



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

The News & Observer

As the Hurricanes relive 2006, one player remains a refugee living in exile

By: Kevin Keister

Former Carolina Hurricanes players Rod Brind'Amour, Cam Ward and Eric Staal, three of the stars that led the team to become the 2006 Stanley Cup Champions, talked about how it felt on the 10th anniversary of the win. This season marks 20 years since the Canes won it all.

When the members of the 2006 Carolina Hurricanes gather this weekend to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their championship, not every player on the Stanley Cup will be present. Some are otherwise preoccupied with work, like Kevyn Adams, general manager of the Buffalo Sabres, or with their own kids playing hockey. Josef Vasicek died 14 years ago. Some are just too far afield.

Then there's Anton Babchuk, who arrived in January of that season as a 21-year-old rookie, a big Ukrainian-born defenseman with a big shot. In the group photos on the ice with the Stanley Cup, Babchuk looms in the back, in uniform, his arm around Mike Commodore with a wide grin on his face, very much part of the team.

While he didn't appear in a playoff game, he still played in 22 games down the stretch — the Hurricanes got special dispensation to add him and Andrew Hutchinson to the engraving — and went on to play another 141 games for the Hurricanes before returning to Russia's KHL to finish out his career.

As they assembled the group to return this weekend, the Hurricanes couldn't find Babchuk to invite him.

"That's the one nobody knew," a team official said.

Babchuk had seemingly dropped off the face of the earth.

And in a way, he had.

"After two months of living in the basement of our house under missile explosions, we decided to leave Ukraine," Babchuk wrote in an email to The News & Observer. "We have been living in Spain for the fourth year now."

Anton Babchuk takes a shot during a game for the Carolina Hurricanes.

Anton Babchuk takes a shot during a game for the Carolina Hurricanes. Chris Seward

Even professional athletes who made millions playing in North America are not immune to the whims of international politics and the ravages of war. Babchuk played for the Russian national team as a teenager and in the KHL as a pro, but he was Kiev-born and raised, growing up alongside another future NHLer, Nikolai Zherdev.

A first-round draft pick of the Chicago Blackhawks in 2002, his hockey career took him around the world until he retired in 2015, moving back to Kiev with his wife and two sons. Russia was already waging a proxy war with Ukraine then, but far from the cosmopolitan capital.

"Everything was going very well, the children played football in the Dynamo Kiev team, my wife and I ran our own business and lived our happy life," Babchuk wrote.

Then the war came home with the Russian invasion in February 2022 and the constant bombing of cities like Kiev. Eventually, Babchuk and his family fled to Spain — first Valencia, and now Villareal. It's safe to say they are not only fortunate to make that escape but also making the best of a bad situation. Their eldest son Anton, 15, recently signed a pro soccer contract with La Liga club Villareal, the famous Yellow Submarine. Their younger son Platon, 12, is playing for another soccer club nearby.

But if that's a long way from Raleigh and this weekend's celebration of a long-ago championship, no less fondly remembered with the passing of time, it's an even longer way from Ukraine. Amid the good memories and better vibes of a time when the Hurricanes owned the hockey world, spare a thought for one player who won't be there because the rest of the world can be a cruel place.

"My wife Natalia and I try to help our children grow up to be happy and worthy people," Babchuk wrote. "That's how we live. We are very much looking forward to all this horror in Ukraine to end soon and we will be able to come to our beloved city Kiev."

Don't we all.



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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

The Athletic

NHL weekend rankings: Time for another round of holiday panic

By: Sean McIndoe

It's the most wonderful time of the year. Unless it isn't.

The first half of the season is filled with checkpoints for NHL teams. There's the curse of Nov. 1, when you'd better be within four points of the playoffs. By U.S. Thanksgiving, you'd better be in there, somewhere, or else you've really got your work cut out for you.

But by the holiday freeze? At this point, for most teams, you are what you are. And when some teams open up their presents at this time of year, they find a lump of coal and a handwritten note from Santa reading "you guys stink."

Yes, it's holiday crisis time for teams around the league. Let's see if we can narrow the list down to five.

Bonus five: Teams facing a holiday crisis

5. Los Angeles Kings – They beat the slumping Tampa Bay Lightning to snap a four-game losing streak, then celebrated by trading away Phillip Danault. Wait, are they sellers now? Not necessarily, since Danault reportedly wanted out and wasn't exactly lighting it up so far this year. Still, the Kings feel like they're flat-lining and desperately need a spark. The good news is they get the Columbus Blue Jackets and Seattle Kraken before the break, so maybe that's four badly-needed points as they cling to a wild-card spot.

4. Chicago Blackhawks – It was fun while it lasted, right Hawks fans? See you down in the bottom-five section. You know the way.

3. Pittsburgh Penguins – Before last night's shootout win against the Montreal Canadiens, they'd lost three in a row according to the NHL's official standings and eight in a row according to everyone else. That might actually be good news since it should end any playoff talk and clear the deck for Kyle Dubas to get to work on some tough decisions.

2. Toronto Maple Leafs – They're a mess, they sure seem like they've quit on their coach, their best players aren't producing anything besides hilariously tone-deaf soundbites, and the 18-wheeler is well and truly headed off the cliff. The good news is they're not even selling out any more, which we were always told was the reason the team never won anything. Yay?

1. Winnipeg Jets – As bad as the vibes are in Toronto, the sub-.500 Jets have a worse record, have been colder in recent weeks, and face an even deeper hole to dig out of in their own division. And they're doing it by falling from a greater height as defending Presidents' Trophy champions. It's been so bad they've driven poor Murat mad, and the question now seems to be less about whether they should sell and more about when it should happen.

Honorable mention: The Edmonton Oilers, who are playing reasonably well but must be holding their breath after newly acquired goaltender Tristan Jarry was injured last week.

On to the rankings. Spoiler alert, none of the teams above made the top five this week...

Road to the Cup

The five teams with the best chances of winning the Stanley Cup.

We all knew it was coming, but seeing Sidney Crosby actually pass Mario Lemieux is still a super cool moment.

5. Vegas Golden Knights (16-8-10, +4 true goals differential*) – They're the fakest of fake .500, not to mention the only NHL team to hit double digits in loser points. Or are they bonus points? It's not just semantics, and your view on the question probably has a lot to do with whether you think the Knights are actually good. I think they're good ... enough, at least as far as the Pacific Division goes.

4. Carolina Hurricanes (22-10-3, +16) – They're still comfortably holding down the top seed in the East, but it was not a great weekend. They just lost back-to-back games on their Florida mini-trip and they lost Seth Jarvis with what appears to be long-term injury. Oh, and Jack Hughes is back in New Jersey, further complicating the Metro.

3. Minnesota Wild (22-10-5, +17) – To be the best, you've got to beat the best. The Wild had their shot against the Avs last night and couldn't get it done. Still, the seven straight wins that came before were a strong message that Minnesota is for real.

2. Dallas Stars (25-7-5, +35) – Does it make sense for a ranking that's supposed to be about who's going to win the Stanley Cup to have three teams from the same division in the top three spots? No, not really, thanks for asking. Eventually, we're going to have to look ahead to playoff matchups and start penalizing the Central, given one of these three teams is guaranteed to be going out in round one. For now, let's just enjoy how good all these teams are.

1. Colorado Avalanche (26-2-7, +65) – It's easy to take them for granted these days, but seeing them walk into Minnesota and roll to a win was quite possibly their most impressive performance of the season.

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*Goals differential without counting shootout decisions like the NHL does for some reason.

Not ranked: Florida Panthers – Well, well, look who's back.



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Not all the way back, mind you. But back enough, thanks to wins in seven of nine, even after Saturday's loss to the Blues. Given that their other loss came against the Avalanche in Colorado, we can say the Panthers went into the weekend undefeated against teams that play in the NHL instead of whatever galactic champions league the Avs are currently in.

In the lethargic East, that stretch has been more than enough to put the Panthers back into the playoff mix, and even back into the conversation for first in the Atlantic. The projections have their playoff chances at 67 percent, up from a 50 percent coin flip at the start of the month. And honestly, 67 percent feels low. They're back.

Who could have seen this coming? Well, everyone. I'm not sure I ran into a single fan, pundit or expert who was willing to write off the Panthers, even when they were stumbling along at fake .500 through two months. We all know the story in Florida — a Presidents' Trophy in 2023 followed by an early exit, then barely making the playoffs in 2024 only to go all the way. Last season, they went into the playoffs as the 11-seed. They were one point ahead of the just-happy-to-be-there Senators. And then they rolled to another Cup, because the regular season doesn't matter to these guys.

Given their injuries, most notably to Aleksander Barkov and Matthew Tkachuk, it wasn't hard to figure out the script to this season. Tread water until Tkachuk returned, then ease down on the gas to make the playoffs. Don't worry about seeding, don't worry about matchups, just get in and then welcome Barkov back at some point in the spring before rolling everyone on the way to a three-peat.

There were times when you wondered if they were falling a bit too far behind, but you never really worried. They'd figure it out. Probably right when Tkachuk was back.

If anything, they're ahead of schedule, with Tkachuk's return imminent but not quite here yet. But the Panthers are back, because they never left, because the regular season is nothing to them but a long runway before it's time to actually fly.

Good luck to Detroit and Montreal and anyone else with their eyes on top spot in the Atlantic. You might get it, but only because the Panthers didn't want it in the first place. They'll see you down the road, in April and May, if you make it that far. For now, at least, we're pretty sure we know they will.

The bottom five

The five teams headed towards dead last and the best lottery odds for the top pick in this year's draft.

Let's start with a team that isn't in this week's rankings: After serving as the East's lone representative in the bottom five for the past five weeks, the Buffalo Sabres have found their stride. They've won six straight, with five of those coming after the firing of Kevyn Adams.

New GM Jarmo Kekäläinen has spent the week building out his new front office, which will include a familiar set of biceps face in former Habs boss Marc Bergevin.

Is it all coming too late to make a playoff push? Not in this year's East it's not.

5. Seattle Kraken (13-14-6, -24) – Saturday's win in San Jose snapped a four-game losing streak, which came on the heels

of a six-game losing streak, and now they're selling. Ah well, it was fun while it lasted.

4. Vancouver Canucks (15-17-3, -19) – They've won four straight, including a three-game stretch where they only allowed two goals. The conclusion: Quinn Hughes was holding them back. Hey, the numbers don't lie.

3. Chicago Blackhawks (13-16-6, -11) – And they're back. And you could even make a case that they should be all the way back to the one-spot here. I'm not quite there yet, but they're certainly headed towards another bottom-five finish. And as Scott points out with an assist from Corey, that might not be the worst thing in the world.

2. Calgary Flames (15-17-4, -11) – Ryan Lomberg had a fun night on Saturday.

1. Nashville Predators (15-16-4, -21) – By beating the Rangers last night, the one-spot team in my bottom five moved ahead of last year's Presidents' Trophy winners in the standings. The NHL makes a lot of sense.

Not ranked: Columbus Blue Jackets – Is this a good hockey team?

I don't mean that rhetorically. And I don't even mean it in that "Who really knows anything in this weird NHL?" sort of way. I mean it as a genuine question. Maybe even an existential one. And I'm not the only one asking it: captain Zach Werenski is too.

#CBJ D Zach Werenski cut to the core of the matter after the loss to Minnesota: "I feel like it's the same thing we've been saying. We're playing well enough to win, but it's getting old that we keep losing. Enough is enough. It's unacceptable, and I get the whole thing where you..."

— Jeff Svoboda (@JacketsInsider) December 19, 2025

I'm a Leafs fan, so I'm a bit of an expert in player soundbites during losing streaks. And I have to say, "We're a good hockey team, and we're losing games. So maybe we're not a good hockey team. I don't know..." is an all-timer.

So let's build the case for both sides. The argument for the Blue Jackets being a good team — not a great one, or a Cup contender, but a playoff team at least — starts with last year. That was back when we all counted them out before the season even began, only to watch them fight for a spot all year long, becoming everyone's second-favorite team in the process. Werenski was the guy leading that charge with a Norris-worthy season, and he might be even better so far this year. The goaltending is better, thanks to rookie Jet Greaves. And they've earned wins against some good teams, including Tampa, Minnesota and Dallas, three Cup favorites the Jackets had beaten in regulation before the time the season was two weeks old.

And maybe most importantly, their front office clearly thinks they're good. Or at least good enough to get some reinforcements, as the team pulled off a pre-freeze deal for Mason Marchment. Both the trade and the timing are interesting, and Portzline gets into the details here.

Some people are surprised CBJ being buyers but the Eastern Conference is so jammed (all 16 teams .500 or better in points percentage), Jackets feel they can still get into playoff race. If not, there's always option of flipping Marchment at deadline. Top players on CBJ were...



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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

— Pierre LeBrun (@PierreVLeBrun) December 20, 2025

The argument for them not being good is ... well, everything else.

A recent five-game losing streak dropped them to fake .500 on the season, and while they beat the Ducks last week to snap that skid, they entered the weekend in dead last in the East, trailing even a Sabres team in such bad shape that they cleaned house and hired the Blue Jackets' assistant GM to join Kekäläinen in Buffalo.

Saturday saw them drop a close one in regulation to Anaheim despite a Marchment goal in his debut, marking their seventh loss in eight games. It could have been far worse, as Werenski

left the game after blocking a shot. It looked bad, but early reports say the injury isn't serious and Werenski is day-to-day.

If you are what your record says you are, then the Blue Jackets are indeed not good. And as bad as the last few weeks have been, it doesn't feel like rock bottom. As Portzline writes in that link up above, "This could get away from them in a hurry if they aren't careful. Maybe it already has."

For now, I'm keeping them out of the bottom five, although I'm not completely sure if that's based on merit or just a lingering feel-good status from last year's run. Check back next week, when there's a good chance I won't have a choice.

Rating every NHL team's goal song, from Eminem to AC/DC to Sabrina Carpenter

By: Scott Powers, Joshua Kloke, James Mirtle, Aaron Portzline, Max Bultman, Arpon Basu, Michael Russo, Jonas Siegel, Jeremy Rutherford, Kevin Kurz, Josh Yohe, Murat Ates, Shayna Goldman, Joe Smith, Fluto Shinzawa, Allan Mitchell, Eric Stephens, Matthew Fairburn, Mark Lazerus, Jesse Granger, Harman Dayal, Sean Gentile, Peter Baugh, Joe Rexrode, Thomas Drance, Julian McKenzie, Cory Lavalette, Vincent Z. Mercogliano

18–22 minutes

Every NHL fan wants to hear it played over and over: their favorite team's goal song.

For years, goal songs have signaled joy in NHL arenas. Whether they're played after a game-opening goal or to mark the ending of an overtime thriller, these tunes can carry the weight of nostalgia and team history. Or they might be more of the moment as teams try to modernize the fan experience.

This week, The Athletic asked its NHL staff to rate every goal song on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the best), based on personal opinions and how the tune fits the team.

For teams with multiple songs, ratings were combined. In the case of teams using different songs for individual players, we rated the captain's song.

What do you think of your favorite team's goal song? Which one do you like the most league-wide? Let us know in the comments.

Anaheim Ducks

"Coming For You" by The Offspring

Rating: 5/10

It's nowhere near my favorite track from The Offspring and I'm still not sure how I feel about the words "sold out, blow out, Donkey Kong" as part of a song's chorus but I'll give points for venturing away from the longtime usage of Pennywise's "Bro Hymn (Tribute)" while sticking with another SoCal band that is even from Orange County, where the Ducks are based. From a promotion angle, the Ducks and The Offspring have collaborated a lot in recent years, so maybe it's part of the deal? — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins

"Kernkraft 400" by Zombie Nation

Rating: 5/10

It's OK. Nothing great. Nothing awful. How about some freshness in the future? — Fluto Shinzawa

Buffalo Sabres

"Kickstart My Heart" by Mötley Crüe (blue jerseys) and "Song 2" by Blur (black and red jerseys)

Rating: 7/10

"Kickstart My Heart" is a relatively new goal song in only its second season. It gets the job done, but it hasn't had a chance to really take hold with the fan base. The Sabres get a boost in this rating for "Song 2" being the goal song when they use the throwback black and red jerseys. That brings people back to better days. — Matthew Fairburn

Calgary Flames

"T.N.T." by AC/DC

Rating: 7/10

Some Flames players have had individual goal songs in the past (Blake Coleman's "Roar" by Katy Perry comes to mind). But typically, the Flames will play "T.N.T." by AC/DC. Solid song that can get the crowd into it, which matters. — Julian McKenzie

Carolina Hurricanes

"Raise Up" by Petey Pablo

Rating: 7/10

There aren't a whole lot of songs that both mention North Carolina and have the potential to hype up a crowd, but Petey Pablo's "Raise Up" checks both boxes. It's been in place since 2018, and the fans seem adequately satisfied with it. If the team wants to move on, they could dip into the Triangle's vibrant indie scene — maybe "Raleigh Days" by Archers of Loaf or something from Hurricanes fan Mac McCaughan's band Superchunk, such as "Hyper Enough" or "What a Time to Be Alive." — Cory Lavalette

Chicago Blackhawks

"Chelsea Dagger" by The Fratellis

Rating: 9/10



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

There are probably many people in Chicago and beyond who think of the Blackhawks when they hear “Chelsea Dagger.” The song is as associated with the Blackhawks’ most recent three Stanley Cup titles as anything. It was the party theme for many. From inside the stadium to packed bars to homes, people celebrated as that song played. Regardless, the chorus is catchy and fun, and it’s easy to understand why it caught on. Fans don’t seem to get sick of it, but you do wonder if it might be worth considering a new song for this new generation of Blackhawks. — Scott Powers

