



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 29, 2025

The News & Observer

Hurricanes end three-game winless streak with 5-2 win over Red Wings

By: Chip Alexander

The NHL's two Eastern Conference points leaders went at it Saturday as the three-day Christmas break came to an end and the puck dropped again.

One was the Carolina Hurricanes, who held the Metropolitan Division lead despite going 0-2-1 in their three games before the holiday break, losing leads in each game. Despite missing their best forward, Seth Jarvis, and best defenseman, Jaccob Slavin, the Canes remained at the top.

"We're a good team," captain Jordan Staal said after the loss Tuesday to the Florida Panthers, as if a reminder.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Saturday morning that the three days away from the rink were a good refresher for everyone, adding, "Now it's back to the grind."

The grind began with a game against the Detroit Red Wings, who came into the Lenovo Center as the Atlantic Division leaders, having won their three games before the break — beating the Washington Capitals home and away — and feeling good about themselves.

But the Canes felt that way after taking a 5-2 win over the Wings, after holding on to the lead in the third period when Detroit made things uneasy for the home team.

Andrei Svechnikov eased the tension significantly for the Canes. The Wings had made it a 3-2 game with a power-play goal, but Svechnikov forced Detroit's Dylan Larkin into a turnover in the Detroit zone, collected the puck at the top of the slot, skated in and beat goalie John Gibson to the blocker side for a 4-2 lead.

Larkin, who had fallen to the ice, popped back up but could only look on as Svechnikov scored with 6:51 left in regulation.

"It just happens," Svechnikov said of the play. "It sucks for them but good for us."

After the Red Wings pulled Gibson for a sixth attacker, Svechnikov fed Jordan Martinook for an empty-net goal that was the 100th of Martinook's career.

Canes goalie Brandon Bussi improved his record to 12-1-1 with an 18-save game — 10 in the final period.

"That was a great game," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said "I loved the way we played. Yeah, they had their little push there. The power-play goal got 'em going a little. Third period, you knew they were going to come some, but I liked

the way we kept playing and that was a big goal by 'Svech.' That kind of settled it down and put the game away."

Svechnikov, physical, active, playing one of his most complete games of the season, had a goal and two assists in being named the game's first star. But defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere also had a goal and a pair of assists, scoring the game-winning goal with 4:38 left in the second period for a 3-1 lead.

After the Canes dominated the opening period, only to fall behind 1-0, Gostisbehere had a shot redirected by winger Jackson Blake for the Canes' first score in the second. Eric Robinson then quickly gave Carolina the lead, punching the puck past Gibson after Svechnikov put a shot on net.

Robinson had his third goal in as many games and the Canes had two goals in 75 seconds and the lead.

Andrew Copp's power-play goal for Detroit early in the third made for an early crunch time for Carolina, but the Canes maintained their poise, Bussi made some nice stops and Svechnikov struck with the big steal and score.

"We wanted to get back at it. We were eager after a couple of days off and how those other games finished," Canes defenseman Jalen Chatfield said. "We were able to close this one out."

Losing twice to the Florida Panthers and another loss to Tampa Bay, all three after blowing three-goal leads, had caused some uncertainty among the Canes and eroded some team confidence.

"You can see it. It has crept in," Brind'Amour said after Tuesday's game. "We've never had that issue ever. But you can see it."

With that in mind, the three days off was a good time to regroup, refocus. Jarvis and Slavin remain sidelined with injuries, and defenseman K'Andre Miller did not play Saturday because of a foot injury, but the Canes found a way.

It helped that Martinook, who had missed three games with a lower-body injury, and winger William Carrier were back in the lineup and back with Staal on the Canes' shutdown line. Carrier was ill Tuesday and sat out the Panthers game.

"People have comfort foods, I guess," Brind'Amour said, smiling. "That's our comfort line. You just watch them play. You wouldn't want to play against that every night. That's just hard, heavy, doing it right."



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The Athletic

NHL weekend rankings: The good, the bad and the teams I can't figure out

By: Sean McIndoe

With three nights off last week, we didn't have as many games as usual this week. That means that our rankings won't move all that much from last time. And more importantly, it means fewer opportunities to learn anything new.

That's bad news for me, because there are a handful of teams where I need all the information I can get, because I just can't figure them out.

I'm not clueless about absolutely everyone. I know the Colorado Avalanche are good, and the Chicago Blackhawks are bad, and that all of this is futile because the Buffalo Sabres will never lose again. But for more than a few teams, I can cram everything I think I know into my hockey fan brain and all that comes out is a shrug emoji.

I've narrowed the list down to five. Help me, readers, because I can't figure these teams out.

