricanes: Game Highlights

Washington Capitals vs. Carolina Hurricanes: Game Highlights

Central Division

C1 Winnipeg

Jets

vs.

C2 Dallas

Stars

Path to Round 2:

Stars: Defeated Avalanche in seven

Jets: Defeated Blues in seven

Leading scorers:

Stars: Mikko Rantanen (nine goals, nine assists)

Jets: Kyle Connor (five goals, eight assists)

Schedule (DAL leads 2-1):

Game 1: Stars 3, Jets 2 | Recap

Game 2: Jets 4, Stars 0 | Recap

Game 3: Stars 5, Jets 2 | Recap

Game 4: Jets at Stars | May 13, 8 p.m. (ESPN)

Game 5: Stars at Jets | May 15, 9:30 p.m. (TNT)

Game 6: Jets at Stars | May 17, TBD

Game 7: Stars at Jets | May 19, TBD (ESPN)

Stars storm ahead with two goals in 49 seconds

Alexander Petrovic and Mikko Rantanen score back-to-back goals to give the Stars a 4-2 lead over the Jets in the third period.

Pacific Division

P1 Vegas

Golden Knights

vs.

P3 Edmonton

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Oilers

Path to Round 2:

Golden Knights: Defeated Wild in six

Oilers: Defeated Kings in six

Leading scorers:

Golden Knights: Jack Eichel (one goal, nine assists)

Oilers: Connor McDavid (three goals, 13 assists)

Schedule (EDM leads 3-1):

Game 1: Oilers 4, Golden Knights 2 | Recap

Game 2: Oilers 5, Golden Knights 4 (OT) | Recap

Game 3: Golden Knights 4, Oilers 3 | Recap

Game 4: Oilers 3, Golden Knights 0 | Recap

Game 5: Oilers at Golden Knights | May 14, 9:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Game 6: Golden Knights at Oilers | May 16, TBD (TNT)

Game 7: Oilers at Golden Knights | May 18, TBD (TNT)

Adam Henrique scores again to give Oilers 2-0 lead

Adam Henrique tallies his second goal of the first period to give Edmonton a 2-0 lead over Las Vegas.

First round

Atlantic Division

A1 Toronto

Maple Leafs

vs.

WC1 Ottawa

Senators

Regular-season records:

Maple Leafs: 52-26-4, 108 points

Senators: 45-30-7, 97 points

Leading scorers:

Maple Leafs: Mitch Marner (27 goals, 75 assists)

Senators: Tim Stutzle (24 goals, 55 assists)

Schedule (TOR wins 4-2):

Game 1: Maple Leafs 6, Senators 2 | Recap

Game 2: Maple Leafs 3, Senators 2 (OT) | Recap

Game 3: Maple Leafs 3, Senators 2 (OT) | Recap

Game 4: Senators 4, Maple Leafs 3 (OT) | Recap

Game 5: Senators 4, Maple Leafs 0 | Recap

Game 6: Maple Leafs 4, Senators 2 | Recap

Consensus pick: Maple Leafs

Keys to the offseason for the Senators

Auston Matthews sneaks in power-play goal for Toronto

Auston Matthews wrists in a power-play goal just past the goalie's skate late in the first period for the Maple Leafs.

A2 Tampa Bay

Lightning

vs.

A3 Florida

Panthers

Regular-season records:

Lightning: 47-27-8, 102 points

Panthers: 47-31-4, 98 points

Leading scorers:

Lightning: Nikita Kucherov (37 goals, 84 assists)

Panthers: Sam Reinhart (39 goals, 42 assists)

Schedule (FLA wins 4-1):

Game 1: Panthers 6, Lightning 2 | Recap

Game 2: Panthers 2, Lightning 0 | Recap

Game 3: Lightning 5, Panthers 1 | Recap

Game 4: Panthers 4, Lightning 2 | Recap

Game 5: Panthers 6, Lightning 3 | Recap

Consensus pick: Lightning

Keys to the offseason for the Lightning

Eetu Luostarinen's goal gives Panthers breathing room

Eetu Luostarinen doubles the Panthers' lead to give them some breathing room late vs. the Lightning.

Metropolitan Division

M1 Washington

Capitals

vs.

WC2 Montreal

Canadiens

Regular-season records:

Capitals: 51-22-9, 111 points

Canadiens: 40-31-11, 91 points

Leading scorers:

Capitals: Dylan Strome (29 goals, 53 assists)

Canadiens: Nick Suzuki (30 goals, 59 assists)

Schedule (WSH wins 4-1):

Game 1: Capitals 3, Canadiens 2 (OT) | Recap

Game 2: Capitals 3, Canadiens 1 | Recap

Game 3: Canadiens 6, Capitals 3 | Recap

Game 4: Capitals 5, Canadiens 2 | Recap

Game 5: Capitals 4, Canadiens 1 | Recap

CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Consensus pick: Capitals

Keys to the offseason for the Canadiens

Caps score empty-net goal, celebrate series win vs. Canadiens

Brandon Duhaime scores an empty-net goal for the Capitals that secures their Game 5 win over the Canadiens.

M2 Carolina

Hurricanes

vs.

M3 New Jersey

Devils

Regular-season records:

Hurricanes: 47-30-5, 99 points

Devils: 42-33-7, 91 points

Leading scorers:

Hurricanes: Sebastian Aho (29 goals, 45 assists)

Devils: Jesper Bratt (21 goals, 67 assists)

Schedule (CAR wins 4-1):

Game 1: Hurricanes 4, Devils 1 | Recap

Game 2: Hurricanes 3, Devils 1 | Recap

Game 3: Devils 3, Hurricanes 2 (2OT) | Recap

Game 4: Hurricanes 5, Devils 2 | Recap

Game 5: Hurricanes 5, Devils 4 (OT) | Recap

Consensus pick: Hurricanes

Keys to the offseason for the Devils

Sebastian Aho slots in a goal for Hurricanes

Sebastian Aho answers with the Hurricanes' fourth goal of the second period to tie the game 4-4 vs. the Devils.

Central Division

C1 Winnipeg

Jets

vs.

WC2 St. Louis

Blues

Regular-season records:

Jets: 56-22-4, 116 points

Blues: 44-30-8, 96 points

Leading scorers:

Jets: Kyle Connor (41 goals, 56 assists)

Blues: Robert Thomas (21 goals, 60 assists)

Schedule (WIN wins 4-3):

Game 1: Jets 5, Blues 3 | Recap

Game 2: Jets 2, Blues 1 | Recap

Game 3: Blues 7, Jets 2 | Recap

Game 4: Blues 5, Jets 1 | Recap

Game 5: Jets 5, Blues 3 | Recap

Game 6: Blues 5, Jets 2 | Recap

Game 7: Jets 4, Blues 3 (2OT) | Recap

Consensus pick: Jets

Keys to the offseason for the Blues

Jets score tying goal in final seconds of regulation

Cole Perfetti knocks in the tying goal for the Jets with one second remaining in regulation.

C2 Dallas

Stars

vs.

C3 Colorado

Avalanche

Regular-season records:

Stars: 50-26-6, 106 points

Avalanche: 49-29-4, 102 points

Leading scorers:

Stars: Matt Duchene (30 goals, 52 assists)

Avalanche: Nathan MacKinnon (32 goals, 84 assists)

Schedule (DAL wins 4-3):

Game 1: Avalanche 5, Stars 1 | Recap

Game 2: Stars 4, Avalanche 3 | Recap

Game 3: Stars 2, Avalanche 1 (OT) | Recap

Game 4: Avalanche 4, Stars 0 | Recap

Game 5: Stars 6, Avalanche 2 | Recap

Game 6: Avalanche 7, Stars 4 | Recap

Game 7: Stars 4, Avalanche 2 | Recap

Consensus pick: Avalanche

Keys to the offseason for the Avalanche

Stars fans go wild on Wyatt Johnston's go-ahead goal

Dallas takes a 3-2 lead over Colorado late in the third period in Game 7.

Pacific Division

P1 Vegas

Golden Knights

vs.

WC1 Minnesota

Wild

Regular-season records:

Golden Knights: 50-22-10, 110 points

Wild: 45-30-7, 97 points

Leading scorers:

Golden Knights: Jack Eichel (28 goals, 66 assists)

Wild: Matt Boldy (27 goals, 46 assists)

Schedule (VGK wins 4-2):

Game 1: Golden Knights 4, Wild 2 | Recap

Game 2: Wild 5, Golden Knights 2 | Recap

Game 3: Wild 5, Golden Knights 2 | Recap

Game 4: Golden Knights 4, Wild 3 (OT) | Recap

Game 5: Golden Knights 3, Wild 2 (OT) | Recap

Game 6: Golden Knights 3, Wild 2 | Recap

Consensus pick: Golden Knights

Keys to the offseason for the Wild

Jack Eichel puts Vegas ahead with his first goal of the series

Jack Eichel finds himself alone with the goalie and puts it in the net for a 2-1 Vegas lead.

P2 Los Angeles

Kings

vs.

P3 Edmonton

Oilers

Regular-season records:

Kings: 48-25-9, 105 points

Oilers: 48-29-5, 101 points

Leading scorers:

Kings: Adrian Kempe (35 goals, 38 assists)

Oilers: Leon Draisaitl (52 goals, 54 assists)

Schedule (Oilers win 4-2):

Game 1: Kings 6, Oilers 5 | Recap

Game 2: Kings 6, Oilers 2 | Recap

Game 3: Oilers 7, Kings 4 | Recap

Game 4: Oilers 4, Kings 3 (OT) | Recap

Game 5: Oilers 3, Kings 1 | Recap

Game 6: Oilers 6, Kings 4 | Recap

Consensus pick: Kings

Keys to the offseason for the Kings

Oilers go up 5-2 on Trent Frederic's goal

Trent Frederic's impressive goal pads the Oilers' lead in the second period.

2025 Stanley Cup playoffs, Conn Smythe odds and futures - ESPN

ESPN

Steve Levy to McAfee: We should be talking more about Mikko Rantanen, Stars (1:07)

Steve Levy joins Pat McAfee and breaks down Mikko Rantanen's hot play in the postseason for the Stars. (1:07)

ESPN

May 13, 2025, 10:01 AM ET

The Carolina Hurricanes took a 3-1 lead in the series against the Washington Capitals thanks to a 5-3 win. The Hurricanes are favorites to represent the East in the Stanley Cup Final and are -4000 to win this series against the Capitals, with the next game being Thursday night.

Monday night's other game saw the Edmonton Oilers (+260 to win the cup), take a 3-1 series lead in the Western Conference semifinals against the Vegas Golden Knights in part thanks to two goals from forward Adam Henrique. The Oilers will look to clinch on Wednesday as the series heads back to Nevada.

On Sunday, the Dallas Stars took a 2-1 series lead on the Winnipeg Jets, bouncing back from a 4-0 loss on Friday. Game 4 is Tuesday night in Dallas, the only game on action, and sees Mikko Rantanen and the Stars as -145 money line favorites.

Also on Sunday, the defending Cup champion Florida Panthers evened their series with the Toronto Maple Leafs at two games a piece. The Leafs won the first two games at home, but the Panthers won both their home games as the series heads back to Toronto for Game 5 on Wednesday.

Below, you can see the top contenders for the Conn Smythe trophy, as well as the odds for every team to win their current series, advance to the Final, and to win the Stanley Cup.

All odds accurate as of publish time. For more, go to ESPN BET.

Odds to win Conn Smythe Trophy

The Conn Smythe is awarded to the player deemed to have been the most valuable to his team throughout the playoffs. Players listed with 100-1 odds or better. More odds available at ESPN BET..

Connor McDavid, Oilers: +400

Mikko Rantanen, Stars: +450

Frederik Andersen, Hurricanes: +600

Leon Draisaitl, Oilers: 12-1

Aleksander Barkov, Panthers: 15-1

Sebastian Aho, Hurricanes: 18-1

Andrei Svechnikov, Hurricanes: 20-1

Jake Oettinger, Stars: 20-1

Sergei Bobrovsky, Panthers: 20-1

Seth Jarvis, Hurricanes: 20-1

William Nylander, Maple Leafs: 20-1

Connor Hellebuyck, Jets: 25-1

CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Matthew Tkachuk, Panthers: 25-1
Sam Reinhart, Panthers: 30-1
Auston Matthews, Maple Leafs: 40-1
Kyle Connor, Jets: 40-1
Wyatt Johnston, Stars: 40-1
Carter Verhaeghe, Panthers: 50-1
Mark Stone, Golden Knights: 50-1
Mitch Marner, Maple Leafs: 50-1
Jack Eichel, Golden Knights: 60-1
Alex Ovechkin, Capitals: 75-1
Brad Marchand, Panthers: 75-1
Jaccob Slavin, Hurricanes: 75-1
John Tavares, Maple Leafs: 75-1
Joseph Woll, Maple Leafs: 75-1
Logan Stankoven, Hurricanes: 75-1
Mark Scheifele, Jets: 75-1
Sam Bennett, Panthers: 75-1
Anthony Stolarz, Maple Leafs: 100-1
Dylan Strome, Capitals: 100-1
Evan Bouchard, Oilers: 100-1
Roope Hintz, Stars: 100-1

CAROLINA HURRICANES
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SPORTSNET™

Takeaways: Hurricanes stay undefeated at home, push Ovechkin's Capitals to brink

By: Sonny Sachdeva

After a sterling 2024-25 campaign that made the Washington Capitals the story of the season, Alex Ovechkin's club finds itself one loss away from a second-round exit.

Much was made of the single-summer turnaround that transformed the Caps into an Eastern Conference behemoth, just a year removed from clawing their way into the 2024 playoffs right before the doors closed. A five-game series victory over the Montreal Canadiens last month had the Caps faithful eyeing a deep post-season run for the first time since Washington's title-winning march in 2018.

But the Canes, nearing the end of their seventh-straight second-round appearance, have served Ovechkin and Co. a reality check, putting up back-to-back drubbings to earn a 3-1 series lead and push Washington to the brink of elimination.

Monday's addition to the pile — a 5-2 Canes victory that saw the Caps twice pull within a goal before Carolina put it out of reach — continued one particularly dominant trend that's taken shape through a round-and-a-half: Through five games at home in these playoffs, the Canes are a perfect 5-0, neither the New Jersey Devils nor the Caps able to get the better of Carolina's home cooking.

The five-game home streak to start the post-season is the fourth-longest such streak any playoff club has strung together in the past decade. The leader on that list? Carolina, just a few years ago (seven straight home wins, 2022).

That's bad news for Ovechkin's squad. Because while the series moves back to D.C. for a Game 5 that could keep Washington's season alive, the Caps would have to win under the Lenovo Center lights in Raleigh — and upend the Canes' streak of home-ice dominance — to force a Game 7.

Before we get there, let's take a look at how Carolina took Game 4 on Monday night.

Canes continue to overwhelm Capitals with shot-attempts onslaught

Heading into Game 4, there was plenty of discussion about Carolina's volume-shooting mentality, particularly the club's affinity for racking up wild numbers of shot attempts through an unending stream of pucks fired at the cage.

In Game 1 against Washington, Carolina amassed a staggering 94 attempts to the Capitals' 34. Over the first three games in total, the Canes managed 256 shot attempts, nearly doubling the Caps' 133.

Game 4 was a similar story. While Washington upped their output, managing a series-high 55 shot attempts, the Hurricanes still finished far ahead with 73, outpacing in terms of shots on goal by a margin of 37-21, too.

While the approach doesn't necessarily mean Brind'Amour's squad has been racking up quality opportunity after quality opportunity, the relentless shooting does serve another purpose, according to his opposing coach — it wears teams down.

"When you look at the shot attempts, sometimes they're jaw-dropping," Caps head coach Spencer Carbery said of the Canes' volume shooting earlier in the series. "And when they flash across the screen, people are like, 'Whoa, that doesn't seem to look good.' Which I agree with — but we've played Carolina long enough to know that … when you look into the quality looks, you can take a little bit of, 'Okay, it wasn't that bad, even though it felt a lot worse.' If you dig into the successes of their system, one of the reasons is — as a coach, as a player, as a fan — when you're watching that transpire, you're like, 'Holy, this team is absolutely crushing the other team.' When, if you look at the odds of some of those shots going in, they're not high, on a goaltender at this level.

"But what they do is it stresses you — it stresses your team, it stresses your coach. Usually, when you do that, when you're applying pressure to someone, eventually you crack."

Andersen finally beaten, but remains in dominant form for surging Canes

While the Caps are trying to navigate the chaos of Carolina's offensive approach, the situation hasn't been much better for them on the other end of the sheet.

Frederik Andersen has been among the best netminders in the post-season to this point — coming into Game 4, the 35-year-old sported a league-leading .940 save percentage, and was fresh off a Game 3 shutout that helped his club pull ahead in the series. That streak extended to five goalless periods Monday before Washington was finally able to get a puck past the Great Dane.

Still, with his squad seemingly on the cusp of a ticket to the Conference Final, Andersen now sports an elite .935 save percentage, which ranks among the best marks of his playoff career. In all, he extended his shutout streak to just over 118 minutes before Jakob Chychrun beat him in the third period Monday night — the longest such streak of his career.

The blue-liners in front of Andersen have been making their presence known too — aside from the three-goal Game 2 that earned Washington its lone win, the Canes' defence has held the Caps' scorers to two or fewer goals in three of four games in this series. The same was true Monday, where Carolina's blue line — courtesy of tallies from Shayne Gostisbehere and Sean Walker — managed as many goals as a Washington offence that ranked second-best league-wide during the regular season.

Ovechkin finally breaks through, but it may be too late

If there's one positive the visitors can take from the tilt, it's the signs of life seen from their captain.

Coming into Game 4, things were looking dismal for the league's all-time goal-scoring king. After potting four goals through five games against the Montreal Canadiens in Round 1, Alex Ovechkin came into Monday's Game 4 goalless in three straight. More worrying, the chances had dried up too. The Great Eight had hit the net just eight times through three games. After managing five one-timer attempts in Round 1, per the broadcast, he had none in Games 1-3 in Round 2.

But late in the third period of Game 4, with his team's season on the line, the captain finally found his touch — wiring a blistering one-timer past Andersen to net his first goal of the series, pulling the Capitals within a goal with time to tie it up.

It was a crucial moment for Washington's power play, too — the Caps' man-advantage unit had gone 4-for-20 through the post-season up until this night, their four power-play markers the fewest among any remaining playoff squad. They'd come up short time and time again throughout Game 4 as well. On the other side of the ledger, the Canes had allowed just one power-play goal against, on 22 opportunities, before Ovechkin's third-period marker.

It took a five-on-three opportunity to break through, but the Caps found one when they seemingly needed one most. Unfortunately for Carbery's squad, it took only four-and-a-half minutes for the Canes to douse the comeback attempt, with Walker scoring to restore Carolina's 4-2 lead, and the home side adding an empty-netter before all was said and done.

If Ovechkin can carry the breakthrough into Game 5 and build on it, perhaps the Caps found something to hold onto Monday night. But the fact it came this late in the series — four games and three losses in — may render it all a footnote before the week is through.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

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NHL Playoffs 2025: Stanley Cup schedule, bracket, scores, as Hurricanes, Oilers take 3-1 series leads

By: Austin Nivison

The Carolina Hurricanes took a 3-1 series lead against the Washington Capitals after coming away with a 5-2 win in Game 4 on Monday. A similar scenario played out in the Western Conference as the Edmonton Oilers also gained a 3-1 series lead thanks to a 3-0 win versus the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 4.

The Hurricanes won their second consecutive game at home and never trailed in Game 4. The Capitals were able to cut the deficit to one goal on multiple occasions after defenseman Jakob Chychrun and winger Alex Ovechkin found the back of the net. However, forward Taylor Hall provided the game-winning goal, as well as assisting on defenseman Sean Walker's insurance tally just moments later.

Hall's two-point performance ended up being the difference, and landed him a spot on our 3 Stars of the Night on Monday.

NHL Playoffs 2025: Adam Henrique helps Oilers top Golden Knights, headlines 3 Stars of the Night

Chris Bengel

NHL Playoffs 2025: Adam Henrique helps Oilers top Golden Knights, headlines 3 Stars of the Night

Meanwhile, the Oilers imposed their will against the Golden Knights and never were in danger of losing Game 4. Veteran forward Adam Henrique recorded his first two-goal game since the 2012 postseason, while teammate Evander Kane added a goal and an assist to lead the way for Edmonton. Oilers goaltender Stuart Skinner, who continued to fill in for an injured Calvin Pickard, turned aside all 24 shots that he faced.

The Stanley Cup Playoffs continue on Tuesday when the Dallas Stars host the Winnipeg Jets in Game 4 of their second-round series. Winnipeg will attempt to even the series after suffering a 5-2 loss to Dallas in Game 3 on Sunday.

For the complete schedule and results for every matchup, follow along right here at CBS Sports.