Rating: 10/10

It’s a perfect goal song, there’s no denying it. It’s buoyant, has a sing-along element and is just a flat-out good rock song. I remember liking it when it came out on alt-rock radio long before the Blackhawks adopted it. After hearing it 14,000 times, it’s just white noise at this point, but it’s never a chore to listen to. Other non-NHL teams have used it over the years, but it’s universally associated with the Blackhawks. I do feel the team missed a chance to start a new anthem for the new era back in Connor Bedard’s rookie season, but the fans love it, so I understand the reluctance to change. — Mark Lazerus

Colorado Avalanche

“Chase the Sun” by Planet Funk

Rating: 5/10

The best part about this goal song is the fan participation element, when the crowd chants “Hey! Hey! Hey!” Even still, it’s not as good as the old Avalanche goal song. “Chase the Sun” isn’t a great song on its own, and it sounds generic as a goal song. I appreciate the sing-along portion, but I can’t give it a grade higher than five. — Jesse Granger

Columbus Blue Jackets

“For Those About to Rock (We Salute You)” by AC/DC and “The Whip” by Locksley

Rating: 8/10

“For Those About to Rock (We Salute You)” works very well with the Blue Jackets’ universally loved cannon, which they blast after every goal. Hard to beat that. As for “The Whip,” it’s been played at so many sporting events that it almost seems ubiquitous. But it’s the type of catchy, mindless chorus that allows fans to be delirious and excited without having to think about anything but what they just witnessed on the ice. Rock on, Locksley. — Aaron Portzline

Dallas Stars

“Puck Off” by Pantera

Rating: 9/10

This one’s always been a little divisive among hockey fans, but I love it. A bespoke goal song by rock royalty is a hell of a lot cooler than a 30-year-old jock jam like half the league seems to use. It’s loud, it’s distinct, and it gives fans the opportunity to chant. If you don’t like 18,000 people screaming DALLAS! STARS! in unison, you don’t like fun. Or you’re an Avalanche fan, I suppose. — Mark Lazerus

Detroit Red Wings

“Without Me” by Eminem

Rating: 8/10

Local legend Eminem will always be a hit in Detroit, but there’s a taunting element to the “na-na-na-na-na” of the chorus that takes this one up a notch — as does the fact that the Red Wings brought the song in at the same time as (finally) getting a goal horn two seasons ago. It’s been well received — though I’m sure the fans wouldn’t mind hearing it just a bit more often. — Max Bultman

Edmonton Oilers

“Fluxland” by XL

Rating: 7/10

It’s a great song for a celebration and house music is fun! This is a famous song and everyone (all ages) can join the party. It isn’t a brilliant song (such as “Blue Monday” by New Order), but it hits hard from the first beat and it’s fast. Probably need to replace it if the Oilers lose in the Stanley Cup Final again, though. — Allan Mitchell

Florida Panthers

“Panthers Pulse” by Öwnboss and Selva

Rating: 6/10

The stripped-down EDM track gets points for being unique, bespoke and bringing the fan base into it with the “woah-oh-oh-ohs.” Since they’ve adopted it, Panthers Pulse has become an anthem that strikes fear into playoff opponents, given how frequently they’ve had to hear it in their worst on-ice moments. I know many Florida fans miss the days of Jimmy Eat World’s “Sweetness” to the point that there are videos on YouTube retrofitting the tune into their biggest recent goals. Personally, I say give the fans what they want. “Are you listening?” — James Mirtle

Los Angeles Kings

“POWER RIDE 22 (LA Kings Goal Song)” by Fred Coury

Rating: 6/10

For one, it’s not a “song,” and probably the best thing about it is the local tie. L.A.-based Fred Coury was the drummer for glam metal band Cinderella and is a fervent hockey fan who composed the guitars-and-drum-driven sound for the Kings. I wouldn’t call it particularly memorable, but it’s got a straightforward beat fans can chant “Hey! Hey! ... Hey, hey, hey!” and pump their fists to in time. Given how the Kings scuffle offensively at times, they won’t be worn out by game’s end. — Eric Stephens

Minnesota Wild

“Shout” by The Isley Brothers

Rating: 8/10

I really like “Shout” as a goal song. It brings a lot of energy to the building. It’s a little old-school, which I enjoy. My guess is that most players don’t know the Isley Brothers, but they probably like the sound. — Joe Smith

Rating: 1/10

I hate it. — Michael Russo

Worst goal song in hockey, hands down, @mnwild.



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NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

You get Quinn Hughes, start pumping teams by 4–5 goals, and this is what we're pressing play on? Completely sucks the energy out of the building.

Bring Crowd Chant back. <https://t.co/EJRBSBllqP>

— James Murray (@JamesMurrayECH) December 18, 2025

Montreal Canadiens

"Canadiens Goal Song" by Antoine Becks

Rating: 6/10

The Canadiens' goal song is fine. It encourages crowd participation, which is important, and it's been around long enough to make it distinct and recognizable. Being an original song is a bonus to me. But for such an iconic franchise, it would be hard to say this goal song fits that same bill. It's fine; nothing more, nothing less. — Arpon Basu

Nashville Predators

"I Like It, I Love It" by Tim McGraw and "Gold on the Ceiling" by The Black Keys

Rating: 5/10

It's a pretty bad song. But it's also a pretty annoying song. And isn't that the idea, to add to your opponent's misery by blaring something grating into their ears right after they have to pick the puck out of their own net? If we are going just on song quality, it's a 2/10. If we are going just on the annoyance factor, it's a 9/10. — Joe Rexrode

New Jersey Devils

"Howl" by The Gaslight Anthem

Rating: 9/10

The Devils have one of the best goal songs in the league. The energy is right, and the crowd gets into it with the "you suck!" chants. The point of the goal song should be to get fans pumped up, and New Jersey found a way to do that well. — Peter Baugh

New York Islanders

"Crowd Chant" by Joe Satriani

Rating: 3/10

The horn itself and "yes, yes, yes" chants are all a vibe, but the actual goal song is honestly underwhelming. There is definitely a better option out there, whether it's just something with a little more tempo or something that represents the most magical place in the world, Long Island. Something Billy Joel would probably be cheesy, but there are a lot of other artists/songs to choose from to amp things up. — Shayna Goldman

New York Rangers

"Slapshot" by Ray Castoldi

Rating: 7/10

I still think half the fans aren't sure whether to sing "Goal!" or "Whoa!" but they come together and have fun with it nonetheless. I've got far less of a problem with that than I do with the general music choices at Madison Square Garden, which fail to properly honor a city with a rich history of diverse

artists. Can we get an old-school rap playlist for warmups that starts with Nas' classic "N.Y. State of Mind," which I'll maintain should be the Rangers' standard entrance song, then hits from Biggie, A Tribe Called Quest, Rakim and other NYC legends? — Vincent Z. Mercogliano

Rating: 7/10

I don't care too much for the song itself, but any time you can get a crowd singing is a win. This does that, and it even is the source of some debate: are the lyrics "wooahh" or "gooaal?" I say the former, but when fans sing it, it seems to be the latter, which works for me, too. — Peter Baugh

Ottawa Senators

"Song 2" by Blur

Rating: 7/10

I personally love this song. It's short, punchy, yet iconic. It honestly makes me think of the "FIFA 98" Soundtrack, because it was the intro. Anything that takes me back to a sports video game is a winner. I also associate this song with the Senators because it's been used for so long. One of my favorites in the league. — Julian McKenzie

Philadelphia Flyers

"Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" by Van Halen

Rating: 7/10

As someone who chooses only to recognize the David Lee Roth years of Van Halen, I'm good with this goal song. It's notable, too, that it was originally used in the early/mid 2000s, and was brought back at the start of the 2023-24 season when the new leadership regime took over. — Kevin Kurz

Pittsburgh Penguins

"Party Hard" by Andrew W.K.

Rating: 5/10

It's fine. Not objectionable. Personally, I think it's the most average goal song in the league. Fans like it well enough and it brings back memories of the 2016 and 2017 Stanley Cup championship runs. I have long maintained that because the Penguins wear black at home and because it's a better song, The Rolling Stones' "Paint It, Black" would be a perfect goal song for the Penguins. But this probably makes me old. — Josh Yohe

San Jose Sharks

"Power Bite" by BVRNOUT

Rating: 4/10

This one is new as it replaces 2 Unlimited's "Get Ready for This" and the change is part of the Sharks shifting into a new era where Macklin Celebrini, Will Smith and William Eklund are filling the net for years to come. Moving away from the techno dance anthem is fine, but this one that's in a similar electronic realm just doesn't stand out in any particular way. It's got the requisite energy, I guess, but I say bring back Green Day's "Holiday" and honor the East Bay heroes. Or take it in an old-school R&B party turn with Parliament's "Give Up The Funk (Tear The Roof Off The Sucker)." — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

"Lithium" by Nirvana

Rating: 10/10

Absolutely no notes. Nirvana's "Lithium" is one of the single best goal songs in the NHL, up there with the Blackhawks' "Chelsea Dagger" by The Fratellis and the Golden Knights' "Vegas Lights" by Panic! At The Disco. I especially like the in-arena edit of the song, so that the "Yeah!" chorus blares out, turning a melancholy track into a proper arena anthem. That it pays tribute to the rock history of Seattle and is fun to sing along to after a pint or two only adds to the perfection of this goal song. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

"The Blues Have the Urge Goal Song (Let's Go Blues)" by The Urge

Rating: 9/10

I like it for several reasons. First, it's simple. It has a good beat, and fans react to it right away and sing along. Second, it was recorded by a local band. It's an original with the lyrics "Let's Go Blues!" It's St. Louis' own. And third, it's not some Top 40 pop song that can be played in other arenas and be outdated in six months. It may not be for everyone, but it hits everything the Blues need in their goal song. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

"Burn It to the Ground" by Nickelback

Rating: 6/10

I mean, this is pretty hockey-coded. Nickelback is a Canadian band, and this song was literally featured in the "NHL 10" video game. The Lightning aren't reinventing the wheel with this one — there are definitely ways to show more personality with more creative songs — but it works for now. And the big picture is that Tampa Bay rotates goal songs every few seasons anyway, so it's not something the team is going to be locked into forever. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs

"Düp Düp" by Mickie Krause and "Panama" by Van Halen (Original Six games)

Rating: 2/10

Like almost everyone, hearing "You Make My Dreams (Come True)" by Hall and Oates dozens of times a season, for many, many seasons, eventually grated on me. But at least it was a choice. This is the opposite of that. This is bland nothingness designed to avoid a stir following all the pleas for change from Hall and Oates. Nobody's getting excited for tunes like this. — Jonas Siegel

Rating: 6/10

They're ... fine. "Düp Düp" ticks some boxes as a goal song: there is an opportunity for crowd engagement ("Hey hey hey!" is easy enough to chant along to), should the Leafs stick with this song. And "Panama" pops in its simplicity. What's missing is any sort of local or franchise connection: Toronto is one of the world's great music cities. Is there nothing the organization could have done to honor the city or the team? With the Leafs, we're always just looking to feel something. With these songs, it certainly feels like crowds don't feel enough of the kind of energy they want to. — Joshua Kloke

Utah Mammoth

"Pretty Handsome Awkward" by The Used

Rating: 8/10

I love this goal song. There's a local connection with The Used being from Utah, and the song itself is very high-energy, which resonates with the hype and emotion that fans want to feel after a goal. The song is catchy and something you can energetically bob your head along to. The transition to a chant after the song, before the puck drops at center ice, is a nice touch as well. — Harman Dayal

Vancouver Canucks

"Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds

Rating: 8/10

The Canucks goal song rocks. It's instantly recognizable, it's nostalgic, it's fun and it's fitting for celebratory moments. My only very minor quibble with it is that it isn't local, it's not something fans can sing along to easily and it's lyrically complicated. The idea of "Don't You (Forget About Me)" implies that the club is positioning itself as an underdog, and is likely to be forgotten. In a perfect world, I'd prefer a goal song that was slightly more lyrically self-assured. — Thomas Drance

Vegas Golden Knights

"Vegas Lights" by Panic! At The Disco

Rating: 9/10

This goal song checks a lot of the boxes. It has "Vegas" in both its title and the chorus that plays as soon as the goal horn at T-Mobile Arena ends. It's performed by Las Vegas natives Panic! At The Disco, and the lyrics are all about getting caught up in the energy and lights of fabulous Las Vegas. The song itself has great energy and is well-suited for celebration. The only thing keeping this from being a perfect 10 is the lack of a sing-along (or chant-along) aspect for the crowd, which is what separates the truly elite goal songs from the rest, in my opinion. — Jesse Granger

Washington Capitals

Individual goal songs — Captain Alex Ovechkin: "Shake, Rattle and Roll" by Big Joe Turner

Rating: 10/10

Why more teams don't go this route is still unclear to me. Example A: Ryan Leonard picked "Free Bird" — it was the goal song for Team USA at the 2025 World Junior Championship — and it pretty quickly became a thing among the fan base. I find myself rooting for Matt Roy to score every time he touches the puck just because Metallica's "Seek and Destroy" still rules extremely hard. So, yeah, other game ops departments should steal this gimmick, wholesale. — Sean Gentile

Winnipeg Jets

"Gonna Celebrate" by The Phantoms, followed by individual goal songs — Captain Adam Lowry: "Espresso" by Sabrina Carpenter

Rating: 9/10



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

The best thing Winnipeg does with its goal songs is encouraging its players to pick their own, with Adam Lowry leading a group of players whose personalities shine through when they score. Lowry says his choice — “Espresso” by Sabrina Carpenter — is a nod to his fiancée, Laura Quinton, but he’s grown to become a fan of Carpenter’s through Laura’s deep dive into her discography together. Other fan favorites

include “Macarena” by Los Del Rio for Gabriel Vilardi and “Money for Nothing” by Dire Straits for Jonathan Toews. As for the team song, it’s upbeat and festive enough, but I’d like to see the Jets pick a homegrown artist. What about the “one of a million” hook in “Stereo” by The Watchmen? — Murat Ates

NHL Power Rankings: Sing along to your team’s Christmas song

By: Dom Luszczyszyn, Sean Gentile

Whether you like it or not, Christmas is six days away. Ho ho ho!

If you’re not feeling festive, we’ve got a fail-proof method of getting yourself in the correct headspace: Listening to holiday music while scanning a numbered list of hockey teams. This week, we’ve (quite painstakingly, in some cases) found a set of lyrics that apply to each team and their place in the grand scheme of things. We made a playlist and everything. It’s at the bottom.

Happy Holidays from Rankings HQ. We love you very much, and we’ll see you in 2026.

1. Colorado Avalanche, 24-2-7

Last week: 1

Sean: 1

Dom: 1

All is calm, all is bright

— “Silent Night”

Every fanbase has anxiety. Every team has flaws. Every roster has a scapegoat. That’s a common feeling across all teams across all sports. The Avalanche might be one of the few exceptions to that rule. Even when they’re down, they’re not out with a plus-30 goal differential in third periods this season. Even their flaws — a wretched power play — aren’t that frustrating given their current record and personnel. And their roster? Tough to hate anyone right now.

In Colorado, everything is sunshine and rainbows. In Christmas parlance: All is calm, all is bright.

2. Dallas Stars, 22-7-5

Last week: 2

Sean: 2

Dom: 2

Last Christmas, I gave you my heart

But the very next day, you gave it away

This year, to save me from tears

I’ll give it to someone special

— “Last Christmas” by Wham!

This was the first Christmas lyric that came to mind. We were all stunned when the Avalanche shunned franchise icon Mikko Rantanen to the Hurricanes last January. We were even more

stunned when he ended up back in the Central Division in a trade to the Stars.

Now, we all get to sit back and watch Rantanen battle his former team for the next eight years, giving his best to a new team that truly wants him. Rantanen was pretty special in last year’s playoffs and he’s kept that up with 44 points in 33 games this year. That’s a 109-point pace.

3. Minnesota Wild, 21-9-5

Last week: 6

Sean: 3

Dom: 3

I just want you for my own

More than you could ever know

Make my wish come true

Oh, baby, all I want for Christmas is you

— “All I Want For Christmas Is You” by Mariah Carey

Our Power Rankings spies did not have boots on the ground in the Twin Cities, but here’s what we believe transpired last Friday morning.

- Bill Guerin was drinking his coffee and blasting Mariah Carey’s timeless Christmas jam “All I Want For Christmas Is You” — his favorite Christmas song

- Guerin opened The Athletic app, ready to read the latest from Mike Russo and Joe Smith

- His interest piqued at the Official Power Rankings Christmas List

- He scrolls to read his team’s blurb only, as many of you are guilty of

- As he gets to the Wild, the chorus perfectly lines up with some disheartening numbers emphasizing Minnesota’s dire need for offense from the blue line

- Guerin starts belting “All I want for Christmas is Hughes”

- He makes The Call

You will not convince us otherwise. This is exactly how it went down. You’re welcome, Minnesota.

4. Carolina Hurricanes, 22-9-2

Last week: 4

Sean: 4

Dom: 4



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Santa, honey, one little thing I really need, the deed

To a platinum mine

— “Santa Baby” by Eartha Kitt

Once again, the Hurricanes were fishing for an ultra-prime piece. Once again, they didn't reel it in. There's good news for the Canes, though: Missing out on Quinn Hughes hasn't stopped them from winning five straight and eight of 10.

5. Vegas Golden Knights, 16-6-10

Last week: 7

Sean: 5

Dom: 5

So he said, “Let's run and we'll have some fun

Now before I melt away.”

— “Frosty the Snowman”

With 25 points in 16 games, Mark Stone is leading the league in points per 60 while providing his customary outstanding two-way play. Enjoy it while you can, Vegas fans. There are a lot of games left to miss.

6. Washington Capitals, 19-11-4

Last week: 5

Sean: 6

Dom: 6

Oh, there goes Mr. Humbug

There goes Mr. Grim

If they gave a prize for being mean

The winner would be him

— “Scrooge” from “The Muppet Christmas Carol”

Is Tom Wilson as mean as he used to be? Not really. Is he still mean enough? Of course — ask Filip Chytil and, in all likelihood, Team Canada's front office. That prize is on its way.