Bonus five: Teams I just don't understand (and why)

5. Los Angeles Kings – They took a step back during the offseason, they've already made a seller-style trade in sending Phillip Danault to Montreal, and it feels like every time you check the standings they're riding a three-game losing streak. But they're also always holding down a playoff spot, so ... they're good? Or maybe good enough? Or maybe just headed to yet another first-round exit, although maybe against someone other than the Oilers this time. I'm pretty sure it's that last one, but it would be nice if they could just pick a lane and stay in it for more than a week or two at a time.

4. Detroit Red Wings – This might just be stubbornness on my part. The Wings have been hanging around the top of the Atlantic for most of the season, and at some point we'll have to accept that they're a solid 100-point team, and in that division that should be more than enough to be in the running. It's what they've been pretty much since the day Todd McLellan took over. Then you notice the negative goals differential and you start to wonder. Or do you?

3. Boston Bruins – I honestly think part of what makes the Bruins so hard to read is their dedication to not soiling their record with loser points. As fans, we've been trained to basically ignore that column, meaning it feels like the Bruins have played way more games than anyone else. They have more regulation losses than any team in the conference, but have also cracked the 20-win mark that teams like the Edmonton Oilers, Washington Capitals and Vegas Golden Knights haven't hit yet. Are they making the playoffs? No. But they're going to win more games than some playoff

teams, and that's weird. (In fact, it's almost as if the whole rationale for the loser point is a big lie.)

2. Utah Mammoth – We all figured that once the Coyotes got out from under the Arizona cloud of uncertainty, they'd blossom into ... something. This was supposed to be the year it happened. And it kind of did, early on, and we all wrote about how the Mammoth had finally arrived. But they came out of the break sitting at fake .500 and tied for the league lead in regulation losses. That might still be good enough for a playoff spot in a top-heavy West, but is this team any good? And if not, is there a valid path to get there any time soon, now that all the obvious excuses are gone?

1. Philadelphia Flyers – At some point, I'm going to have admit that this team is good. Not "better than expected," or even "good enough to sneak into the playoffs," but just plain good. Today is not that day, because I can't shake the feeling that any team where Christian Dvorak is the third-leading scorer and Dan Vladar is a stud in goal just might be fake. But we're almost halfway through the season and they've been humming along around .625 pretty much all year long. I already feel like I'm locked in on the Flyers as my "team that makes the playoffs and I don't accept it until the very last night of the season."

On to this week's rankings...

Road to the Cup

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

Put the kid on the team, guys.

5. Tampa Bay Lightning (22-13-3, +25 true goals differential*) – Four straight wins, including one over the Hurricanes and another nasty one against the Panthers, was enough to get them back into top spot in the Atlantic for a few hours before Detroit took it back.

4. Minnesota Wild (23-10-6, +17) – They took care of business in Winnipeg, if only barely. That was game one of a two-week road trip while the World Juniors gets center stage in Minnesota.

3. Carolina Hurricanes (23-11-3, +16) – Here's a stat that surprised me: There are only three NHL defensemen scoring at better than a point-per-game pace this season. Cale Makar is one, obviously. So is Zach Werenski, leading the way in Columbus. But the third is Shayne Gostisbehere, a guy we don't talk about a ton; he nudged his average over the 1.00 mark with his three-point performance in Saturday's win over Detroit.



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2. Dallas Stars (25-7-7, +34) – It still sounds like Jason Robertson has a tough road to make Team USA, despite his production. As a Canadian, I support this completely.

1. Colorado Avalanche (28-2-7, +66) – We all know they're good, but the "parity" chart in this article is just ridiculous.

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

Not ranked: Montreal Canadiens – They've been good, and reasonably consistent about it, just about all year long. There was that five-game losing streak back in November, but they managed to find their footing again afterwards, and in a division that's been in flux to an almost embarrassing degree, the Habs along with the Wings have been just about the only constants.

They took a big swing in the summer on Noah Dobson, and so far that's worked out well. They were buyers again before the holiday freeze, bringing back Phillip Danault. And if they decide to load up even more on the way to the trade deadline, they have the assets to do it.

The question I keep coming back to: What's the ceiling here?

They feel like a solid bet for the playoffs (although the projections aren't as sure, having them close to a coin flip). But if and when they get there, is there reason to believe their spring will look much different than last year's, when they were a bump in the road for a Capitals team that couldn't get any further?

I think there is, even as it's clear that this team's window for legitimate contention isn't quite all the way open yet. Their best players are young and improving, surrounded by an older supporting cast that should largely stay in place for two more seasons. You never know with young players — Ivan Demidov was supposed to have 50 goals by now, but he's more of an enforcer these days — and even the best young teams will have their ups and downs. You'd like to see the goaltending bail them out a little more often, although maybe Jacob Fowler is the answer there. This team still banks an awful lot of their points in overtime, and they're basically just a break-even team in terms of goals differential.

So: Would you pick them over a team like Tampa in round one? Florida? Detroit?

And maybe more importantly: Do they need a playoff win for the season to be a success, or are they already on track for the sort of progress that lets you feel good about where they're headed, even if it's another quick spring?