Round 2

(1) Toronto Maple Leafs vs. (3) Florida Panthers

Game 1: Maple Leafs 5, Panthers 4 | Recap

Game 2: Maple Leafs 4, Panthers 3 | Recap

Game 3: Panthers 5, Maple Leafs 4 (OT) | Recap

Game 4: Panthers 2, Maple Leafs 0 | Recap

Game 5: Wednesday, May 14 | 7 p.m. | at TOR | ESPN

Game 6: Friday, May 16 | TBD | at FLA | TNT/truTV/Max

*Game 7: Sunday, May 18 | TBD | at TOR | TNT/Max

(1) Washington Capitals vs. (2) Carolina Hurricanes

Game 1: Hurricanes 2, Capitals 1 (OT) | Recap

Game 2: Capitals 3, Hurricanes 1 | Recap

Game 3: Hurricanes 4, Capitals 0 | Recap

Game 4: Hurricanes 5, Capitals 2 | Recap

Game 5: Thursday, May 15 | 7 p.m. | at WSH | TNT/truTV/Max

*Game 6: Saturday, May 17 | TBD | at CAR | TBD

*Game 7: Monday, May 19 | TBD | at WSH | ESPN

(1) Winnipeg Jets vs. (2) Dallas Stars

Game 1: Stars 3, Jets 2 | Recap

Game 2: Jets 4, Stars 0 | Recap

Game 3: Stars 5, Jets 2 | Recap

Game 4: Tuesday, May 13 | 8 p.m. | at DAL | ESPN

Game 5: Thursday, May 15 | 9:30 p.m. | at Jets | TNT/truTV/Max

*Game 6: Saturday, May 17 | TBD | at DAL | TBD

*Game 7: Monday, May 19 | TBD | at WPG | ESPN

(1) Vegas Golden Knights vs. (3) Edmonton Oilers

Game 1: Oilers 4, Golden Knights 2 | Recap

Game 2: Oilers 5, Golden Knights 4 (OT) | Recap

Game 3: Golden Knights 4, Oilers 3 | Recap

Game 4: Oilers 3, Golden Knights 0 | Recap

Game 5: Wednesday, May 14 | 9:30 p.m. | at VGK | ESPN

*Game 6: Friday, May 16 | TBD | at EDM | TNT/truTV/Max

*Game 7: Sunday, May 18 | TBD | at VGK | TNT/Max

Round 1

(1) Toronto Maple Leafs vs. (WC1) Ottawa Senators

Game 1: Maple Leafs 6, Senators 2 | Recap

Game 2: Maple Leafs 3, Senators 2 (OT) | Recap

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Game 3: Maple Leafs 3, Senators 2 (OT) | Recap
Game 4: Senators 4, Maple Leafs 3 (OT) | Recap
Game 5: Senators 4, Maple Leafs 0 | Recap
Game 6: Maple Leafs 4, Senators 2 | Recap
(2)Tampa Bay Lightning vs. (3) Florida Panthers
Game 1: Panthers 6, Lightning 2 | Recap
Game 2: Panthers 2, Lightning 0 | Recap
Game 3: Lightning 5, Panthers 1 | Recap
Game 4: Panthers 4, Lightning 2 | Recap
Game 5: Panthers 6, Lightning 3 | Recap
(1) Washington Capitals vs. (WC2) Montreal Canadiens
Game 1: Capitals 3, Canadiens 2 (OT) | Recap
Game 2: Capitals 3, Canadiens 1 | Recap
Game 3: Canadiens 6, Capitals 3 | Recap
Game 4: Capitals 5, Canadiens 2 | Recap
Game 5: Capitals 4, Canadiens 1 | Recap
(2) Carolina Hurricanes vs. (3) New Jersey Devils
Game 1: Hurricanes 4, Devils 1 | Recap
Game 2: Hurricanes 3, Devils 1 | Recap
Game 3: Devils 3, Hurricanes 2 (2OT) | Recap
Game 4: Hurricanes 5, Devils 2 | Recap
Game 5: Hurricanes 5, Devils 4 (2OT) | Recap
(1) Winnipeg Jets vs. (WC2) St. Louis Blues
Game 1: Jets 5, Blues 3 | Recap
Game 2: Jets 2, Blues 1 | Recap
Game 3: Blues 7, Jets 2 | Recap
Game 4: Blues 5, Jets 1 | Recap
Game 5: Jets 5, Blues 3 | Recap
Game 6: Blues 5, Jets 2 | Recap
Game 7: Jets 4, Blues 3 (2OT) | Recap
(2) Dallas Stars vs. (3) Colorado Avalanche
Game 1: Avalanche 5, Stars 1 | Recap
Game 2: Stars 4, Avalanche 3 (OT) | Recap
Game 3: Stars 2, Avalanche 1 (OT) | Recap
Game 4: Avalanche 4, Stars 0 | Recap
Game 5: Stars 6, Avalanche 2 | Recap
Game 6: Avalanche 7, Stars 4 | Recap
Game 7: Stars 4, Avalanche 2 | Recap
(1) Vegas Golden Knights vs. (WC1) Minnesota Wild
Game 1: Golden Knights 4, Wild 2 | Recap
Game 2: Wild 5, Golden Knights 2 | Recap
Game 3: Wild 5, Golden Knights 2 | Recap
Game 4: Golden Knights 4, Wild 3 (OT) | Recap
Game 5: Golden Knights 3, Wild 2 (OT) | Recap
Game 6: Golden Knights 3, Wild 2 | Recap
(2) Los Angeles Kings vs. (3) Edmonton Oilers
Game 1: Kings 6, Oilers 5 | Recap
Game 2: Kings 6, Oilers 2 | Recap
Game 3: Oilers 7, Kings 4 | Recap
Game 4: Oilers 4, Kings 3 (OT) | Recap
Game 5: Oilers 3, Kings 1 | Recap
Game 6: Oilers 6, Kings 4 | Recap

CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Hurricanes win Game 4, on Brink of Advancing to the Eastern Conference Finals

By: EvanTHB

The Carolina Hurricanes took Game 4 Monday night, bringing the team within one victory of the Eastern Conference Finals.

Washington played much better, but Carolina stuck to their game and responded each time the Capitals grabbed some momentum.

The Canes put together another team effort as 12 players tallied a point.

Taylor Hall and Sean Walker led the Hurricanes with two points. Each scored a goal, with Walker's impressive delay and sidestep snipe being his first career playoff goal.

Frederik Andersen stopped 19 of 21 shots. Once again, Andersen was a difference-maker, blanking the Caps during the first two periods and stopping several high-percentage shots.

The Capitals started on time. For the first ten minutes of the game, Washington controlled the play and had a couple of Grade A chances.

A team effort kept the puck in the zone, and Shayne Gostisbehere's dangling on the blue line led to the Canes' first goal.

Once the Hurricanes found their game, the meat grinder started to turn. Carolina's forecheck ramped up, spending the rest of the first period in Washington's end.

In the second, the Canes picked up where they left off in the first.

A forced turnover by the Caps led to a Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis breakout. Washington goalie Logan Thompson could not wrangle Aho's shot, and Jarvis put the rebound home for a 2-0 lead.

Washington found some rhythm halfway through the period, but could not solve Andersen.

Washington created some odd-man rushes with some forced turnovers in the neutral zone.

The momentum generated by the Capitals in the latter half of the second period spilled over into the third.

The Capitals scored for the first time in five periods when Jakob Chychrun streaked to the net and scored on a weak-side one-timer.

Washington kept pressing, but ended up doing too much. The Caps' offensive aggressiveness led to the Canes taking advantage behind the defense.

Great vision by Jack Roslovic led to a Hall breakaway goal to restore Carolina's two-goal lead.

With about eight minutes left in the game, interference on Dmitry Orlov gave Washington a 1:18 two-man advantage. The Caps scored just 17 seconds into the two-man advantage to bring them back within one.

Alexander Ovechkin tallied his first point of the series with the goal on the two-man advantage.

The Hurricanes returned to their game and were rewarded just over four minutes later.

Great board play forced a turnover and led to a three-on-two breakout. Walker's dangle, pause, and sidestep led to a highlight reel goal worthy of his first career playoff marker.

A minute later, Andrei Svechnikov put the exclamation point on the game with an empty net goal.

The Hurricanes defeated the Capitals 5-2 and took a 3-1 series lead. Carolina is 8-0 when up 3-1 in a playoff series.

Game 5 is Thursday at 7:00 PM in Washington, DC.

CAROLINA HURRICANES
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The Hockey News

'You Just Try To Leave Everything Out There': Rod Brind'Amour, Seth Jarvis, Dmitry Orlov, Taylor Hall, Sean Walker On Game 4 Win, Chance To Advance

By: Ryan Henkel

May 12, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker (26) scores a goal against the Washington Capitals during the third period in game four of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. (James Guillory-Imagn Images)May 12, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker (26) scores a goal against the Washington Capitals during the third period in game four of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. (James Guillory-Imagn Images)

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Washington Capitals 5-2 in Game 4 Monday night at Lenovo Center to take a 3-1 series lead.

The Canes struck early and often as they once again overwhelmed the Capitals through the 60-minute affair.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour, along with Seth Jarvis, Dmitry Orlov, Taylor Hall and Sean Walker, spoke with the media in Raleigh. Here's what they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On getting contributions all throughout the lineup: That's how we have to do it to get it done. We've done it that year all year and that's what's expected. Everyone is expected to chip in. That's obviously what is happening.

On the response goals in the third period: Those were huge plays, obviously. You need those plays. That's the difference, right? Getting those individual efforts. That's really what those were. Good plays, but burying, finishing your chances at crucial times of the game. Both those goals were huge for us.

On Taylor Hall getting a pass for not backchecking on his goal: It was a read. We had possession of the puck, so it was actually a good play by him.

On if he expected Hall to fit as well as he has: Not right away. I think it took a while. I didn't really know... obviously knew the player, but didn't know where his game was at. Hadn't really watched him the last little while. It was good then to just give him a clean slate. Just told him, 'You show us what you have,' and that's kind of what he's done. I think he's come in here and just wanted to be a part of it and not anything more than that. He's clearly been a good addition for us.

On if the national media's focus on Carolina being a "shot volume team" annoys him: It's lazy. Because you're not really watching the game then. You're picking out a part of it. But there's a method to all of it. Anyway, it doesn't irk me, it's fine. It is what you're trying to do. Put pucks to the net. Like, that's how you score.

On Sean Walker taking shifts with Jaccob Slavin: Jaccob kind of played in the third, if you noticed, a little more than normal. So he was playing with everybody and we know why. But Walks has just been solid and we've been talking about him a little bit here lately. I think his game has gone up another level and he's earned that ice time if that's how you want to look at it. Clearly, that goal tonight was an indicator of what he's capable of. I know his numbers maybe weren't great this year that way, but you watched him all year, he had a lot of good opportunities. He's capable of doing that.

On the penalty kill: The kill was huge tonight, obviously. I know they got one 5v3, but I think it's all about timing too. Early in the game, we have six minutes of penalties in the first period and that just takes you right out of anything. To be able to come out of their with the lead was a big key. Our kill has been solid and obviously that was a big part of tonight.

On the core's experience: There's certainly no panic when things don't go our way. Tonight, they were closing the gap and we just kept playing. Our older guys have been through this and even our not so old guys have been through it for a few years. So I think there's a little bit of maturity there.

On Frederik Andersen: You look at the end of the night and I'm like, '21 shots?' Felt like a lot worse than that, but there were a lot of close ones and early. I know they hit the post on one, but he made some big saves. It's just a different game when you can play from in front, that's for sure.

On if he feels his team is getting stronger as the series goes along: I don't know. I mean, if I'm just honest about how I feel about it, I thought our first two games might have been better than some of these games. Just the way the game went and the chances we've given up. A little too much here for me, but obviously at this time of the year, it's about results. I like where we're at, that's for sure.

On Jalen Chatfield potentially tweaking something: Yeah. He did [pull up] but he seemed fine after. I guess we'll find out more tomorrow.

Seth Jarvis

On if he felt like they broke Washington's will in this game: No. There's still another game and the hardest one to win is the one to close it out. We know they're experienced and that they've been through a lot of playoffs and a lot of runs, so we're expecting their best next game. But it's a good step in the right direction.

On the response goals: It's amazing. Hallsy's was huge. Walks... We had contributions all across the board. Guys stepped up. That's why you bring those guys in. To make the impact that they had tonight.

On Taylor Hall: He won the Hart for a reason. He's an elite player. Still is. You love to see a guy like that get rewarded and to come up in a situation like this when it really matters, was awesome to see.

On the penalty kill: It's huge. You never want to [have to rely on it], but when the time comes, everyone answers the bell really well. Your best penalty killer is always your goalie and Freddie played amazing again. We as a unit did really well and just hopefully we can keep it going.

On his spinning, no-look pass: Fishy made a great play to me there coming late and then I saw the D trying to poach and I knew Svechy was there. You could hear him from across the ice coming down. Just tried to get the puck to him. He's hit like six crossbars this series, so more are bound to go in. Just have to keep feeding him and he's going to put them in.

On having Andersen's back with some goal scoring: He's had our back all series, so it's about time we helped him out a little bit. Not that he needed it. He played great and there's not a lot he could do on those goals. It's nice to see them start going in though and nice to contribute offensively and not have to rely on him so much.

On getting on the scoresheet: It's been a while it feels like. I've had some chances and to get one like that is great. Hopefully it's a sign of things to come.

On getting contributions up and down the lineup: It's not bad. Exactly what we want.

On having a chance to advance in Game 5: It's nice to be on this side of it. Just the opportunity to end it is huge. You don't want to give them any life, give them any hope so hopefully we finish the job over there.

On if he thinks Washington is feeling the pressure: They're desperate. I think everyone knows the situation. We just have to match their desperation and up it and make sure we come ready to go because they're going to give us their best and we just have to be prepared for it.

Dmitry Orlov

On the defensive effort: Freddie, obviously, was great today again. When we have bad breaks, he makes the saves at the right time and keeps us in the game. They have a good team. We see how they play. Sometimes breaks happen, but you have to find ways and block shots and be in lanes. It's always huge in these moments of the games. Obviously we're happy where we are in the series, but it's not over. It's always hard to finish and now we just have to reset, take a rest and be ready for the next game.

On what was going though his mind when he went to the box to make it a 5v3: There was a lot going on. Almost shit myself there, you know? The boys, they didn't allow a second one. Marty also had a chance on a 2-on-1 and I was hoping he would score that to make it easier on us. It was a bad play by me taking that penalty. Obviously they scored 5v3, but overall, the PK was good. Just need to be smarter and not lose concentration on certain plays.

On if he can sense Washington's growing frustrations: Yeah. When you lose, it doesn't matter which team you played against, sometimes frustration doesn't help. I think they have a lot of experience and they're going to figure it out. But on our side, we don't need to worry about them. We need to worry about us and our system and how we want to play.

On the team's overall effort: It's what you try to do. It's playoff hockey and you just try to leave everything out there. Sacrifice for your teammates. That's how you win. Sometimes you can cheat a game, but you have to put your face out there to try and stop the puck. Make a big hit or take a big hit to make a play. All these small things make a difference in the playoffs and that's what you try to do and what we need to keep doing.

On Taylor Hall: Especially the breakaway goal was huge. Two-goal lead again and gives us a breath. It's an individual play, an individual read to stay at the far blueline and he got the puck and just used his chance and basically finished the game.

On Sean Walker: He's skating well, has skill offensively and defensively he plays hard. He's a perfect fit for this organization and for us he's been playing great all season. Today he finally got rewarded and scored and got an assist. It's awesome. We need everyone. Sometimes it's different guys who score or who make a nice play. We need everyone.

On having a chance to close out the series: Right now, we'll get our workout done, get an off-day tomorrow, enjoy a little bit of rest, and then come in on Wednesday, practice and then fly to D.C. Then we're going to be focused on finishing the series and obviously we're going to do video to see what we did wrong and what we can do better and get ready.

On if the pressure is on their shoulder: It's never easy to close a series. It's always the hardest game of the series. It's going to be a lot of emotions, a lot of scrums. They'll battle for their lives, for their season. It's important that we are ready. We cannot just come and expect it to be easy. It's not going to be easy. We have to be more focused on them and bring it more than they do.

Taylor Hall

On what he was seeing on his breakaway goal: I got my head up and just tried to look where the goalie was. He plays somewhat deep in his net, so shooting is a pretty good option. If you deke, he's going to have a better chance at it, so I just picked my corner and it was a good shot.

On how he got that open: Everyone was asking me if I was cheating for offense, but I just kind of read that Sean was going to rim the puck around and Rosey was going to have a bit of time. If I didn't get a breakaway there, we were going to exit with possession, so I thought it was just something to try. Rosey and I made eye contact and he made a great pass. We needed that goal.

On if they feel like they're just a step ahead of the Capitals: I mean, we don't feel like that. They had some really good pressure at times tonight and we had to rely on Freddie probably more than we would like. They're a very good offensive team. They have skilled players throughout their lineup and they're not afraid to make plays at all times. The play is never really dead when you're playing against them,

but obviously we like where we're at. We have a couple days here to regroup and it's about trying to go into their building and play the best that we can.

On if they can feel Washington getting frustrated: I don't know. That's a question for them. I don't know how they're feeling. I think we still have some things in our game that we can get better at. The series isn't over until it's over. An elimination game is always the hardest one to win and they're probably going to play their best game of the series in Game 5. So we'll be ready.

On if Washington started to open up as the game went along: A bit. In Game 3, you could see that they really tried to open it up when they got down and tonight was a little bit of the same. But they're probably pretty happy with how they played. They had some good looks and they drew a lot of penalties which is a sign that they were making plays and putting us on our heels a little bit. But it's the playoffs and momentum swings are kind of everything. So it's about managing those and trying to just step on the pedal no matter what the score is and trying to get the crowd momentum back in our favor.

On the opportunity he now has in Carolina: It's what you kind of train for and look forward to when you're in the summer, in the dog days and certainly when I was in Chicago in the bottom of the league, bottom of the standings. Kind of knew I was going to get traded here and didn't know what to expect from the group or from the fans and obviously I felt really comfortable here and it's an amazing group of guys. It's been a lot of fun to get to this point and know that we have a lot more left.

On if he knew his game would fit the Hurricanes as well as it has: I had a feeling it would be a good match. I played a lot of games here with Jersey, had a playoff series with Boston here. As soon as I got here and they gave the systems run down and showed me video, I was even more happy with how things were probably going to go. It was a tough start for me statistically, but I got going and found a good rhythm. I think off the ice, I felt like a part of the group really quickly and that helped everything else. But the style of play is aggressive, it's in your face and once you get the hang of it, there's not a lot of thinking and that bodes well for my game.

Sean Walker

On his goal: As far as I remember, the play just kind of got pinched off at the blueline and then the puck squirted out. Hallsy made a great play to keep it going and then saw me coming. I felt like they were backchecking really hard, so I kind of just read that and tried to be patient. Once I stepped inside, I felt like I had a good lane and so I shot it and just happy it went in.

On the response goals: I think that's something that is really important, especially at this time of year. You have to answer when teams are making their push. Obviously you don't want to give up those goals, especially late in the third, but I think as a whole, we kept our composure, didn't really panic and just stuck to our systems. Again, Hallsy made a great play on his goal and happy that I got mine too. Worked out well.

On the penalty kill: I think obviously special teams is such a key at this time of the year. Again, we don't want to be relying on our penalty kill as much as we have, but we're really confident when those guys are going out there that we're going to get the job done. Obviously 5v3, there's a better chance that they're going to score, but 5v4 I think we did a really solid job. That's what we're looking for every night.

On Frederik Andersen: I think it's just so apparent the confidence that he's giving us. We can play a lot more aggressive. Mistakes are going to happen, but he's been bailing us out tons. Just going out there every night and just knowing that he's back there and he's playing unbelievable really, so it's really comforting feeling. Like we said, we don't want to rely on him as much as we have. Some grade-As we're giving up, but those are things we're going to look at. Again, he's playing really well and it's giving us a great chance every night.

On playing alongside Jaccob Slavin in the third: I think the adjustment is so easy. He's so unbelievable to play with. I don't think there's enough positives that you could say about a guy like that. Transition was easy. You just go out there and try to do your job and he's kind of taking care of a lot of it for you. So yeah, it felt great.

Former Hurricanes Forward Fined For Dangerous Hit

By: Michael DeRosa

Max Domi (© Dennis Schneidler-Imagn Images)Max Domi (© Dennis Schneidler-Imagn Images)

NHL Player Safety has announced that former Carolina Hurricanes forward Max Domi has been fined $5,000 for boarding Aleksander Barkov during the Toronto Maple Leafs' Game 4 matchup against the Florida Panthers on May 12. This is the most Domi could have been fined under the current CBA.

The incident occurred in the final seconds of Game 4 between the Maple Leafs and Panthers. While both teams were battling for the puck, Domi hit Barkov from behind into the boards. For the hit, Domi was handed a five-minute major for boarding at the 20:00 mark of the third period.

Domi is known for being a gritty player, but the former Hurricanes forward took it too far with this hit on Barkov. Because of it, he has now been fined.

Domi, 30, was acquired by the Hurricanes from the Columbus Blue Jackets during the 2021-22 season in a three-team trade involving the Panthers. In 19 regular-season games with the Hurricanes following the move, he posted two goals, seven points, 18 penalty minutes, and a plus-8 rating. He also appeared in 14 playoff games for the Hurricanes in 2022, recording three goals, six points, and a plus-6 rating.

Domi's time with the Hurricanes ended during the 2022 NHL off-season when he signed a one-year, $3 million contract with the Chicago Blackhawks in free agency.

Former Hurricanes Forward Is Red-Hot Right Now

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

By: Michael DeRosa

Nino Niederreiter (© Tim Fuller-Imagn Images)Nino Niederreiter (© Tim Fuller-Imagn Images)

The Winnipeg Jets fell to the Dallas Stars in Game 3 of their second matchup by a 5-2 final score. With this, the Jets are now down 2-1 in the series and will aim to tie it back up on the road in Game 4. While the Jets lost, former Carolina Hurricanes forward Nino Niederreiter did his part to try to get them a victory.

At the 10:07 mark of the second period, Niederreiter scored to tie the contest up at 2-2. The former Hurricanes forward's goal was a nice one, too, as he received a great feed from Jets defenseman Josh Morrissey before beating Stars goalie Jake Oettinger with an excellent snap shot.

With this goal, Niederreiter has extended his point streak to three games, where he has two goals and an assist over the span. In addition, he now has four goals and six points in his last six contests. Thus, the former Hurricane is certainly hot right now for the Jets.

During his tenure with the Hurricanes, Niederreiter was impactful because of his secondary scoring ability and tenacity. He is providing just that for the Jets this post-season, and now ranks second on Winnipeg with four goals and fourth on the team with six points in 10 playoff games.

Healthy Scratch To Impact Player: Jack Roslovic Stepping Up For Carolina Hurricanes

By: Ryan Henkel

May 10, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes center Jack Roslovic (96) celebrates his goal against the Washington Capitals during the second period in game three of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. (James Guillory-Imagn Images)May 10, 2025; Raleigh, North Carolina, USA; Carolina Hurricanes center Jack Roslovic (96) celebrates his goal against the Washington Capitals during the second period in game three of the second round of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center. (James Guillory-Imagn Images)

Jack Roslovic wasn't on the ice when the Carolina Hurricanes clinched their first-round series. He wasn't even on the bench.

Instead, the forward was watching from a press box on the fifth level of Lenovo Center, having been a healthy scratch for the past two games.

Despite tying his career-high in goals (22) and appearing in all but one regular season game (he only missed that one due to illness too), the 28-year-old wasn't in the lineup in a critical game.

Roslovic had started the series against New Jersey, even having a hand in the team's opening goal in Game 1, but after a double overtime loss in Game 3, he found himself replaced by trade deadline acquisition, Mark Jankowski.

"We talked before the series that I wanted to get [Mark Jankowski] in there, but it was just that for the first time all year, we get to the playoffs and were fully healthy up front, which we hadn't had that," said Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour on the decision to change his lineup. "It was a tough decision to leave him off to start, but I felt like after the other night, it was a good time to throw him in."

It's not easy being the odd-man out, but it was going to have to be somebody.

With 14 healthy forwards on the roster, Carolina had some tough decisions to make.

"That was not an easy decision," Brind'Amour said. "It was the first time we had been healthy all year. Basically the start of the playoffs up front.

"It wasn't because of his play or any reason to take him out, we just can't dress everybody."