7. Florida Panthers, 18-13-2

Last week: 18

Sean: 7

Dom: 8

War is over, if you want it

War is over now

— “Happy Xmas (War Is Over)” by John Lennon

It's understandable that the Panthers were mad at Brandon Hagel for a late hit that injured Aleksander Barkov during the playoffs. At some point, though, they're going to have to get over it. Seth Jones injured Hagel with a forearm to the head on Tuesday. Enough is enough.

8. Edmonton Oilers, 17-12-6

Last week: 16

Sean: 9

Dom: 7

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

Everywhere you go

Take a look at the five and ten, it's glistening once again

— “It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas” by Perry Como

Are the Oilers back? Yeah, we're thinking the Oilers are back. Edmonton is on an 8-3-1 streak and the team's top dogs are firing on all cylinders. As usual, rumors of this team's demise are always exaggerated.

9. New York Islanders, 19-12-3

Last week: 9

Sean: 8

Dom: 9

Come, they told me, pa-rum, pum-pum, pum

A newborn King to see, pa-rum, pum-pum, pum

— “The Little Drummer Boy”

Matthew Schaefer just gets better every game and continues to strengthen his shocking case to make Team Canada. He's a worthy bet by the numbers and looks to be in strong consideration for the final spot on defense. To rule the hockey world this early puts Schaefer in rarified air.

10. Tampa Bay Lightning, 18-13-3

Last week: 3

Sean: 11

Dom: 10

It's Christmas time, there's no need to be afraid

At Christmas time, we let in light and we banish shade

And in our world of plenty we can spread a smile of joy

— “Do They Know It's Christmas?” by Band Aid

Would it be nice if Nikita Kucherov, Brayden Point, Brandon Hagel, Victor Hedman, Ryan McDonagh and Andrei Vasilevskiy weren't missing so much time this year? Yes. But it could be worse — imagine if this happened last year. Tampa Bay's depth has stepped up all season and that will go a long way toward this team going a long way this spring.

11. Anaheim Ducks, 20-12-2

Last week: 8

Sean: 10

Dom: 12

All through the year we've waited

Waited through spring and fall

To hear silver bells ringing

And winter time bringing the happiest season of all

— “The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire)”



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Anaheim has a high-end, No. 1 center who doesn't turn 21 until Dec. 26 (Leo Carlsson), a 21-year-old power forward scoring at a 43-goal pace (Cutter Gauthier) and the leading scorer among rookies (Beckett Sennecke). The rebuild is over, and the wait appears to have been worth it.

12. Los Angeles Kings, 15-10-9

Last week: 10

Sean: 14

Dom: 11

This old house, sure is looking good

Got ourselves the finest snowman in the neighborhood

— "Christmas Vacation" by Mavis Staples

Drew Doughty may not be what he used to be, but he's still got it. Still playing tough minutes, still dominating defensively, still worthy of Team Canada. An LA living legend.

13. Montreal Canadiens, 18-12-4

Last week: 12

Sean: 12

Dom: 15

I never see you anymore

Come out the door

It's like you've gone away

— "Do You Want To Build A Snowman?" from Frozen

It's not just that Sam Montembeault has been terrible (.857 save percentage, minus-7.23 GSAX). It's that he's been absent — he's started just one game in December.

14. New Jersey Devils, 19-14-1

Last week: 12

Sean: 13

Dom: 14

I'll be home for Christmas

If only in my dreams

— "I'll Be Home for Christmas" by Frank Sinatra

Devils fans who were extremely confident Quinn Hughes would come play with his brothers as soon as possible received a rude awakening last week from ol' Billy G. Maybe in two years, but for a team whose window is right now, it was a massive missed opportunity.

15. Detroit Red Wings, 19-13-3

Last week: 14

Sean: 16

Dom: 13

Hallelujah, hallelujah

You know I do some things more different than I used to

'Cause I'm a player, doing what the players do

— "Player's Ball (Christmas Mix)" by Outkast

For three seasons, Moritz Seider has grown his game and added to his toolkit. Now, in the midst of a monstrous December, he's looking like a true Norris Trophy candidate. That's what players do.

16. Philadelphia Flyers, 17-10-6

Last week: 11

Sean: 15

Dom: 16

What's this? What's this?

There's something very wrong

What's this?

There's people singing songs

— "What's This?" from "A Nightmare Before Christmas"

The Flyers are squarely in a playoff chase! They're not bad! How is anyone supposed to feel about that?

17. Boston Bruins, 20-15-0

Last week: 13

Sean: 17

Dom: 17

Christmas, Christmastime is near

Time for toys and time for cheer

We've been good, but we can't last

Hurry Christmas, hurry fast

— "The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)" by Alvin and the Chipmunks

The best thing about Boston's shocking record is that the Bruins actually stumbled out of the gate, dropping six of their first nine. They've been a rocket ship since, going 17-9-0. Will it last? As long as Morgan Geekie keeps scoring at this rate, anything is possible.

18. Ottawa Senators, 16-13-4

Last week: 21

Sean: 18

Dom: 19

Season's greetings, hope you're well

Well I'm doing alright

If you were wondering

Lately I can never tell

— "Christmases When You Were Mine" by Taylor Swift

Sean thought he'd be safe from shoehorning Taylor Swift lyrics into the Power Rankings this year, but boy, was he wrong!

Are the Senators good? Are they bad? Are they mid? Nobody knows. They started the season 2-4-1, then went 10-3-3, and then followed that up with a 3-6-0 stretch. Sure, their



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

underlying numbers are good, but they also entered Thursday's game 14th in the East. Maybe a 4-0 win against the Penguins can spark the next streak in the right direction.

19. New York Rangers, 17-15-4

Last week: 20

Sean: 20

Dom: 20

It's Christmastime again

It's time to be nice to the people you can't stand all year

I'm growing tired of all this Christmas cheer

— "I Won't Be Home For Christmas" by blink-182

J.T. Miller is already a famously grumpy dude. Now, he's about to spend Christmas on a team outside the playoff picture, possibly with the sinking feeling that his Olympic spot is in jeopardy. Keep your distance.

20. Buffalo Sabres, 15-14-4

Last week: 26

Sean: 22

Dom: 18

Up there on your tree, better treat me like a star

Spend your cookie dough, dough, dough, spend it on my heart

— "buy me presents" by Sabrina Carpenter

Alex Tuch is really hoping there's an \$11 million check under his tree this Christmas. Will Santa Jarmo put it there or will he trade Tuch in for a pile of presents?

21. Utah Mammoth, 17-16-3

Last week: 23

Sean: 19

Dom: 21

And I know that they say, "Have a happy holiday"

And every year, I sincerely try

Oh, but Christmas, it always makes me cry

— "Christmas Makes Me Cry" by Kacey Musgraves

The Utah Mammoth may only be a two-year-old franchise, but we all know where they came from. The ghosts of the Arizona Coyotes still haunt the franchise lineage; the Mammoth Coyotes have made the playoffs just once since 2011-12. And it's fair to say that the year they did — 2019-20 when the Coyotes were 11th in the West when the world stopped — barely counts.

The worst part is that the franchise usually knew exactly where it stood by Christmas. Since 2011-12, the Mammoth Coyotes were in a playoff spot on just three occasions at Christmas. It doesn't look like they'll add to that total this year either.

22. San Jose Sharks, 17-14-3

Last week: 24

Sean: 21

Dom: 22

The choir of children sing their song

They practiced all year long

— "Wonderful Christmastime" by Paul McCartney

The San Jose Sharks are simply having a wonderful Christmas time, somehow sitting in a playoff spot against all odds. Not even halfway through the season, the Sharks are just 15 points back of last year's full season total of 52. And we all know why: The kids are all right. Macklin Celebrini is a monster and Yaroslav Askarov has been The Answer in net.

23. Toronto Maple Leafs, 15-13-5

Last week: 17

Sean: 23

Dom: 23

Silent night, holy night

Silent night, nothing feels right

— "That Was The Worst Christmas Ever!" by Sufjan Stevens

A team captain doing the "I can't hear you" gesture on home ice after the Leafs got booed earlier in the game is probably not a great sign for anyone involved. It wasn't the usual silent night at Scotiabank Arena, but the notoriously apathetic crowd was right to voice their displeasure. For a Leafs team that's rarely flashed its A-game this season, nothing feels right indeed.

24. Pittsburgh Penguins, 14-10-9

Last week: 15

Sean: 24

Dom: 24

Here we are as in olden days

Happy golden days of yore

Faithful friends who are dear to us gather near to us once more

— "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" by Judy Garland

Okay, so the Penguins might be pumpkin-ing before our very eyes, dropping seven straight — some of which in absolutely humiliating fashion. But if we told you the Penguins would be playing at a 92-point pace in mid-December, most fans would gladly take that. It's not over yet for Crosby and Co.

25. Columbus Blue Jackets, 14-14-6

Last week: 22

Sean: 25

Dom: 25

What a bright time, it's the right time

To rock the night away

Jingle bell time is a swell time

To go glidin' in a one-horse sleigh

— "Jingle Bell Rock" by Bobby Helms



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Zach Werenski's Net Rating this year: plus-10.3. The next best Blue Jacket: Kirill Marchenko at plus-3.6. That's the largest gap in the league. The Blue Jackets are a one-man army and while Werenski is one of the league's best players, Columbus needs more from the rest if the team is going to push for the playoffs.

26. Nashville Predators, 13-16-4

Last week: 29

Sean: 26

Dom: 26

The last time I played Father Christmas

I stood outside a department store

A gang of kids came over and mugged me

And knocked my reindeer to the floor

— "Father Christmas" by the Kinks

In the summer of 2024, Barry Trotz tried to give the children of Nashville everything they wanted. It has not gone according to plan.

27. Winnipeg Jets, 15-16-2

Last week: 30

Sean: 27

Dom: 27

And the Christmas bells that ring

There are the clanging chimes of doom

— "Do They Know It's Christmas?" by Band Aid

Connor Hellebuyck is back, and it might not matter. These guys, average or worse in a bunch of key categories, are on the verge of losing Murat. It's tough to imagine a worse sign.

28. St. Louis Blues, 13-15-8

Last week: 31

Sean: 28

Dom: 28

And when those blue snowflakes are falling

That's when those blue memories start calling

You'll be doing alright with your Christmas of white

And I'll have a blue, blue Christmas

— "Blue Christmas" by Elvis

Doug Armstrong is dropping gems like, "I hope they go on a run. I hope a lot of things. But hope is a bad strategy." Trade rumors are swirling. A depressing song for a depressing team.

29. Vancouver Canucks, 13-17-3

Last week: 32

Sean: 29

Dom: 29

Santa buddy, fill my stocking with Canucks tix, for kicks

Throw me on the first line

— "Santa Baby" by Michael Bublé

Obviously, we had to throw noted Canucks fan Michael Bublé's name-drop of the Canucks into the mix. With how the season is going, throwing the Bubes on the first line might be worth a shot — can't be worse than having David Kampf there.

30. Chicago Blackhawks, 13-15-6

Last week: 25

Sean: 30

Dom: 31

They're singing "Deck the Halls"

But it's not like Christmas at all

'Cause I remember when you were here

And all the fun we had last year

— "Christmas (Please Come Home)" by Darlene Love

Okay so "last year" is obviously a stretch for the Blackhawks, but change that lyric to "last month" and it works. The Blackhawks were flying high and Connor Bedard was ruling the world — things were good. With the Blackhawks reeling and Bedard out until at least January, it sure doesn't feel like Christmas in Chicago.

31. Calgary Flames, 13-17-4

Last week: 31

Sean: 31

Dom: 31

Overflowing with the most disgraceful assortment

Of deplorable rubbish imaginable

— "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch"

It's tough out there finding Christmas lyrics for the bad teams — too many songs that are jolly, not enough about the folly of the Calgary Flames.

It's the holiday season so we're not going to name names, but if you haven't sneaked a peek at this roster in a bit, go take a look. It's rough.

32. Seattle Kraken, 12-13-6

Last week: 27

Sean: 32

Dom: 32

The three words that best describe you are as follows

And I quote

"Stink, stank, stunk"

— Also "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch"

On Nov. 22, despite a goal differential of minus-1, the Kraken were 11-5-5. Now look at them. At least they're not making any bizarre, unforced P.R. mist — oh. Oh no.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025



Jake Guentzel scores twice as Lightning rally for 6-4 win over Hurricanes

By: Erik Erendsson, AP Sports Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Jake Guentzel scored a pair of third period goals and the Tampa Bay Lightning rallied past the Carolina Hurricanes for a 6-4 victory on Saturday night.

Gage Goncalves, Brayden Point and Jack Finley all scored second-period goals for Tampa Bay. Ryan McDonagh also scored, and Dominic James and Charle-Edouard D'Astous each had two assists.

Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 18 saves. Tampa Bay snapped a four-game home losing streak while picking up just its third win in the past 10 games overall.

Eric Robinson, Jackson Blake and Bradly Nadeau, called up earlier in the day, scored in the first period for Carolina. Andrei Svechnikov also scored for Carolina, and Pyotr Kochetkov stopped 23 shots.

Carolina failed to hold a three-goal lead for the second consecutive night and lost in regulation for the first time in seven games.

Guentzel scored the winning goal sitting on top of the crease to poke in a rebound of J.J. Moser's point shot at 6:38 of the third period. Guentzel added an empty-net goal to cap off the scoring with 27 seconds left.

Robinson scored on a one-timer feed from Jordan Staal 2:42 into the game and Blake tipped a Nikolaj Ehlers pass for a power-play goal at 4:00. Nadeau scored another power-play goal at 12:27 for a 3-0 lead.

Goncalves scored 30 seconds into the second period and Point made it 3-2 at 1:20. Finley tied the game getting his own rebound off a breakaway chance at 16:36.

Svechnikov regained the lead for the Hurricanes 2:47 into the third but McDonagh answered 26 seconds later.

Carolina placed leading goal scorer Seth Jarvis on injured reserve before the game. He left Friday's game against Florida when he was tripped up and crashed into the post.

Up next

Carolina: Host Florida Panthers on Tuesday

Tampa Bay: Host St. Louis Blues on Monday

Panthers, down 3-0 in the third, stun Hurricanes and win in shootout, 4-3

By: Tim Reynolds

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Sam Bennett and Sam Reinhart scored extra-attacker goals in the final minutes to lead a furious comeback, Evan Rodrigues got the winning goal in the shootout and the Florida Panthers stunned the Carolina Hurricanes with a 4-3 victory on Friday night.

Brad Marchand also scored for Florida, which trailed 3-0 midway through the third and still was down 3-1 with less than five minutes left.

But with the teams playing 4-on-4, Panthers coach Paul Maurice pulled Sergei Bobrovsky for an extra skater. Bennett scored soon after to make it 3-2, and Reinhart connected with 41.8 seconds left to knot the game at 3-3.

It was Florida's second three-goal comeback in less than two weeks. The Panthers also rallied from three down to top Columbus 7-6 on Dec. 6.

Sebastian Aho scored two third-period goals for the second consecutive game for the Hurricanes, whose five-game

winning streak was snapped. Jordan Staal also scored for Carolina.

Goaltender Brandon Bussi — who was in camp with the Panthers this fall before being claimed by the Hurricanes — had 38 saves and lost for just the second time in 13 starts this season.

Marchand's goal was his 20th of the season for Florida, making him the third-oldest player to reach that number with the Panthers. Jaromir Jagr did it at 43, Joe Nieuwendyk did it at 39. Marchand, in his first full season with Florida, is 37.

Bobrovsky stopped 26 shots for Florida, which now has won seven of its last eight games.

Staal scored at 11:53 of the first put Carolina up 1-0, and it stayed that way until Aho scored on a breakout early in the third. Aho struck again on the power play with 12:26 left, about a minute after Marchand was called for cross-checking — a play that left the Panthers bench in disbelief.

Marchand scored midway through the third, and the rally was on.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025



Recap: Canes 'Meltdown' Leads To Loss In Tampa

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

TAMPA, Fla. - The Carolina Hurricanes saw a three-goal lead evaporate for the second straight game, ultimately falling 6-4 to the Tampa Bay Lightning at Benchmark International Arena.

Despite playing the second half of a back-to-back, the Hurricanes enjoyed the far better start of the two clubs on Saturday, scoring twice on their first three shots.

Eric Robinson got things started with a one-timer from the right circle at 2:42, then drew a penalty shortly after. During the ensuing power play, Jackson Blake doubled the lead with a slick between-the-legs deflection of a Nikolaj Ehlers shot-pass.

Staying hot on the man advantage, Bradly Nadeau, who was recalled earlier in the day, ripped home a shot from the slot to inflate Carolina's cushion to three at the 12:27 mark.

But as the page turned to period two, the script flipped in Tampa's favor. Two tallies in the first 1:20 brought the Bolts back into the battle, and a breakaway conversion in the frame's final minutes leveled the score ahead of the third period.

The teams went tit for tat once more as the final 20 began to unfurl; Andrei Svechnikov initially restored the Canes' lead at 2:49, but the Lightning had an answer just 24 seconds later. When Jake Guentzel put the Bolts ahead for the first time at 6:38, though, it spelled the end of the back-and-forth. The former Hurricane then put the game on ice with an empty-netter in the final minutes.

Pyotr Kochetkov stopped 23 of 28 shots as he backstopped a defeat for just the second time this season. The loss ends Carolina's point streak at six games, marking its first regulation loss since Dec. 7.

Stats & Standouts

Forward Andrei Svechnikov scored to stretch his point streak to a season-high-tying three games (1G, 4A). The 25-year-old leads the Hurricanes in scoring during December, with nine points (1G, 8A) in 10 games.

Forward Bradly Nadeau buried his second career goal on Saturday, scoring for the second time in his last five NHL games after being recalled earlier today.