We can leave those questions to the fans for now. In the meantime, they come out of the break with a tough week that features road games against a mix of potential contenders, starting with last night's almost-comeback in a shootout loss to the Lightning. They've got the Panthers tomorrow, then the Hurricanes on New Year's Day. After a stop in St. Louis, they finish the trip with a tough one in Dallas. If the ceiling is already higher than it looks, we might find out over the next few weeks.

From there, we'll have to wait for the trade deadline and the inevitable Sidney Crosby trade. That one might move the needle, just a bit.

The bottom five

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

If you missed it, be sure to check out our staff predictions for the World Juniors and Scott's viewing guide. Lots of pressure on the former presumptive top pick Gavin McKenna, for sure.

5. Nashville Predators (16-17-4, -21) – Saturday's loss to the Blues snapped Nashville's win streak at three, and moved the Blues back ahead of them in the standings. But the Preds have been humming along at "reasonably decent" for a few weeks now, and just miss escaping the bottom five.

4. St. Louis Blues (15-16-8, -33) – Now we see if they can turn that into their first win streak since the opening week of December. They'll have to earn it, as they've got the red-hot Sabres and the first-place Avalanche up next.

3. Calgary Flames (16-18-4, -14) – Both Pierre and CJ have Rasmus Andersson staying in the Pacific. The bigger question is whether an extension will be part of any deal, and how that would affect the return the Flames can get on their top trade asset.

2. Vancouver Canucks (15-19-3, -25) – Hey, look who's on the board...

Meanwhile, Drance had a good piece on what exactly this retool (that might not be a rebuild) is going to mean for this team.

1. Chicago Blackhawks (14-18-6, -17) – Beating Dallas, even in a shootout, was impressive. It was also apparently exhausting, at least based on that first period against the Penguins last night.

Not ranked: Winnipeg Jets – I didn't include them in the teams that confuse me, because they've transcended that. And I didn't really consider putting them in the bottom five even though the standings say they should be there, because I really can't believe that they're this bad.

But also, they might just be this bad.

Saturday's collapse against the Wild will go in the books as the Jets' fifth straight loss. It's also their eighth loss in nine, tenth in twelve, and fourteenth in their last seventeen. Whichever arbitrary endpoint you want to choose, there's no way to make this look good. Oh, and now Josh Morrissey is hurt.

And again, these are the defending Presidents' Trophy champs, who employ the reigning MVP. I'm not sure anyone was expecting a repeat of last year's 116-point season, but falling all the way out of the playoff picture felt unlikely. Now that result is starting to feel like a sure thing.

We're not quite there yet, and our projections still have the Jets in the 40 percent range to make the playoffs. Money puck is more bullish, dropping them under 30 percent, just slightly ahead of the Flames. And I get the feeling that some Jets fans are already prepared to throw in the towel, jump into a seller's market and regroup with an eye to the future.

Murat has made the case that they should wait on that, and I think he's right. But we're talking about waiting another week or two, because there's barely any more room to work with here. That makes this week feel crucial, as the schedule serves up some winnable games. They get the Oilers at



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home tonight, before heading out east for a three-game trip that will bring them a tough matchup with the Wings before easier matchups with the Leafs and Senators.

Bank six or seven points in that stretch, and you've got the start of a comeback climb. But with the halfway mark almost here and anything above a wild-card already basically

impossible, there's no time left to figure this out. It has to happen now, or it's not happening at all.

And maybe that's ultimately what some Jets fans would want, given how tilted this year's trade market could be. We're not quite there yet, just like the Jets aren't quite in the bottom five yet. But we're getting awfully close, right?



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Svechnikov, Gostisbehere help Hurricanes snap 3-game skid | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — For the fourth straight game, the Hurricanes entered the third period with a multigoal lead. And for the fourth straight game, their opponent chipped away at it and gained momentum.

This time, Carolina finished the job.

With the Hurricanes clinging to a one-goal lead, Andrei Svechnikov stole the puck from Red Wings captain Dylan Larkin and scored to extinguish the threat, and Carolina snapped a three-game losing streak with a 5-2 win Saturday at Lenovo Center.

“That’s a big goal. ... They were coming, and that just silenced it,” Hurricanes coach Rod Brind’Amour said.

After a Red Wings goal cut Carolina’s lead to 3-2, Svechnikov pressured Larkin just inside the Detroit blue line. The Red Wings captain lost an edge and turned the puck over to Svechnikov, who accelerated into the clear and snapped a shot past the blocker of Detroit goalie John Gibson (33 saves) to push the Hurricanes’ lead back to two goals.

“I actually scored one goal against Seattle, maybe a few years ago, and exactly the same thing happened,” Svechnikov said of a similar goal he scored against the Kraken in December 2022. “And I think it was in my head right away, like I know where I’m going to shoot, and that was a good thing.”