Roslovic doesn't pretend to be unfazed by the situation. I mean, like every NHL player, he's a competitor. He wants to be out there. But he's also mature enough to know it's not about him.

"From the day that I got here, I realized the buy in, and it sounds cliche, but the comradery and the way we're coached and the way we all buy in to one system," Roslovic said.

Roslovic was still watching from above when the Canes started their second-round series against the Washington Capitals, but after Jankowski went down with an injury in that opening game, Roslovic had an opportunity to get right back into the lineup.

"We made that decision knowing that if someone gets hurt, he's the one going in," Brind'Amour said. "There was no second guessing that."

Game 2 was a good showing for the versatile forward, outchancing the Capitals 20-8 in his minutes, but the team just wasn't able to find the scoresheet.

But in Game 3, Roslovic made his presence felt with a huge goal, giving the Hurricanes a 2-0 lead heading into the third period, which led to them eventually putting the hammer down at the end.

"It's a deep team, a really good team so it's nice to come back and try to help the guys out as best I can," Roslovic said.

He also picked up another assist in that game and continued to be strong in the dot, now with a 57.1% faceoff win percentage this postseason.

"Obviously that was a huge goal," Brind'Amour said. "During the regular season, he's a guy that can score. When he gets a chance, he can put it in the net and he did tonight. He's got a lot of value to us because he plays center, plays right wing, is great on the power play. We're lucky to have gotten him."

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

Athlon Sports

NHL's Immediate Reaction to Alex Ovechkin's Historic Playoff Milestone

By: Antonio Losada

Game 4 in Raleigh brought more trouble for the Washington Capitals as they fell 5-2 to the Carolina Hurricanes and slipped into a 3-1 series hole.

Even with Washington on the brink of elimination after finishing the regular season with the most points among Eastern Conference teams, a moment from Alex Ovechkin earned attention from the NHL's official X account.

Midway through the night, the NHL reposted a Bleacher Report's B/R Open Ice graphic celebrating Ovechkin's 77th career playoff goal, which pushed him past Mario Lemieux for 12th place all-time in league history.

"THE GR8EST GOAL SCORER WITH ANOTHER MILESTONE 😱," B/R Open Ice wrote. "Ovi has passed Mario Lemieux for 12th all-time on the playoff goals list 🚨."

Ovechkin's goal came on a 5-on-3 power play with just over seven minutes left in regulation, with Dylan Strome recording his ninth assist of the playoffs on the play.

It was another trademarked shot by Ovechkin, finding the net from his office in the left circle, beating Canes goalie Frederik Andersen clean and cutting Carolina's lead to 3-2.

The goal marked a moment of hope for Washington, which had trailed all game long, but Carolina answered quickly, removing all chances of a comeback.

Sean Walker scored his first playoff goal with 3:15 remaining to reestablish a two-goal cushion before Andrei Svechnikov iced the game with an empty-netter for the final 5-2 outcome.

Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) scores a goal against the Carolina Hurricanes at Lenovo Center.James Guillory-Imagn Images

Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) scores a goal against the Carolina Hurricanes at Lenovo Center.James Guillory-Imagn Images

Capitals defenseman Jakob Chychrun scored earlier in the third period to cut Carolina's lead in half, making it 2-1, for the only other goal scored by Washington.

The Hurricanes lead the best-of-7 series 3-1 with Game 5 set for puck drop at 7 p.m. ET on Thursday at Capital One Arena in Washington.

Related: Capitals Make Alex Ovechkin Announcement During Game 4 Loss to Hurricanes

CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Sports Illustrated

Carolina Hurricanes' Depth Pushes Washington Capitals to Brink of Elimination

By: Jacob Punturi

The Washington Capitals are in unfamiliar territory after their most recent loss to the Carolina Hurricanes. Following the Hurricanes' 5-2 victory in Game 4, Carolina jumped to a 3-1 series lead over the top-seeded Capitals.

The difference for the Hurricanes right now is depth. Through four games, they are getting far more from their entire lineup compared to the Capitals. Game 4 was the perfect example. The Canes had 12 different players register a point in their latest victory, including three defensemen. Winger Taylor Hall led the team with two points, while Sean Walker also led the defensemen with a two-point outing.

That's been the story all series long. Each game, the Hurricanes are dictating the pace of play and it's due to their forward depth. Each line is able to attack the puck, establish offensive zone pressure, and create scoring chances. It's why on any given night, any line can be the one that stands out and leads the team to victory.

The Capitals, on the other hand, are struggling to roll four lines. The team's head coach, Spencer Carbery, has been tweaking the lineup in both of the recent games in search of the right mix. He's been unsuccessful so far, and the Caps are now in danger of elimination.

Alex Ovechkin recorded his first goal of the series in Game 4. Forward Dylan Strome is leading the team in scoring, and he's the only player averaging over a point per game. Most of the roster is struggling to produce, costing them at the worst time.

Even in their lone victory in the series, the Caps' offense was limited. In Game 3, they beat the Canes by a final score of 3-1. Only five players on the team recorded a point in the win.

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1352301 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes hold Capitals' Tom Wilson in check, to delight of Raleigh faithful

Chip Alexander

10-12 minutes 13/05/2025

Raleigh's Rialto Theater at Five Points had an interesting sign on its marquee the past few days:

"All are welcome except Tom Wilson."

That would be Tom Wilson of the Washington Capitals. That would be the big forward wearing No. 43 who at times can beat you with a hard-working goal or become a heat-seeking missile on the ice who's ready and willing to lay somebody out.

"He can smoke you," Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Dmitry Orlov said Monday.

Whenever there is antagonism or angry faces or a scuffle on the ice, Wilson always seems to be involved. At 6-foot-4 and 220 pounds, he's hard to miss, and the Caps feed off his energy and a defiant demeanor that some opponents — and opposing fans — would call nasty and the Caps call motivational.

He's the player everyone seems to love to hate, unless you're playing with him.

There were boos Monday at Lenovo Center in the second period of Game 4 when Wilson, during a scrum, pawed Canes captain Jordan Staal in the face. But mostly there were cheers from the home crowd as the Canes took a 5-2 win for a 3-1 win in the second-round series.

Wilson was playing on Dylan Storme's line with Alexander Ovechkin, a change made to load up the top line and find some offense. Ovechkin had 44 goals in the regular season and Wilson a career-high 33. while Strome had 29 goals led the Caps with 83 points.

Oveckin scored a 5-on-3 goal in the third period, but the Caps will need a lot more from Wilson and the Strome line as Canes goalie Frederik Andersen continues to be sharp and the Canes' pressure game is suffocating.

"He's the engine who drives our team," Strome said of Wilson. "When he's going well, I think our whole team is going well.

"He can score, hit and make plays and he plays every situation whether we're up a goal or down a goal late in the game. Power play, penalty kill, he's out there. That's why we follow him."

Wilson led the Caps this season with 233 hits, which surprises no one. He had 11 hits against the Canes in Game 3 of the series.

"I think maybe the casual fan might think he does more hitting than anything else," Strome said. "Obviously his stats this year would lead you to believe that's not the case.

"I think he can do it all. I think when it requires a more physical game, he's going to be right there. In the games we won 6-5 or 5-4, he's right there with a two- or three-point night. That's why he's a great guy to have on your team."

Ovechkin is the Caps' superstar and enjoys superstar status at each spot in the NHL, befitting for the man who has broken Wayne Gretzky's career goal-scoring record. He's the captain of the team, and at 39 has the kind of veteran status that allows him to skate off the ice six minutes into the morning skate, as he did Monday.

Wilson, 31, stayed out, continuing to work after several players headed to the locker room ahead of him.

Nor was he in a hurry to leave, taking a seat in the room to patiently answer media questions.

"When you have a group like this and you look each other in the eye, you expect to have a bounce back. It's the recipe you want in your locker room, an accountability and dependability for the guy next to you to show up," he said.

Wilson won a Stanley Cup with the Caps in 2018. The playoff game Monday was the 96th of his career, giving him the experience needed to weather the good and the bad that comes with the playoffs.

Wilson credits such former teammates as Justin Williams as helping him develop that proper mentality and head space. Williams played for the Caps for two seasons before leaving after the 2017-18 season and returning to the Hurricanes, where he became the team captain.

Williams won three Stanley Cups, the first with the Canes in 2006 and later twice with the L.A. Kings, and was the Conn Smythe Trophy winner as the playoff MVP in 2014 with the Kings.

"He could tell a story like, 'Hey, we were down a couple of games' and all the different scenarios that can show you how anything can happen," Wilson said. "He's one of those guys who was such a great teammate and great for hockey. He had so much composure under pressure and was such a great leader.

"We didn't win (the Cup) together, but we won right after he left and I think a lot of the qualities and the lessons from him in how to carry ourselves were still in our locker room. He helped change the culture for the better. I still depend on what he taught me."

The Canes' Orlov also was on the Cup-winning team in 2018. He spent a decade as Wilson's teammate in Washington before being traded and later signing with the Canes.

Orlov said Monday before Game 4 that Wilson could be the next to wear the "C" for the Caps as captain.

"He's grown so much since I saw him young, and we played all those years together," Orlov said. "He's playing hard and has become a special player for that organization. When you played with and against a player for so many years, you know what they bring to the table."

Wilson brings a lot, earning respect from some of his peers, disdain from some and a marquee message from others.

And about that message at the Rialto ...

"The Rialto marquee often aims to serve as the city's collective conscience, and right now we think most Raleighites agree: we don't like that guy," Rialto owner Hayes Permar said Monday. "We would,

however, reconsider our stance if he's willing to participate in the Underwear Run at Friday's screening of The Rocky Horror Picture Show, that is if the series goes to six games."

News Observer LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352302 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes take Capitals' best shot, then take 3-1 NHL playoff series lead

Justin Pelletier

11-14 minutes 12/05/2025

In a Hurricanes-Capitals series that's delivered a handful of double-take moments, perhaps the biggest so far came in Carolina's 5-2 win over Washington in Game 4 at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Early in the second period, with Carolina nursing a newly acquired two-goal lead, Washington entered the Canes' zone with numbers. Tom Wilson spun across the blue line, located Alexander Ovechkin at the top of the left circle, and slid the puck to the NHL's all-time regular-season goal-scoring leader.

Ovechkin then … passed?

The Great 8, from as close to his "office" as he'd been all game to that point, didn't pull the trigger, electing instead to move the puck across to Dylan Strome in the right circle. Strome one-timed the puck at the cage, and Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen made the best of his 19 saves to keep the Caps at bay.

There was still plenty of hockey remaining, of course, but no moment encapsulated the Capitals' general mood in the series quite like that one.

Indecisive. Frustrated.

The Hurricanes have a way of doing that to good teams — great teams, like these Capitals. Carolina's done it so well it's pushed Eastern Conference champion Washington to the brink of elimination, snagging a 3-1 series lead behind two dominant home games and an overtime victory back in Game 1 in Washington, D.C.

Andersen, who leads the NHL in all of the major goaltending categories, was stellar again Monday, turning back 19 of 21 shots to earn his sixth win of these 2025 Stanley Cup playoffs. (Pyotr Kochetkov had the win to close out New Jersey in Round 1.)

And for all of those adjectives that described the Capitals' comportment, the opposites were generally true for Carolina.

Decisive. Confident.

Goals from Shayne Gostisbehere in the first period, Seth Jarvis in the second and Taylor Hall in the third were enough on that end of the ice, and the Canes played within themselves — and coach Rod Brind'Amour's much talked-about system — limiting Washington's chances, creating offensive bursts, and allowing Andersen to be comfortable in his crease.

All of that now gives Carolina a chance to close out a second consecutive playoff series in five games. The difference: Game 5 this time around will be in hostile territory.

First period, and a goal?

In a departure from the first three games of the series, a team finally scored in the first period.

After another early flurry from the Capitals, during which Andersen made a handful of stops through traffic, the Canes pushed back. After the Hurricanes' fourth unit of Eric Robinson, Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Jackson Blake hemmed the Caps in their own zone for a spell, the puck found its way out to the center point and Gostisbehere, who ducked and danced his way across the line in a series of moves that left Washington forward Brandon Duhaime looking for a piece of equipment or two.

Gostishebere curled to the top of the left circle and fired a wrister through traffic in front of Logan Thompson, the puck sailing past the screened keeper for a 1-0 lead.

The Caps had the benefit of a pair of power plays in the latter half of the period, the first on a roughing call to Sean Walker and the second a four-minute double minor to Jordan Martinook, who caught defender Jakob Chychrun up high with his stick.

The latter of those bled into the second period, but the Caps did no damage. The Canes, in fact, had more high-danger scoring chances shorthanded than the Capitals did with the extra skater.

Staying engaged

After a flurry of activity that got Andersen engaged early — including a pair of shots that fluttered off his glove and into the corner, shots he would normally snag and hold — the Danish netminder saw little action the rest of the opening period.

But he still had to be sharp, particularly early in the second. On a broken zone entry that saw Wilson finally get the puck to Ovechkin, the NHL's all-time leading goal scorer passed, hitting Strome on the back door to Andersen's left, where he one-timed what he thought was an easy goal toward the cage. Anderson slid hard from right to left, though, and was there in time to square up and knock the shot down with the center of his body and stick paddle.

The Canes doubled their lead early in the second, after the penalty kill time was over, when Seth Jarvis cleaned up an off-the-post rebound in front of Thompson on a blistering shot from Sebastian Aho.

Afterward, the Capitals opened things up a bit, and Andersen saw a bit more action. In addition to the Strome chance, Washington penned Carolina in for a good chunk of time through the middle part of the period. At one point, Jalen Chatfield was on the ice for more than two minutes straight, unable to change with the pressure combined with the long change teams face in the second.

Stretching the lead

After the Capitals broke through with a goal at 5:18 of the third and set the Canes back on their heels a bit, Carolina re-established its two-goal lead thanks to perhaps the longest pass of the night from any player on either team.

Hall got caught up the ice after getting spilled in the corner, leaving the Canes to defend 4-on-5. But they did so, with Sean Walker slinging the puck up the boards to Jack Roslovic. Hall, just then exiting the Caps' zone at the other end of the ice, banged his stick and caught Roslovic's attention. Roslovic fired a 100-foot pass to Hall, who went in alone and scored on Thompson low blocker, pushing Carolina's lead to 3-1.

It was a needed cushion, too. Minutes later, the Capitals fed off a pair of penalties to the Hurricanes and got Ovechkin a much-needed goal — from his office at the left circle on a 5-on-3 power play — to again pull within one at 3-2.

Walker finished off his own rush with the Caps pressing at 16:45, though, to again push the Canes' lead back to two at 4-2. Andrei Svechnikov struck the final nail with an empty-net goal at 17:39.

Sharp-eyed attendees at Game 4 on Monday caught a glimpse of Carolina Hurricanes defender Alexander Nikishin on the ice for warmups. Two days after Chatfield played minimally in Game 3, the Hurricanes deemed him ready to go at morning skate.

But Nikishin, whose arrival in Raleigh has been the subject of much discussion — and debate, with respect to lineup changes — was on the ice for team warmups Monday night ahead of Game 4, fully dressed in his No. 21 jersey and skating alongside the rest of the game-ready Canes.

He did not draw into the lineup.

Capitals felt 'urgency'

With a win on the road in Game 1, the Hurricanes snagged home-ice advantage back from the Capitals, who finished the regular season with the best record in the Eastern Conference. The Capitals righted their ship

with a win in Game 2, but the Hurricanes clamped down in Game 3, posting a shutout to take a 2-1 series lead.

Washington knew Game 4 was as much of a must-win as a game can be without truly being an elimination game.

Wilson, 31, stayed out late after morning skate Monday, continuing to work after several players had headed to the locker room ahead of him.

He was in no hurry to leave afterward, either, taking a seat in the room to patiently answer media questions.

“At this point there’s urgency with our group, which there needs to be,” Wilson said of Game 4. “We need to be dialed in. We know it’s going to be a fight for every inch.

“It’s another opportunity to go out and leave it all out there, and I think as a group we’re ready for that. When you have a group like this and you look each other in the eye, you expect to have a bounce back. It’s the recipe you want in your locker room, an accountability and dependability for the guy next to you to show up.”

Game 5, then, now truly a must-win, should only amplify that feeling in the Capitals’ locker room.

News Observer LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352303 Carolina Hurricanes

Burns-Ovechkin battle in Hurricanes-Capitals series an old-time physical duel

Chip Alexander

7-9 minutes 12/05/2025

Raleigh

Jaccob Slavin broke into a smile Sunday when the “game within the game” was mentioned: Brent Burns vs. Alexander Ovechkin.

Burns is 40 years old and Ovechkin 39, but there they were on the ice Saturday, the two veterans jostling for position, looking to hit, accepting hits, each trying to get an edge. The Carolina Hurricanes took a 4-0 victory over the Washington Capitals for a 2-1 lead in their Stanley Cup playoff series, but the Burns-Ovechkin confrontation was a highlight.

“It’s a battle,” Slavin said. “I’m typically on the ice (with Burns) and don’t see too much of it, but you hear the crowd kind of love it.”

Slavin and Burns have often been the Canes’ defensive pair sent out when the Caps’ Ovechkin takes his shifts. Now the NHL’s career goal-scoring leader, Ovechkin remains a game-changer and potential game-breaker — he scored 44 goals in the regular season and four in the Caps’ five-game series win over the Montreal Canadiens to start the playoffs.

Ovechkin has had eight shots in the three games against Carolina and four came Saturday in Game 3. He had three in the opening period, only to be denied each time by goalie Frederik Andersen, who was sharp for all 60 minutes in earning his fourth career playoff shutout.

Ovechkin also was bounced around a bit by Burns.

Consider that Ovechkin is 6-foot-3 and about 240 pounds, and Burns 6-5 and 230. They’re two big men and when they collide, it has an impact.

Burns initiated a lot of contact Saturday with Ovechkin, especially along the boards, more than enough to keep the partisan crowd engaged and loud and enjoying it.

“With both of those guys it’s incredible that they can still play the game at such a high pace and be as effective as they are,” Slavin said.

The two should see more of each other Monday in Game 4 at Lenovo Center. Canes coach Rod Brind’Amour, able to make the last change at home, can slip the Burns-Slavin defensive tandem onto the ice against Ovechkin’s line.

“It’s not just the D corps,” Slavin said. “I think it’s the forward group, as well, back-pressuring really hard. I think it’s just time and space. I know it’s a cliche to say, but with a guy of that caliber and the shot that he has, you have to take it away.

“You always have to be aware when he’s on the ice. With any top player in the league you have to be aware of it or you’ll get caught staring and watching. When someone like that is on the ice, he has the potential to score from anywhere. He’s lethal and you have to be aware of it.”

The Canes got a boost Saturday from its power play, with Jack Roslovic and Jackson Blake picking up goals. Andrei Svechnikov scored the game’s first goal and Eric Robinson snipe early in the third period made it a 3-0 game.

One trend that has been constant the first three games has been scoreless first periods. Neither team has been able to jump out to an early lead and make the other team chase.

Just 30 seconds into Game 3, Caps forward Tom Wilson carried the puck in from the right wing, forcing goalie Frederik Andersen into a tough save.

Had Wilson scored, the complexion of the game could have changed. Could have, but didn’t.

The Caps had eight high-danger scoring chances to the Canes’ two in the opening period Saturday, according to naturalstattrick.com, a hockey analytics site.

“For us, it’s about getting to our game right way, not tip-toeing into the game, not almost waiting around to see what kind of game it’s going to be like,” Slavin said. “It’s just taking control right from the start, kind of like the start we have in Game 1, when we were in and on them.”

The Canes had an 11-2 edge in high-danger chances in the opening period of Game 1, but did not score until the third period and eventually won 2-1 in overtime on a Slavin goal.

The Caps flipped the script Saturday in the first as Wilson had the early look, was open in the lot and later Ovechkin had good shots against Andersen. But, again, the opening period was scoreless..

“We know how the game is going to go. For us, we need to get to it,” Brind’Amour said Sunday. “At some point, why not try to get to it right away? I know the other team is doing the same thing, so they got to it first, obviously.

“I thought we were able to kind of figure our way and get to it in the second half of the game. It’s not going to be pretty all of the time.”

News Observer LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352304 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes push Capitals to brink with 5-2 Game 4 win

May 12, 2025

Cory Lavalette Article, News

RALEIGH — Many saw this season as a retooling year for the Carolina Hurricanes. After winning Monday’s Game 4 over the Capitals 5-2, they are within one victory of reaching the Eastern Conference final.

Taylor Hall and Sean Walker both cleanly beat Washington goalie Logan Thompson — earning assists on each other’s goals — in the third period as Carolina responded each time the visiting Capitals scored to build a 3-1 series lead with a win at Lenovo Center.

“Certainly there’s no panic when things don’t go our way,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said. “Whatever it is — tonight, they’re closing the gap. We just keep playing.”

After the Capitals scored for the first time in more than five periods on Jakob Chychrun's goal at 5:18 of the third period to cut Carolina's lead to 2-1, the Hurricanes responded just over three minutes later thanks to a good read by Hall.

Hall hung back near the Capitals' blue line as the Hurricanes prepared to exit the defensive zone — a good read, Brind'Amour said — and Jack Roslovic's pass up ice sent him in on a breakaway. The former Hart Trophy winner and deadline acquisition shot and beat Thompson to reestablish a two-goal lead.

"He plays somewhat deep in his net," Hall said of Thompson, "so shooting is a pretty good option. If you deke, he's going to have a better chance at it. So I just picked my corner, and it was a good shot."

Washington got within one again with under eight minutes left when Alex Ovechkin — to that point blanked in the series — scored on a 5-on-3 power play.

But Carolina again had a response, with Walker winning a puck battle against two Capitals in the defensive zone and then beating them up ice to create a 3-on-1 rush. Walker carried the puck up the left wing, hesitated, cut to the inside of the left circle, and beat Thompson's glove to extinguish Washington's comeback by making it 4-2 at 16:45 of the third.

"I tried to be patient," Walker said. "Once I stepped inside, I felt like I had a good lane, so I shot it. Just happy it went in."

Patient is a good way to describe Carolina's play through four games in the series.

"It's playoffs, and momentum swings are everything," Hall said. "So it's about managing those and trying to just step on the pedal no matter what the score is."

After a strong start for the Capitals during which Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (19 saves) made seven stops in the first six-plus minutes, a dominant shift by the top line of Sebastian Aho, Seth Jarvis and Andrei Svechnikov helped the home team seize control.

Carolina's fourth line kept the pressure on in the Capitals zone, and Shayne Gostisbehere held the puck near the blue line and created a space with a nifty series of moves. He then wristed a shot from the left point through a screen by Jesperi Kotkaniemi, beating Thompson short side just past the midway point of the opening period. Gostisbehere's goal, his third of the playoffs, was the first scored in the opening 20 minutes of any game by either team in the series.