Forward Jesperi Kotkaniemi set up Andrei Svechnikov's third-period goal for his 200th career point, 138 of which have come in a Hurricanes sweater.

Forward Jackson Blake tallied his 10th goal of the season, becoming the fourth member of the team to reach double digits this season (Seth Jarvis - 19, Sebastian Aho - 13, Jordan Staal - 10).

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere registered an assist for the second straight game. Gostisbehere is one of just three NHL blueliners averaging a point per game this season, joining Cale Makar and Zach Werenski.

The Hurricanes scored multiple power-play goals for the second time this season, lighting the lamp on the man advantage for a season-high fourth straight game. And after notching 10 power-play markers in their first 26 games, the Canes have potted nine in their last nine outings.

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour giving his review of the contest...

"It wasn't a good game. Even though we were up 3-0, we kind of got fortunate on a couple of plays. You come out for the second and just lay an egg, really. It was terrible. We kind of got what we deserved. Not impressive. Mentally, you could feel that we just weren't sharp. When that doesn't go, your body doesn't go. You could see the turnovers we made, just stupid plays that you can't win a hockey game doing."

Jordan Staal describing the defeat...

"It was a meltdown, obviously. That's two games in a row. When you're up three, you've got to be pretty confident that you'll go on and win that game. A slow second, some lax plays, turnovers, and they're back into it. We tried to push back in the third and came up short."

Jordan Staal reflecting on a second consecutive game lost when the team had a three-goal lead...

"We've got to be more consistent in our game. We believe in our game, but we've got to execute. We haven't done that, honestly, the last two games against two good teams and they've made us pay. They've made us look like an ugly hockey team. We've got to be strong and believe in our game. When we are up like that, we've got to stay consistent, stay with it, and be hard to play against. We got a little soft, hoping it was just going to be a shootout. It ended up being a



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

shootout, but in the wrong direction for us. You can't play that way."

Rod Brind'Amour on what needs to change for Tuesday's final game before the holiday break...

"Just do it right. We need to get back to playing the way that we need to play. We need to try and reestablish that. I think the last couple of games we've gone astray a little bit. Obviously, we're missing big pieces here that would help drag us into that game, but we've got to be able to find a way."

Injury Report: Jarvis To Be 'Out For A While'

By: Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes are expecting to be without Seth Jarvis for an extended period of time after the forward was injured during Friday's shootout loss in Sunrise.

Streaking down the wing with speed during overtime, the young star was tripped by Florida's Evan Rodrigues, causing him to violently go crashing into the post at full speed. Immediately clutching his midsection, Jarvis lay on the ice for a bit before making his way off the ice with Head Athletic Trainer Doug Bennett.

The post-game prognosis was grim and has the team preparing to have a sizeable hole in their lineup moving forward.

"It's not good. He's going to be out for a while," Rod Brind'Amour told the television broadcast.

Not just Carolina's leading goal-scorer (19), but a top ten twine finder in the NHL, it's tough to overstate just how much the 23-year-old has meant to the team's lineup this season.

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will fly back to Raleigh immediately post-game and are scheduled to be off on Sunday. They'll return to practice on Monday before taking on the Panthers for the second time in five days on Tuesday.

Next Game: Tuesday, Dec. 23 vs. Florida | 7:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO

While there has not been an official diagnosis made yet, the obvious hope is that it will not impact Team Canada's consideration of him for the 2026 Winter Olympics.

After representing his country at the 4 Nations Face-Off earlier this year and producing at a stellar level through the Canes' first 34 games, hopes for a repeat selection were high. General Manager Doug Armstrong and staff are expected to announce their roster on Dec. 31, just 11 days from now.

If there are reasons to be optimistic that Jarvis could still be in the mix and available again for the Canes sooner rather than later, Brind'Amour had a similar tune on Oct. 30 when the 2020 first-round pick blocked a shot off his skate amid the team's win over the New York Islanders. Going with "it doesn't look great" at his post-game press availability, Jarvis played just two days later in Boston.

When William Carrier and Eric Robinson were injured during the team's victory in Colorado on October 24, Brind'Amour said that the duo would be "out for a while." Both missed just six games, returning on Nov. 8.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025



Guentzel scores twice, Lightning rally past Hurricanes

By: Corey Long

TAMPA -- Jake Guentzel scored twice in the third period, and the Tampa Bay Lightning rallied for a 6-4 win against the Carolina Hurricanes at Benchmark International Arena on Saturday.

Guentzel put Tampa Bay ahead 5-4 at 6:38 of the third period when he backhanded a J.J. Moser wrist shot from the left point five-hole on Pyotr Kochetkov from the top of the crease.

Ryan McDonagh had a goal and an assist, and Brayden Point and Jack Finley scored for the Lightning (19-13-3), who were 0-2-1 in their past three games. Dominic James and Charles-Edouard D'Astous each had two assists. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 18 saves.

"You basically saw a formula of how to lose a game and how to win a game all in a span of about two hours and 15 minutes," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "That's what happened."

Andrei Svechnikov and Eric Robinson scored for the Hurricanes (22-10-3), who have lost two straight (0-1-1), including 4-3 in a shootout to the Florida Panthers on Friday. Jackson Blake and Bradley Nadeau also scored, and Kochetkov made 23 saves.

It was the second straight game Carolina failed to hold a three-goal lead.

"It wasn't a good game, even when we were up 3-0 we kind of got fortunate on a couple of the plays," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "And then we come out in the second and just lay an egg really. It was terrible. We kind of got what we deserved. Mentally you can feel that we just weren't sharp. You see the turnovers we made. Just stupid plays that you can't win hockey games doing."

Robinson gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 2:42 of the first period. Tampa Bay defenseman Darren Raddysh's clear attempt was held at the blue line by Jordan Staal. Staal then fed a pass to Robinson in the right face-off circle, where he sent a one-timer five-hole on Vasilevskiy.

Blake pushed it to 2-0 with a power-play goal at 4:00 when he deflected a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers between his legs in front that went off Vasilevskiy's stick and under his left arm.

Nadeau extended the lead to 3-0 on the power play at 12:27 with a wrist shot from the slot. The goal came during the second half of a four-minute man-advantage after Finley was given a double minor for high-sticking.

Nadeau was recalled from Chicago of the American Hockey League on Saturday after forward Seth Jarvis was injured in Friday's loss.

"When you're up three, you've got to be pretty confident you're going to win that game," Staal said. "Couple of lax plays, a couple of turnovers and they're back into it. We tried to push back in the third and came up short."

The Lightning scored two goals in the opening 1:20 of the second period to get back into the game.

Gage Goulet cut the deficit to 3-1 just 30 seconds into the period when he finished a feed from Dominic James in the low slot.

Point set up at the crease and redirected a pass from D'Astous into an open net behind Kochetkov to make it 3-2 at 1:20.

"There's a lot of accountability on this team, a lot of guys speaking up in the room after that first period," McDonagh said, "We were embarrassed. You feed off that first shift [of the second period]. Obviously they score a goal and they set the tone right away for us."

Finley tied it 3-3 on a breakaway at 16:36 when he put a rebound past Kochetkov's left skate after his initial shot was stopped.

"The first period wasn't great, but I thought in the second we came out hard and stuck with it in the third," Finley said. "That just shows the character in this room. [Dominic] James was driving our line all night. It was a team effort."

Svechnikov regained a 4-3 lead for Carolina at 2:47 of the third period, skating in on a 2-on-1 and lifting a pass from Mark Jankowski over Vasilevskiy's left pad.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

"We've got to be hard to play against," Staal said. "I think we got a little soft. It ended up being a shootout but in the wrong direction for us."

McDonagh tied the game 4-4 at 3:13 after breaking through two defenders and slipping the puck between Kochetkov's pads.

"It was a good 40-minute game, we're trying to get closer to a 60-minute game here at home," McDonagh said. "But obviously a good response in the end."

Guentzel scored into the empty net at 19:33 for the 6-4 final.

"Three in four nights, you can feel it," Brind'Amour said. "This is part of the schedule that you have to grind out and we didn't tonight."

NOTES: With an assist, Lightning forward Nikita Kucherov recorded his fourth calendar year with at least 110 regular-season points and tied Jari Kurri and Peter Stastny for the second-highest total by a player born outside North America. The only players with more are Leon Draisaitl and Jaromir Jagr (both with five). ... Point has eight points (three goals, five assists) over his past six games. ... Hurricanes defenseman Jaccob Slavin was a healthy scratch as Brind'Amour did not want to play him in back-to-back games as he continued to work his way back from a lower-body injury.

Jarvis leaves Hurricanes game with injury, will be 'out for a while'

By: George Richards

SUNRISE, Fla. -- Seth Jarvis will be "out for a while" for the Carolina Hurricanes after sustaining an undisclosed injury against the Florida Panthers at Amerant Bank Arena on Friday, coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

The forward left the 4-3 shootout loss 20 seconds into overtime after crashing into the left post at full speed while being pursued by Evan Rodrigues on a drive to the net. He was helped off the ice and down the tunnel.

Brind'Amour said the injury "is not good. He's going to be out for a while."

Jarvis had two assists Friday in helping the Hurricanes build a 3-0 third-period lead before the Panthers rallied with three goals in the final 9:44 to force overtime.

Jarvis is second on Carolina this season with 29 points (19 goals, 10 assists) in 34 games. The 23-year-old has 240 points (115 goals, 125 assists) in 337 NHL games, all with the Hurricanes, and 43 points (19 goals, 24 assists) in 55 Stanley Cup Playoff games.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jake Guentzel scores twice as Lightning beat Hurricanes 6-4 | AP News

By: Erik Erendsson

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Jake Guentzel scored a pair of third period goals and the Tampa Bay Lightning rallied past the Carolina Hurricanes for a 6-4 victory on Saturday night.

Gage Goncalves, Brayden Point and Jack Finley all scored second-period goals for Tampa Bay. Ryan McDonagh also scored, and Dominic James and Charle-Edouard D'Astous each had two assists.

Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 18 saves. Tampa Bay snapped a four-game home losing streak while picking up just its third win in the past 10 games overall.

Eric Robinson, Jackson Blake and Bradly Nadeau, called up earlier in the day, scored in the first period for Carolina. Andrei Svechnikov also scored for Carolina, and Pyotr Kochetkov stopped 23 shots.

Carolina failed to hold a three-goal lead for the second consecutive night and lost in regulation for the first time in seven games.

Guentzel scored the winning goal sitting on top of the crease to poke in a rebound of J.J. Moser's point shot at 6:38 of the third period. Guentzel added an empty-net goal to cap off the scoring with 27 seconds left.

Robinson scored on a one-timer feed from Jordan Staal 2:42 into the game and Blake tipped a Nikolaj Ehlers pass for a power-play goal at 4:00. Nadeau scored another power-play goal at 12:27 for a 3-0 lead.

Goncalves scored 30 seconds into the second period and Point made it 3-2 at 1:20. Finley tied the game getting his own rebound off a breakaway chance at 16:36.

Svechnikov regained the lead for the Hurricanes 2:47 into the third but McDonagh answered 26 seconds later.

Carolina placed leading goal scorer Seth Jarvis on injured reserve before the game. He left Friday's game against Florida when he was tripped up and crashed into the post.

Up next

Carolina: Host Florida Panthers on Tuesday

Tampa Bay: Host St. Louis Blues on Monday

Panthers, down 3-0 in the third, stun Hurricanes in shootout | AP News

By: Tim Reynolds

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Sam Bennett and Sam Reinhart scored extra-attacker goals in the final minutes to lead a furious comeback, Evan Rodrigues got the winning goal in the shootout and the Florida Panthers stunned the Carolina Hurricanes with a 4-3 victory on Friday night.

Brad Marchand also scored for Florida, which trailed 3-0 midway through the third and still was down 3-1 with less than five minutes left. The NHL said it was the first time Florida won a game when down by three goals in the final 10 minutes of regulation.

With Sergei Bobrovsky being pulled for an extra attacker with about 4:40 left, Bennett scored quickly to make it 3-2 and Reinhart connected with 41.8 seconds left to knot the game at 3-3.

It was Florida's second three-goal comeback in less than two weeks. The Panthers also rallied from three down to top Columbus 7-6 on Dec. 6.

Sebastian Aho scored two third-period goals for the second consecutive game for the Hurricanes, whose five-game

winning streak was snapped. Jordan Staal also scored for Carolina.

Goaltender Brandon Bussi — who was in camp with the Panthers this fall before being claimed by the Hurricanes — had 38 saves and lost for just the second time in 13 starts this season.

Marchand's goal was his 20th of the season for Florida, making him the third-oldest player to reach that number with the Panthers. Jaromir Jagr did it at 43, Joe Nieuwendyk did it at 39. Marchand, in his first full season with Florida, is 37.

Bobrovsky stopped 26 shots for Florida, which now has won seven of its last eight games.

Staal scored at 11:53 of the first put Carolina up 1-0, and it stayed that way until Aho scored on a breakout early in the third. Aho struck again on the power play with 12:26 left, about a minute after Marchand was called for cross-checking — a play that left the Panthers bench in disbelief.

Marchand scored midway through the third, and the rally was on.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025



Brind'Amour: Seth Jarvis 'out a while' after crash into post vs. Panthers

By: Sportsnet Staff

The Carolina Hurricanes will be without one of their top forwards for the foreseeable future.

Seth Jarvis, who exited Friday's loss to the Panthers after crashing hard into the post, will be "out a while," head coach Rod Brind'Amour told reporters post-game, according to The Athletic's Cory Lavalette.

Brind'Amour also added that the injury "is not good," per team reporter Walt Ruff.

Jarvis made a fast dash towards the net with 4:40 left in overtime. But as he attempted to get the shot off, he was inadvertently tripped and sent flying into the post by Panthers' Evan Rodrigues, who was trying to deflect the shot.

The Hurricanes forward momentarily stayed down on the ice in pain, appearing to hold his midsection, before being helped off the ice and down the tunnel.

No penalty was assessed on the play.

Jarvis, 23, is Carolina's leading goal scorer by a wide margin. He posted 19 goals and eight assists through 33 games this season, while Sebastian Aho is the only other Hurricane with 10-plus goals on the season with 13.

Jarvis is coming off back-to-back 67-point campaigns with goal totals of 33 and 32.

If the young forward were to miss considerable time, his chances to make Team Canada's Olympic squad become murkier. Jarvis was on Canada's 4 Nations Face-Off team, where he registered an assist in three games.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Another Three Goal Lead Wasted - Lightning 6, Hurricanes 4

By: Bob Wage

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of reasoning, it was the age of foolishness." etc. etc. etc.

If Charles Dickens had to write this game recap, how would he do so?

On one side of the story, the Hurricanes were able to jump out to a 3-0 lead, which is good stuff.

But much like the previous night against the Florida Panthers, they were unable to hold it.

The Canes came out with jump to start the game and scored early and often.

Just two minutes and change into the contest, Eric Robinson got things started off a pass by Jordan Staal.

One minute later, Jackson Blake tipped in a Nikolaj Ehlers pass to make it 2-0 and the visitors were cooking. It was a powerplay tally for Carolina.

The Hurricanes were awarded another powerplay and they took advantage when Bradly Nadeau buried a pass by Logan Stankoven to make it 3-0, and it looked like the Canes might have mentally gotten over the debacle from the night before.

But the second period was another story.

The Lightning scored three straight goals to tie things up and both teams went to the dressing room for the second intermission tied at three goals each. The Canes were outshot 14-6 in that period.

Andrei Svechnikov notched a pretty goal off a nice pass by Mark Jankowski to start off the third period, but again the lead was short-lived.

Less than a minute later, Ryan McDonagh scored on a breakaway and the home team did not look back.

They would score again three minutes later when Jake Guentzel out battled Mike Reilly from in close then Guentzel scored again on an empty-netter to close it out.

After the game, Jordan Staal said his team had a "meltdown".

Rod Brind'Amour called the second period "terrible". He went on to say that "(We made) stupid plays that you cannot win a hockey game doing."

On one hand, the Hurricanes are still in first place in the East as well as the Metropolitan, but they lost to two teams, one of which they would most likely face in the upcoming playoffs, two teams they have had issues with before.

This game was not as frustrating as the night before when they coughed up three goals in the last 11 minutes of the game, but to blow another three goal lead is not good.

This reminds me a bit of last season when the Hurricanes lost back-to-back games against the Panthers.

First, they lost at home, 6-3, then they went to Florida for redemption and got manhandled, losing 6-0 the following night.

Don't hold your breath for any type of "retribution" on Tuesday night, but we will see.

Game Preview and Thread: Carolina Hurricanes at Tampa Bay Lightning

By: briandaguanno

The Carolina Hurricanes (22-9-3) are back in action tonight to take on the Tampa Bay Lightning (18-13-3) at 7 PM in the second of back-to-back road games in Florida.

Carolina is coming off a tough performance in the third period last night against the Panthers, where they allowed three unanswered goals in the final 10 minutes before eventually losing in the shootout.

Despite the bad loss, the Canes still hold the best record in the Eastern Conference and are 7-2-1 in their last 10 games. One of the bright spots last night was Sebastian Aho, who

netted two goals for his second straight multi-goal performance.

But the Hurricanes won't be without one of their top liners tonight in Seth Jarvis, who exited last night's game in overtime with an injury after being tripped into the net. He is expected to be out for a decent amount of time as a result. So far this season, Jarvis leads the Canes with 19 goals in 34 games.

Carolina doesn't get any time off though as they prepare to face another Atlantic Division contender in the Lightning tonight.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Tampa Bay has gone cold as of late, losing three straight and posting a 3-6-1 record in their last 10 games. Similar to the Canes early in the season, injuries have plagued the Lightning this year. Tonight will be no different, as they will be without a few of their top pieces.