It was the second three-point game of the season for Svechnikov, who picked up primary assists on Eric Robinson’s second period goal and Jordan Martinook’s empty-netter — the 100th goal of the veteran’s career — to help the Hurricanes shake off three pre-Christmas meltdowns.

“We had some emotional games before the break, and they obviously didn’t go our way either,” said Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, who also had a goal and two assists. “So for us to respond against a really good team that’s playing really well right now, it’s big for our group.”

The Hurricanes blew multigoal leads in three straight games — two against Florida and one vs. Tampa Bay — to enter the three-day Christmas break on a low note.

The opening 20 minutes were surely similarly frustrating for the Hurricanes, who dominated the entire period only to be down 1-0.

Gibson, who entered the game a perfect 8-0-0 in December, made 16 first period stops and got some help from Carolina — specifically Mark Jankowski.

Shortly after Jankowski hit the crossbar and pushed another chance on an open net wide, defenseman Sean Walker’s defensive zone turnover ended up in the home team’s net.

Walker got himself in trouble trying to stickhandle away from a Detroit forechecker and fired a too-hot-to-handle pass to nearby partner Alexander Nikishin. The puck went off the boards and to Detroit’s J.T. Compher, who set up a streaking Michael Rasmussen in the slot. His shot beat Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (18 saves) for his fifth goal of the year and a 1-0 Red Wings lead at 12:39 of the first.

But Carolina finally cracked Gibson in the second period by getting to the front of the net.

First, Blake got his 11th of the year by redirecting a Gostisbehere shot to tie the game at 3:22. Then 75 seconds later, Svechnikov made good on his muffed pass on a rush by still getting the puck across the crease, where Robinson knocked it in for his ninth goal of the year.

The Hurricanes scored their third of the middle frame when, off a faceoff win, Jalen Chatfield and Gostisbehere switched sides, and Gostisbehere’s wrist shot beat Gibson’s glove at 15:22 to extend Carolina’s lead to 3-1.

“He was lights out,” Brind’Amour said of Gostisbehere, who has 29 points in 28 games this season. “He should have had another one. He was all over it. And he played really well defensively.”

But adversity again awaited the Hurricanes.

With Chatfield in the penalty box for holding, Andrew Copp finished a backdoor pass from John Leonard at 3:11 of the third to cut the Carolina lead back to one.

Instead of collapsing as they had in the previous three games, the Hurricanes held on to the slim lead until Svechnikov’s steal and score.



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"They get a quick one early in the period, and for us to hang on and play the right way and get rewarded for it is kind of nice," Gostisbehere said.

Notes: Bussi improved to 12-1-1 on the season. ... Nikishin played a team-high 24:59. ... Gostisbehere was plus 4, the second time he's been better than plus 3 in his career. His

career best was plus 6 on March 5, 2022, when he played for the Coyotes. ... The Hurricanes held a large edge in 5-on-5 scoring chances (43-12) and high-danger chances (24-6), according to NaturalStatTrick.com. ... K'Andre Miller missed the game with a lower-body injury. Jaccob Slavin and Seth Jarvis remain week to week with injuries.



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Gostisbehere, Svechnikov post 3-point games as Hurricanes beat Red Wings 5-2, end 3-game skid

By: Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Shayne Gostisbehere and Andrei Svechnikov each had a goal and two assists and the Carolina Hurricanes snapped a season-worst three-game skid with a 5-2 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday night in a matchup of divisional leaders.

Jackson Blake and Eric Robinson scored during the Hurricanes' three-goal second period. Jordan Martinook, who missed the three previous games with an injury, scored his 100th career goal with an empty-netter with 1:21 to play. Brandon Bussi made 18 saves and boosted his record to 12-1-1.

Michael Rasmussen and Andrew Copp scored for the Atlantic Division-leading Red Wings. John Gibson stopped 33 shots and lost for the first time in nine December outings.

The Metropolitan-leading Hurricanes held a multi-goal lead in the third period for the fifth game in a row. But, Carolina lost the previous three games in those situations.

Robinson has scored in three consecutive games for the first time in his career.

Rasmussen scored his first goal in 13 games and the Red Wings led 1-0 through the first period despite Carolina's 15-5 edge in shots. It marked only the 22nd first-period goal in 39 games this season for Detroit.

Blake and Robinson scored 75 seconds apart in the first five minutes of the second period. Gostisbehere added the third goal of the period.

The Red Wings converted on the game's first power-play chance when Copp scored 3:11 into the third period. Svechnikov scored with 6:51 to play.



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Preview: December 29 vs. NY Rangers

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Hurricanes.com

12:05 AM

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes will try to pick up a second straight win on Monday when they host the New York Rangers.