"It's just a different game when you can play from in front, that's for sure," Brind'Amour said.

Carolina then ended the first period killing off the majority of a four-minute high-sticking penalty by Jordan Martinook, finishing it off to start the second. That led to them doubling the lead shortly thereafter when an Aho shot went off Thompson's glove. The puck fluttered in the air and grazed the crossbar, and Jarvis found the rebound and put it in for his third goal of the postseason.

"You never want to do that," Jarvis said of killing the penalty. "But when the time comes, everyone answered the bell really well."

The Hurricanes are now 25 of 27 on the kill in the postseason, a league-best 92.6% after being tops in the NHL during the regular season.

Svechinkov added his team-best seventh goal of the playoffs into an empty net at 17:39 of the third to send Carolina back to Washington with a chance to close out the Capitals on Thursday.

"We're happy right now where we are in the series," Hurricanes defenseman Dmitry Orlov said. "But the series is not over. It's always hard to finish it."

Jarvis added, "We're expecting their best next game, but it's a good step in the right direction."

North State Journal LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352305 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes demoralize Capitals, put Washington's season in peril: Takeaways

Sean Gentille

May 12, 2025

RALEIGH, N.C. — Outside of a couple of periods and a few isolated moments, it would've been unfair for the Carolina Hurricanes not to leave Lenovo Center with a 3-1 series lead over the Washington Capitals.

Despite an expected third-period push by Washington, that's exactly what the Hurricanes earned, holding on for a 5-2 Game 4 win behind another strong night from goalie Frederik Andersen, a great penalty kill and goals from five different players. Strong five-on-five play was once again the foundation for Carolina — you've heard that before, no doubt — but the Hurricanes continue to show off in plenty of different ways.

"There's no panic when things don't go our way. Whatever it is — tonight, they're they're closing the gap. We just keep playing," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Our older guys have been through this. Even our not-so-old guys have been through it here for a few years. So I think there is a bit of maturity there."

Here's what I saw in Game 4.

The Hall way

With 11 minutes, 36 seconds remaining in the game, Taylor Hall showed why the Hurricanes, amid all the Mikko Rantanen drama, made sure to come out of March's NHL trade deadline with Hall in the mix. He remains a legitimate scoring threat on the middle six, and he used that offensive skill to put Carolina back up by a pair 3-1.

With Washington pushing in the immediate aftermath of a goal by Jakob Chychrun that cut Carolina's lead to 2-1, Hall slipped behind the Washington defense, stayed onside and carried a pass from Jack Roslovic in for a breakaway. Goal and — despite a classic Alex Ovechkin power-play goal to cut the lead — game over. That's the sort of dagger Carolina has missed in the Brind'Amour era. It was another big play from Roslovic, too, who had a goal and an assist in Game 3 after being a healthy scratch.

Washington can't capitalize early

For the second straight game, Washington wasted a strong start — and unlike in Game 3, the Capitals couldn't sustain it for a full 20 minutes, either. Washington got prime scoring chances right off the drop for both Connor McMichael and Aliaksei Protas, who blocked a shot, earned a clean chance in transition and hit the post. Sustained zone time followed. After 6 minutes, 34 seconds, the Capitals held a 7-1 lead in scoring chances and 3-0 lead in high-danger chances but couldn't turn any of it into actual goals.

Around that time, Carolina snapped into form, preventing clears and forcing Washington's skaters — particularly center Lars Eller, who unnecessarily played a Carolina high stick to keep the puck in the zone — into poor decisions. With 10:27 remaining, Capitals goaltender Logan Thompson stopped two prime chances in close for Jordan Staal to set up a faceoff in Washington's zone. Less than a minute later, with the pressure still on, Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere made a slick play to keep the puck in, separate himself from Brandon Duhaime and beat Thompson with a well-placed shot from 54 feet.

The goal was the first of the series for either team in the first period.

"I think our starts have been pretty good, maybe beside (Game 2)," Gostisbehere said Monday morning. "I don't know if it really matters if we score or not. It just matters if they don't score, really. For us, obviously it would be nice to get going in the first, but whatever the game has, the game gives us."

Smothering penalty kill meets dismal power play

The bigger killer, though, was Washington's near-total lack of productivity in six minutes of power-play time in the first 20-plus minutes. Carolina's penalty kill is outstanding, but the Capitals barely came close. They had

several one-and-done trips with the man advantage — an egregious missed opportunity for a team almost guaranteed to lose the five-on-five battle.

The Capitals' power-play issues were such that it was easy to imagine them carrying over to other phases of the game. Carolina's second goal, making it 2-0 just over a minute into the second period, felt like proof. Carolina started the period on the kill — the Hurricanes' Jordan Martinook had high-sticked Chychrun in the face late in the first — and after 36 seconds of strong work, went back into attack mode almost immediately. Thompson failed to glove a shot by Sebastian Aho, leaving the puck on the doorstep for Seth Jarvis.

The assist gave Aho at least 10 points for the seventh consecutive postseason. It's a little played out to call him underrated; it's also probably still accurate.

Capitals' third-line liability

Last game, we made plenty of Carolina's neutralization of Washington's first line, particularly Ovechkin, and that's no less true after Game 4 — but Washington's third line has struggled mightily as well. The Capitals' decision not to add another center at March's trade deadline, leaving them with Eller as the only option with anything close to a playoff third-line center's profile, is looming large.

In Game 2, a 3-1 Washington win, Eller played for just 9:06. In Game 3, with Ryan Leonard sent to the bench for Taylor Raddysh, the Hurricanes owned heavy advantages in shot attempts (19-4), scoring chances (9-1) and high-danger chances (3-1) with Eller, Raddysh and Andrew Mangiapane on the ice at five-on-five. In Game 4, with Leonard back in the mix, nothing improved; Eller and Leonard were particularly rough in the run-up to Carolina's first goal.

Nikishin watch

For a few minutes ahead of puck drop, it seemed like we were going to get our first real look at Carolina defenseman Alexander Nikishin. The 23-year-old, 6-foot-4 top prospect took Carolina's pregame warmup, possibly in case Jalen Chatfield was unable to play. Chatfield (and everyone else) was good to go, and Nikishin headed back up to the press box, where he's spent games since arriving in North America on April 18.

Given how much practice time Nikishin has under his belt, how the series has gone thus far, and the likelihood that he could help Carolina down the line, it might make sense for Carolina to give him another look for Game 5 in Washington. In the KHL, Nikishin was third league-wide in points by a defenseman in 2024-25 and captained a SKA St. Petersburg team that featured multiple former NHLers. Ahead of the season, this was The Athletic's prospects expert Corey Pronman's assessment of Nikishin: "He has length, mobility and puck-moving skill, and he's mean as hell. He runs over opponents with his physicality, especially with how quickly he closes on checks."

Sounds like someone you'd like to have as ready as possible, and Carolina might need him sooner rather than later. Chatfield missed shifts down the stretch after spending 2:33 on the ice at the end of the second period.

"He did (tweak something)," Brind'Amour said, "but he seemed fine after, so I guess we'll find out more tomorrow."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352306 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL playoffs picks, odds, schedule for Capitals at Hurricanes, Golden Knights at Oilers

Sarah Jean Maher

3-4 minutes 12/05/2025

The Stanley Cup playoffs continue on Monday with a pair of Game 4s. In both series, Monday's hosts, Carolina and Edmonton, are leading 2-1. Vegas fans are probably still euphoric from the game-winning Reilly Smith goal with 0.4 seconds left in Game 3 against the Oilers. What will that series have for an encore?

Hurricanes lead series 2-1

Series odds: Hurricanes -600, Capitals +425

The Hurricanes took a 2-1 series lead after their commanding 4-0 Game 3 win over the Capitals on Saturday. Goalie Frederik Andersen had a standout performance with a perfect 21 saves and some particularly big stops, including this early one on a Tom Wilson breakaway, keeping the Capitals at bay during their dominant first period. It was an ugly Game 3, Sean Gentille points out.

Andrei Svechnikov also stood out. John Carlson did not. Also of note is that the Hurricanes have managed to shut down Alex Ovechkin so far through all three games. Will the NHL's all-time goals leader pop in Game 4?

Vegas Golden Knights at Edmonton Oilers

Oilers lead series 2-1

Series odds: Oilers -250, Golden Knights +200

The Oilers may hold the 2-1 lead, but the Golden Knights have to be buzzing after Saturday's remarkable Game 3 finish. Reilly Smith scored with just 0.4 seconds left to give Vegas its first win of the series. It was just the third go-ahead goal scored with less than one second remaining in NHL playoff history.

With Calvin Pickard injured in Game 2, Stuart Skinner was back in net for Edmonton. It wasn't his best game.

Edmonton remains in a good spot with Game 4 at home and the edge in the series, but confidence and nerves could be shaken after the dramatic Game 3 finish.

Expert picks

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The Athletic LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352373 Washington Capitals

Panic? The resilient, even-keeled Capitals aren't ready to go there.

Bailey Johnson5-6 minutes 12/05/2025

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Washington Capitals are keenly aware of the spot they're in.

Their coach, Spencer Carbery, is keenly aware of the challenges that are ahead in Game 4 of their second-round series against the Carolina Hurricanes on Monday night, when they will try to avoid having to return to Capital One Arena facing a 3-1 deficit.

And their No. 1 defenseman, John Carlson, is keenly aware that in Saturday's Game 3, he was on the wrong end of a handful of plays.

"It's pretty simple. I'm well aware of me and my game and what I'm capable of," Carlson said Sunday morning after the Capitals' 4-0 loss. "I can be better. Just as the team will do, I think I'm looking forward to another chance [Monday] night. I know there's a lot of noise around that, but I'm not worried about it."

Carlson, Carbery and center Pierre-Luc Dubois spoke with the media Sunday. They had reviewed video from Saturday's game in a team meeting before taking the rest of the day off the ice, and they will

reconvene for a full morning skate at Lenovo Center on Monday before Game 4.

After they reevaluated Game 3, their impressions were simple and consistent. The Capitals started hot, playing by far their best period of the series in the opening 20 minutes, then fell apart once Carolina took a 1-0 lead when Andrei Svechnikov beat Carlson to the puck after a faceoff win.

“Going back through it, I thought we did a lot of good things, especially early in that hockey game,” Carbery said. “Don’t find a way to break through. We give that one up off the faceoff and then the power-play one. Playing from behind is not a good recipe for success in this series. Not that it’s insurmountable, but [it] puts us behind the eight ball, and then [we] just didn’t do enough, with power play [or] five-on-five, to get that game back.”

“We did a lot. We sustained a lot more. We had a lot more chances,” Carlson said. “It felt better offensively, especially at the start of the game. Looking through it, we obviously play them better when we have the lead or are tied. Once they got that goal, it spiraled away from us a little bit.”

Dubois added: “There’s no panic. They’re a good team. We didn’t expect to win in four. We split at home. Now our job is to split here. We have the next game to get ready for. There’s no panic. We know what we can do better.”

Carbery was insistent after the Capitals lost in overtime in Game 1 that they would be better in Game 2. Washington was, to the tune of a 3-1 win Thursday to even the series. After that game, Carbery was emphatic that his team had another level it could get to.

The Capitals did just that in the first 25-plus minutes of Game 3. They were, for the first time in the series, the dominant force, not just surviving the Hurricanes’ pressure but applying their own, shift after shift. Yet they couldn’t turn any of it into goals, and a narrow opening for Svechnikov midway through the second period flipped the game into Carolina’s hands.

“You got to finish goals,” Carlson said. “When you do have a great period like that, when you do sustain a lot of O-zone time, you want to come out of there with goals. You look back through Game 1, I think they’re probably looking after the first period like the same way we did. That’s just part of series. Especially against this team, they make it difficult, but we’ve found ways to exploit their strengths a little bit. We’ll look forward to more of that.”

It isn’t in these Capitals’ makeup to melt down when they’re up against the wall. Even in the early days of what became an Eastern Conference-winning regular season, when Carbery challenged them for more after a string of mediocre games, they responded. He’s challenging them again now — in the most tense, high-pressure situation they have faced.

“We’ve got a lot of experienced guys who have been through this before. You reset. We can win a game [Monday] night,” Carbery said. “Yeah, is it a back-against-the-wall, difficult game, Game 4 in their building after losing Game 3? For sure, but it’s an opportunity to even the series. That’s what the playoffs is about.

“You reset, you refocus, and you expect to have your best performance of the season, your best shift of the season, [on] your next one. Our guys are really good at that. They’ve been good at that through the regular season. We need to have that same mindset going into Game 4.”

There’s plenty the Capitals can take away from how they started Game 3, but they also must learn the lessons from how the Hurricanes took over. They are, as ever, emphasizing that that’s exactly what will happen. Proof, one way or the other, will come Monday night.

“It’s not going to be that we have to change everything,” Dubois said. “There’s just a few things that, if we do better, we think we can change the result for next game.”

Washington Post LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352374 Washington Capitals

Hurricanes demoralize Capitals, put Washington’s season in peril: Takeaways

Sean Gentille7-9 minutes 13/05/2025

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Jack Roslovic with the feed, Taylor Hall with the finish! ✅ #StanleyCup

US: @NHL_On_TNT & @SportsonMax ➡️ https://t.co/4TuyIATi3T

CA: @Sportsnet or stream on Sportsnet+ ➡️ https://t.co/4KjbdjVctF pic.twitter.com/0XDDvKSOFV

— NHL (@NHL) May 13, 2025

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The assist gave Aho at least 10 points for the seventh consecutive postseason. It's a little played out to call him underrated; it's also probably still accurate.

Capitals' third-line liability

Last game, we made plenty of Carolina's neutralization of Washington's first line, particularly Ovechkin, and that's no less true after Game 4 — but Washington's third line has struggled mightily as well. The Capitals' decision not to add another center at March's trade deadline, leaving them with Eller as the only option with anything close to a playoff third-line center's profile, is looming large.

In Game 2, a 3-1 Washington win, Eller played for just 9:06. In Game 3, with Ryan Leonard sent to the bench for Taylor Raddysh, the Hurricanes owned heavy advantages in shot attempts (19-4), scoring chances (9-1) and high-danger chances (3-1) with Eller, Raddysh and Andrew Mangiapane on the ice at five-on-five. In Game 4, with Leonard back in the mix, nothing improved; Eller and Leonard were particularly rough in the run-up to Carolina's first goal.

Nikishin watch

For a few minutes ahead of puck drop, it seemed like we were going to get our first real look at Carolina defenseman Alexander Nikishin. The 23-year-old, 6-foot-4 top prospect took Carolina's pregame warmup, possibly in case Jalen Chatfield was unable to play. Chatfield (and everyone else) was good to go, and Nikishin headed back up to the press box, where he's spent games since arriving in North America on April 18.

Given how much practice time Nikishin has under his belt, how the series has gone thus far, and the likelihood that he could help Carolina down the line, it might make sense for Carolina to give him another look for Game 5 in Washington. In the KHL, Nikishin was third league-wide in points by a defenseman in 2024-25 and captained a SKA St. Petersburg team that featured multiple former NHLers. Ahead of the season, this was The Athletic's prospects expert Corey Pronman's assessment of Nikishin: "He has length, mobility and puck-moving skill, and he's mean as hell. He runs over opponents with his physicality, especially with how quickly he closes on checks."

Sounds like someone you'd like to have as ready as possible, and Carolina might need him sooner rather than later. Chatfield missed shifts down the stretch after spending 2:33 on the ice at the end of the second period.

"He did (tweak something)," Brind'Amour said, "but he seemed fine after, so I guess we'll find out more tomorrow."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.13.2025

1352375 Washington Capitals

How Logan Thompson is dominating NHL playoffs with smart reads, 'nth degree' competitiveness

Jesse Granger10-13 minutes 12/05/2025

A long time ago, 12-year-old Logan Thompson was battling shooters inside the East Calgary Twin Arenas ice rink.

Even at a young age, the competitive streak in the Washington Capitals' star goaltender was evident. Because of that, Thompson was a huge fan of the game "rebound," which pits the goalie against between five and seven shooters.

The shooters take turns firing pucks from the top of the slot while the others circle the crease hunting for rebounds. If the goalie makes the save and freezes the puck or deflects it beyond the goal line, he earns a point. If the army of shooters gets the puck into the net, they earn a point.

It can be a brutally taxing game for the goalie, who is always outnumbered, but Thompson loved it. He would play it all night if the rink didn't have to turn the lights off eventually.

Years later, Thompson is still battling shooters with every ounce of energy he has. Now, of course, he's doing it in the Stanley Cup playoffs, where he has been perhaps the best goalie this postseason.

"The most impressive thing that sticks out when you get to know Logan Thompson is his competitiveness," Capitals coach Spencer Carbery said. "He's just an ultra, ultra-competitive guy that when the puck drops and the game starts, he wants to win so desperately and will do anything to keep that black rubber thing out of our net."

Thompson dazzles the crowd with spectacular acrobatic saves. His blend of athleticism and commitment to never giving up on a puck makes for one of the most entertaining styles of goaltending, and at the moment, it's one of the most effective.

He leads the NHL playoffs with 9.3 goals saved above expected, has a .922 save percentage for Washington and should be one of the early favorites for the Conn Smythe Trophy. And he's doing it with an unorthodox style built around his strengths.

It all started back in Calgary.

"He has always had the ability to make every routine save, but also steal a whole bunch more," said goalie coach Justin Cardinal, who has worked with Thompson since he was 10 years old. "So instead of training to a cosmetic standard, let's play to your strengths."

Thompson plays from a low, crouched stance. He leans forward, sticking his head and hands way out in front of his body to crowd the puck, eliminate shooting angles and, most importantly, maximize his elite reaction time and athleticism.

"If you're more forward, you're meeting that puck way closer than if your chest was upright," Cardinal explained. "He understands reading shot release. He has very, very good hands and feet. His athleticism is one of his biggest strengths, so let's play with that strength rather than limit it."

Many of Thompson's tendencies go against the grain of some traditional methods. He certainly doesn't make himself "look big" in the net — at least not from the camera angles high above the rink.

"In the early 2000s, everybody was big into the idea of being big and filling space," Cardinal said. "Well, you can fill 99 percent of the net, but if the shooter hits the one percent, then you're not doing your job.

"I think that's one of the biggest things that has changed in the game in the last 10 years. Guys are shooting the puck a lot faster and a lot harder. What does that mean for us goaltenders? It doesn't mean that the pucks are going to hit us more. It means that we need to make more saves."

Thompson rarely enters blocking positions and hopes the puck hits him. Instead, he relies on his reads and puck tracking, reacts to shots and uses his lightning-quick hands and feet.

Logan Thompson's been pretty, pretty good this season. 😍

Take a look at these two stops. 👇

📺: @Sportsnet or stream on Sportsnet+ ➡️ https://t.co/4KjbdjVctF pic.twitter.com/KJ5tLGmzuf

— NHL (@NHL) November 22, 2024

"It was a completely new style for me to coach," said Tyler Plante, longtime goalie coach for the Western Hockey League's Brandon Wheat

Kings, who coached Thompson as a junior from 2016-18. “I was more of a big, blocking goaltender, so he was kind of an anomaly to me. I was always jealous of guys who played like him because it looked like more fun.”

When Plante first started working with Thompson, he immediately recognized that Thompson possessed a trait that was difficult to teach.

“He won’t quit on a puck,” Plante said. “I never had to work on that with him. He just naturally wanted to not let his teammates score on him, which was pretty fun and entertaining. It was quite a treat.”

That hasn’t changed. During Thompson’s four seasons with the Vegas Golden Knights, his practice battles with Jonathan Marchessault were legendary. The games of rebound were loud, boisterous and fiercely competitive. At the end of the contest, one would be hooting and hollering in celebration while the other was pulling their wallet out.

Now in Washington, Thompson has a new practice combatant: a formidable shooter who has spent his entire career getting under his opponents’ skin.

“I’ve been on him all year to try and get him flustered, get him off his game and keep him on his toes,” Washington forward Tom Wilson said. “Maybe it’s just practice makes perfect, and now he’s just finding that rhythm where he’s just in his happy place.”

It’s no surprise that when the playoffs arrive, and competitiveness on the ice reaches its peak, Thompson thrives. Over the last two postseasons, he has saved 15.1 goals above expected, good for second in the NHL despite making only 12 starts during that span. He’s already living up to the six-year, $35.1 million contract extension he signed with the Capitals in January.

“I always had a belief in myself and just needed a team to take a chance on me,” Thompson said. “I’m really thankful that Washington did, and like I said, I’m not gonna take it for granted. I’m going to keep working hard and pushing myself to be better every day.”

Perhaps where Thompson’s reactionary style is most evident is in his post integrations. He uses the reverse vertical horizontal (RVH) position quite often, but his approach differs from most. Rather than simply dropping into the position as a blocking technique, he is active from it. He’s constantly reaching his glove at pucks, reading releases and making saves. He will even leap into the air from his knees to get his shoulders on high shots — something you’ll almost never see from another NHL goalie.

“The answer is not less RVH, the answer is better RVH,” Cardinal explained. “We have to understand that RVH isn’t necessarily a save, it’s a stance. So what is our stance responsible for? Being able to move and make saves.”

Thompson also positions himself well to explode out of the RVH at any moment. He keeps his hips high (rather than slumping into a lazy, seated position, which is one of the easiest faults of the stance) and his weight light and balanced (rather than leaning too heavily into The Post). This gives him unique mobility in the event a lateral pass is made in front, like on this incredible save he made in the first-round series against the Montreal Canadiens.

The way Thompson leaps out of the RVH and gets his right skate so far up the ice is impressive from a leg strength and weight standpoint. That move sets him up perfectly to explode across and rob Nick Suzuki.

“He’s a great goalie, and he’s confident with his abilities,” Capitals forward Andrew Mangiapane said. “Obviously I think him coming in this year and just doing what he’s doing gives everyone kind of belief on our bench that he’s a great player. He just gives us, I think, some calmness back there, even when we do give up a Grade-A (chance), we always have him back there backing us up.”

Thompson isn’t just an athlete. He has great hockey sense, which helps him read and anticipate plays. Perhaps just as important: He understands his own physical capabilities and how to maximize them in every situation.

For example, while Thompson isn’t afraid to challenge shooters well outside of his crease, he typically plays pretty deep. Depth management — how far a goalie plays from his goal line as the play develops — is one of the easiest ways to actually see a goalie reading the play visually.

This save in Game 5 of the first round against Montreal is an excellent example of Thompson using great depth management to make a difficult save look easy.

Near the beginning of this three-on-one rush, Thompson came way out of his crease. Initially, Canadiens forward Jake Evans was skating toward him as a shot threat, but then he flipped his hips to set up for a cross-ice pass.