Leading scorer Brandon Hagel, who has 18 goals in 32 games, will be out with an upper-body injury. Tampa Bay also won't have star veteran defenseman Victor Hedman, who was placed on IR after having surgery on his elbow in mid-December. Hedman has put up 12 points in 18 games this season. Nikita Kucherov, who is ninth in the NHL with 42 points, will be a game-time decision with an illness.

Starting goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, who returned from injury in Tampa Bay's loss to the Kings on Thursday after missing

seven games with an injury, has posted a 2.30 GAA and .917 save percentage in 20 games this season.

The Canes are looking to bounce back tonight and extend their point streak to seven games with a win, which should be in reach facing an injury-riddled Lightning team.

Here's how to catch tonight's game:

Time: 7 PM

TV: FanDuel Sports Network

Streaming: FanDuel Sports Network App/ESPN

Radio: 99.9 The Fan

Odds: Hurricanes +102 Moneyline, Hurricanes +1.5 at -260

Hurricanes allow comeback, fall to Panthers, 4-3, in shootout

By: briandaguanno

The Carolina Hurricanes allowed three straight goals in the third period in a 4-3 shootout loss to the back-to-back Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers in South Florida on Friday night.

After having a three goal in lead in the third period with around 10 minutes remaining, the Panthers stormed back to tie the game with less than a minute left.

The Canes got on the board first courtesy of Jordan Staal, who buried his 10th of the year to cap off a flurry of net-front chances following a shot from the point by Shayne Gostisbehere. After scoring 13 goals in 75 games last season, the captain has found his scoring touch to start the season.

Both teams had chances the rest of the period, but the Hurricanes took their 1-0 lead into the second.

Throughout the second, Bussi continued to keep Florida off the board with a couple of huge stops, including a sprawling pad save on Sam Bennett.

The Hurricanes extended the lead less than two minutes into the third period when Sebastian Aho made no mistake, beating Sergei Bobrovsky five-hole on a breakaway. Seth Jarvis and Andrei Svechnikov both picked up assists on the goal.

Aho added his second of the night just six minutes later on the power play, ringing it post-and-in off a rebound. The goal marked Aho's second consecutive multi-goal game, giving him 13 on the year.

It didn't take long for Florida to answer and get on the board, with Brad Marchand finding the back of the net to cut the lead to two a little less than three minutes later.

Florida, with an empty net, added their second straight goal off a rebound from Bennett with a little over two minutes left in the game.

With the momentum on the Panthers side, Marchand found Sam Reinhart all alone in the slot. Reinhart's shot trickled past Bussi to tie the game with less than a minute to go and send the game to overtime.

Jarvis went down early in overtime and headed to the locker room after a trip caused him to collide with the net.

Bussi came up big, making a couple timely saves to force the game to a shootout, Carolina's fourth in five games.

Needing a goal to extend the shootout, Nikolaj Ehlers failed to beat Bobrovsky, who made a stick save.

Carolina will take on the Tampa Bay Lightning tomorrow night at 7 PM in the second of back-to-back road games in Florida, looking to bounce back.

Hurricanes @ Panthers - Preview and Game Thread

Bob Wage

2-3 minutes

The Carolina Hurricanes (22-9-2) are visiting the Sunshine State as they prepare for a game against the Stanley Cup Champion, Florida Panthers (18-13-2) on Friday night. Game time is 7 P.M. and the television broadcast will be on the FanDuel Sports Network.

Don't look now but the Canes are one of the hottest teams in the league. They are winners of five straight games and have an 8-2-0 record over their last 10.

The team is currently in first place in the Eastern Conference by four points.

After a slow start, the Panthers have now won three straight and have a 6-3-1 record over their last 10.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

While Jaccob Slavin's minutes have been closely watched since his return to action, (limited to about 15 minutes a game), his presence has been noteworthy. Look for the same Friday night.

Alexander Nikishin has a current team best four game point streak going, (1G 3A). Who would have possibly thought that putting him on a powerplay unit would increase scoring?

There was no word at the time of this article whether or not Jordan Martinook would be able to play in this game. Martinook left the game early against Nashville with an unknown ailment.

Also, as of 12:30 there is still no word on who will start in net for Carolina. It should be Brandon Bussi but could be Fred Andersen. We will see.

The rest of the lineup should be the same as from recent games.

((Update)) According to this Brind'Amour interview after the pregame skate, Kotkaniemi should be back in the lineup and Martinook is out.

Still nothing official about the starting goaltender.

The Panthers are still missing Barkov and Tkachuk but Bobrovsky will be in net, who is always a challenge for Carolina. Look for their lines to be something like this.

Luostarinen - Lundell - Reinhart

Verhaeghe - Bennett - Marchand

Samoskevich - Rodrigues - Greer

Gregor - Kunin - Boqvist

Forsling - Ekblad

Mikkola - Jones

Balinskis - Petry

Paul Maurice had a press conference prior to the game.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025



Hurricanes blow second consecutive 3-0 lead, shocked by Lightning, 6-4

By: Jakob Halbur

Center Sebastian Aho is pushed by an opposing defender during the game against the Tampa Bay Lightning at the Lenovo Center on Tuesday, March 11, 2025. Aho had two shots on goal. The Hurricanes beat the Lightning 4-1.

Center Sebastian Aho is pushed by an opposing defender during the game against the Tampa Bay Lightning at the Lenovo Center on Tuesday, March 11, 2025. Aho had two shots on goal. The Hurricanes beat the Lightning 4-1.

Same story, different day for the Carolina Hurricanes.

The Hurricanes (22-10-3) once again found themselves with a 3-0 lead over a Sunshine State rival, but just like the night prior couldn't hang on and ultimately fell 6-4, this time to the Tampa Bay Lightning (19-13-3).

Much like their previous game, the Hurricanes got off to a blazing start as they found the back of the net three times in the first frame. Just over two minutes in, winger Eric Robinson opened the scoring. After Tampa defenseman Darren Raddysh threw the puck up the ice with the hopes of clearing from his defensive zone, center Jordan Staal intercepted it and managed to dish the puck off to Robinson who buried it through the five-hole of Lightning netminder Andrei Vasilevskiy.

And the Canes did not stop there. Twice in the first period they were able to convert on the power play which marked a season-high fourth straight game with a goal on the man advantage.

The first of these goals came courtesy of a redirection from winger Jackson Blake. After setting up nicely in their offensive zone, fellow winger Nikolaj Ehlers sent the puck Blake's way who masterfully tipped the puck under the arm of Vasilevskiy, giving the Canes two goals a mere four minutes into the game.

The second of the Canes' two power play goals came from rookie winger Bradly Nadeau who was called up Saturday from the AHL Chicago Wolves in place of injured center Seth Jarvis. Nadeau potted his second-career NHL goal after Raddysh once again errantly turned the puck over behind the Lightning net. Center Logan Stankoven found himself in the right place at the right time but saw Nadeau in an even better

position as he dished it off to him, allowing Nadeau to build the Canes' lead to three goals.

The second period however, was an entirely different story. Under 90 seconds in, the Lightning came out swinging with goals from centers Gage Goulet and Brayden Point to cut the Hurricanes' lead to one.

In a period riddled with mistakes and sloppy play overall, the Hurricanes were never able to generate any offensive momentum and spent a significant amount of this period in their defensive zone. Good things never tend to come out of spending that much time in front of your own net and it finally came to a head when Tampa center Jack Sveinley scored the equalizer for the Lightning off an Andrei Svechnikov turnover, erasing the 3-0 lead the Hurricanes had built the period prior.

Heading into the last frame all knotted at three, the Hurricanes had a final 20 minutes to avoid a second-straight loss after holding a three-goal lead. The stars seemed to align themselves early in the period as on a breakaway, Svechnikov duped Vasilevskiy with his initial move and was able to finish the play to give the Canes a one goal lead once again.

Nonetheless, the lead was short lived as Bolts defenseman Ryan McDonagh did his best impression of fellow teammate Nikita Kucherov, "no-moving" on Kochetkov and sent the puck through the goalie's legs not even 30 seconds later.

With the Hurricane's confidence waning and time ticking down, Tampa looked to capitalize on the repeated Carolina mistakes, and there was only one person that could score the go ahead goal — center Jake Guentzel.

The ghost of Hurricanes' past came back to haunt the team once again as he too was able to slip a puck through Kochetkov's five-hole, giving Tampa its first lead of the night. Only adding insult to injury, Guentzel also potted the empty netter that sealed yet another heartbreaking loss for the Canes.

For their final game before the Christmas holidays, the Hurricanes make the trip back up to Raleigh and the Lenovo Center as they meet the Florida Panthers once again. Puck drop against the Panthers is set for Tuesday, Dec. 23, at 7 p.m.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Hurricanes blow 3-0 lead, fall to Eastern Conference rival Panthers in shootout

By: Jakob Halbur

With frigid temperatures surrounding Raleigh the past week, the Carolina Hurricanes took their early holiday trip down to the Sunshine State to face an all-too-familiar foe in the Florida Panthers.

With a five-game win streak for the team and a nine-game win streak for starting goaltender Brandon Bussi on the line, along with plenty of Eastern Conference Finals demons to exorcise, this game surely carried more weight on the mind of Canes' players than the standings themselves. With a goal from center Jordan Staal in the first period, two goals from center Sebastian Aho in the third, and an overall complete 50 minutes of hockey thus far, the Hurricanes' 3-0 lead looked as if it would hold and continue their pre-holiday road trip on a high note.

Unfortunately for the Canes, hockey games don't end after 50 minutes, and the final 10 minutes is all the Panthers (19-13-2) needed to mount quite the improbable comeback ultimately defeating Carolina (22-9-3), 4-3 via the shootout.

By the time the clock ticked into the single-digits in the third period, Florida had already begun its suffocation. Its first goal was via one of the newer Panthers, winger Brad Marchand. After giving Bussi a tap in the place where the sun doesn't shine and effectively knocking him down, Marchand was able to tuck the puck past Bussi to move the Panthers back within two. While many considered this a possible indicator of goaltender interference, the Hurricanes chose not to challenge due to the possibility of a Panthers' power play if the challenge was unsuccessful.

Brad Marchand with the Florida Panthers' first goal of the game#CarolinaCulture #TimeToHunt #NHL
pic.twitter.com/yQBAqx1gik

— Queen of the Puck (@rbarkleyhockey) December 20, 2025

As time began to tick down, the Panthers resorted to vacating their net in hopes of bringing the game within one goal. After Aho failed to clear the puck out of the Canes' defensive zone mere moments after a faceoff win, the Panthers sent Bussi scrambling and allowed center Sam Bennett to find the back of an essentially vacated net.

Within the final minute of regulation, the game looked to be all but won for Carolina. Winger Andrei Svechnikov had the

chance to put the game to bed with the Panthers' net once again empty. However, he couldn't get a clean shot away, leading to a neutral zone turnover and an ensuing Panthers' offensive possession. Much as they had for the previous nine minutes, the Panthers continued to pressure Bussi and the Hurricanes defense. It once again paid off as with 42 seconds remaining, center Sam Reinhart netted the equalizer on a shot that just barely trickled behind Bussi and into the Carolina net.

Heading into overtime, the Hurricanes hoped to put the last 10 minutes behind them and escape Sunrise with two points. Instead, they left with something significantly worse: an injury to star center Seth Jarvis.

Just 20 seconds into overtime, Jarvis looked to end the game fast. As he began to make his move inside towards the net, he was met by Florida center Evan Rodrigues who sent him crashing into the goalposts making for quite a scary moment on the ice. Jarvis was helped off the ice by the Hurricanes' athletic training staff and did not return for the rest of overtime.

Seth Jarvis will be "out a while", head coach Rod Brind'Amour announced.

Jarvis left the game after being tripped by Evan Rodrigues and crashing hard into the post. There was no penalty on the play.
pic.twitter.com/s3WAL0x5b7

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) December 20, 2025

The remaining four minutes in overtime saw both goaltenders standing tall like they had for most of the game. With the score still knotted at 3 at the end of the five-minute period, this game was to be decided via the shootout. Alas, the Hurricanes couldn't finish the job as the Florida Panthers ultimately won the shootout 2-1 in four rounds with goals from Rodrigues and Reinhart as they completed one of the most improbable comebacks in the NHL season thus far.

The Hurricanes will have their opportunity for revenge against the Panthers as Florida will make the trip up to the Lenovo Center on Tuesday, Dec. 23. But before then the Hurricanes have one last stop on their road trip as they prepare for battle against the other Sunshine State team, the Tampa Bay Lightning. The Canes and Lightning will meet on Saturday, Dec. 20 with puck drop set for 7 p.m.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Sports Illustrated

NHL Best Bets Today: Picks for Hurricanes-Panthers, Canucks-Islanders, Devils-Mammoth

By: Ryan Gilbert

The NHL opens the weekend with a modest five-game slate on Friday night.

The Carolina Hurricanes visit the Florida Panthers in one of the early games, with the Anaheim Ducks hosting the Dallas Stars to close things out.

After a 1-2 performance last night, let's bounce back with my NHL best bets – using odds from the best betting sites – for Friday, Dec. 19.

Odds via DraftKings Sportsbook

Carolina Hurricanes (-122) at Florida Panthers

The Florida Panthers have been playing better hockey in recent weeks, winning six of their last seven games. However, it has largely been the performance of their top line carrying things for the Cats.

Meanwhile, the Hurricanes are one of the deepest teams in the league at forward, defense, and even in net this season. They've also put together a solid stretch recently, winning five straight games, including three on the road.

Carolina is 22-9-2 on the season, including 11-4-1 on the road, while Florida is at 18-13-2 and 11-6-2 at home. The Canes have largely taken care of business as favorites this season at 21-9, including 10-3 on the road.

In the last 10 games, the Hurricanes rank second in expected goals share at 57.33%, per Natural Stat Trick, while the Panthers have the seventh-lowest at 46.99%. To put it simply, the Hurricanes' recent results are much more likely to continue than Florida's.

Vancouver Canucks vs. New York Islanders UNDER 5.5 (-105)

The Canucks have been able to breathe a bit easier after trading away Quinn Hughes, with Zeev Buium, Marco Rossi,

and Liam Ohgren already making their marks in Vancouver. They went into New Jersey for a 2-1 win on Saturday and got a 3-0 victory at the Rangers two nights later.

Those two unders have continued a recent trend for Vancouver. The Canucks have gone under the total in four straight games and eight of their last nine. They were a profitable team to bet the over on early in the season, but that's turned around as their offense had dried up and Thatcher Demko has improved in the crease.

The Islanders have also had a few phases this season, and recently they've also played some low scoring games. Their last two games had a final score of 3-2, and four of their last six games went under the total.

Demko vs. Ilya Sorokin should be a good goalie battle on Long Island on Friday night.

New Jersey Devils (+114) at Utah Mammoth

The Devils have been battling through injuries for a while now, but they still have more wins than losses at 19-14-1, including a 9-8-0 record on the road. They're coming off an impressive 2-1 shootout win in Vegas, and now face a Utah team that is in a tough spot.

The Mammoth just played three games in four nights out East, and now head home for their fourth game in six nights – and another third game in four night situation. They had a similar situation earlier this month, losing 4-2 to the Kings on December 8 after playing in Vancouver and Calgary a few nights prior.

Utah has been fine at home at 8-5-1, but that's not particularly impressive in today's NHL.

The Devils are 7-4 as road underdogs, and they're a good bet to make it eight wins on Friday night.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

The Hockey News

'It Was Terrible': Rod Brind'Amour On Second Consecutive Collapse, Loss In Tampa Bay

By: Ryan Henkel

Coach Brind'Amour reveals the mental lapse that led to another devastating collapse, admitting his team "got what we deserved."

The Carolina Hurricanes have somehow done it again.

Despite holding a 3-0 lead, the team just capitulated on itself, this time falling 6-4 to the Tampa Bay Lightning.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour spoke with the media in Tampa. Here's what he had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On the game: It wasn't a good game. Even when we were up 3-0, we got fortunate on a couple of the plays. You come out in the second and just lay an egg really. It was terrible. We kind of got what we deserved. Not impressive. Mentally, you could just feel it. We just weren't sharp. And when that

doesn't go, your body doesn't go and you could see the turnovers we made, just stupid plays that you can't win hockey games doing.

On not being mentally sharp: It's not really the last two games, just really the last part of the last game and then it kind of carried over here. Three in four nights. You could feel it. It's just the part of the schedule where you have to grind it out and we just didn't. Obviously we were in a good spot, but score a goal to go ahead and then take the foot off the gas and leave a guy open. It's just blown coverage that mentally, just not sharp. To me, that's what cost us.

On the needed response: It's just doing it right. We need to get back to playing the way we need to play and try to reestablish that because I think the last couple of games it's gone astray a little bit. Obviously you're missing big pieces here that would help drag us into that game, but we have to be able to find a way.

Carolina Hurricanes @ Tampa Bay Lightning: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By: Ryan Henkel

Hurricanes battle Lightning in Tampa. Injuries plague both sides as streaks hang in the balance. Puck drop at 7 PM.

What - Game 35 (22-9-3)

When - 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 20

Where - Benchmark International Arena; Tampa Bay, FL

How to Watch - FanDuel Sports Network South, The Spot

The Carolina Hurricanes will look to bounce back in Tampa Bay tonight as they take on the Lightning.

The Canes are coming off of a 4-3 shootout loss to the Florida Panthers, a game they led 3-0 at one point.

Carolina will also be dealing with the loss of Seth Jarvis, who was injured in the loss.

Tampa Bay is on a three-game skid currently, most recently losing 2-1 to the LA Kings on Thursday.

The Lightning are also dealing with a plethora of injuries, including to their top goal scorer and point scorer.

Streaks

Sebastian Aho (4g, 1a), Andre Svechnikov (4a) and Seth Jarvis (1g, 2a) have points in back-to-back games.

Milestone Watch

Jordan Martinook is one goal away from 100 career goals.

Jesper Kotkaniemi is one point away from 200 career points.