When: Monday, Dec. 29

Puck Drop: 7:00 p.m. ET

Watch: FanDuel Sports Network South, FanDuel Sports Network App | [Learn More](#)

Listen: 99.9 The Fan, Hurricanes App

Canes Record: 23-11-3 (49 Points, 1st - Metropolitan Division)

Canes Last Game: 5-2 Win over the Detroit Red Wings on Dec. 27

Rangers Record: 19-17-4 (42 Points, T-5th - Metropolitan Division)

Rangers Last Game: 2-0 Loss to the New York Islanders on Dec. 27

Last Time Out...

The Canes snapped a three-game skid on Saturday, besting the Red Wings by a score of 5-2.

Shayne Gostisbehere and Andrei Svechnikov had a goal and two assists each, leading the charge offensively.

Brandon Bussi stopped 18 out of 20, improving to 12-1-1 to start his NHL career.

Previous Meetings vs. NYR This Season...

Nov. 4: Pyotr Kochetkov stopped all 25 shots faced in his first game of the season, backstopping the Canes to a 3-0 victory at MSG.

Nov 26: Igor Shesterkin turned aside 36 of 38 shots faced, spoiling Thanksgiving Eve in Raleigh and guiding his team to a 4-2 win.

Feelin' Hot, Hot, Hot...

Both Eric Robinson and Andrei Svechnikov enter this evening's tilt with goals in three consecutive games.

For Robinson, he carries a season-long point streak and sits just one strike away from hitting double-digit goals for the fourth time in his NHL career. With nine in 31 games, he's well on pace to best his current career-high of 14, which came last season.

As for Svechnikov, he has points in five consecutive games, including three multi-point efforts. With nine points in those five games, Rod Brind'Amour has raved about his overall impact for the team during the stretch.

In Net...

Should Sunday's practice be an indication, Pyotr Kochetkov would be in line to face the Rangers again.

A respectable 6-2 in eight appearances this season, he suffered a tough loss in his last game out (12/20 @ Tampa), but as mentioned, posted a 25-save perfect performance against the Blueshirts in early November.

Alternatively, the Canes could go back to the hot hand Brandon Bussi, or give Frederik Andersen another crack as they start a set of two games in two days. The veteran is winless in his last seven outings, going 0-5-2 dating back to early November.

On The Other Side...

The Rangers' return from the holiday break was not the one they would have wanted, as they fell 2-0 to their crosstown rivals, the New York Islanders, on Saturday night.

That loss marked New York's eighth shutout loss this season, continuing a troubling trend for the Blueshirts. No other team has been shut out more than four times this year.

The Rangers do, however, come to Raleigh with the confidence of knowing they took two points out of their last trip to Lenovo Center on Nov. 26.



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Artemi Panarin posted a goal and an assist in that win, and leads the team overall with 38 points in 39 games.

Injury Updates...

Defenseman K'Andre Miller suffered a lower-body injury on Dec. 23 vs. Florida. He missed Saturday's game, but was a full participant in Sunday's practice.

Defenseman Jaccob Slavin suffered an upper-body injury on Dec. 19 in Florida. He was labeled as "week-to-week" and placed on injured reserve on Dec. 22.

Forward Seth Jarvis was also injured during overtime on Dec. 19, suffering an upper-body injury. He was placed on IR on Dec. 20 and labeled as "week-to-week" on Dec. 22.

Defenseman Charles Alexis Legault suffered a cut to his hand via a skate blade on Nov. 9 and underwent surgery to

repair lacerated tendons on Nov. 10. He is expected to miss three to four months.

What Are We Wearing?

The Canes will wear their RED uniforms for the contest. To view the team's full 2025-26 uniform schedule, [click here](#).

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will fly to Pittsburgh post-game to wrap up their back-to-back on Tuesday against the Penguins.

Next Game: Tuesday, Dec. 30 at Pittsburgh | 7:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO

Next Home Game: Thursday, Jan. 1 vs. Montreal | 7:00 p.m. ET |

Recap: Canes Snap Skid With Win Over Wings

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, N.C. - Andrei Svechnikov and Shayne Gostisbehere starred with three points apiece as the Carolina Hurricanes knocked off the Detroit Red Wings 5-2 at Lenovo Center on Saturday.

After giving up the game-opening goal for the first time in six games during the opening frame, Carolina was rewarded for its early territorial dominance soon after the puck dropped for the second period.

Jackson Blake's 11th of the year, a deflection of Shayne Gostisbehere's wrist from the blue line, evened the score at 3:22. Just over a minute later, the Canes took the lead as Eric Robinson hammered home an Andrei Svechnikov cross-crease setup.

Later in the period, Gostisbehere switched from playmaker to sniper, letting loose a laser from the left circle after a set faceoff play, sending the Hurricanes into the second intermission ahead by a pair.

Just 3:11 into the third period, though, Detroit found life with a power-play marker to halve the Canes' lead, and threatened to once again knot things up with a handful of scoring chances in the ensuing action. But after weathering the storm, Carolina pushed the gap back to two at 13:09 when Svechnikov forced a turnover in the Red Wings' zone and made no mistake with a quick shot past the blocker of John Gibson.