The moment Evans gave away this clue and removed himself as a shot threat, Thompson immediately retreated into his crease with a swift c-cut backward. He remained square to Evans, just in case he tried a shot, but he was already preparing for the pass by giving himself far less distance to travel to get over. At its core, this is simple geometry, shown by the graphic below. But it’s all instinct on Thompson’s part.

The result was Thompson exploding across for a huge blocker save to deny Kaiden Guhle’s one-timer and keep Montreal off the board.

“He’s a rock,” Capitals forward Dylan Strome said. “He kind of did what he did all year. We feel really confident with him back there.”

Thompson has made a career out of proving people wrong. He went undrafted — largely because he was stuck behind WHL champion Jordan Papirny on the depth chart in Brandon and didn’t start until he was 19 — but fought his way through a long, winding road to the NHL anyway.

Now he’s proving his style works at the highest level, in the biggest moments. If not for a late-season injury, he was on track to be in conversation for the Vezina Trophy this season. In the playoffs, he’s given Washington a chance to win every night.

His secret weapon is his competitiveness, which has carried him from a small rink in Calgary to the NHL playoffs.

“Not that other guys don’t have that, he just has it to the nth degree,” Carbery said. “It’s why, in my opinion, one of the main reasons why he’s been able to be so successful in his career and why he’s been able to achieve things that a lot of people didn’t think he was going to achieve. He’s overcome obstacles and adversity, and proven a lot of people wrong because of that competitive fire in his belly.”

— The Athletic’s Sean Gentille contributed to this report.

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1352376 Washington Capitals

NHL playoffs picks, odds, schedule for Capitals at Hurricanes, Golden Knights at Oilers

Sarah Jean Maher3-4 minutes 12/05/2025

The Stanley Cup playoffs continue on Monday with a pair of Game 4s. In both series, Monday’s hosts, Carolina and Edmonton, are leading 2-1. Vegas fans are probably still euphoric from the game-winning Reilly Smith goal with 0.4 seconds left in Game 3 against the Oilers. What will that series have for an encore?

We have staff picks, odds and viewing info for the two games.

Viewing guide for Monday

Game Time (ET) TV Stream

Capitals at

Hurricanes

7 p.m.

US: TNT, truTV

CAN: Sportsnet

Max

Golden Knights at

Oilers

9:30 p.m.

US: TNT, truTV

CAN: Sportsnet, CBC

Max

Watching in person? Get tickets on StubHub.

Washington Capitals at Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes lead series 2-1

Series odds: Hurricanes -600, Capitals +425

The Hurricanes took a 2-1 series lead after their commanding 4-0 Game 3 win over the Capitals on Saturday. Goalie Frederik Andersen had a standout performance with a perfect 21 saves and some particularly big stops, including this early one on a Tom Wilson breakaway, keeping the Capitals at bay during their dominant first period. It was an ugly Game 3, Sean Gentille points out.

Andrei Svechnikov also stood out. John Carlson did not. Also of note is that the Hurricanes have managed to shut down Alex Ovechkin so far through all three games. Will the NHL's all-time goals leader pop in Game 4?

Expert picks

Vegas Golden Knights at Edmonton Oilers

Oilers lead series 2-1

Series odds: Oilers -250, Golden Knights +200

The Oilers may hold the 2-1 lead, but the Golden Knights have to be buzzing after Saturday's remarkable Game 3 finish. Reilly Smith scored with just 0.4 seconds left to give Vegas its first win of the series. It was just the third go-ahead goal scored with less than one second remaining in NHL playoff history.

With Calvin Pickard injured in Game 2, Stuart Skinner was back in net for Edmonton. It wasn't his best game.

Edmonton remains in a good spot with Game 4 at home and the edge in the series, but confidence and nerves could be shaken after the dramatic Game 3 finish.

Expert picks

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1352385 Websites

The Athletic / In Hockey Canada sexual assault trial, defense attorney suggests E.M. initiated sex

By Hailey Salvian and Dan Robson

May 12, 2025Updated 5:44 pm EDT

On a sixth day of cross-examination, the complainant in the Hockey Canada sexual assault trial was accused of initiating sexual contact in a London, Ont., hotel room with Alex Formenton by the former NHL player's defense attorney Daniel Brown.

Formenton, Michael McLeod, Carter Hart, Dillon Dubé and Cal Foote are all facing sexual assault charges stemming from the alleged incident while players were in town for a Hockey Canada event celebrating their 2018 World Juniors championship. All five players have pleaded not guilty.

On Monday, Brown suggested that E.M., as the complainant is known publicly, was the aggressor in the hotel room, while the "boys" — as they have been referred to by each defense attorney through the trial — stood around her, saying they did not want to have sex with her, despite her requests.

Brown also suggested E.M. was "egging on" the players, and grew frustrated that nobody would have sex with her. "Are you going to f— me or play golf?" Brown said E.M. asked the players in the room.

E.M. said she has a hard time accepting she would have said that because "it doesn't sound like words that have ever come out of my mouth."

However, she remembered feeling frustrated because the men in the room kept talking about things "that they wanted to see and wanted to do." But when she'd try to leave, she said, they'd coax her back to a bedsheet that had been laid down on the floor. She said she didn't know why they were keeping her there.

Brown argued that at some point, Formenton, who was 18 at the time and did not attend Jack's bar that night, agreed to have sex with E.M., but not in front of the other men.

"Some had said you were actually pulling him into the bathroom," Brown said, adding that a witness who was in the room will provide that account. "Is it possible you just don't remember that?"

E.M., who has testified she was feeling very drunk and has memory gaps, told Brown: "I know I got up to go to the bathroom, and then I knew he was following behind," but conceded "it could be possible" that she pulled him into the bathroom with her.

Brown asserted that all the sexual acts that occurred in the bathroom with Formenton were prompted by E.M., and challenged her previous testimony that she was bent over the sink with no conversation beforehand.

Brown said E.M. and Formenton discussed the use of a condom — and alleged she said one wasn't necessary because she was on birth control — as well as a sunburn she had on her chest. E.M. said she didn't recall the conversation, but conceded that she was not "forcefully" bent over in the bathroom.

"Perhaps (the interaction) happened exactly as you told him, and he respected exactly what you wanted to do," Brown said.

"I don't remember saying or suggesting (anything)," E.M. said. "But maybe."

Later on Monday, Lisa Carnelos — attorney for Dillion Dubé — began her cross-examination of E.M. Carnelos is the fourth of five defense attorneys questioning E.M. on her version of events.

Carnelos further suggested that E.M. was asking the players to engage in sexual activity with her. She said E.M. was taunting and threatening the players, and said, "Well, I'm going to leave" if they did not have sex with her.

"Maybe I made a comment about leaving because I know I was trying to leave," E.M. said. "But I don't recall saying it like that."

Carnelos challenged one instance of a player slapping her butt was "playful" and in response to her taunts.

The Crown contends that Dubé slapped E.M. on the buttocks without her consent.

On Monday, E.M. said the occasions of slapping that she recalled were when she was on the white sheet and performing oral sex.

Carnelos said one player told E.M. that some of them had girlfriends and didn't want to do anything with her. To that, E.M. pushed back: "I'd be confused as to why they were even in the room in the first place, if that was the fact."

The court has heard that McLeod texted members of the 2018 Canadian World Juniors team at 2:10 a.m. on June 19, asking “who wants to be in a 3 way quick” and providing his room number. E.M. has testified that she saw McLeod walking around with his phone after they had consensual sex, but did not know what he was texting. She said she was “shocked” when McLeod’s teammates began entering the room.

Carnelos also suggested on Monday that E.M. was frustrated that the men in the room were spread out, chatting with each other, and that she was not their central focus: “These boys were having fun amongst themselves separate from your existence,” Carnelos said.

E.M. agreed the men were speaking to each other, but the naked woman on the bedsheet was their focal point.

“I felt like I was just an object there,” E.M. said. “I felt like I was there for their entertainment.”

Later, Carnelos questioned E.M.’s communications with two friends the day after the incidents. E.M. called one of her closest friends, crying, as she left the Delta Armouries hotel around 5 a.m. on the morning of June 19. In particular, she asked E.M. why she didn’t respond to a concerned text from that close friend shortly after that call until after 3:30 that afternoon, when she followed up again.

Carnelos noted that E.M. had been texting with another colleague who was at Jack’s with her the night before, without revealing that anything was wrong.

“I was still kind of just coping with everything that had just happened and not feeling well that day and I just didn’t want to, didn’t get back to her about it,” E.M. said of not responding to her close friend sooner. “ I wasn’t ready to talk about it yet.”

Monday marked the trial’s third week, and E.M.’s seventh day in the witness box, where she has appeared via CCTV since Friday, May 2. Over two weeks of cross examination, the defense has aimed to challenge E.M.’s version of events and highlight contradictions or revised statements made to investigators or the jury.

David Humphrey, who represents McLeod, was the first to question E.M. and suggest that she had been the one to initiate sexual contact with the players. Humphrey said last Tuesday that E.M. was looking for “a wild night.”

Megan Savard, the attorney for Carter Hart, suggested that E.M. was acting in a way that would have led the players to believe she was consenting. Starting on Thursday afternoon, Brown began challenging E.M.’s account of what transpired at Jack’s bar on the night of June, 18, 2018.

Brown continued that line of questioning Monday morning, where he suggested, again, that E.M. consumed less alcohol than she has previously claimed because of smaller drink sizes served at Jack’s on the discounted “dollar-beer night.” On Friday, he presented the jury with a small plastic shot glass obtained from Jack’s bar, used for “Jägerbombs,” which he said held only half an ounce of liquid.

On Monday, he presented the plastic cups used for beer, which he said were one-third the size of a regular beer. E.M. argued that she’s not typically a beer drinker and she didn’t know any better about the serving size.

“I think it’s something you knew and intentionally held back because you wanted to create the impression you had more alcohol than you did,” Brown said.

Brown’s probing also turned to E.M.’s weight. She had previously testified that she was 120 pounds on the night of the alleged incident, but Brown said according to her medical records, she was 138 pounds. He said she had access to those medical records, and questioned why she didn’t tell the jury her actual weight.

“Maybe you were trying to leave the jury with the impression that you were much smaller than you were to emphasize the size difference between yourself and the players,” he said.

E.M. said she told the court what she had estimated at the time, not what was in the medical records.

“So you just said what you said at the time,” Brown said. “Rather than telling us the truth.”

On Tuesday, Julianna Greenspan — attorney for Cal Foote — will be the final lawyer to cross-examine E.M.

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1352386 Websites

The Athletic / Need a weird NHL superstition? We can help you

By Sean McIndoe

May 12, 2025 1:50 pm EDT

Good morning to everyone except people who have strong feelings about whether it’s “offside” or “offsides” and get weird about it. I’m honestly still a little disoriented from the absolutely wild end of Saturday’s Oilers/Knights game, but let’s try to get organized.

While You Were Sleeping

Dallas Stars alive and kicking

The Stars and Jets opened the action yesterday with an afternoon tilt, and it was a back-and-forth contest until things got weird in the third. The Stars scored three unanswered to earn the win, but it’s the goal that held up as the winner that we’ll be talking about for the next few days.

THE STARS HAVE A GOOD GOAL TO START THE THIRD ⭐
pic.twitter.com/oZcBGascdx

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) May 11, 2025

That’s Stars defenseman Alex Petrovic giving his team a 3-2 lead early in the third. He sure seems to do it with the dreaded distinctive kicking motion, but after a long (long) (LONG) review, the official determined the goal would count anyway, ruling that Connor Hellebuyck directed the puck into the net. The Jets goalie certainly makes contact with the puck, but the rulebook says that’s not supposed to matter. This time it did, and even having read the league’s unofficial explanation, I’m still not sure I get it. The Jets don’t either.

Still, Winnipeg had time to mount a comeback and couldn’t manage it, in part due to yet another big game from Mikko Rantanen. We’re officially at the point in this storyline where former teammates are roasting the Avs for letting him go, so … yeah.

Also, don’t hit the referee with your stick, kids.

Panthers get even with Leafs

We’re tied again in the Atlantic, with the home teams winning all four after last night’s 2-0 Panthers win. It was mostly a penalty-filled snoozer, but Florida will be fine with that — after two straight Eastern Conference crowns, I’m guessing they’ve figured out there are no style points handed out at this time of year.

We’ve got two nights off before the series resumes Wednesday, which should be good news for a Leafs team that looked like it was stuck in slow motion for most of the night. They took undisciplined penalties, the power play was a mess and the stars have gone quiet again. Auston Matthews is still looking for his first career goal past the opening round, if you’re keeping count.

Coast to Coast

🚨 This is a fun one from Fluto Shinzawa, who asked several NHL goalies if they could have made it as forwards or defensemen. And sure enough, a few of them think they could have.

🏒 Remember Alex Ovechkin, the sniper who set the all-time goals record a few weeks ago? Fun fact: He’s still playing in the postseason. We think. Other Sean (Gentille) looks into how the Hurricanes have neutralized the GOAT.

📠 At the start of each season, I make my oddly specific predictions, which is fun. At the end of the season, I have to report back on how I did,

which is not as fun. This year, I got a couple right, and I'm calling for a coach's challenge on one more.

🔥 The PWHL playoffs are underway, and Game 2 between the Montreal Victoire and Ottawa Charge needed extra time. Four overtimes worth, to be exact — the longest game in league history.

Feedback Loop

(Courtesy of Utah Hockey Club / the Utah Mammoth)

Last newsletter, I gave my thoughts on the big Utah Mammoth reveal and asked you to share yours. And you sure did, with over 800 of you filling out our survey. Let's see what you had to say …

You (mostly) like the Mammoth 🔥

More specifically, you like the name …

… and kind of love the logo …

… but are a little less sold on the uniforms.

A representative sampling of your feedback:

Sure, it isn't the Yeti name that would have worked so well, but for the names they were working with, I think this was easily the best option. Plus, that logo is CLEAN, along with already cool uniforms. — Ryan, the depressed Lightning fan

Mammoths would've been infinitely better than Mammoth. — Mike

The mountains being part of the Mammoth is spectacular. — Tom

The home jersey is pretty good, honestly. The road jersey is just template stuff. — Jeff

Nice color scheme and great logo. Not 100% sold on the name. But overall, well done. — Brian

Kind of boring uniforms … the name mammoth could have been so much bigger! — Barbara

Should have stayed Utah Hockey Club. That was nostalgic & unique at the same time. — Tyler

A mammoth is a cool choice — they look awesome, they're rough and tumble, and since they're extinct, they can't do anything to get themselves canceled. But for the sake of heaven and hell and all the limbos in between, STOP USING SINGULARS FOR TEAM NAMES! — Matt

The Colorado Mammoth (lacrosse) have been around since 2003. This is a lazy ripoff of an already existing team name from the state next door. Utah … aka Colorado's shadow. — Rob

By the way, that last bit of feedback about the lacrosse team showed up surprisingly often. Colorado sports fans are feeling feisty about this. Congrats on your new name, logo and uniform, Utah; it sounds like it might have come with your first rivalry too.

Now we want your feedback on all the team names. Take our ultimate team name survey and let us know who ranks where.

💡 Trivia time 💡 The Mammoth give Utah two teams in North America's "big four" pro men's leagues (NFL, MLB, NBA and NHL), and they're the only metro market to have the NBA and NHL but not MLB or NFL. Can you name the other four NHL markets that have a team in exactly one of the other leagues?

What to Watch

📺 Capitals @ Hurricanes

7 p.m. ET on TNT / Sportsnet

So far, the series has followed some pleasingly predictable beats. Game 1 was the classic Hurricanes playoff experience, with them dominating the stat sheet but just barely eking out enough offense to win. Game 2 was the Capitals' statement game, where they reminded us that they're the top seed and don't plan to roll over, no matter what the experts think. And Game 3 was just an old-fashioned flex by Carolina, dominating start to finish on home ice and regaining their status as series favorite.

Now, do we see Washington return serve and turn this into a best of three? Or do we see another dominant Hurricanes performance that leaves the Caps floundering? Honestly, maybe both.

📺 Golden Knights @ Oilers

9:30 p.m. ET on TNT / Sportsnet / CBC

The good news for the Oilers is they're still leading the series and are on home ice with a chance to take a commanding 3-1 lead. The bad news is Game 3 was the sort of disastrous loss that can derail a championship run. The Golden Knights are two years removed from a championship, and not the sort of team you want to let up off the mat.

One thing we already know: Calvin Pickard is not returning for Game 4. Stuart Skinner wasn't the problem Saturday, because hey, not many goalies can stop Leon Draisaitl with the game on the line. But he's now 0-3 in the postseason, while Pickard is 5-0, and you don't need Dom's model to crunch those numbers.

Full NHL schedule here. Try streaming games like these for free on Fubo.

Superstition Corner

Any weird superstitions you need help with?

Let's be clear on what I mean by "help" here. I don't mean that you need me to help you stop being weird, because I would never do that. Weird superstitions are part of being a sports fan, and if you don't have any at all, then you're not doing enough to help your team win. Remember, you're talking to the guy with the Good Luck Bag of Chips, and who recently had an incident involving a stuffed animal that I was later asked to defend in detail on a major radio show. You think you're weird? I'm not here to judge.

But I am here to help, which is where you come in. If you've got a superstition that's working for you and your team, great, keep at it. But maybe it's not working, or at least not firing on all cylinders, and you think a tweak could help. Or maybe you've got one of those dilemmas, where you're not sure if the lucky shirt only worked for Game 1 or is ready for an expanded role. Maybe your significant other is trying to get you to wash the playoff underwear you've had on for three weeks, and you need breakup tips.

The point is, I'm here for you, and I have expertise on the subject. If you find yourself in need of any superstition-related advice, you can reach me at redlight@theathletic.com, and we'll run anything good in future editions of Red Light.

Trivia Answer

Did you get all four?

In addition to Utah being in the NHL and NBA, the other North American metro markets that have a team in the NHL and exactly one other league are: St. Louis (MLB), Nashville (NFL), Buffalo (NFL) and Las Vegas (NFL, at least until the MLB's Athletics arrive in a few years).

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1352387 Websites

The Athletic / What Sidney Crosby playing at Worlds means to Canada: 'It's so huge'

By Chris Johnston

May 12, 2025Updated 10:34 am EDT

The seeds for Sidney Crosby's return to the IIHF World Hockey Championship were planted this winter at the 4 Nations Face-Off.

There was something restorative about the experience for the Pittsburgh Penguins' captain. It wasn't just that he was donning the Maple Leaf for the first time in nine years at that event. It was also playing alongside the next generation of top-tier Canadian players. What struck Crosby most

was how deeply those players cared — how much the experience meant to them.

“It’s just their passion and energy, which is contagious I think for me,” Crosby said after the 4 Nations championship game in February. “I’ve been on a lot of different teams, in a lot of different situations, but knowing these guys a little bit and seeing them day to day, that’s something that pushes me.

“If anything, I remind myself daily that I’d better get to work if I want to play with these guys because they’re special players and it’s incredible what they do out there.”

Viewed in that context, it’s little surprise that Crosby accepted an invitation to lead Team Canada in Stockholm.

Captain Canada has arrived. CA

Capitaine Canada est là. CA#MensWorlds | #MondialMasculin pic.twitter.com/JCtmXDD93y

— Hockey Canada (@HockeyCanada) May 5, 2025

Crosby hadn’t played at the Worlds since 2015, but he’d also never missed the Stanley Cup playoffs in three successive years before now. At this point, Crosby needs to look elsewhere to keep his competitive spirit sharp with the Penguins mired in an extensive retool. He continued to skate daily after the Penguins regular season ended on April 17, and Hockey Canada announced May 5 that he’d committed to the event.

Crosby informed officials about his plans before Nathan MacKinnon’s Colorado Avalanche were eliminated from the playoffs, Hockey Canada executive Scott Salmond said, so it was a pleasant surprise when MacKinnon quickly signed up to join his close friend at the Worlds following the Avalanche’s Game 7 loss to the Dallas Stars in Round 1.

That was the beginning of a string of commitments from established NHL players to round out the roster once Crosby was already on board: Marc-André Fleury, Jordan Binnington, Brayden Schenn, Phillip Danault, Jared Spurgeon and Mike Matheson among them.

“It’s so huge that he came,” Salmond said of Crosby.

The tournament tends to be a tough draw for North Americans because of its relatively low profile back home and the extensive time commitment required. It will likely chew up more than three weeks of Crosby’s summer and include round-robin games against weaker nations such as France and Austria after Canada opened the tournament with back-to-back wins over Slovenia and Latvia on the weekend.

Basically, no one would have faulted Crosby for taking a pass to focus on his offseason.

He won world championship gold in 2015 to gain entrance to the exclusive “Triple Gold Club” and will get a chance to play for his third Olympic gold medal next February in Milan. But after the 4 Nations victory, the 37-year-old was eager to both keep the momentum going for the national team and keep pushing himself.

“Sidney Crosby is a unicorn,” Jon Cooper, Canada’s Olympic coach, told The Athletic. “Somebody that’s played as long as he has done and accomplished what he’s accomplished — like, he’s run out of trophy space — and yet he still, after two decades in the league, is giving up a big portion of his summer to play the game he loves for the country he adores. It’s mind-blowing.

“It’s just phenomenal leadership and a crazy passion for the game that few have ever matched.”

Crosby’s record with Team Canada speaks for itself: The country is 50-6 in games with him in the lineup dating back to the 2004 World Juniors.

Cooper was blown away by what he saw behind the scenes from his captain at the 4 Nations event. That roster was populated with players who grew up idolizing Crosby, and he helped bring everyone together with an understated leadership style.

Crosby made sure no detail was overlooked in preparation and quietly went out of his way to establish personal touchpoints with members of the staff and younger teammates. On a roster brimming with Stanley Cup champions and major NHL award winners, he was the man. And yet he remained humble — open to being highlighted for a missed play during team meetings while still signing sticks and jerseys for the guys he was playing with.

“He carried a weight with all of them,” Cooper said. “There’s just something different about Sid.”

Past and present members of Team Canada describe Crosby's "aura": "The quiet intensity and confidence … you know there's no moment too big."

Cooper believes the main driving force behind Crosby’s world championship appearance is putting himself in the best position to lead the Olympic team next year. Cooper will head to Sweden this week and plans to debrief with Crosby, MacKinnon and the other 4 Nations players there: Travis Konecny, Travis Sanheim and Binnington.

Salmond, who has known Crosby for two decades, believes he was drawn in by the constant that’s helped push his career to heights few players have ever matched in history.

“I think he likes winning,” he said.

Canada certainly has a much better chance at claiming world championship gold with No. 87 in the lineup.