Jacob Slavin is one point shy of 300 career point.

Game Notes

Carolina is 64-61-10-12 all-time against Tampa.

Jake Guentzel (2024) is the lone Canes connection on Tampa Bay's roster.

Key Matchups

Projected Starting Goalies

Pyotr Kochetkov: 6-1-0; 0.913 Sv%; 1.95 GAA

Andrei Vasilevskiy: 11-7-2; 0.917 Sv%; 2.30 GAA

Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (19) / Brandon Hagel (18)

Points - Sebastian Aho (31) / Nikita Kucherov (42)

Power Play

Carolina - 16% (24th)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Tampa Bay - 17.4% (22nd)

Penalty Kill

Carolina - 81.1% (16th)

Tampa Bay - 85.2% (3rd)

Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Andrei Svechnikov - Sebastian Aho - Taylor Hall

Nikolaj Ehlers - Logan Stankoven - Jackson Blake

William Carrier - Jordan Staal - Eric Robinson

Mark Jankowski - Jesperi Kotkaniemi

Jacob Slavin - Sean Walker

K'Andre Miller - Jalen Chatfield

Alexander Nikishin - Shayne Gostisbehere

Mike Reilly

Pyotr Kochetkov

Frederik Andersen

Injuries and Scratches: Brandon Bussi, Jordan Martinook (LBI), Seth Jarvis (UBI)

Lightning Projected Lineup

Oliver Bjorkstrand - Brayden Point - Gage Convalves

Jake Guentzel - Anthony Cirelli - Nick Paul

Pontus Holmberg - Yanni Gourde - Zemgus Girgensons

Curtis Douglas - Dominic James

J.J. Moser - Darren Raddysh

Ryan McDonagh - Charle-Edouard D'Astous

Declan Carlile - Max Crozier

Andrei Vasilevskiy

Jonas Johansson

Injuries and Scratches: Erik Cernak, Emil Lilleberg, Victor Hedman, Brandon Hagel, Nikita Kucherov

'It Cost Us A Point': Rod Brind'Amour On Collapse Against Panthers, Seth Jarvis' Status

By: Ryan Henkel

Hurricanes coach laments costly third-period collapse and confirms Seth Jarvis' "not good" injury, sidelining him indefinitely.

The Carolina Hurricanes blew a 3-0, third-period lead Friday night to lose 4-3 to the Florida Panthers in what was a frustrating game.

Some questionable calls and even more questionable hits helped fuel the Panthers' comeback as the Hurricanes also crumbled under the pressure.

After the game, Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour spoke with the media in Florida. Here's what they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On the game: I think Bus really just kept us in it. I didn't really love the game. We were able to capitalize and obviously should have won the game when you have a three-goal lead there. But at the end, two 6-on-5 goals, the details just weren't very good. We were kind of cheating for that next one instead of just doing it right and it cost us a point.

On Seth Jarvis' status: He got tripped and went right into the post. It's not good. He's gonna be out for a while.

On moving onto the game tomorrow: It's gonna be tough. You have a game like that where you obviously put a lot into it and now you have to turn around and go again. That's the league right now. It's part of being a pro. We have to find a way.

Hurricanes Star To be Out 'For A While' Following Violent Collision

By: Ryan Henkel

Leading scorer Seth Jarvis sidelined indefinitely after a brutal collision. The Hurricanes face a significant challenge without their offensive spark.

The Carolina Hurricanes are preparing to be without leading goal scorer and star forward Seth Jarvis for the foreseeable future after the 23-year-old left Friday night's game against the Florida Panthers due to injury.

As Jarvis was coming down the wing with speed in overtime, Panthers forward Evan Rodrigues tripped him, causing the Canes winger to slam hard into the Florida net.

He was down on the ice for a while after that and eventually got up under his own power but went straight to the locker room.

Jarvis would not return to the game and afterwards, Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour stated that the injury "wasn't good" and that Jarvis would be "out for a while."

No call was made on the trip.

Gino Hard

Gino Hard

@GinoHard_



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Seth Jarvis exits the game in OT after crashing hard into the net 🤕

No penalty was called on the play.

9:58 PM · Dec 19, 2025

1.0K

Reply

It's a massive blow for both the team, as Jarvis was the Canes' leading goal scorer (19), and for Jarvis himself as his career year had him on the verge of qualifying for the Canadian Olympic team.

The Hurricanes will just need to hold faith that the injury isn't as bad as it seems and that Jarvis can recover quickly, else it may be a tough stretch without him.

Brandon Bussi Has Potential Shutout Snubbed Due To Cheapshot

By: Ryan Henkel

A cheap shot derailed Brandon Bussi's shutout bid. Discover how Brad Marchand's controversial play cost the Hurricanes goalie a clean sheet.

Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Brandon Bussi was well on his way to his second career shutout and first against his former team, but it was snubbed as a result of a cheapshot.

Florida Panthers forward Brad Marchand scored to snap the shutout, with Bussi down and out of position.

But how did Bussi get there? Well seconds before his goal, Marchand whacked Bussi right in the groin causing him to fall to the ice.

Scummy cheapshot there

@WaltRuff

It is what it is, but it looks like Brad Marchand clearly gives Brandon Bussi a whack to where the sun doesn't shine just before the goal, causing him to fall out of position.

9:32 PM · Dec 19, 2025

It was a cheap and scummy play from a player who's well known for his on-ice antics.

For as talented as Marchand is, he's equally as good at toeing the line trying to find any way to give his team an edge.

Carolina could have probably challenged the play for goaltender interference, but with the way those things go, it probably seemed like a safer bet to try and keep a two-goal lead then perhaps hand Florida a power play.

However, the Canes would end up allowing two goals at 6v5 and eventually lose in the shootout, so this missed call/challenge looms large looking back.

Either way though, Marchand will more than likely have to pay a fine or face a suspension tomorrow for that cheapshot.

Jordan Martinook Out With Injury Against Panthers; Jesperi Kotkaniemi To Draw Back In

By: Ryan Henkel

Martinook sidelined by injury; Jesperi Kotkaniemi returns to the lineup, aiming to ignite the Hurricanes' offense against the Panthers.

The Carolina Hurricanes will be without one of their top defensive wingers tonight when they take on the Florida Panthers, as Jordan Martinook will not play due to injury.

The 33-year-old winger had played in every game for the Hurricanes this season so far, putting up four goals and 11 points, but he left the game early on Wednesday against the Nashville Predators due to a lower-body injury.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour labeled the forward as day-to-day.

Eric Robinson will get the bump up to Martinook's spot and center Jesperi Kotkaniemi will draw back in.

Kotkaniemi has missed the team's last five games after playing in only two since returning from an ankle injury.

When asked what he'd like to see from him tonight, Brind'Amour stated:

"I'd love to see that presence. He's a big body, so can he get in there, create some loose pucks, create havoc? Got a good shoot so can we utilize that a little more, He doesn't have to be super impactful, but I want to notice him around the body and see some things that he brings to the table.

Carolina Hurricanes @ Florida Panthers: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By: Ryan Henkel

Hot streaks collide as two top teams battle. Injury woes challenge both squads, but only one can extend their winning run tonight.

What - Game 34 (22-9-1)

When - 7 p.m., Friday, Dec. 19

Where - Amerant Bank Arena; Sunrise, FL



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

How to Watch - FanDuel Sports Network South, SCRIPPS, TVAS

The Carolina Hurricanes are one of the hottest teams in the league currently and winners of five straight, and they'll look to keep the streak going as they take on the Florida Panthers tonight.

The Hurricanes are coming off of a 4-1 win over the Nashville Predators on Wednesday to complete the season sweep, but the one question mark coming out of that game was the status of Jordan Martinook who left early due to injury.

His status is currently unknown.

The Panthers have been dealt one of the toughest hands in terms of injuries with multiple star players having been sidelined long-term.

Despite that, Florida is staying afloat in the playoff race and are winners of their last three as well, most recently beating the LA Kings 3-2 on Wednesday.

Streaks

Alexander Nikihisin (1g, 3a) has points in four-straight games.

Jackson Blake (1g, 2a) has points in back-to-back games.

Milestone Watch

Jordan Martinook is one goal away from 100 career goals.

Jesperri Kotkaniemi is one point shy of 200 career points.

Jacob Slavin is one point shy of 300 career points.

Game Notes

Carolina is 74-49-11-10 all-time against Florida, but lost in a five games last season in the Eastern Conference Final.

Former Hurricanes on the Panthers roster include Gustav Forsling (2019-20), Eetu Luostarinen (2019-20) as well as coaches Paul Maurice (1995-03; 2008-11) and Tuomo Ruutu (2008-2014) also share connections with Carolina.

Mike Reilly played in two games for Florida during the 2023-24 season and Shayne Gostisbehere was born 20 miles from Sunrise.

Key Matchups

Projected Starting Goalies

Sergei Bobrovsky: 14-8-1; 0.888 Sv%; 2.80 GAA

Brandon Bussi: 11-1-0; 0.911 Sv%; 2.05 GAA

Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (19) / Sam Reinhart (17)

Points - Sebastian Aho (29) / Brad Marchand (37)

Power Play

Carolina - 15.5% (28th)

Florida - 19.1% (16th)

Penalty Kill

Carolina - 80.4% (18th)

Florida - 82.7% (9th)

Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Andrei Svechnikov - Sebastian Aho - Seth Jarvis

Nikolaj Ehlers - Logan Stankoven - Jackson Blake

William Carrier - Jordan Staal - Jordan Martinook

Taylor Hall - Mark Jankowski - Eric Robinson

K'Andre Miller - Sean Walker

Shayne Gostisbehere - Jalen Chatfield

Jacob Slavin - Alexander Nikishin

Brandon Bussi

Frederik Andersen

Injuries and Scratches: Mike Reilly, Jesperi Kotkaniemi

Panthers Projected Lineup

Eetu Luostarinen - Anton Lundell - Sam Reinhart

Carter Verhaeghe - Sam Bennett - Brad Marchand

Mackie Samoskevich - Evan Rodrigues - A.J. Greer

Noah Gregor - Luke Kunin - Jesper Boqvist

Gustav Forsling - Aaron Ekblad

Niko Mikkola - Seth Jones

Uvis Balinskis - Jeff Petry

Sergei Bobrovsky

Daniil Tarasov

Injuries and Scratches: Aleksander Barkov (knee), Jonah Gadjovich (UBI), Dmitry Kulikov (UBI), Tomas Nosek (knee), Cole Schwindt (arm), Matthew Tkachuk (groin)

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

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SportScan

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

1372722 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'Don't know if I've felt like this': Nylander, Maple Leafs hit new low in confidence

Luke Fox

DALLAS — William Nylander could well be the most confident man in Toronto, most nights.

"I don't know if I've felt like this before. If I've had a stretch like this," Nylander said Sunday, following his team's third straight loss and fifth in its past six tries.

The superstar was wearing all his clothes and speaking so quietly that reporters were tempted to mush their recorders into his beard to catch his words.

"I'm not sure. I don't feel like I've had that in the NHL, at least."

Nylander began this season among the (very) early Art Ross contenders. When the red flags of a campaign in peril popped up in November, he laughed. He said everything was fine. Check back in a month. Dirt off the shoulder.

The punchline Buffalo Sabres are now three points up on the Leafs, following the latter's 5-1 loss to the Dallas Stars.

All the while, the smooth-skating Swede has not scored a goal in 11 games.

No, that's not his worst stretch; that would be his 13-game drought at the end of 2023-24, when the Leafs' playoff spot was already etched in stone.

But this is without question the most meaningful cold stretch for Nylander and his fellow Leafs stars, who have never sat dead last in their division this close to Christmas.

"He is getting his looks, and they're not going in. But sometimes you've got to get under the net and get greasy and score some dirty goals," coach Craig Berube suggested.

The thing is, the Maple Leafs played much better on Sunday, despite facing a tougher test, than they did on Saturday, and better on Saturday than on Thursday.

They defended hard around the blue paint. They outshot their opponent (28-21), which hasn't been the case often enough. And they generated 11 high-danger chances to the Stars' three, per NaturalStatTrick.com.

Still, it's not enough.

The Stars' Vezina candidate, Jake Oettinger, was dialed, and their game-breakers and penalty-killers did enough to land on the right side of it.

"We need to finish, right?" Berube said.

"We want bounces? We want luck? You've got to earn them, and you've got to keep earning them, you know. Like, it doesn't just happen."

Points-wise, nothing happened on a three-game road trip in which Toronto got outscored 14-4 and went 0-for-10 on a power-play that gives fans night terrors. This was the Maple Leafs' most demoralizing roadie since the P.A. Parenteau era.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Consider the stat lines of the big guns, who've all been affixed with silencers:

"We've been building positively the past two games. But when we haven't been playing well consistently for a while, we have to grind through it even more," Nylander said.

"If we were playing well consistently, maybe tonight would have gone our way. Maybe last night would have gone our way. But, I mean, we're just in that slump right now where you got to work yourself out of it."

A dangerous-looking Auston Matthews thought for sure he had Oettinger solved on an early breakaway generated by his clean strip of Thomas Harley. He said, "We deserved a better fate." Then the captain admitted how tough it's been to remain positive.

John Tavares spoke of fighting the sense that everything is going against them.

"It's a choice," Tavares said. "You can either let things like that seep in, or you push back against it and choose to be confident and believe in one another and stick together."

No trade, no firing can mend the mental wound here, which may stretch back to May for some, or stretch back nine years for others.

"Tough sledding right now," added veteran Scott Laughton.

"Yeah, it's hard. It weighs on guys. Guys care. That's the biggest thing. And if it didn't weigh on guys, then we have a bigger problem, right?"

They care. They tried hard this night.

Maybe that's even more concerning.

"Look. You just got to leave the rink now and forget about it," Nylander advised. "Everybody's frustrated. Can't bring it home. You need to let your mind relax and just focus on the next game, next shift."

Laughton, 31, has seen all kinds of ups and downs over his 13 seasons.

But considering the Maple Leafs were thinking Stanley Cup two months ago and have hit the basement?

"Yeah, it feels a little bit different," Laughton said. "But, I mean, I've lost 10 in a row and won 10 in a row in the same year and made the playoffs. So, you keep grinding, you keep working on it.

"You can string some together here and see what happens — but it's gonna have to happen soon."

Fox's Fast Five

- Rookie Easton Cowan got the healthy-scratch treatment as Max Domi, who sat Saturday, drew back onto the top line.

Berube noted that Cowan would be served well watching a game after looking "light" in some situations in Nashville.

Indeed, the 20-year-old was muscled off a couple of pucks. He also helped create much-needed offence, put up an assist, and was one of only six Leafs to finish as a plus.

The coach was banking on another bump from scratching Domi, who played his best hockey (five points in three games) in response to his first trip to the press box.

- If you show us a better alternate sweater than the Dallas Stars' '99s, we'll come to your house and cater the Christmas feast. These things are positively dreamy.

Even better? "Otter" Oettinger's custom '99 mask, a tribute to Eddie "The Eagle" Belfour:

- Jason Robertson leads all American NHLers this season with 23 goals. Make him an Olympian.

- As soon as the Stars finish killing a penalty, the Dallas game operations drop Eminem rapping, "Guess who's back!" (from "Without Me") as the penalized player hops out of the box and rejoins the action.

It is delightful.

- Quote of the Night.

Oettinger was tempted to go for the goalie goal late with the Maple Leafs' net empty, but chose an easy outlet pass instead.

"I obviously wanted to shoot it, but I felt like I was going to end up all over social media in a bad way if I tried it. I don't have it perfected yet. Thankfully, Esa (Lindell) made a nice play, and I ended up getting an assist," the goaltender said.

"It was a business decision."

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Sportsnet.ca / Connor Ingram seizes opportunity with Oilers to defeat Golden Knights

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — Imperial, Saskatchewan, is just another pimple on the prairie, as my Dad used to say. And he could say that — he was from Watrous, Sask., just a half-hour drive north.

"There are 390 people in our town," said Imperial native and Edmonton Oilers head coach Kris Knoblauch. "Then, of course, the surrounding area, with all the farmers."

According to Wikipedia, there are two "notable people" from Imperial: Knoblauch, and his goalie in Sunday's 4-3 win over the Vegas Golden Knights, Connor Ingram.

What were they doing back home Sunday night, the only two guys with "Welcome to Imperial, The Home Of..." signs, both on the same team in an NHL game?

"I'll bet they were in the rink watching it. Maybe the bar," said Ingram. "I'll have to text Dad and see what he's up to."

The crazy part is, Knoblauch and Ingram didn't really know each other very well back home — there's a 19-year age gap between the two. But in a town that small, the two families intertwined.

"His Mom and Dad worked for the school," Knoblauch said. "Mr. Ingram was our seventh grade homeroom teacher. He was my football coach, track and field coach, volleyball coach, you name it. Yes, I know the family very well."

"Mrs. Knoblauch, Holly, she was our receptionist at my school my whole life," Ingram told me back in November. "Bob (Kris' Dad), he ran the rink when I was really little, and then he refereed basically every minor hockey game I ever played."

It's crazy, isn't it, how fate would lead these two to the same team, at the same time, with Ingram resurrecting a National Hockey League career after spending time in the NHL/NHLPA program due to OCD — Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, a mental health condition characterized by uncontrollable, recurring thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviours (compulsions).



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

But Knoblauch lost his No. 1 goalie, Tristan Jarry, to injury — “He’s going to be out a couple of weeks. We won’t see him until the New Year at some point,” he said before the game — and he needed a “tender from the farm.

Enter Ingram, who had been searching for his game in Bakersfield after missing camp, and who hadn’t played an NHL game since last February with Utah.

“There was a lot of days I didn’t think it would ever happen again,” Ingram said after his first NHL win in 10 months. “It’s just the truth of it in this world. There are 64 spots in the world to do this, so you don’t take it for granted. Any day that you’re up here, it’s a huge honour.”