Now nursing a more comfortable advantage, the Hurricanes held off the Red Wings the rest of the way, including killing off another penalty. With Gibson at the bench for an extra attacker, Gostisbehere and Svechnikov combined to set up Jordan Martinook for an empty-net goal to seal the win.

Returning to the crease for the first time since having his nine-game winning streak curtailed in Florida on Dec. 19, Brandon Bussi turned aside 18 of 20 shots to move to 12-1-1 on the year.

Stats & Standouts

Forward Eric Robinson scored for the third straight game and stretched his point streak to four games (3G, 1A), his longest of the season.

Forward Andrei Svechnikov's second three-point performance of the season extended his own season-best point streak to five games (3G, 6A).

Svechnikov's performance marked the 99th of his career with two or more points, tying Blaine Stoughton for the seventh-most in franchise history.

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere logged a goal and two assists against his former club for his seventh multi-point outing this season, which ranks third among Hurricanes, trailing only Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov (8 each).

Forward Jordan Martinook returned from a three-game absence to score his 100th career goal, 74 of which have come in a Hurricanes sweater.

Goaltender Brandon Bussi may have had his winning streak ended in his last outing, but his run of starts in which the Canes have picked up at least a point lives on. Now without a regulation loss in 11 straight games (10-0-1), Bussi's streak is the second longest in a season by a Hurricanes/Whalers goaltender behind only Antti Raanta (13 GP in 2022-23).

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour giving his assessment of the win...

"That was a great game. We deserved to probably have way more. That was the frustrating part after the first period - to be down when I thought we played great. But I loved the way we played. Yeah, they had their little push there with the power play goal that got them going a little bit, and Bus made one nice save there just to kind of settle it down. The third period, we knew they were going to come a little bit, but I liked the way we kept playing."

Jalen Chatfield on returning to the win column after how the previous three games had gone...



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"We wanted to get back at it. We were eager after a couple of days off and how the other games finished, so we were happy that we were able to close this one out."

Shayne Gostisbehere discussing the same topic...

"We had some emotional games before the break, obviously, that didn't go our way either. So for us to respond against a really good team who's playing well right now, it's big for our group. Especially, we had a little bit of a lead, and we managed their push. Bus came up big for us."

Andrei Svechnikov on Shayne Gostisbehere's three-point night...

"He makes it easy. He's always making those plays, skating with the puck and creating for the forwards. It's huge. You want to play with him."

Rod Brind'Amour continuing on Gostisbehere...

"He was lights out. He should've had another (goal). He was all over it, and he played really well defensively. He was holding down the fort. Again, with what we're missing, we're looking at the guys that have to do a little more and play in situations they don't normally play. He's stepped up."

What's Next After This Game?

The Canes will practice on Sunday as they ramp back up following three days off the ice. They'll then start a home/road back-to-back set, hosting the Rangers at Lenovo Center on Monday ahead of another divisional matchup in Pittsburgh on Tuesday.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • December 29, 2025



Gostisbehere, Svechnikov post 3-point games as Hurricanes beat Red Wings 5-2, end 3-game skid | AP News

By: Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Shayne Gostisbehere and Andrei Svechnikov each had a goal and two assists and the Carolina Hurricanes snapped a season-worst three-game skid with a 5-2 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday night in a matchup of divisional leaders.

Jackson Blake and Eric Robinson scored during the Hurricanes' three-goal second period. Jordan Martinook, who missed the three previous games with an injury, scored his 100th career goal with an empty-netter with 1:21 to play. Brandon Bussi made 18 saves and boosted his record to 12-1-1.

Michael Rasmussen and Andrew Copp scored for the Atlantic Division-leading Red Wings. John Gibson stopped 33 shots and lost for the first time in nine December outings.

The Metropolitan-leading Hurricanes held a multi-goal lead in the third period for the fifth game in a row. But, Carolina lost the previous three games in those situations.

Robinson has scored in three consecutive games for the first time in his career.

Rasmussen scored his first goal in 13 games and the Red Wings led 1-0 through the first period despite Carolina's 15-5 edge in shots. It marked only the 22nd first-period goal in 39 games this season for Detroit.

Blake and Robinson scored 75 seconds apart in the first five minutes of the second period. Gostisbehere added the third goal of the period.

The Red Wings converted on the game's first power-play chance when Copp scored 3:11 into the third period. Svechnikov scored with 6:51 to play.



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Hurricanes 5-2 Red Wings (Dec 27, 2025) Game Recap - ESPN

By: AP

RALEIGH, N.C. -- — Shayne Gostisbehere and Andrei Svechnikov each had a goal and two assists and the Carolina Hurricanes snapped a season-worst three-game skid with a 5-2 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday night in a matchup of divisional leaders.