But his presence represents something even deeper and more important than that. Cooper, the Tampa Bay Lightning coach, said Lightning forwards Brayden Point, Anthony Cirelli and Brandon Hagel came away better from their experience at the 4 Nations simply because they were around Crosby, and each of those guys has already spent years in the NHL.

In Stockholm, the Hall of Famer is skating on a line with 18-year-old Macklin Celebrini, a fellow No. 1 draft pick. There’s also 21-year-old Adam Fantilli on the roster and recent World Juniors players Porter Martone and Carter George, both 18, part of the team’s taxi squad. Crosby’s decision to go to this world championship could echo through the years of future national teams with those players.

“Just imagine the effect it’s going to have on a 19- and 20-year-old; it’s unparalleled,” Cooper said. “I’m sure (Crosby) knows it, maybe, but I don’t think he realizes the magnitude because he’s such a humble guy. Those kids that are at that tournament, they don’t know what a gift they got when Sid said he’d play.”

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The Athletic / A case for (and against) picking the top forward prospects in 2025 NHL Draft

By Corey Pronman

May 12, 2025 7:00 am EDT

The 2025 NHL Draft class boasts a deep pool of top-end forwards. It’s a group without a ton of separation, and legitimate cases to be made for multiple players as top picks. I’ve talked to NHL scouts who have Michael Misa, Anton Frondell, Jake O’Brien, Porter Martone, James Hagens or Caleb Desnoyers as their top-ranked forward, for example. NHL teams with high picks will be sorting out how to order these players in the coming months. Here is my perspective on the arguments for and against each of the players.

Michael Misa | Center | OHL

Case for: Misa has the most complete toolkit of the group. He’s a high-end skater with great creativity, vision and puck skills who produced massive numbers in the OHL, scoring over 60 goals this season. The skill he displays at quick tempos separates him from the rest of the top prospects. He competes diligently without the puck and has the instincts to run a first power-play unit as a pro. Teams see a potential No. 1 center.

Case against: He's not a pure sniper, and while he scored a lot this year, many of his goals come from timing and positioning rather than from a world-class shot. He also isn't that physical, with some speculating that Misa could end up as an NHL winger due to his off-puck play.

Porter Martone | Winger | OHL

Case for: Martone's size-skill combination is the most enticing in the draft. He can outmuscle defenders, control the puck in traffic and make difficult plays look easy. His willingness to engage physically while also being elite with the puck on his stick makes evaluators dream about how he could impact an NHL playoff run.

Case against: His skating is an issue, and he is the clear worst skater among the top prospects. His first few steps are sluggish, and his stride mechanics need work. There's real risk his game just doesn't translate to the top level to be a true difference-maker unless his offensive touch is truly special, which it could be.

Caleb Desnoyers | Center | QMJHL

Case for: Desnoyers checks a lot of the boxes teams will want in an NHL center: He's big, fast, skilled and competitive and he can play any role coaches ask of him. His ability to transition play up ice, contribute offensively and still be a shutdown presence gives him massive value.

Case against: While Desnoyers is excellent across the board, he doesn't have any true elite traits. His game is more about consistency than flash. Teams that are bearish on him also wonder how much offense he will truly bring in the NHL, and most are wary of great production in the QMJHL as being indicative of future NHL success.

James Hagens | Center | Boston College

Case for: Few players in this class can create offense like Hagens. His skating, particularly his edge work and acceleration, is top-tier, and his puck skills are elite. He's deadly in transition and thrives in open ice. Hagens projects to flank an NHL PP1 and to be a major point producer in the NHL.

Case against: His game has too much perimeter play at times. Against bigger, stronger competition, there's concern about his ability to consistently get inside and create in the hard areas even if his compete level is solid. He's very talented, but will he have to be moved off to the wing? And if he's a 5-foot-11 winger, how valuable is that player profile?

Anton Frondell | Center/Winger | Sweden

Case for: Frondell plays a well-rounded and highly effective game. His combination of smooth puck play, solid skating, an NHL one-timer and physical compete makes him very projectable to the top level. He could be a consistent 20-30 goal scorer who plays against top competition.

Case against: He's not a high-pace offensive driver and can sometimes fade into the background due to a lack of premier playmaking in his game. There will be flashier options available, with the argument around Frondell being that he could be a top-two-line center who is hard to play against. Despite being projected to the NHL as a center, when he played versus men this season, he was mostly a winger.

Jake O'Brien | Center | OHL

Case for: O'Brien has high-end offensive instincts. His ability to make plays through defenders and to his teammates is elite. He can quarterback a power play and control the tempo of a game. His poise and feel for the game as a 6-foot-2 right-shot center gives him a ton of NHL potential.

Case against: His lack of a high-end shot limits his goal-scoring threat. There are concerns about whether he can consistently push the tempo at the next level and how hard he is to play against.

Victor Eklund | Winger | Sweden

Case for: Eklund is a relentless, energetic forward who combines speed, skill and compete. He plays bigger than his frame, consistently winning battles and creating chaos in front of the net. His edge work and puck retrieval ability could make him a highly effective top-line winger who makes life miserable for opponents.

Case against: Size is the lingering worry. Even though he plays tough, physical teams will still test him. There's also some risk that his offensive game doesn't pop quite enough to offset the physical mismatch against bigger NHL players. Unless he's a truly special player, i.e., a Seth Jarvis type, a 5-foot-11 energetic scoring winger isn't the most exciting profile with a premier pick.

Roger McQueen | Center | WHL

Case for: McQueen's profile is rare and coveted: a giant center with good speed, hands, hockey sense and some physical bite. When healthy, he can dominate shifts.

Case against: Health is the big question. Back injuries like what McQueen dealt with have the potential to be career-altering, and even if McQueen is fully cleared, durability concerns will be a major question mark for teams with a premium draft pick. Teams didn't get much draft-season data on him as well. Even when he was playing, he looked good, but he didn't produce points at a major rate in the WHL.

Brady Martin | Center | OHL

Case for: Martin is a coach's dream: a skilled, nasty forward who drives the net hard, plays very physical and embraces the dirty work. He's got enough skill to score in the NHL in a top-six role.

Case against: His offensive instincts aren't quite at the level of some of the other names on this list. His hockey sense could limit his offense and/or push him to the wing in the NHL. For a power forward type of player, he's actually slightly below average in terms of size for the NHL.

Tale of The Tape

Michael Misa

6' 0.75"

184

4

4

4

4

4

Porter Martone

6' 2.75"

208

2

5

3

4

4

Caleb Desnoyers

6' 1.5"

178

3

4

4

4

3

James Hagens

5' 10.5"

177

4

5

4

3

3

Anton Frondell

6' 1.0"

198

3

4

3

4

5

Jake O'Brien

6' 1.75"

172

3

4

4

4

2

Victor Eklund

5' 11.0"

161

4

4

3

5

4

Roger McQueen

6' 5.25"

197

3

4

3

4

3

Brady Martin

6' 0.0"

178

3

4

3

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The Athletic / Could NHL goalies have made it as skaters? What they said, from 'of course' to 'I'm so slow'

By Fluto Shinzawa

May 12, 2025 7:00 am EDT

Today's NHL goalies are specimens. Consider the Dallas Stars' Jake Oettinger. He is a 6-foot-6, 224-pounder who moves like a cat. He competes for pucks. Oettinger uses hockey sense to read plays and optimize his speed, size, quickness and agility. The Stars require Oettinger to handle pucks without failure and shuttle them onto his teammates' tape. When pressure rises, Oettinger is expected to stay cool.

It stands to reason, then, that a multidimensional goalie like Oettinger could ditch his 50 pounds of gear and reach for a skater's stick.

The net is no longer where coaches shelter the stout kid with a limited skating and shooting toolbox. It has even become the launchpad from where goalies like Alex Nedeljkovic and Linus Ullmark have scored long-distance goals in recent years.

Today's goalies are big, fast, athletic, smart and competitive — all the qualities teams want in their forwards and defensemen. In fact, USA Hockey encourages goalies to bypass specialization and play other positions until, at the earliest, the under-12 level.

Could Oettinger, then, have made it to the NHL as a forward or defenseman?

"I think I'd be in the NHL for sure," Oettinger, who played defense until he was 11, said with a smile. "I don't know. I have no idea."

Oettinger is one of nine goalies queried this season about whether they could have been NHL forwards or defensemen had they stripped off their gear when they were younger. Following are their responses and comparable forwards and defensemen they could have been:

Joey Daccord, Seattle Kraken

"I don't think I would have made it. I wasn't a good enough skater. I also don't like getting hit too much. That's why I played goalie."

Who he would have been: William Nylander (offense-first wing with minimal physicality)

"I like to score. Scoring's so much fun. Oh yeah. Skilled guy. I don't think I could grind. I don't think I have that in me. I don't like hitting. I don't like fighting. I'll just be a power-play guy."

Joonas Korpisalo, Boston Bruins

"Of course! Of course! I was a really good skater. Fast winger with a good shot."

Who he would have been: Ryan Poehling (fast bottom-sixer who can kill penalties and hit occasionally)

"A little physical. Third-line guy. PK."

Adin Hill, Vegas Golden Knights

"I think it's too unknown. But I'm not going to take my chances, because I made it as a goalie. I thought I was decent as a forward. I was scoring. I would have to work on my skating a bit. Because I was falling a bit behind on that. I was also transitioning to being a goalie (at 11 years old). The biggest thing is if I could skate."

Who he would have been: Jordan Martinook (heavy three-zone forward with occasional pop)

"Probably (Connor) McDavid, no? I think I would have been a two-way power forward with a little bit of skill. I would have been physical."

Spencer Knight, Chicago Blackhawks

"I don't know. If I wasn't a goalie, I think I probably would have ended up going to college for lacrosse. That was my thing. I was looking to do that too."

Who he would have been: Dylan Larkin (two-way center)

“Definitely offensive side. But I also played middie in lacrosse. I like playing on both sides.”

Jake Oettinger, Dallas Stars

“Sometimes I wish I’d stayed as a player when things aren’t going so good. But I love stopping the puck. I’m happy I made that decision.”

Who he would have been: Brady Skjei (two-way defenseman trusted in all situations)

“I’d like to think I’d be a mixture of Miro (Heiskanen) and Esa (Lindell). I always tell them that. Solid defensively. A little offensive upside. Second power play.”

Calvin Pickard, Edmonton Oilers

“It’s hard to say. Maybe. Maybe. I don’t know. I would have been a forward.”

Who he would have been: Vincent Trocheck (high-paced forward who can finish)

“I like to score goals. But probably more of an energy guy.”

Stuart Skinner, Oilers

“Could I have made it? Oh my gosh. I don’t know. I don’t know. I wouldn’t have the speed in my legs to play at the speed that guys play at. Maybe I’d have the hockey IQ. But my skating wouldn’t be that good. You should see me skate when there’s a penalty. I’m so slow.”

Who he would have been: Mark Stone (top-six wing who is defensively responsible)

“For sure top six. I’d be a two-way player, though. It’s probably because I’m a goalie that I’m saying that. I would really try to care about how I play in the D-zone.”

Jeremy Swayman, Bruins

“I’ve got a pretty good shot. But I don’t think my skating is nearly as good as some of these guys. I probably wouldn’t have made it past high school.

Who he would have been: Victor Olofsson (shot-ready left-shot forward)

“I think my pond hockey career could have gone pretty far as a forward. I was always a top pick in my pond hockey days in Alaska.”

Linus Ullmark, Ottawa Senators

“Excuse my language, but f—, no. No. No. Yes, I was a goal scorer. But at the same time, I wasn’t any good at skating. I had the vision for the game. But at the same time, you’ve got to be able to work hard, practice, skate hard and do all the right things. Being the immature kid I was at the time, yes, I was a way better goaltender. Then I worked with a lot of good people when it came to that part. So no, I don’t think I would have made it to the show. It’s fun thinking about what kind of player I would have been if I made it. Would I have been a grinder or a fourth-liner? Or would I be a top-six skilled guy? I don’t know.”

Who he would have been: Zach Hyman (net-front presence on the power play)

“Tomas Holmstrom. Right in front of the net. All the time.”

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Sportsnet.ca / Impeccable structure, poised Skinner carry Oilers to dominant 3-1 lead

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — Somehow, today’s fan base has come to need a whipping boy.

A fallback guy who can be blamed for whatever goes wrong — and when you’re the last guy to see the puck whiz past as it enters the net, well, step right up, Stuart Skinner.

“We all face pressure,” observed veteran centre Adam Henrique, “but to be a No. 1 goalie in a market like this, there's probably extra pressure — coming from all angles. To see him struggle, Picks (Calvin Pickard) goes in, plays great…

“The mental aspect of being a No. 1 goalie is probably above and beyond any other position, and he does a great job with that.”

Sometimes a player gets labelled because of a contract. Sometimes he’s just not playing well enough.

And sometimes, as it has been for Skinner here in Edmonton, his play, the analytics folks and the goaltending “experts” — isn’t every Canadian a goaltending expert — all team up to dig the grave.

It all flows along in separate rivers of online abuse and talk radio diatribe, and at its confluence, Skinner would spend two days being blamed for a game-winning goal in Game 3 that was going wide of his net until Leon Draisaitl deflected it in with 0.4 seconds left.

It’s got to make a guy crazy, wouldn’t it?

“What outside noise?” Skinner asked Monday, after making 23 saves in a 3-0 shutout, a flawless performance in his team’s most important game to date. “I have no idea, no clue what’s going on.”

Behind a defensive effort so sound it would likely beat any team in the league three games out of four — if only you could replicate this pedigree of positional play night after night — Skinner filled in any cracks that the Vegas Golden Knights could chisel out of the Oilers’ impeccable structure in a Game 4 win that vaulted them to a 3-1 series lead.

Vegas had 10 shots on goal halfway through the game and trailed 3-0. From there, Edmonton became even harder to generate chances against.

In a four-start post-season where Skinner has drawn the Oilers’ worst three performances — Games 1 and 2 vs. L.A., and Game 3 vs. Vegas — he finally got his team’s best in front of him.

And Skinner played like a guy who knew what to do with it.

“We just put on our work boots and our hard hats and went to work. The way that we’ve competed over a number of games is pretty incredible,” Skinner said. “When you see our guys rolling and playing with that desperation and that fight that we’ve got, we always give ourselves a chance to win.”

Skinner isn’t the kind of goalie who will consistently carry his team to wins they don’t deserve.

Occasionally, sure. But take a look at the save percentages around the NHL — it’s not 2012 anymore. Goalies don’t carry teams the way they once did.

Skinner hasn’t been as good over the course of the regular season as he was last year, but you can say that about so many elements of this Oilers team — from Connor McDavid, to Zach Hyman, to the special teams, to the top defensive pairing.

But as the playoffs have worn on, we’re seeing an Edmonton team that’s left the regular season behind and found its playoff legs. On Monday night, they gave Vegas nothing and left head coach Bruce Cassidy as complimentary as he was frustrated on a night where his team was second best in every quantifiable category.

“They got an early lead, and they’ve been here before,” Cassidy said. “You’ve got to manage the game if you do that, and they did a good job of it. We had some looks, but we were kind of one and done. Not a lot of second chances.”

Vegas had three power plays in Period 1 and couldn’t score. They didn’t know it at the time, but that would be their best window of opportunity for the rest of the night.

Edmonton was air-tight after that — no more penalties, just 12 shots allowed through 40 minutes, and total domination at both net fronts.

“No easy passages through the neutral zone,” added Cassidy. “Give ‘em credit — they played the right way to win the game. We’re going to have to do it the hard way. Won’t be anything easy.

“They’ve been there. They were right there last year.”

Evander Kane was a force of nature in Game 4, with a goal, an assist, six hits and a plus-3 rating.

“From every standpoint,” Henrique said of his left winger, Kane. “We talked about playing with energy right off the bat, and Kaner gets in there, mixes things up, and other guys are following suit, just shift after shift.

“You want play on that line. We ended up with a few more penalties in the first than them, but … we continued to push that line and play with that energy from start to finish tonight.”

Henrique scored twice, and Leon Draisaitl — coming off perhaps the worst playoff game of his career — drew the rare assignment of marking Jack Eichel and eliminated the Golden Knights’ best forward. Draisaitl had no points and was excellent.

Even Kasperi Kapanen, playing his first playoff game in relief of Viktor Arvidsson, was impactful, generating momentum with his speed and physical play.

A pivotal Game 4 had the possibility of putting Vegas in the driver’s seat in this series. Instead, the Oilers showed that when they roll out their best game, it’s not particularly close.

Now, they’ve got three chances to reproduce a game of that pedigree to move on to the Western Conference Final.

It’s fair to wonder if the Edmonton Oilers will need more than two of those opportunities.

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Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Hurricanes stay undefeated at home, push Ovechkin’s Capitals to brink

Sonny Sachdeva

After a sterling 2024-25 campaign that made the Washington Capitals the story of the season, Alex Ovechkin’s club finds itself one loss away from a second-round exit.

Much was made of the single-summer turnaround that transformed the Caps into an Eastern Conference behemoth, just a year removed from clawing their way into the 2024 playoffs right before the doors closed. A five-game series victory over the Montreal Canadiens last month had the Caps faithful eyeing a deep post-season run for the first time since Washington’s title-winning march in 2018.

But the Canes, nearing the end of their seventh-straight second-round appearance, have served Ovechkin and Co. a reality check, putting up back-to-back drubbings to earn a 3-1 series lead and push Washington to the brink of elimination.

Monday’s addition to the pile — a 5-2 Canes victory that saw the Caps twice pull within a goal before Carolina put it out of reach — continued one particularly dominant trend that’s taken shape through a round-and-a-half: Through five games at home in these playoffs, the Canes are a perfect 5-0, neither the New Jersey Devils nor the Caps able to get the better of Carolina’s home cooking.

The five-game home streak to start the post-season is the fourth-longest such streak any playoff club has strung together in the past decade. The leader on that list? Carolina, just a few years ago (seven straight home wins, 2022).

That’s bad news for Ovechkin’s squad. Because while the series moves back to D.C. for a Game 5 that could keep Washington’s season alive, the Caps would have to win under the Lenovo Center lights in Raleigh — and upend the Canes’ streak of home-ice dominance — to force a Game 7.

Before we get there, let’s take a look at how Carolina took Game 4 on Monday night.

Canes continue to overwhelm Capitals with shot-attempts onslaught

Heading into Game 4, there was plenty of discussion about Carolina’s volume-shooting mentality, particularly the club’s affinity for racking up wild numbers of shot attempts through an unending stream of pucks fired at the cage.

In Game 1 against Washington, Carolina amassed a staggering 94 attempts to the Capitals’ 34. Over the first three games in total, the Canes managed 256 shot attempts, nearly doubling the Caps’ 133.

Game 4 was a similar story. While Washington upped their output, managing a series-high 55 shot attempts, the Hurricanes still finished far ahead with 73, outpacing in terms of shots on goal by a margin of 37-21, too.

While the approach doesn’t necessarily mean Brind’Amour’s squad has been racking up quality opportunity after quality opportunity, the relentless shooting does serve another purpose, according to his opposing coach — it wears teams down.

“When you look at the shot attempts, sometimes they’re jaw-dropping,” Caps head coach Spencer Carbery said of the Canes’ volume shooting earlier in the series. “And when they flash across the screen, people are like, ‘Whoa, that doesn’t seem to look good.’ Which I agree with — but we’ve played Carolina long enough to know that … when you look into the quality looks, you can take a little bit of, ‘Okay, it wasn’t that bad, even though it felt a lot worse.’ If you dig into the successes of their system, one of the reasons is — as a coach, as a player, as a fan — when you’re watching that transpire, you’re like, ‘Holy, this team is absolutely crushing the other team.’ When, if you look at the odds of some of those shots going in, they’re not high, on a goaltender at this level.

“But what they do is it stresses you — it stresses your team, it stresses your coach. Usually, when you do that, when you’re applying pressure to someone, eventually you crack.”

Andersen finally beaten, but remains in dominant form for surging Canes

While the Caps are trying to navigate the chaos of Carolina’s offensive approach, the situation hasn’t been much better for them on the other end of the sheet.

Frederik Andersen has been among the best netminders in the post-season to this point — coming into Game 4, the 35-year-old sported a league-leading .940 save percentage, and was fresh off a Game 3 shutout that helped his club pull ahead in the series. That streak extended to five goalless periods Monday before Washington was finally able to get a puck past the Great Dane.

Still, with his squad seemingly on the cusp of a ticket to the Conference Final, Andersen now sports an elite .935 save percentage, which ranks among the best marks of his playoff career. In all, he extended his shutout streak to just over 118 minutes before Jakob Chychrun beat him in the third period Monday night — the longest such streak of his career.

The blue-liners in front of Andersen have been making their presence known too — aside from the three-goal Game 2 that earned Washington its lone win, the Canes’ defence has held the Caps’ scorers to two or fewer goals in three of four games in this series. The same was true Monday, where Carolina’s blue line — courtesy of tallies from Shayne Gostisbehere and Sean Walker — managed as many goals as a Washington offence that ranked second-best league-wide during the regular season.

Ovechkin finally breaks through, but it may be too late

If there’s one positive the visitors can take from the tilt, it’s the signs of life seen from their captain.

Coming into Game 4, things were looking dismal for the league’s all-time goal-scoring king. After potting four goals through five games against the Montreal Canadiens in Round 1, Alex Ovechkin came into Monday’s Game 4 goalless in three straight. More worrying, the chances had dried up too. The Great Eight had hit the net just eight times through three

games. After managing five one-timer attempts in Round 1, per the broadcast, he had none in Games 1-3 in Round 2.

But late in the third period of Game 4, with his team's season on the line, the captain finally found his touch — wiring a blistering one-timer past Andersen to net his first goal of the series, pulling the Capitals within a goal with time to tie it up.

It was a crucial moment for Washington's power play, too — the Caps' man-advantage unit had gone 4-for-20 through the post-season up until this night, their four power-play markers the fewest among any remaining playoff squad. They'd come up short time and time again throughout Game 4 as well. On the other side of the ledger, the Canes had allowed just one power-play goal against, on 22 opportunities, before Ovechkin's third-period marker.

It took a five-on-three opportunity to break through, but the Caps found one when they seemingly needed one most. Unfortunately for Carbery's squad, it took only four-and-a-half minutes for the Canes to douse the comeback attempt, with Walker scoring to restore Carolina's 4-2 lead, and the home side adding an empty-netter before all was said and done.

If Ovechkin can carry the breakthrough into Game 5 and build on it, perhaps the Caps found something to hold onto Monday night. But the fact it came this late in the series — four games and three losses in — may render it all a footnote before the week is through.