Had Ingram been forced to wait for his American League numbers to force a call-up, he might have been down in Bako for a while. He had a goals-against average of 4.04 and a save percentage of .856 for the AHL Condors — not the kind of numbers that had GM Stan Bowman reaching for the phone.

But then Jarry got hurt, and Ingram — for one day at least — seized the opportunity. He didn’t look anything like an .856 goalie, stopping 26 shots as the Oilers clung to its lead after jumping ahead 4-0.

“I think it’s easier (playing in the NHL) — what you think should happen does happen,” Ingram said of the two leagues. “I rely heavily on reading the game. I’ve never been a guy who was fast enough or quick enough to react, so I had to be one step ahead. In this league it’s just easier to do that.

“Where you think the puck is going to go, 90 per cent of the time it does. But it’s also a huge step. It’s a lot faster than what I’ve been used to for the last couple of months.”

A game that saw Trent Frederic healthy-scratched after producing just three points in 36 games likely felt like just another game tacked on to the end of a road trip for Edmonton, which had closed out a five-game roadie just the day before in Minnesota. To come home and beat a division rival in regulation is massive, as Edmonton moves to within two points of first-place Anaheim, sitting tied with Vegas at 42 points.

“They should have been much more fatigued than we were,” admitted Vegas head coach Bruce Cassidy, whose team had lost the night before in Calgary. “It was their sixth game in nine days in six different cities.”

Connor McDavid was once again unstoppable, stretching his points streak to 10 games. He has 24 points in that span, and blazed around the Vegas defence to open the scoring Sunday before adding two helpers on an Oilers power play that went 2-for-3. It’s the top PP unit in the NHL these days, clicking along at 33.3 per cent.

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Sportsnet.ca / With franchise record in hand, Sidney Crosby has given everything to Penguins

Eric Engels

Sidney Crosby is the only player in NHL history to have recorded at least a point per game in 20 consecutive seasons. He’s the only one to have notched at least 30 goals as both an 18-year-old and over-35-year-old. He’s the only current player in the league with over 200 playoff points. And he is now the eighth-leading scorer of all time and highest-scoring Pittsburgh Penguin ever.

It took Crosby 1,384 games to get to 1,722 points and put himself one back of Mario Lemieux for the franchise record, and it took him only four minutes and 42 seconds to pass Lemieux after tying him in his 1,387th game.

And while it was momentous and glorious all at once, watching Crosby do it to help the Penguins barely squeak by the Montreal Canadiens 4-3 in a shootout to avoid their ninth consecutive loss made you feel like there’s nothing left for him to do in their uniform other than watch the world he helped build continue to crumble to pieces.

Oh sure, Lemieux remains the franchise leader in goals, and Crosby remains destined to score 46 more to pass him if he just rides out the remainder of his two-year contract.

But what’s one more personal accomplishment mean to a player who’s always been about the team?

It was three years after saving the franchise with Lemieux on his wing that Crosby brought the Penguins back to prominence with their first Stanley Cup Final appearance in 16 years. The first-overall pick in 2005 then lifted his first of three Cups a year later, in 2009.

Time went on, and the accolades kept piling up. There were the three Ted Lindsay Awards as the players’ MVP, the two Art Ross Trophies, the two Hart Trophies, the two Rocket Richard Trophies, the Mark Messier Leadership Award, the four first-team all-star nominations, the four second-team all-star nominations, and the back-to-back Conn Smythes for the two runs that netted the Penguins the Cup in 2016 and 2017.

Crosby’s greatness continued for years, while that of the Penguins began to erode in 2022. He has since put up seasons of 93, 94 and 91 points, respectively, but they haven’t given him a chance to continue his playoff legacy.

It’s all Crosby is still playing for at this point, and he’s almost singlehandedly keeping the hope alive that the Penguins seem destined to extinguish.

“I think that’s the motivation every time is to continue to win and try to make the playoffs,” he said before the Penguins were shutout by the Canadiens for an eighth straight loss Saturday. “It’s not easy, and that’s a given, but that’s the best time to be a hockey player, and I think that’s what you’re always working towards. I think early on there were probably lower expectations, but we had a great start and maybe surprised some people that way. But it’s so close. You see the standings, you see the teams; every point, every night matters. That’s what you love about playing this game is every night you’ve got to be on, but it’s part of the challenge.”

He has risen to it.

Crosby’s 20th goal of the season, which came in the eighth minute of play Sunday, got the Penguins on the board and tied him with Lemieux. His 17th assist, which came in the 13th minute of play, gave them a lead and him the franchise record. Much like his hot start propelled the Penguins to an 8-2-2 record through October, his contribution to Sunday’s win pushed them to within two points of the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

But it feels like a foregone conclusion he will keep going and they won’t, and the only thing he’ll still be chasing if he stays is a higher spot on the all-time points list and Lemieux’s goal record.

Crosby has already given the Penguins everything, and remarkably, ahead of his 39th birthday, he still has a chance to give them what they need more than anything while finally giving something to himself.

It’ll be up to Crosby to ask for a trade to continue pursuing the only thing that’s ever mattered to him — winning — and if he does it, he’ll give the Penguins a better chance of finding the next one than if he rode out the rest of his career with them.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

No one thought there'd ever be another player like Lemieux in Pittsburgh.

If you had told a young Martin St. Louis that someone would come along and break his idol's Penguins scoring record, he'd have said, "He's going to need to play a lot of games."

That's what the Canadiens' coach — who grew up just a couple kilometres away from where Lemieux was decimating scoring records in the then-named Quebec Major Junior Hockey League before becoming the greatest player he'd ever seen — said when he was asked about it on Saturday.

"What Sid has done is remarkable," St. Louis added.

He didn't need to say that what he's doing right now is otherworldly.

Crosby is on pace to score 47 goals and 87 points, while the Penguins are on pace to finish on the bubble of the post-season.

It would leave them much further away from where they need to be to find the next Crosby.

They won the draft lottery to bring The Kid from Cole Harbour, N.S., to Pittsburgh, and he became the most successful man in franchise history long before this night. His departure could help them win another, on top of netting them some of the assets that could accelerate their resurgence.

But Sunday night is about Crosby's history with the Penguins.

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Sportsnet.ca / Sunday Overreactions: Jets need to make big splash to save playoff hopes

Michael Amato

It's starting to get late early in Winnipeg.

Connor Hellebuyck's return has not provided the desired results for the Jets, who were floundering without their superstar goaltender and had lost nine of 11 games before his return. Hellebuyck has been solid since returning to the crease, but Winnipeg only has one win in four tries since getting him back. The club is now five points out of a wild-card spot with a bunch of teams in front of it and a galaxy away (17 points) from the Minnesota Wild for third in the Central.

Getting one of the top three spots in their division seems like a longshot at best at this point, but if last year's Presidents' Trophy winners don't want to miss out on the post-season, they need to get pointed in the right direction very quickly.

Jets need to make a trade to save their season

If there's an area where the Jets really need a boost, it's secondary scoring. The top line of Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Gabriel Vilardi all have more than 15 goals and 30 points, with Scheifele and Connor having 40-plus points. After that, though, things really fall off a cliff. Nobody else on the team has more than six goals and Cole Perfetti, Adam Lowry and Jonathan Toews have combined for just six total between the three of them. Not to mention that off-season acquisition Gus Nyquist, who had 34 goals over the past two seasons and 75 points in 2023-24, hasn't scored in 25 games this year.

It's clear the Jets really miss Nik Ehlers and haven't been able to replace the offence he provided. They now sit 20th in goals per game after

finishing as a top-five team a year ago. Things are getting to a critical point where if Winnipeg doesn't do something soon, it's hard to imagine them making up enough ground to get into the playoffs.

Overreaction? No

We've already seen the Wild bring in Quinn Hughes and you know the Dallas Stars are going to use the additional cap space they are getting because of Tyler Seguin's injury to add as well. Winnipeg is in arguably the toughest division in all of hockey and the West is not like the East where no one is pulling away from the pack. If you aren't keeping pace, you're digging yourself a hole that may be too deep to get out of.

There are also a handful of new teams making a push for the playoffs that haven't been relevant in a few years. The San Jose Sharks, who we'll talk about later, are much further ahead than anyone thought they'd be this season thanks to Macklin Celebrini. Chicago was also on a surge before Bedard got hurt and the Blackhawks are still right next to the Jets in the standings. Plus, there's Utah, who are no longer in a rebuild and committed to making the post-season. All this is to say there will be more competition for the two wild-card spots this time around.

If I'm the Jets and want to save this season, I'm perusing the trade market right now to see what impactful pieces are available before it's too late.

The New York Rangers are in a tricky situation with Artemi Panarin, who is a UFA at season's end and will likely want a raise from the \$11.6 million he's making now. The cap is going up and Panarin is still a really good player, but the Rangers will have to decide how much money they are willing to commit to someone who will turn 35 early next season. In an ideal world, New York is probably hoping Panarin would consider a discount and a shorter-term deal, though he'll likely want to try and cash in one final time with a big contract. At this point, Panarin could also be the class of free agency and have leverage if he hits the open market. If the two sides are still far apart on terms by the time the trade deadline arrives, the Rangers may have no choice but to consider moving him.

Overreaction? No

While still a productive player, Panarin has regressed over the past few seasons. He scored a career-best 120 points in 2023-24 after a bunch of 90-plus point campaigns, then dropped to 89 last year and is now pacing for right around a point-per-game. Given Panarin's age, it does seem risky to give him something in the \$12 million-\$13 million range on an extension, even with a rising cap. Other key forwards like Mika Zibanejad, J.T. Miller and Vincent Trocheck are also well north of 30, so a lucrative Panarin extension would give them a bunch of aging forwards that are owed a lot of money. The Rangers missed the playoffs last year and are again on the outside looking in this season, which might make it wise to consider re-tooling some parts of the roster to get younger. A Panarin trade could really help facilitate that if he is insistent on a significant raise.

San Jose will make the playoffs

Don't look now, but it's almost New Year's Eve and the Sharks are sitting in a playoff position. This is the same team that lost its first six games of the season and its final 11 games of last season. That's how fast a generational talent like Macklin Celebrini, who's sitting top five in league scoring, can change the fortunes of a franchise. That, plus the emergence of players like Will Smith and Yaroslav Askarov in goal, has San Jose fast forwarding its rebuild and dreaming of the post-season as early as this spring.

Overreaction? Yes

As exciting as the Sharks are to watch, I'm not sure they can maintain this point pace over 82 games. They still aren't as stout as they need to be on the defensive end, allowing the most shots per game in the league and the seventh most high-danger chances. You can't expect Askarov to



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

continue standing on his head for the next four months. San Jose also doesn't have a ton of depth up and down its lineup and it is currently leaning on a lot of young, inexperienced players. It's hard to imagine a team with Dmitry Orlov and John Klingberg on its first pair being able to continue at a point pace that's good enough to get into the playoffs.

There are also teams like the aforementioned Jets and the Utah Mammoth on the outside looking in who figure to make a push at some point. Utah looks like a very balanced squad and is the only team not in a top-three division spot in the West with a positive goal differential. The Mammoth are going to get Logan Cooley back eventually and make a real push for the post-season.

It's not impossible for the Sharks to sneak in, but looking at some of their underlying numbers, I have a hard time seeing them finishing as one of the top eight teams in the West.

There isn't much wiggle room for forward spots on the U.S. roster for the Olympics, but Alex DeBrincat is doing his best to make it as difficult as possible for Bill Guerin and company. DeBrincat has six goals in his past six games and is now on pace for almost 90 points this season, which would easily smash his career high. He's also been a key part of a Detroit Red Wings team that is currently sitting first on the Atlantic and looking poised to end a lengthy playoff drought. DeBrincat is a great finisher and could help the Americans on the power play and at even strength find the back of the net, so he definitely should be worthy of consideration for the Olympic squad.

Overreaction? No

DeBrincat is having a phenomenal campaign and has done an excellent job of working his way into the conversation when not many had him in the mix when the season started. When I wrote that I thought Jason Robertson should be included on the U.S. squad team a few weeks back, these were the 14 American forwards I had:

Auston Matthews

Jack Hughes

Jack Eichel

Matt Boldy

Matthew Tkachuk

Brady Tkachuk

Dylan Larkin

Clayton Keller

Tage Thompson

Jake Guentzel

Kyle Connor

J.T. Miller

Cole Caufield

Jason Robertson

I didn't initially have DeBrincat in there but now I think I'd slot him ahead of Clayton Keller. He's simply been a little better and more dynamic than the Utah forward this season. Brock Nelson, Vincent Trocheck and Chris Kreider come off the 4 Nations squad for me and with the extra forward they can bring to the Olympics, Robertson, Caufield, Thompson and DeBrincat should jump in. DeBrincat also gives them another right shot forward in a left-heavy lineup.

Wild will finish with the most shutouts in modern era

Most of the attention around the Minnesota Wild this season has been related to the massive Kirill Kaprizov extension and Quinn Hughes

blockbuster trade, which has overshadowed how solid their goaltending has been. Minnesota ranks first in the NHL in save percentage and leads the league in shutouts with seven, which puts them on pace for 16 on the year. That would be the most since 1928-29 and tied for the second most of all time.

The Wild have two goaltenders contributing to the cause, with Filip Gustavsson tallying three and Jesper Wallstedt notching four. That gives them a pair of quality of options that can potentially steal a game on any given night. Plus, the Hughes trade should give the goaltenders a big boost, too. The former Canuck is tremendous at breaking the puck out of the zone and should help keep the play at the other end of the ice more regularly.

Getting a shutout isn't easy, but it does seem like the Wild in a great spot to finish with a significant total.

Overreaction? Yes

Getting to 16 shutouts is going to be much easier said than done. Only one of the best single season shutout totals by a team has come after 1977, with the St. Louis Blues getting 15 in 2011-12. The game is faster than ever now and some rosters are more watered down because of the salary cap, making it hard to keep the puck out of your net. It's also likely that Wallstedt regresses a bit at some point. He's been phenomenal but is also inexperienced, with only 18 career games to his name. Wallstedt's .936 save percentage will start to come down sooner rather than later.

Let's also keep in mind the Wild are in the best division in hockey, with the Stars and Colorado Avalanche. There are still a handful of games against those teams to come, along with Pacific powers like Edmonton and Vegas, who can all fill the scoresheet. I think the Wild will easily clear double-digit shutouts but will ultimately fall short of setting a modern era record.

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1372726 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Ohgren among new faces helping Canucks thrive post-Hughes

Iain MacIntyre

BOSTON – Like Babe Ruth raising his bat towards the outfield bleachers, Vancouver Canuck Brock Boeser pointed Saturday night in Boston to call the winning shot. For teammate Liam Ohgren.

"Boes kept looking at me and pointing at Liam," Canucks coach Adam Foote said, explaining his surprising shooter selection in the seventh round of a marathon tie-breaker against the Boston Bruins. "At that point, it was going to be Liam or Marco (Rossi). But Boes is pointing at Liam, so I'm looking at (assistant coach) Brett McLean, and he says: 'Well, Liam's been hot.'"

Yes, he has.

The 21-year-old National Hockey League rookie, who did not have a point in 18 games for the Minnesota Wild before his inclusion in the Quinn Hughes trade, beat Boston goalie Jeremy Swayman with a delayed deke to finally end the shootout and give the Canucks a 5-4 win.

Vancouver is 4-0 since last Friday's gigantic trade, and, besides his shootout winner

— on his first attempt as an NHL player — Ohgren has two goals and an assist during the four wins.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

"I am always thinking shot, I think, at first," Ohgren said of a shootout attempt in which he smartly disguised his deke before dragging the puck past Swayman. "And then if I don't see anything, I'll go either way. It was my first penalty shot here in the NHL, so nice to get that going."

"I wanted to make a good first impression. It feels like I've done that, and I've just got to keep working and, yeah, keep building on this."

Ohgren's impression Saturday included a third-period deflection goal from Marcus Pettersson's point shot as the Canucks executed a faceoff play, and a first-period setup of Max Saxon that allowed Vancouver to escape the opening 20 minutes tied 1-1 despite being outshot 13-4.

Another Swedish rookie, Linus Karlsson, started that play by knocking Boston defenceman Hampus Lindholm off the puck, then scored himself in the second and third periods on nice plays from Evander Kane and Rossi, another of the Wild boys.

And after Boston defenceman Andrew Peeke's point shot hit the post and bounced in off Kevin Lankinen to tie it 4-4 with 3:44 remaining in the third period, Vancouver's goalie stopped six shots in overtime and then stared down all seven Bruins in the shootout. In his career, Lankinen has been beaten only six times on 51 breakaways in the NHL's tie-breaker.

If you need a thumbnail summary of how much the landscape has suddenly shifted for the Canucks since the Hughes' blockbuster, consider Saturday night's win came on two goals from Karlsson, one each from Saxon and Ohgren, another from Ohgren in the shootout, and a 42-save (plus) night from Lankinen, the backup goalie who had lost six starts in five weeks since last winning on Nov. 16.

"Just sticking with it," Lankinen said of the four-game win streak, which in this one road trip has generated as many points as Vancouver amassed the previous month. "We don't really have any magic tricks. I wish I could reveal one, but we don't. I think the past few games we've been playing really well. Tonight was a battle, but sometimes that's what it takes to win games in this league."

The magic, of course, is the mix of players energized by the Minnesota Three, as well as the clarity the massive trade brought regarding the Canucks' future.

"They're coming in with good confidence, with good swagger, and that's what we like to see," Lankinen said of Ohgren, Rossi and defenceman Zeev Buium, who had the Canucks' best scoring chance in OT. "They're all great guys, and we have a great group of guys in this locker room, and I'm happy we've been able to stack a few wins here and hopefully keep the momentum going."