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Today's top games to watch, best bets, odds: Bears vs. 49ers SNF, NBA and more

By: Scott Erskine

The San Francisco 49ers haven't lost since Brock Purdy returned from a toe injury that sidelined him for six games, winning all five of their contests with the 26-year-old back under center. The winning streak has given them a chance to secure the NFC West title for the third time in four years.

In order to accomplish that feat, San Francisco (11-4) first must record its sixth consecutive victory when it hosts the NFC North champions Chicago Bears (11-4) at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Cal. at 8:20 p.m. ET on Sunday Night Football. The 49ers, who already have clinched a playoff berth, trail the Seahawks (12-3) by one game but opened the season with a 17-13 road triumph over Seattle and concludes the campaign against the Mike Macdonald's squad at home next week.

Each of San Francisco's last seven wins have been by double digits, including a 48-27 victory versus the Indianapolis Colts in Week 16. The 49ers are ninth in the NFL in scoring with an average of 26.1 points but have produced at least 34 in four of their past six triumphs.

Chicago clinched its fifth NFC North title and first since 2018 with the Green Bay Packers' 41-24 loss to the Baltimore Ravens on Saturday. The Bears, who posted a thrilling 22-16 overtime victory over the Packers last week, and the 49ers both still have a chance to overtake the Seahawks for the No. 1 seed in the conference.

Six games are on Sunday's NBA schedule, including a matchup between the Detroit Pistons (24-7) and Los Angeles Clippers (9-21) at 9 p.m. ET at the Intuit Dome in Inglewood, Cal. The Pistons fell to 2-1 on their five-game road trip with Friday's 131-129 setback against the Utah Jazz while the Clippers are coming off their third straight victory, a 119-103 triumph over the Portland Trail Blazers.

The NHL has five games on its slate, one of which is an Atlantic Division battle between the last-place Toronto Maple Leafs (17-15-5) and first-place Detroit Red Wings (22-14-3) at 7 p.m. ET at Little Caesars Arena. It is the third meeting of the season between the Original Six rivals and first since the Red Wings swept a home-and-home series in October.

There also are numerous college basketball games taking place on Sunday, including a West Coast Conference clash between San Francisco (8-5) and Seattle (11-2) at 8 p.m. ET at the Redhawk Center. The Dons have been idle since last Sunday, when they trounced Morgan State by 30 points, while the Redhawks edged UTSA 71-68 the following day for their sixth consecutive victory.

The 49ers are 3.5-point favorites against the Bears in the latest consensus NFL odds. The Pistons are 3-point favorites against the Clippers, the Red Wings are -127 favorites on the

money line against the Maple Leafs and Seattle is a 2.5-point favorite against San Francisco.

Below is a snapshot of what to watch and bet for Sunday, Dec. 28. All times Eastern

NFL best bets, where to watch

Bears at 49ers

Time: 8:20 p.m. | Location: Santa Clara, Cal. | TV: NBC | Stream: Fubo (Try for free)

SportsLine picks -- Model: Bears +3.5 (-116) | Expert: Colston Loveland Over 3.5 receptions (-123, PropBetGuy)

The 49ers have been winning comfortably of late and rolled past the Bears 38-13 last season without Christian McCaffrey, who is tied for third in the NFL this year with 16 total touchdowns. But Chicago has lost just one game since Week 8, and that was a 28-21 setback at Green Bay in which the Packers snapped a tie with 3:32 remaining in the fourth quarter. Even though they've already won the NFC North, the Bears won't be coasting as they still have a shot at the top seed in the conference. They are 8-2 against the spread in their last 10 games and the SportsLine Projection Model has them covering against San Francisco in 52% of simulations. SportsLine NFL props expert PropBetGuy (+1267 on his last 73 NFL player prop picks) thinks Chicago's Colston Loveland will be involved in the team's aerial attack against a 49ers defense that has struggled to contain opposing tight ends lately.

More NFL best bets

Raiders +3 (-111, Sportsline model B-rated play)

Mike Evans Over 55.5 receiving yards (-114, R.J. White)

NBA best bets, where to watch

Pistons at Clippers

Time: 9 p.m. | Location: Inglewood, Cal. | TV: NBA League Pass | Stream: Fubo (Try for free)

SportsLine picks -- Model: Over 224.5 (-109) | Expert: Clippers +3.5 (-111, Bruce Marshall)

The Pistons are tied for eighth in the NBA with an average of 119.5 points per game. And after only 212 combined points were scored in the opener of their road trip, at least 260 were produced in their last two contests. Detroit's Cade Cunningham (26.5) and Los Angeles' James Harden (26.3) both are averaging more than 26 points, and the SportsLine Projection Model sees them coming close to those numbers and making this game a high-scoring one as its simulations say the Over hits 56% of the time. The Clippers have won each contest during their three-game streak by double digits, and SportsLine expert Bruce Marshall (48-41-1 on his last 90



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NBA picks) believes they'll at least cover the spread as the Pistons are beginning to appear tired on their road trip.