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Sportsnet.ca / Tensions rise in Maple Leafs-Panthers series amid string of controversial hits

Luke Fox

TORONTO — As margins for error shrivel, bruises mount, and temperatures spike in this doozy of a Toronto Maple Leafs–Florida Panthers series, we think back to the wise words of veteran Scott Laughton.

It's human nature to want a pound of flesh, an eye for an eye. To sneak in the last chirp or pointed stick or knock on the numbers.

But the sweetest revenge?

"Win. That's how you get 'em," Laughton said after villain Sam Bennett sent Toronto's starting goalie, Anthony Stolarz, to an ambulance and went unpenalized.

"At the end of the day, it's about winning and punishing 'em that way."

The proverbial fine line requires more squinting by the shift here, as Cats-Leafs opened with a bang and has swollen into the closest (2-2) most dangerous of the four second-round battles.

And so, as the combatants shake out the cobwebs from another heavy hitter Monday morning, we've learned that Max Domi has been fined $5,000 (the maximum charge, under the collective bargaining agreement) for boarding Florida captain Aleksander Barkov as time expired on the Panthers' 2-0 shutout victory.

And we've heard Maple Leafs coach Craig Berube point toward a separate Game 4 incident — Dmitry Kulikov directing a flying elbow at Mitch Marner's head — when asked about the Domi check during his meeting with reporters in Fort Lauderdale.

"To me, the Kulikov hit on Marner was 10 times worse," Berube said.

The coach received no explanation for why the Kulikov infraction went un-whistled, and Marner appealed to the officials in real time.

In a series that has already seen one key figure (Stolarz) taken out and another under assessment (Florida wing Evan Rodrigues, who was checked out of Sunday's event by Oliver Ekman-Larsson), the Atlantic war of attrition is intensifying.

"It's normal. We expected it. And I think we're fine with it. We're handling it. We're physical," Berube said. "I thought we were the more physical team last night."

Yes, the Leafs outhit their rambunctious opponent 47-40 in that game, but that had something to do with the Panthers owning the puck and drawing six minor penalties as the Leafs lost discipline and spent more time in box than in Sergei Bobrovsky's kitchen.

Florida still leads all playoff teams with a whopping 44.2 hits per 60 minutes. (The Leafs rank 11th with a respectable 33.8.)

Domi set the tone in Game 4 with a careless high-stick two minutes in, the first of a few Leafs infractions that had nothing to do with preventing a scoring chance.

"We don't need to take those," Berube said. "Hookings and interference. We've got to be better. We'll be smarter than that. In the end, I really liked our physicality, our compete out there. The guys played hard."

Simon Benoit and Max Pacioretty registered eight hits apiece. Determined power forward Matthew Knies threw six.

And while Marner and a clearly ailing Auston Matthews struggled to generate in middle ice over the weekend, as a whole these Leafs are more willing to match Florida bully tactics than they were in 2023 — when the series was swift and lopsided.

The NHL's Department of Player Safety, which leveled a pair of suspensions in Florida's previous series against Tampa, would argue that Domi's aggression was more worthy of punishment than Kulikov's because the game was essentially over.

Getting carried away with game-flow aggression is not viewed the same as message-sending malice, in the eyes of George Parros's office.

"The league looks at those things very closely, especially at that point of the game," Panthers coach Paul Maurice said post-game. "That's their job."

"I mean, obviously he's trying to take a run at Barky at the end there," Bennett added. "The boys did a good job jumping in there and sticking up for Barky. Yeah, I mean, it's been a physical series, so I expect more of that."

To expect anything less would be silly, especially after two full days of recovery and wound-licking before Game 5 Wednesday.

The last player to face league discipline for a sneaky shot on Barkov, Brandon Hagel, was taken out by an Aaron Ekblad forearm shiver to the chops the next game he played. (Ekblad maintains he had no intent to injure Hagel's head.)

The hatchet, much like the series, is still in full swing.

Which is why, as the plastic rats rained from the rafters and hyped-up fans banged the glass and Barkov gathered himself off the ice, Matthew Tkachuk warned Toronto's best player, William Nylander, that he was next.

And why the six-foot-three, 227-pound Knies suggested he'd be up for the wrath instead.

"I mean, that's what he does," Nylander said of Tkachuk. "He'll probably do whatever he can to get a player off their game. Next game's going to be a fun one."

It'll be more fun for the side that heeds Laughton's advice. The one that can reach ruthless without getting reckless.

Just win.

That's how you really get 'em back.

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Sportsnet.ca / Time is now for Jets to find consistency and end road slump

Iain MacIntyre

DALLAS — When the Stanley Cup Playoffs began, the Winnipeg Jets were the only team that could win the Cup without winning a road game.

But they lost that particular perk that came with finishing first in the regular season when the Jets dropped the opening game of their second-round series 3-2 to the Dallas Stars in Winnipeg.

The Jets were pretty much awful in three first-round road games against the St. Louis Blues, a hat trick of lopsided losses in Missouri, but still won the series by sweeping all four games in Manitoba.

As they chase their first Western Conference Final appearance since 2018 — and what would be the franchise's first Stanley Cup — the Jets must find a way to win in Dallas, where they trail the Stars 2-1 heading into Game 4 on Tuesday night.

Surely, the best team of the regular season, which had the NHL's third-best road record, can figure out how to win at least one playoff road game, right?

Except the Jets haven't managed to win a playoff game away from home since Game 1 against the Vegas Golden Knights in their only series two years ago.

They have lost eight straight road games since then while being absurdly outscored 42-13. They haven't scored more than twice in any of those games, and they've allowed fewer than five goals only once. This is madness.

There are blind gophers on the Canadian Prairies who fare better on the road than the Jets.

Seve Ballesteros' caddie once told the spectacularly mercurial golfer, "Aim for the rough; maybe you'll miss."

Despite all their blocks and snap hooks, the Jets can't afford to aim for the rough.

In Game 3 here Sunday, they played an impressive road game for 43 minutes until the Jets lost a contentious, third-period goal call that followed a seven-minute intermission for the review. It broke a 2-2 tie but, more alarmingly, also broke the Jets.

They surrendered two more rush goals they couldn't defend — and goalie Connor Hellebuyck couldn't prevent — as Dallas won 5-2 to gather momentum and put Winnipeg back in the playoff vise.

And here they are again, facing a dare: Go ahead, win a road game.

"Obviously, we know that on the road we have to be better," Jets coach Scott Arniel told reporters Monday at the American Airlines Center. "We have to be more consistent, and that area obviously hasn't been good.

"We have good leadership and guys recognize that there's areas that we have to be more consistent with. But at the end of the day, the one thing about the playoffs, it's the next game. It really is. You can love what you did if you win, you hate what you did if you lose, but it really is all about the next step. We have to win in this building, obviously. They took Game 1 from us, so we have to win in the building. All our energies are pushed towards Game 4 tomorrow."

As you might expect, given the preceding 500 words, the Jets have been chasing most of these road games.

Roope Hintz's power-play redirection of Mikko Rantanen's shot-pass just 2:27 into Sunday's contest was the fourth time in 10 playoff games that the Jets went behind 1-0 on the opposition's first shot.

That happened to Winnipeg only three times during the 82-game regular season.

"I think a big thing for us is our starts," Jets forward Cole Perfetti said. "I feel like most of our games in the playoffs so far, you know, we build towards the third period — our final product. Usually, we've been really good as the game gets going on, and we've just got to find that from the get-go. It's not a lack of preparation or a lack of effort.

"I think it's just when the game's going, from the first puck drop, we've got to have that attention to detail and come out guns blazing. A lot of these games, we've kind of fallen behind the eight ball to start, and it's a hard thing to do when you're down on the road in the playoffs, early in games. It's hard to come back."

Winnipeg rallied from 1-0 and 2-1 deficits on Sunday and was tied 2-2 until Alex Petrovic's kick-in goal was allowed to stand at 3:51 of the third period because referees and the NHL situation room ruled that Hellebuyck had propelled the puck into the net, nullifying the rulebook rider that disqualifies a soccer goal that bounces in off the goaltender's stick.

But given the experience, ability and leadership of their group — as well as the stakes — the Jets' failure to manage this dose of adversity was the most disconcerting aspect of Game 3. Obviously, any team with Stanley Cup aspirations must have more mental strength and resolve than what Winnipeg displayed in the third period.

"If we want to go on a long run, we're going to have to deal with adversity," Perfetti acknowledged. "We're going to have to go through things. Every team does in order to win a Stanley Cup. We're going to have to deal with, you know, the opposition, the refs, the unlucky bounces. Whatever it is, that's just part of the game. And we've had a few of them this post-season, and kind of had. . . a little collapse after them in a few of the games. And we've just got to make sure when that does happen, when we get thrown a gut punch, that we're able to respond in the way that, you know, we know we can play."

"It hasn't gone the way we wanted on the road," defenceman Josh Morrissey said. "But we're very much in a series right now. Obviously, we can look at some of those moments in games where something doesn't go our way, and maybe it compounds a little bit, and be better able to handle that in the future. But, like I said, we're very much in a competitive series right now and obviously tomorrow's game is massive."

The toll of so many road losses over the last two years has probably made the Jets less robust mentally than they'd like to be.

But that armour can be rebuilt with a single road win.

"A great coach once told me — and I've told our group this — there isn't a home or a road way to play," Arniel said. "There's only the right way. We have a certain style that we're accustomed to playing and how we play, and we've been doing it all year long. This is Game 93 coming up, and we've got to get back to being that road team that we were for 82 games. This playoff hasn't been good (away from home). We've got to be more consistent. There has to be more through 60 minutes."

ICE CHIPS – Looming over the series is the potential return of Stars defenceman Miro Heiskanen, who is close to playing after missing 3 ½ months with a knee injury. Dallas coach Pete DeBoer reiterated Monday that he believes his No. 1 blue-liner will return against the Jets at some point.

"In a series, you want to keep putting the other team under that must-win pressure," DeBoer said. "No one wants to fall behind by two games. We put them under that pressure after (winning) Game 1, and they responded. We're putting them under that pressure again tomorrow. I know they're going to respond, and hopefully our game is a little better than it was in Game 2 when we had them in this spot."

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Sportsnet.ca / Leafs Thoughts: Auston Matthews must take the lead with series tied 2-2

Justin Bourne

No preamble – below are a half-dozen thoughts on the state of the Leafs through Game 4 of the second round, which finds them tied 2-2 with the Florida Panthers.

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 13, 2025

Auston Matthews' lack of scoring is a problem, but miscalibrated shooting isn't to blame

Just about nothing I'll write after this section matters if Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner can't figure out how to create more offence. Everything except the play of Joseph Woll (a sudden bright spot) is secondary.

So, let's look at Matthews today. I'm doing my best to nip this whole "Matthews can't hit the net and that's why he can't score" thing in the bud, as I fear I helped create it a couple weeks back by pointing out his high missed net total in a previous article. It's true, he has missed the net a bit more than usual (just under two misses per game in the regular season, just over two so far in playoffs), but once you start looking for it, it becomes confirmation bias.

He gets a ton of shots (tied for the second most with Connor McDavid behind Nathan MacKinnon) and is trying to pick corners.

Missed nets are like giveaways in that good players have the puck a lot so their raw totals are high. For sure, he's had a few egregious misses, but I don't see it as the primary problem. It may be a symptom of having to rush shots a bit more, as he isn't getting to his spots as well as he usually does.

In sum, the Leafs' huge centre just refuses to assert himself right now. He's not skating, he's standing, he's almost lurking and waiting for others to go do it like he sees himself as Teemu Selanne rather than Eric Lindros. Matthews has never been lightning quick, but he usually gets up to top speed fairly regularly. He hasn't been doing that.

This decline has been a theme in the playoffs. His top skating speed in the regular season followed by the playoffs, over the past three years (percentile ranks, with 99 being the best):

2024-25: 61st / Below 50th

2023-24: 63rd / Below 50th

2022-23: 64th, 57th

When you don't skate, you can't get in on the forecheck. Over the past five playoff runs Matthews' "hits per 60" has never been below 9.00, but this year they're closer to 7.00. He needs to get those boots going, and everything else (including his shooting) will seem to magically get better.

This clip below made the coaching part of me mental, though it's not just on Matthews. He wins the opening faceoff in a huge road game. In my mind, that's a set-the-tone moment.

Florida is in its structure, and you know you can't skate through them, so you're going to have to dump it in. The two wingers reload and build speed, but watch all three forwards. Matthews isn't saving ice, dying to get in on the forecheck and land some thunderous hit. Marner takes almost no strides through the neutral zone. And Matthew Knies just gets too far ahead of it to have any momentum.

The Leafs get a dump, and by that point Matthews is skating backwards for some reason, while Marner skates in late and light and the Florida defence gets it back out no problem.

That's a brutal "tone setter" forecheck just seconds into the game. Although in fairness, it did accurately forecast the game's tone.

But this is the theme of Matthews' game right now for me. I'm not sold that he's "hurt" (it doesn't show up anywhere else). To me he just looks stuck in mud, fading away from the dangerous areas, while on the road against a team like Florida, he needs to know: the only way out is through.

Florida does this to stars, as you'll recall Connor McDavid was blanked in Games 6 and 7 of the Cup Final last year (two total shots). I'm not saying it's easy, but I am saying you can't play in a way that assumes it's going to be anything remotely different from that. Matthews is a star, and has done a lot right to get the Leafs here. But he needs to show a little more dawg right now.

You have to dump it in versus the Panthers when they're in their structure

This is probably a good time to go further on that and mention Florida has some say in how this series goes, and eight of their last nine playoff opponents have lost to them, unable to find solutions. Sunday night was the best team structure game I've seen a team play in the Stanley Cup Playoffs to date. I couldn't find a Panther out of place.

For the Leafs, they know winning dumped pucks back is brutally hard, so down a goal, we saw them try to keep possession and find their way through the neutral zone last night. Not a chance. When the Panthers are in their neutral zone spots, that's the game: You have to dump it in, otherwise it ends up looking like this as you try to break in.

And so, what are some solutions?

Rush play is a Leafs advantage

Florida has given up a surprisingly high amount of breakaways over the past couple seasons, and the Leafs have done a decent job exploiting that. Knies found one last game, and William Nylander nearly did too. Odd-man rushes are 19-13 for Toronto in the series, and this is not typically a category they control.

Coaches love to say the safe things like "don't cheat, stick with it" and that sort of thing, but when Florida is on its game, I've yet to see a team just "stick with it" and find offence. Yes Toronto needs to be tight defensively. But with all the flipping of pucks they do on breakouts, it's OK to leave the zone a second earlier.

If you're telling a few guys (Nylander, Knies, Marner, Max Domi, Bobby McMann) it's OK to go, I don't think the Panthers are such an offensive dynamo that it kills you to take a couple chances and guess wrong. And the rewards can be huge, in that you may score, but a heightened awareness that the Leafs forwards are leaving the zone early could at least pull back the Panthers defence, making breakouts easier.

And Lord could the Leafs use a few easier breakouts.

Does the home ice line match up thing matter?

Certainly, but I think it matters most to Florida. Matthews' line was handling the Aleksander Barkov line with surprising ease (carrying the expected goals, as well as attempts and real goals, in the first three games) to the point where Florida moved that line to face Nylander's group, who coincidentally had been red hot for the Leafs. Credit Paul Maurice, but it was kind of a no-brainer.

And so, the Panthers found a matchup they like, with Nylander's line going quiet in Game 4, and Matthews/Marner unable to exploit the second line and second defence pair of Seth Jones and Niko Mikkola.

They'll almost certainly go back to what worked in Toronto with Matthews on Barkov, going back to that power-on-power matchup that gave the Leafs' second line more life.

Should they make lineup changes?

Yeah, it's time. David Kampf makes over $2 million a year and played the fifth-most among forwards on the Leafs (after the core four) the previous time the Leafs won a playoff round. He's not some scrub. And Nick Robertson skates and works and can shoot it in if the puck finds him in the offensive zone. They're not getting so much from say, Calle Jarnkrok, that the lineup is untouchable.

But more than anything, you have to be able to use your advantages where you have them, and the Leafs have 14 NHL forwards, meaning they can infuse some fresh pop into their lineup when things go stale.

The only hangups on what would otherwise be a simple decision are that there's an extra day of rest before the next game, so you'd expect everyone to have some more energy in their legs anyway. But also, the Leafs won their games in Toronto with their current lineup, so they know it can work.

It's not an easy call, but to me, if you're looking at trying to play five-to-six more weeks of hockey this year, they'd benefit from spreading out the workload a bit.

So, can the Leafs still win this thing?

Of course. More than anything else, the play of Joseph Woll should encourage that reality. With Anthony Stolarz out, and Woll putting forward an awesome effort in Game 4, there's little conversation to be had about the crease. He'll go in Game 5, and the team should feel good about that.

Next, the power play can be better. I think they have to stay with their five forward group, as that's all they've done for months (neither Morgan Rielly nor Oliver Ekman-Larsson feel like some great upgrade). But they do need to be prepared for the hard pressure and bodies in the lanes, and to move the puck better so they can get it to the net and let Knies and John Tavares go to work down there.

Finally, they'd love a depth goal from someone like McMann or Scott Laughton or Steven Lorentz, but of course, it doesn't matter if the top guys aren't scoring too.

In the end, the Leafs have been right there in every game. It's 2-2, and they've got home ice for what's now a best of three. They're in a good spot. Now, more than ever, they need solid goaltending and a big game from their best players. Craig Berube continues to show his faith that those things can, and will, happen. As the pressure mounts, we'll see if this core can muster a different ending.

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Sportsnet.ca / Penguins' coaching vacancy brings plenty of intrigue

Emily Sadler

Who will be the next head coach of the Pittsburgh Penguins? Two weeks after the team parted ways with longtime bench boss Mike Sullivan, that's still a big question mark.

Of the eight teams on this summer's coaching carousel, two have found their new bench boss — the New York Rangers wasted no time scooping up Sullivan, and the Anaheim Ducks hired veteran Joel Quenneville last week. There's plenty of intrigue on this year's list of coaching vacancies, particularly when it comes to the Penguins.

"Whoever gets this job, they're gonna have patience," Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman said during Monday's episode of 32 Thoughts: The Podcast. "It's a rebuild now — Kyle Dubas has said it's a rebuild, so there's not going to be immediate pressure to win right away, like some of these other jobs."

The candidate Kyle Dubas chooses will tell us a lot about the more concrete expectations around the club — one that initially treaded lightly into rebuilding territory but now appears to be ready to dive in. Still, this is not your average rebuild, considering the trio of generational players and future Hall of Famers still leading the roster. And that's what makes this hiring process so interesting.

"Whoever goes in there is going to be able to coach Crosby, is going to be able to coach Malkin — who's probably headed into his last year — and Letang, all of whom are going to the Hall of Fame. And because of Crosby's magic, you never count out the fact that maybe he drags this team farther than is expected," said Friedman.

In that sense, it's hard not to compare this Penguins team — and this coaching search — to the one we saw in Washington two years ago, which ended with the Capitals' hiring of Spencer Carbery in May 2023. At least from the outside, the similarities are there.

"I had someone say to me they were kind of looking for the next Carbery," Friedman noted, "but then someone else said to me, 'I don't think that's the right way to put it.'"

Still, it's an interesting comparison considering the Crosby and Alex Ovechkin connection.

The Capitals were five seasons removed from their 2018 Stanley Cup run when Carbery was hired. The first-time NHL head coach inherited a team heavy on talent — led, of course, by Ovechkin and a handful of veterans from that Cup-winning core — but with an eye to the future as it opened the doors to younger players coming up through the system.

We all saw what happened next — the team snuck into the post-season last spring only to be swept away by the Rangers, and all signs pointed to a rebuild heading into 2024-25. But the power of Ovechkin and a few key moves got them back to the top of the league.

Carbery was hired to revive the core. Considering Dubas' stance on retooling this roster, it sounds like the candidate he's searching for in Pittsburgh will play a crucial role in rebuilding. But it's hard not to wonder whether the turnaround we saw in Washington this year could be duplicated in Pittsburgh.

The right candidate will need to strike a perfect balance between, as Friedman puts it, "the sunset of legacy players" and "the beginning of the next wave of the team."

"You're gonna have a commitment from your GM and ownership that yes, this is a rebuild, and you're gonna have to be a very big part of creating something," Friedman continued. "And so, I think there's a lot there in the sense that, the expectation isn't going to be for you to win right away, but to build with the recognition that you have a nuclear weapon there who might be able to drag you into the post-season and is gonna be part of teaching those younger players how to win."

The Penguins last won the Cup in 2017. After five unsuccessful attempts to hoist another, they've failed to make the post-season three straight years despite a few big swings to jump back into the mix early on in Dubas's tenure.

So, patience will be key. So, too, will a sense of experimentation with one of the league's most fascinating rosters right now.

"You're not going to be expected to deliver immediate results, even though I'm sure someone like Crosby would like them, but you're gonna be allowed to experiment," said Friedman. "And I'm curious to see what they're gonna look at for this, because I've heard that there are some young coaches, or maybe some first-time coaches, that have a serious shot at this job."

Dubas has suggested a timeline that goes into early June. Until then, it'll be an interesting job vacancy to watch.

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Sportsnet.ca / Dube's lawyer continues cross-examination at hockey sexual assault trial

Paul D. Grant

LONDON, Ont. — The complainant in the trial of five former NHLers accused of sexual assault in June 2018 was challenged on Monday by the defence as to why she didn't tell her best friend in text messages about the severity of the alleged incident until days later.

The woman, known as "E.M." in court documents because of a publication ban on her name, answered from elsewhere in the courthouse via CCTV to continued questioning by lawyer Lisa Carnelos, who represents Dillon Dube. It was E.M.'s sixth day of cross-examination.

During cross-examination, E.M. said she called her best friend after leaving the Delta Armouries hotel in the early hours of June 19, 2018, crying.

Carnelos questioned why she had a seemingly normal text exchange later that morning with a co-worker who was the bar with E.M. but didn't follow up to a text from her best friend until later, and then when she did, didn't express anything had happened.

"I think I was just being overdramatic earlier (over the phone) but I'm good," E.M. responded in a text when her best friend asked how she was.

Carnelos again asked why E.M. didn't tell her best friend about what had happened in the hotel room.

“I was in between ignoring it and pretending it didn’t happen. I’d never gone through something like that before,” she responded.

“I did feel embarrassment and shame. They were making fun of me all night. They were laughing at me. It was embarrassing. … They kept me there. They kept laughing at me.”

A few days later, on June 22, 2018, E.M. texted her best friend to say she went to London police and the hospital, to which her friend responded with an expletive.

“She’s shocked because I had downplayed what happened,” E.M. said in court.

She later added in her text to her best friend, “The group of guys are all high-up hockey players. Go figure. LMAO.”