"They bring the energy when you're playing back to back," Foote said of the youth movement. "You know, our veterans early in the game weren't quite there, but I understand that because there's been a lot going on lately and they've been carrying a load for a long time. It's nice to see that, when maybe they weren't at their best in the first period. . . some of these young guys were pushing the pace for us, and that's being a team."

Saxon was just rewarded with a two-year, one-way contract extension by Vancouver. Management better find one also for Karlsson, another late-blooming graduate of the Canucks' championship minor-league team, who has seven goals in 32 games while averaging a little over 10 minutes of nightly ice time.

"It's nice, it's fun," Karlsson said. "I think I've played pretty good lately, too, even if I haven't scored. So it's nice to see the puck go in, for sure."

"We have a lot of energy and I think that's helped us a lot. I think everyone is contributing in a way that's helping the team. That's huge for us right now. We've got some new, fresh guys in here that have been really good for us. And, I mean, they have helped the group a lot. We've come together."

"They're really good, all the young guys," veteran Conor Garland said. "They've probably been our best players on this trip. They're pushing the pace and playing well on both sides of the puck, scoring big goals. I'm really happy they're a big part of the team. Winning is enjoyable."

Four points out of a playoff spot as they left Boston post-game, the Canucks have a chance to sweep their five-game, pre-Christmas road trip Monday in Philadelphia against Rick Tocchet's Flyers.

ICE CHIPS – Energy winger Nils Hoglander was a healthy scratch Saturday, five pointless games into his return from pre-season ankle surgery. With the Canucks halfway through three games in four nights, Foote said he wanted to manage Hoglander's workload after being off so long due to injury. . . In his return to the lineup after sitting out three games, centre Aatu Raty was noticeable with eight hits and a 9-3 faceoff record. . . Top centre Elias Pettersson missed his seventh straight game with an undisclosed injury that has been considered day-to-day since the trip began last Sunday.

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1372727 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' youth steals historic night away from Crosby, Penguins

Eric Engels

MONTREAL— It was supposed to be Sid the Kid's night, but it belonged to the kids on the Montreal Canadiens instead.

The one most responsible for keeping Sidney Crosby from recording his 1,723rd point to tie Mario Lemieux for eighth on the all-time scoring list, and move him to within one point of becoming the highest-scoring Pittsburgh Penguin ever, was Jacob Fowler.

This was the 21-year-old's fourth NHL game, his second win, his first shutout, and he earned first-star honours with every save he made.

"I think I just view it as being in the zone," Fowler said.

From the first stop he made — on a 25-foot snapper from Kevin Hayes in the sixth minute of play — to the last kick of his pad on a Thomas Novak wraparound chance in the final minute of the third period, he appeared impenetrable.

In front of Fowler, the 62nd overall pick in the 2022 Draft, Lane Hutson, became the fastest Canadiens defenceman and the 11th-fastest defenceman in NHL history to reach 100 points, when he started the play No. 62, Owen Beck, finished for his first NHL goal.

This was Hutson's 119th game in the league, and Beck's 21st. Just like Fowler, the two of them are just 21 years old. And all three of them are helping the Canadiens vault their way towards the place youth and premium talent propelled the Penguins to for so long.

It is the place the Penguins fell out of three years ago. And now, older, stripped bare of so much of the skill that saw them contend for—and win—multiple Stanley Cups, they're plummeting as far away from it as they can get.

After a shockingly good, 8-2-2 October, they've spent the last two months losing. It started in November and got worse after Evgeni Malkin was hurt in a 4-3 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Dec. 4.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

The Penguins haven't won a game since, with Saturday's 4-0 loss making it eight in a row, and it seems inevitable many more losses are coming for them—whether they happen in succession or not.

This was Montreal's second win over the Penguins in the last 10 days, and the lopsided nature of it emphasized to what end these two teams are headed in different directions.

Roughly 23 hours before it was celebrated in the Canadiens' room, something else drove home the stark contrast between them: Phillip Danault was acquired from the Los Angeles Kings by general manager Kent Hughes.

Until the next one, which could come soon, with the Canadiens now 19-12-4 on their season, owning the best points percentage in the Atlantic Division (.603), and possessing so many upstart players making an impact.

Look at Fowler.

"He's a kid that you feel that he's got a lot of confidence," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis. "I think he believes in himself, and it's not arrogance. There's a big difference. It's a confident kid. He plays very mature. And all these games he's getting right now, you can't buy that experience. Playing on a Saturday night at home, you can't buy that, you've got to live through it, and he did that tonight. He did a heck of a job, and he seems like he's been ready for this for a long time."

It was a slower burn for Beck, who was taken 29 spots before Hutson in 2022.

But on a night where veteran Jake Evans went down less than four minutes into the game and Beck was forced into more ice-time than he would've otherwise received, the kid played his best.

On top of shelving his first goal, Beck won four of his eight faceoffs, notched two shots on net, had three hits and rode the momentum he had built over his last three games with the team.

"I feel he's understanding the NHL game more, the risk that you need to manage, the tough areas," said St. Louis. "There's a progress in everything for him. Every time you come up, there should be some progress. That's what I see, and he's giving us good minutes."

Hutson played over 23 mostly great ones in this game and continued his meteoric rise towards NHL superstardom, over which he's continuously made league history.

Crosby has made so much of it over his 1386 games. To see the Kid come to Montreal Saturday with a chance to tie Le Magnifique was still unbelievable, even if you had a sense for how great he'd be well before he played his first game against the Canadiens in November of 2005.

St. Louis grew up in Laval, where he watched Lemieux torch the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League before joining the Penguins and setting the NHL ablaze. He said on Saturday morning that he considers him to be the greatest player ever, with all his points recorded in just 915 games a testament to the fact.

As for Crosby?

"I think Sid is top five for sure," the coach said. "Top five all-time. I don't know exactly where, but I feel I pay my respect if I put Sid in my top five."

Crosby, in all his humility, isn't prepared to consider his place in NHL history.

All he wanted on Saturday was a win.

"I don't think about it a lot," Crosby said of the record he was on the precipice of breaking. "It's something that obviously I'm asked about as I'm getting close. You're just hoping that you can win the game and get it done. There'll be lots of time to reflect on it one day, but at this point it's not really the motive."

The motive has always been the same for Crosby, though it's becoming more and more elusive for him with these Penguins.

Maybe Crosby's night will come Sunday, when the Penguins welcome the Canadiens to PPG Paints Arena for the final instalment of this season series.

But Saturday belonged to the kids in bleu, blanc, et rouge, to Fowler, Hutson and Beck.

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1372728 Websites

TSN.CA / McKenna stresses positives after frustrating own goal in Canada's loss

Mark Masters

Team Canada held an off-ice workout and autograph session at the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls, Ont. on Sunday.

As Gavin McKenna stepped off the ice following the pre-game warm-up on Saturday night, fans in London, Ont. serenaded him with the 'Happy Birthday' song.

"It's pretty funny," Team Canada's top-line left winger said while gazing up at the crowd.

Asked about the best hockey-related gift he received growing up, McKenna recalled getting a Patrick Kane sweater.

"I was a Patty Kane fan, so that was pretty cool," the Whitehorse native said. "He plays with swagger. He's smooth, and he's a winner."

McKenna hoped to celebrate his 18th birthday by helping Team Canada pick up a win in the same building where Kane once played for the London Knights. But the Swedes spoiled the party by beating Canada 4-2 in a tune-up game for the World Juniors.

And the usually sure-handed McKenna, who models his game on Kane, was the victim of a brutal bounce.

Late in the first period, Swedish forward Victor Eklund high sticked defenceman Carson Carels behind Canada's net leading to a delayed penalty call. Goalie Jack Ivankovic raced to the bench and McKenna jumped on as the extra attacker. The Penn State freshman received a pass on his backhand in his own end, but bobbled the puck, which flew into Canada's net.

"Puck rolled up on my stick," he said. "Obviously frustrating."

The gaffe gave Sweden a 1-0 lead.

McKenna did his best to reset.

"It's tough especially on such a big stage, but it's the game of hockey and stuff happens," he said. "I honestly felt that after that I picked it up. I thought our second period was better. It's tough. Just gotta learn from it."

"It's tough," agreed Team Canada head coach Dale Hunter. "It's exhibition so you just gotta let it go. That's a hockey play and sometimes it happens. You don't see it very often, but it's a hockey play."

McKenna's neutral-zone turnover late in the third period allowed Sweden's Jack Berglund to score an empty-net goal to seal the win.

"A couple bad bounces for me," Canada's youngest forward said. "I just gotta be better."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

Teammates rallied around McKenna, who produced two primary assists in a 2-1 win over Sweden in Wednesday's pre-tournament opener in Kitchener, Ont.

"We all forgot about it," Team Canada forward Brady Martin said of the own goal. "It doesn't matter. It happens to everyone, so you just forget about it and you pump him up and keep him going."

"I told him in the room, 'Flush it, it's pre-tournament,'" said centre Michael Misa. "He's going to do much bigger things in the future and in this tournament in general. So, he knows and everyone knows how good he is, and I have no doubt he's going to prove everyone wrong in that tournament."

McKenna's start in the NCAA this season – four goals and 14 assists in 16 games – has sparked questions about his status as the projected first overall pick in the 2026 NHL draft. On the first day of Canada's camp, McKenna noted the "chatter" around his season is serving as motivation heading into the World Juniors.

Between the bad bounces, there was a lot to like for McKenna and Canada's top line, which also features Misa and Philadelphia Flyers prospect Porter Martone.

"We played fast," McKenna said. "I liked the way we were pushing the pace. I thought Misa was flying. Second and third period, I thought our line was great. We were making plays. We could've had three or four goals, but as the tournament comes we got to find a way to bury those. With the line we got, I think that will be possible."

The trio only had one practice together before getting their first taste of game action.

"Second period on we were phenomenal," said Martone, who is a freshman at Michigan State. "We had a lot of chances. We read off each other really good. The puck just didn't go in the net and that's going to come. I'm happy with the way it went and I think there's more to it definitely. A couple more practices, a couple more games, we'll have lots of chemistry and really feed off each other."

Canada will hold a practice on Monday in Niagara Falls, Ont. before flying to Minnesota where they will play a final pre-tournament game on Tuesday against Denmark.

Canada opens the World Juniors against Czechia on Boxing Day.

Saturday marked Misa's first game since being loaned to Hockey Canada by the San Jose Sharks.

"Misa was good," said Hunter. "He started off slow a bit. He hasn't played a lot of hockey so I did short shifts with him because of that. But they clicked around, moved the puck around."

Penalties contributed to Misa's slow start. He took a slashing penalty on his first shift and was also whistled for embellishment later in the first period.

"As the game went on, I felt better," said Misa. "Obviously, I haven't played in three weeks, but yeah, as the game got on I felt better. I thought our line was pretty good for the most part."

Misa had not played since suiting up in a pair of games with the San Jose Barracuda on Dec. 5-6 as part of an American Hockey League conditioning stint. He missed a month of action after sustaining a right ankle injury in a morning skate on Nov. 5.

"Just got to get my legs going," he said. "Got to get back to that pace that I was playing in the NHL. And, yeah, it'll come. I'm not worried, but we've got some work to do."

Misa has produced one goal and two assists in seven games with the Sharks this season.

Canada carried a 2-1 lead into the third period.

"It's a skill to close out games," said Martone. "We got to really figure out how to do that if we want to have a shot at a gold medal. It's a learning lesson for us and we'll improve from it."

Misa, who produced 134 points in 65 games with the Saginaw Spirit last season en route to being named the Ontario Hockey League's most outstanding player, described the defeat as a "wake-up call."

"We played a pretty solid game," he said. "We got to obviously clean some stuff up in practice but, yeah, so much belief in that room that we're going to still find a way to win gold."

"Sweden's a good team," said Kitchener Rangers defenceman Cameron Reid, who is a Nashville Predators prospect. "We can't underestimate anyone. I mean, we have to be at the top of our game every single minute. Mistakes are going to happen, but it's about how many you can limit."

Sweden tied the game with a shorthanded goal in the first minute of the third period. A puck bounced over the stick of Calgary Flames defenceman Zayne Parekh, which allowed Berglund to score on a nice breakaway snipe.

"It was a bit of a weird game," said University of North Dakota forward Cole Reschny, who is also a Flames prospect. "A few unlucky bounces. Overall, we had some chances, a little too lackadaisical at times in our end, but it's pre-tournament."

The team is drawing confidence from how they played starting in the second period. Canada scored twice in the middle frame while outshooting Sweden 10-2.

"We just were a fast team," said Martin. "We just ran them down. We quick-upped the puck and then we'd put it in behind them and we just kept working them. We just ran them down and just kept going."

Sweden didn't land a shot on goal until there was 6:45 left on the clock in the second.

"We found our game," McKenna said. "When we were working on the forecheck and stuff like that, every line was rolling, four lines, and they couldn't handle it. You saw in the second period, even in the third period I think we outplayed them, and we just have to stick to that."

After failing to convert on two chances on Wednesday, Canada's power play wasted five power-play opportunities on Saturday.

"When you have all this skill sometimes you have a tendency to want to make the extra play," said assistant coach Brad Lauer, who is overseeing the units. "It's just about simplifying, being more direct with our game, being more predictable with the plays we want to do, and obviously getting pucks to the net a lot more rather than trying to pass it in the net."

Being predictable is easier said than done with the super-skilled and creative Parekh at the point of the top unit.

"You got to let them be creative," Lauer acknowledged. "Zayne at the top, he's got so much ability, he sees the ice so well. You got to give him a little bit of opportunity to make some plays, but I think, early on, we've got to be very predictable with what we want to do and then their skill will take over."

Lauer confirmed he plans on making some changes to the units at Monday's practice.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 22, 2025

"We just got to keep working on it," said McKenna. "With the guys we got, I'm not too worried."

"Just need to be a little more crisp," said Reschny, who plays in the bumper spot on the top unit. "Ice wasn't great last night, a little bouncy, but just need to be a little more crisp and moving the puck fast. We'll get it figured out."

Canada only scored four goals in the first two pre-tournament games. If the power play comes to life, it will take some of the pressure off the team at 5-on-5.

"Just have to try to be more connected," said Michigan Wolverines centre Michael Hage, who operated on the flank of the second unit. "It wasn't great last night."

Generating offence is not a problem for Martin so far. The Soo Greyhounds forward is leading the team with two goals and three points in pre-tournament play. The 18-year-old is all over the ice whether it's throwing hits or making plays on offence. It's like a hockey sugar high. Perhaps it has something to do with his pre-game snack.

"Usually grab a small double double [coffee] and two chocolate-glazed donuts," he revealed with a smile. "Probably been a couple years now, ever since I could drive."

Sometimes he'll go with an iced cappuccino, but the donuts are always the same.

"I'm a big chocolate guy," he said.

Superstition?

"Zero superstition," he said. "I'm just a Canadian kid who loves Tim Hortons."

Hockey Canada's strength and conditioning coach Sean Young just shakes his head.

"Nutritionally, I do not approve of this message," he said with a grin. "You want to make sure you do get carbohydrates, so there are some carbohydrates in there. It's just the source of the carbohydrates, I might have a few other suggestions for the young players out there growing up."

Young would prefer Martin munch on a banana, but isn't about to mess with a winning recipe.

"I don't want to change a thing," he said. "The guy's playing great."

Martin's outgoing personality on and off the ice makes him a compelling character for Team Canada.

"He's definitely different than anyone I've ever played with," said Hage, who has played on a line with Martin in both games so far. "I mean, whatever works for him, I guess. It's pretty funny to be around and just watch his antics. But, I mean, it works for him, so just got to keep doing what he's doing."

Martin enjoys stirring the pot, including engaging verbally with the opposition.

"I love it," he said. "I love chirping guys and getting under their skin. It's a big part of my game, so I'm gonna keep doing that."

What's his best chirp so far this season?

"Ah, can't say it on here, but, like, it's been pretty good. So, like, don't worry about it, but it was good."

Teammates standing nearby start laughing.

Martin did reveal that he called a Swedish player "fat" on Saturday.

"He keeps it light," said Kelowna Rockets forward Tij Iginla. "He's always joking around, but you know he's gonna be ready to go come puck drop."

What makes Martin such a great agitator?

"It might be that haircut he has," said Reschny with a grin. "Yeah, I don't know, but whatever he's doing it's working."

In the lead up to the World Juniors, Hockey Canada posted Q&A's with the players on social media. Among the questions asked, how do you deal with adversity on the ice?

Martin responded, "I don't know, probably hit somebody."

On Sunday, he expanded on that thought.

"If I get angry, I'll go run someone over," Martin said, "and then grab the puck and go put it in the net."

"Just the way he plays with his intensity, how hard he plays on pucks, he's a difference maker," said Reschny. "That's what we need."

Iginla slotted in beside Martin and Hage on Canada's second unit on Saturday. It's a loud line.

"Hager likes to chirp a lot," Iginla noted. "He's got a big mouth on him. He's just like nonstop talking the whole game. Like whenever a guy skates by him."

The line did some talking on the scoreboard as well with Iginla scoring the opening goal. Hage, who is a Montreal Canadiens prospect, picked up the primary assist.

"I really liked it," Iginla said of the feel. "I think those are two really good players. They're fast, smart, and play hard. I think we can kind of work the puck low in the O-zone and get the cycle going. I felt like it was effective."

Iginla did not score in his final three Western Hockey League games before leaving for Canada's camp so it was his first goal since Nov. 28.

"Always feels good to score," the first draft pick in Utah Mammoth history said. "Tournaments like these you want to kind of start hot if possible and try to build from there. So, yeah, I feel good."

Team Canada lines in Saturday's game:

McKenna - Misa - Martone

Iginla - Hage - Martin

Reschny - Beaudoin - Luchanko

Greentree - Cootes - O'Reilly

Desnoyers

Reid - Parekh

Aitcheson - Brunicke

MacKenzie - Danford

Carels

Ivankovic starts

Ravensbergen

Scratches: Bear, Verhoeff, George

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