Carnelos questioned E.M. about using the abbreviation for “laughing my ass off” in such a serious situation.

“I was in disbelief that not only did this horrible situation happen, but now it’s even more complicated because they’re high-up hockey players,” E.M. said.

Earlier in the day, Daniel Brown, who represents Alex Formenton, completed his cross-examination of E.M. by suggesting she was the one who pulled Formenton into the washroom to have sex. E.M. said she was going to use the bathroom and that someone followed her in.

Brown also suggested that E.M. felt “scorned” because no one walked her out of the room or arranged for a ride home at the end of the night.

“I’d never had an encounter that ends in that way,” she said in court. “I wasn’t scorned about it. I felt disrespected the whole night, so I’m not sure why I thought the end would be any different.”

When she went to London police to first report the incident, she told detective Stephen Newton she had concerns about videos of what had happened.

“I didn’t know what they would do with the videos,” E.M. said. “I was already in such a horrible situation, I would not have wanted to see that. I didn't want to be there. I didn’t want people recording what was happening to me.”

Michael McLeod, 27, has been charged with two counts of sexual assault, including one relating to aiding in the offence. Dube, 26, Cal Foote, 26, Formenton, 25, and Carter Hart, 26, have each been charged with one count of sexual assault. All have pleaded not guilty to their charges.

Cross-examination is expected to continue by Juliana Greenspan, who’s the lawyer for Foote, on Tuesday at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

Once cross-examination has been completed, the Crown will get a chance for redirect, which means it will get a chance to clarify anything E.M. said during cross-examination.

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TSN.CA / Mark Masters: Temperature rising in Leafs-Panthers series as Domi avoids suspension | TSN

Mark Masters

Maple Leafs coach Craig Berube held a media availability at the team hotel in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. on Monday. Panthers coach Paul Maurice met with the media at the Baptist Health Iceplex.

In the final seconds of Florida’s 2-0 win in Game 4, Leafs forward Max Domi hit Panthers captain Aleksander Barkov into the boards from behind.

"The league looks at those things very closely," Panthers coach Paul Maurice noted on Sunday night, "especially at that point in the game.”

Leafs coach Craig Berube shrugged when asked about the play on Monday as his team prepared to fly home to Toronto.

“Whatever,” he said. “That’s the league's stuff. I haven't heard anything, so I don't know. I doubt it.”

The NHL later announced it was fining Domi $5,000, the maximum allowable under the collective bargaining agreement, for boarding.

Berube used the question about the Domi hit to shift the focus.

“To me, the [Dmitry] Kulikov hit on [Mitch] Marner was 10 times worse,” he said.

The Panthers defenceman elbowed the Leafs winger in the head after Marner passed a puck in the second period. There was no call on the play.

Maurice had no interest in getting into a war of words with his counterpart on Monday as the Panthers gathered at their practice facility.

“I don’t care,” Florida's coach responded when asked about Berube’s comment. “Everybody has an opinion. Mine right now is it’s the day after a game, but two days away from our next, and I don’t really have anything for you. Yeah, fine.”

Fair enough. But with the series now even at two games a piece, the temperature is clearly rising on the ice.

“It's normal,” Berube said. “We expected it and I think we're fine with it. We're handling it, we're physical. I thought we were the more physical team last night.”

The Panthers lead the playoffs in hits per 60 minutes, but the Leafs held a 47-40 edge in that category on Sunday. Notably, defenceman Simon Benoit levelled winger Sam Reinhart with a big check during a Panthers power play.

> Benoit crushes Sam Reinhart pic.twitter.com/2JGqHooOT5
>
> — The Hockey News (@TheHockeyNews) May 12, 2025

Leafs defenceman Oliver Ekman-Larsson was later assessed an interference penalty for hitting Evan Rodrigues when he didn't have the puck. That knocked the Panthers winger out of the game. He was still being evaluated on Monday.

"He's not ruled out, not cleared to play," said Maurice.

> Ekman-Larsson is called for interference pic.twitter.com/z5s4JIoqO1
>
> — Omar (@TicTacTOmar) May 12, 2025

What did Maurice think of the physicality in Game 4?

“Game 2 in the Tampa series was nasty,” he said, referencing his team's first round series against Tampa Bay. “I didn’t leave the bench last night feeling that was exceptionally physical or under physical on our part. It wasn’t a piece of a game that I was processing.”

Instead, Maurice highlighted that the Panthers seemed to look more like themselves on Sunday. After allowing 13 goals in the first three games of the series, Florida was finally able to lock things down defensively.

Now, it will be up to Toronto to respond in Game 5 back home on Wednesday.

“The group understands it's going to be a tough series,” Berube said. “We knew that going in. It's going to be a long series. We lose two here, but we lost two in a row against Ottawa and came out in Game 6 and got it done. We gotta reset. We'll be fine.”

Berube: Kulikov elbow on Marner ‘10 times worse’ than Domi on Barkov Craig Berube was asked about Max Domi's hit on Aleksander Barkov at the end of Game 4 but believes Dmitry Kulikov's elbow on Mitch Marner, that went uncalled, was 10 times worse. Paul Maurice didn't have much to say in response to Domi's fine and says the hockey will take care of itself.

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After the Domi hit on Barkov, Panthers winger Matthew Tkachuk leaned over the Panthers bench and started getting in the ear of William Nylander, who was at the end of the Leafs bench.

"Yeah, just talk," Nylander said. "I mean, that's what he does."

Tkachuk seemed to be telling Nylander he would be targeted because of what Domi did to Barkov.

"He'll probably do whatever he can do to get a player off their game," Nylander said with a smile. "But, yeah, next game's going to be a fun one."

Matthew Tkachuk was telling Willy Nylander that he was going after him next game because of the Domi hit on Barkov 😳 pic.twitter.com/dF0bYkJRxH

— B/R Open Ice (@BR_OpenIce) May 12, 2025

You can understand why the Panthers are looking to unsettle Nylander. He is leading the Leafs with three goals and six points in the series.

But Nylander was held in check on Sunday along with the rest of the Leafs.

"I think they did a good job keeping us on the outside," Nylander said. "Yeah, they did a great job. It's a tough battle."

Play

Leafs Ice Chips: Nylander unfazed by Tkachuk; anticipates fun Game 5

Leafs Ice Chips: Nylander unfazed by Tkachuk; anticipates fun Game 5 Matthew Tkachuk made it clear that William Nylander is the target moving forward after a spicy end to Game 4. Mark Masters has more on the Maple Leafs' top scorer in the playoffs and how Florida is trying to slow him down.

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The temperature is rising in the series and the heat is certainly on Toronto's top-line centre Auston Matthews, who has yet to score through four games against the Panthers.

"Well, he's just gotta keep playing," said Berube. "He does a lot of other things in the game that really dictate things, and does a great job with a lot of other areas of the game. He's just got to keep focusing on that. He's going to get his looks and just stick with what he's doing and don't get too frustrated with anything because it's not just about scoring goals. He's got a lot of other stuff he does extremely well for us. And big goal's coming. That's the way you've got to think about it, and who knows when it's going to happen, but just focus on playing the game."

Matthews, who scored a career low 33 goals in 67 games in the regular season, admitted to feeling "a little bit" snakebitten right now. He has fired 14 shots on net in the series.

"The chances have been there," Matthews said. "I think I've just got to do a better job of bearing down on some of them. But I think for the most part, throughout the four games, we've been winning shifts, generating chances against tough matchups. But, obviously, if you want to score, I want to score. But continue to get these opportunities and just capitalize and go from there."

Matthews scored two goals in six games against the Ottawa Senators in the first round with one of the goals coming at even strength.

Matthews was held without a goal during Toronto's five-game loss to Florida in the 2023 playoffs. He has scored just three goals in his last 20 playoff games.

What a great glove save by Bobrovsky on Matthews, and it's because he read the play and beat the pass on his feet.

On a lateral, high to low pass like this it's easy to default to a slide, but he realized it was a long pass and he had time to get over while holding his edges. pic.twitter.com/czECLoc5VR

— Jesse Granger (@JesseGranger_) May 12, 2025

Matthews missed 15 games in the regular season due to an upper body injury. He also missed a game at the 4 Nations Faceoff. He played every game down the stretch with the Leafs, but questions about his health have popped up again because he missed a practice during the first round of the playoffs and was the only player to sit out the morning skate on Sunday.

As Berube has noted repeatedly, Matthews continues to influence the game positively despite the lack of goals. He's piled up eight assists and is winning 57.4 per cent of his faceoffs in the playoffs

"He's out there killing penalties," said Berube. "He's going against top lines. He's checking. He's working. He's competing. A lot of good stuff, you know. Yeah, we'd like him to score and so would he. It's not easy to score in a playoffs, you know. So, I'm not overly worried about it."

'Don't get too frustrated': Berube urges Matthews to 'stick with it' Craig Berube explains why he's not worried about Auston Matthews lack of scoring through four games against the Panthers and points out the many positives of his captain's game elsewhere on the ice.

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It would help Matthews if Marner started getting more pucks to the net. The 102-point winger failed to land even a single shot on net during the two games in Florida.

"Sometimes your top guys, they look to get too good of a chance instead of just putting a puck on net," Berube noted. "And I think there's times where we could put more pucks on net at angles, bad angles, just firing it in there with people going to the net. You never know, it goes off somebody, rebounds or anything like that. So I think Mitch could just be a little bit more direct in that area."

Marner scored his only goal of the series on a quick shot from the side boards in the third period in Game 2. That was his only shot in the last three games.

"He has the puck a lot, we know that, and he's got to look to put more pucks on net," Berube said. "And I get what he's trying to do. Like, he wants to upgrade his chance. He's a passer first. We know that, but we need him to shoot pucks too."

Marner was requested for an interview after Sunday's game, but was not made available.

Berube not shying away from asking for more from his snake-bitten starsAuston Matthews hasn't scored a goal against the Panthers and Mitch Marner hasn't recorded a shot in back-to-back games. TSN Hockey Insider Chris Johnston joins Mark Masters to discuss what Craig Berube is looking for from his top guys after Florida evened up the series at two.

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Even if the offence is stalling at 5-on-5, Marner and Matthews should be able to produce on the power play. But Toronto failed to breakthrough on three attempts in Game 4.

"Execution was a little off," said Berube. "I thought the first one was pretty good, but after that, like, we won the faceoff, but it wasn't totally clean, and we couldn't get out of their pressure on it. And they shot it down the ice, and then we didn't enter the zone very well last night with the puck on our entries. They came hard with the pressure, and I didn't think that we executed well enough against the pressure like we did the game before."

Toronto's top unit scored its first goal of the series in Game 3. The Leafs have cashed on only two of 15 power-play chances in the four games.

The Panthers converted on one of their six power plays on Sunday.

"They get four power plays in the first period and they end up capitalizing on one at the end," said Berube. "We get three power plays in the second period and we don't capitalize. We score and it's a 1-1 game now. I mean, it's close. It's right there, you know."

Florida is 3/14 on the power play in the series.

The Talking Point: Are Leafs getting dragged into a fight they can't win?

The Talking Point: Are Leafs getting dragged into a fight they can't win?The Maple Leafs were full of confidence heading on the road with a 2-0 series lead but the Panthers have sent a message in what has now turned out to be a best-of-three series. TSN Hockey analyst Bruce Boudreau explains how Toronto is playing Florida's game and what his advice would be to Auston Matthews to get him on the scoreboard.

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Joseph Woll turned aside 35 of 37 shots to keep Toronto within striking distance for most of Sunday's game.

"Joe was awesome," said defenceman Brandon Carlo. "Having a guy like that behind you, especially as a defensive guy like myself, very thankful for that. He held us in there all the way through to the end."

It was an important bounce-back effort from Woll, who allowed five goals during a leaky performance in Friday's Game 3 loss.

"He was excellent in the game," said Berube. "I thought he was really aggressive, made some big saves when we needed him to make them and just looked comfortable in net for me. Throughout the season, he's been a real steady goalie for us and done a good job, in my opinion, most nights. And almost all nights, he's given us a chance to win the game and he did last night. He did a great job for us."

Did the Leafs waste Joseph Woll's outstanding performance in Game 4? Joseph Woll was outstanding in net for the Leafs in Game 4 making miraculous saves to keep Toronto in the game, but ultimately the Panthers pulled away with a shutout win to tie the series up. TSN's OverDrive host Bryan Hayes joins SportsCentre to discuss how big of a missed opportunity this was for the Leafs to steal one in Florida, if he's concerned about Toronto's lack of offensive production in Game 4, and shares how he thinks Toronto will find a way to win two of the next three games.

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Leafs lines in Game 4:

Knies - Matthews - Marner

Pacioretty - Tavares - Nylander

Lorentz - Laughton - Jarnkrok

McMann - Domi - Holmberg

McCabe - Tanev

Rielly - Carlo

Benoit - Ekman-Larsson

Woll starts

Murray

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TSN.CA / Defence lawyer accuses E.M. of 'taunting and threatening' world junior players

Rick Westhead

Content advisory: This article includes graphic language and details of alleged sexual assault

A lawyer representing Dillon Dube, one of five former members of Canada's 2018 world junior hockey team who have been charged with sexual assault, suggested Monday that while someone slapped the complainant on the buttocks during a sexual encounter in Michael McLeod's hotel room, the slap was "playful."

During cross-examination on her seventh day of testifying, E.M., whose identity is protected by a publication ban, was questioned by Dube's lawyer, Lisa Carnelos, about the events of June 18 and 19, 2018.

McLeod, Dube, Alex Formenton, Carter Hart and Callan Foote have been charged with sexually assaulting E.M. in McLeod's hotel room following a Hockey Canada event in London, Ont. McLeod faces a second criminal charge of being a party to the offence. The players, who face up to 10 years in prison if they are convicted, have all pleaded not guilty.

Carnelos is the fourth of five lawyers to cross-examine E.M. and she began her time on Monday morning by suggesting that E.M. was "taunting and threatening" the "boys" and called them "p---ies" when they would not have sex with her.

The Crown has said that following a night of drinking and dancing at a bar in downtown London, E.M., who was then 20, returned with McLeod to his hotel room where they had consensual sex.

After that, E.M. has alleged that as many as 10 men visited McLeod's hotel room over the course of the evening and that she was sexually assaulted by a number of them.

E.M., who is now 27, has also testified that several of the men suggested to E.M. that she put golf balls in her vagina and asked if she "could take" an entire golf club inside of her.

E.M. has testified that she took on a "porn star persona" to make it through the evening and has said that she cried and tried to leave the hotel room several times but players instead guided her back to a bed sheet that had been placed on the floor.

"You became upset when the boys would not take you up on your offers," Carnelos suggested to E.M. on Monday.

"No, I explained that the anger and the frustration I was feeling was because when they weren't doing anything, I would try to leave and they still wouldn't let me leave [the hotel room]," E.M. responded. "That's where I was becoming angry."

Carnelos suggested to E.M. that a man slapped her after she asked whether he was going to have sex with her or play golf.

"And in response to the young man that you said it to, he slapped your butt on one occasion in response," Carnelos said. "It was playful, and in response to the slap you immediately said, 'Are you going to f--k me or just play?' or words to that effect. Agree with that?"

"No, I don't agree with that," E.M. responded.

E.M. has previously testified that she was drunk and felt trapped and threatened with so many men in McLeod's hotel room. On Monday, Carnelos suggested to E.M. that the room, with two double beds, was actually larger than the standard-size hotel room.

"I felt I was just an object," E.M. testified. "No one was speaking to me. They were speaking to each other. I just felt like I was there for their entertainment...I could hear them all talking loudly around me and to each other. I didn't know they were broken off into little groups, it all felt the same. I felt just surrounded."

Following a lunch break, Carnelos grilled E.M. about a phone call and a series of text messages she sent to her best friend in the hours and days after the alleged sexual assault. E.M. did not initially share the details of what had allegedly happened with the hockey players.

After E.M. phoned her friend at around 5 a.m. on June 19, 2018, her friend texted E.M. at 5:02 a.m., writing, "Hey Ily [I love you], everything's gonna be ok ❤️ Get home safe, get some rest & yeah if you wanna talk about it, text me in the morning ❤️ ❤️ ❤️"

E.M. did not immediately respond to the message.

"Let's put this in perspective because [name redacted] is your best friend," Carnelos said.

"I was just trying to bottle it up and move on, I didn't want to think about it." E.M. said.

"I'm going to suggest to you that if you had in any way shape or form felt that you had been sexually violated or assaulted that night, you would have said to your best friend, the one person in the whole wide world that you could discuss it with," Carnelos said.

Following an objection from Crown attorney Meaghan Cunningham, Carnelos continued to press E.M. on why she did not immediately tell her friend the details of what had allegedly happened with the hockey players.

"I wasn't trying to think about it, and that was part of how I was processing it," E.M. testified. "I do still feel like my mom is probably my best friend and that's who I was having those conversations with. I didn't

really want to admit that it was sexual assault, I didn't want to say those words because then it would be true."

Carnelos reviewed a number of other messages between E.M. and her friend on June 22, after she finished an interview with London police.

"Just had a long ass day at the police station and then the hospital and now I have work rip so idk how I'll be feeling later," E.M. texted.

"Holy f--kkkkkkk what happened!?" her friend responded.

Carnelos asked E.M. again why she had not told her friend the details of her alleged sexual assault.

"I was keeping it to myself, I was trying to handle it on my own," E.M. testified.

E.M. later texted her friend on June 22: "Pretty sure I was roofied tbh and my mom is taking it hella seriously contacting the police and s--t. The group of guys are all high up hockey players. Go figure LMAO," E.M.

Carnelos asked E.M. to explain why she would write that she would be laughing about the situation.

"I'm just in disbelief that not only did this horrible situation happen, but [it's] even more complicated now that I know they're high-up hockey players." E.M. testified. "It's kind of ironic. Not … hilarious in the sense of the word, but just that I can't believe that. Not only that this happened, but also, they were high-up hockey players. Reporting something like that to police, it seemed like nothing will happen to them. They won't get in trouble. 'What's the point?' kind of thing."

Carnelos' cross-examination came after Dan Brown, an attorney for Formenton finished questioning E.M.

Brown suggested to E.M. that she had been "egging on" the players who were in McLeod's room. The lawyer also asked E.M. about the sexual encounter between her and Formenton in the bathroom.

Brown suggested to E.M. that she pulled Formenton into the bathroom to have sex with her. (Brown said another witness during the trial would testify to this) Then, Brown suggested that, after she was in the bathroom with Formenton, she told him that she was indifferent about his using a condom because she was on birth control.

"It could have been," E.M. answered. "I don't recall any conversation."

Brown asked E.M. if she remembered guiding Formenton's penis into her because of their size difference.

"I don't remember that," she answered.

Brown then asked whether E.M. recalled apologizing to Formenton for her appearance because her chest had become sunburned after she had been tanning nude.

"I don't know if I shared that with him," E.M. answered. "I know I was sunburnt. I don't know why I would bring that up to him. I don't recall speaking about that."

E.M. also testified she had trouble identifying a number of the men involved in the sexual acts during the evening, but had a definite memory of McLeod and Formenton because of the one-on-one sexual activity she had with them.

Brown also questioned E.M. on her weight the evening of the alleged incident. At the time of the incident, E.M. weighed 138 pounds, according to medical records cited by Brown. E.M. has testified that she weighed 120 pounds in June 2018.

Brown suggested to E.M. that she wanted the jury to believe she was much smaller than the group of men in the hotel room.

Brown also suggested to E.M. that she felt "scorned" by the players at the end of the evening because they had not offered to get her a cab and didn't give her a hug.

"I wasn't scorned," E.M. answered. "I definitely felt disrespected. But I felt disrespected the whole night. So, I'm not sure why I thought the end would be any different."

Carnelos finished her cross-examination late Monday afternoon. Julianna Greenspan, who represents Foote, will be the final defence lawyer to question E.M. on Tuesday.

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TSN.CA / Scorching Rantanen has Stars soaring

Travis Yost

How hot is Mikko Rantanen right now? In one word: scorching.

The Dallas Stars entered the Stanley Cup Playoffs with some of the shortest championship odds and, three games into the second round, it appears justified.

They dispatched the feisty Colorado Avalanche in round one and now sit with a 2-1 lead (and home-ice advantage) over the Presidents' Trophy-winning Winnipeg Jets.

The Jets, much like the Avalanche before them, have had a whale of a time against this deep, skilled Stars lineup. With so much weaponry, head coach Peter DeBoer doesn't have to load up his first line and can lean into groupings with complementary skill sets and playing chemistry.

That lets the Stars come at you in waves. After they send in a deadly trio of young attackers (Mason Marchment, Jason Robertson and Wyatt Johnston), you get to deal with either a line of incredibly experienced and seasoned postseason performers (Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn and Matt Duchene), or an all-Finn line featuring Rantanen, Roope Hintz, and Mikael Granlund:

I wanted to highlight the groupings because it gives you an idea how difficult it's been to line match for Avs coach Jared Bednar and Jets coach Scott Arniel, and this is all before we get to special teams play.

At any rate, the challenge of slowing down balanced lines like this is most teams simply run out of trusted personnel, and by extension it opens doors for opposing playmakers.

Enter Rantanen. The famous trade deadline acquisition from Carolina has comfortably been the best player of the playoffs. The individual scoring is berserk: he has nine goals and nine assists (18 points) in just 10 games. He's also contributed on 15 of the past 17 Stars goals, a staggering Connor McDavid-esque number.

That sort of scoring in any postseason has few parallels. I looked for any postseason skater with at least 200 minutes played (and by extension, at least two rounds played) to measure how absurd this run has been. These are the only skaters you'll find:

In Rantanen's case, it's not just empty individual scoring. Rantanen's 60 per cent goal share (+4 even-strength goal differential) leads the entire Stars lineup, and again, this production coming against two high-end teams in Colorado and Winnipeg.

The beautiful wrinkle with this Stars team versus some of the respective clubs on this table comes down to defensive play. Some of these forwards had little choice but to play ultra-aggressively on the attack to chase goals, the concern being that besieged and leaky defensive play or netminding would give those goals right back.

Behind a veteran defence and goalie Jake Oettinger, Stars' leads are typically safe. It's what makes Dallas such a credible threat to win it all.

Dallas and Rantanen still have some work to do — closing out this series against Winnipeg won't come easy unless Connor Hellebuyck struggles to find his game, and right after that comes a seven-game gauntlet with one of the Edmonton Oilers or Vegas Golden Knights.

But right now, you have to imagine there's a smile ear to ear on the face of Stars general manager Jim Nill. His aggressive move to acquire Rantanen and extend him on a $96-million mega contract will be measured over years, but at this moment in time, it looks like the deal of a lifetime.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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