NHL best bets, where to watch

Maple Leafs at Red Wings

Time: 7 p.m. | Location: Detroit | TV: ESPN+ | Stream: Fubo (Try for free)

SportsLine picks -- Model: Maple Leafs +1.5 (-220) | Expert: Red Wings -139 (Matt Severance)

The Maple Leafs have followed a three-game losing streak during which they scored a total of four goals by tallying a combined 13 times in back-to-back victories. Detroit posted a pair of overtime victories before suffering a 5-2 road loss against the Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday. Toronto also was in action last night and could be without leading scorer William Nylander, who tallied in the team's 7-5 triumph over the Ottawa Senators but exited with an apparent knee injury. But the Maple Leafs will have plenty of motivation for this matchup after dropping 6-3 and 3-2 decisions to the Red Wings in the first week of the season. The SportsLine Projection Model likes the Leafs to keep this meeting close, at worst, as they cover the spread in 69% of its simulations. SportsLine expert Matt Severance (6-2, +385 on his last eight NHL money-line picks) feels Detroit will come away

with the win, however, as the possible absence of Nylander and Toronto's lack of success on the road (5-10-0) are too much to overlook.

CBB best bets, where to watch

San Francisco at Seattle

Time: 9 p.m. | Location: Seattle | TV: ESPN+ | Stream: Fubo (Try for free)

SportsLine picks -- Model: Seattle -145 | Expert: Seattle -2.5 (-108, Bruce Marshall)

Seattle hasn't lost since Nov. 29, when it was edged 74-71 by UC Santa Barbara in the championship game of the Resorts World Classic. The Redhawks' only other defeat this season was a two-point setback against Cal Poly three weeks earlier. Both of the Dons' last two contests were double-digit victories, but the SportsLine Projection Model sees the Redhawks extending their winning streak to seven games as its simulations have them winning 64% of the time. SportsLine expert Bruce Marshall (7-3, +370 on his last 10 college basketball picks) agrees and likes Seattle to cover the spread with a balanced offense that has had five different players lead the team in scoring during its current six-game run.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes 5, Red Wings 2

By: Bob Wage

The Carolina Hurricanes put an end to their losing streak with a dominating, 5-2 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday night at the Lenovo Center.

The win kept the team in sole possession of first place in the Eastern Conference and Metropolitan Division.

Goaltender, Brandon Bussi earned the win and stopped 18 of the 20 shots he faced.

Bussi is now an amazing 12-1-1 in his first career 14 NHL games.

Andrei Svechnikov and Shayne Gostisbehere each had a goal and two assists to lead the team.

The Wings jumped out to a 1-0 lead midway through the first period even though the Canes were dominating. The home team had several close chances but couldn't light the lamp yet.

In the second period, the Canes were able to get pucks by John Gibson.

First, Jackson Blake tipped in a Gostisbehere shot to tie the score, just 3:22 into the second.

A minute and change later, Eric Robinson knocked in a loose puck to give the home team the lead. It was Robinson's 9th goal of the season.

Later in the period, Gostisbehere took a nice pass from Jalen Chatfield and roofed in a perfect shot in the top corner of the net to make it, 3-1.

The Wings would make it 3-2 with a powerplay tally in the third but Svechnikov stole the puck and put his team back up by two about 10 minutes later.

He would feed teammate Jordan Martinook for an empty net goal to close things out. It was Martinook's 100th career goal.

In all, the Hurricanes outshot the Wings 38-20 for the game.

Alexander Nikishin led all Carolina skaters with 24:59 of ice time.

William Carrier had a team high five hits.

The Canes will next take on the Rangers at home on Monday night.



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The Hockey News

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Detroit Red Wings: Lineups, Game Preview and How to Watch

By: Ryan Henkel

Hurricanes battle slump and injuries against streaking Red Wings. Can Carolina right the ship in this crucial Eastern Conference clash?

What - Game 37 (22-11-3)

When - 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 27

Where - Lenovo Center; Raleigh, NC

How to Watch - FanDuel Sports Network South, FanDuel Sports Network Detroit

The Carolina Hurricanes and Detroit Red Wings will square off tonight, as the top two teams in the East faceoff coming out of the holiday break.

Carolina is currently on a three-game skid, where they've blown multi-goal leads in every single loss.

Most recently, the Hurricanes blew a 2-0 lead to the Florida Panthers on Tuesday, allowing five goals against in the third period alone.

The Canes have certainly been in a rut and while scoring has been there, defense has certainly not.

With injuries to key players as well, the team is going to have to dig deep to get the ship righted.

Detroit enters tonight's game on a three-game winning streak, most recently defeating the Dallas Stars 4-3 in overtime on Tuesday.

Streaks

Andrei Svechnikov (2g, 4a) has points in four straight games.

Jordan Staal (1g, 2a) and Eric Robinson (2g, 1a) have points in three straight games.

Milestone Watch

Jordan Martinook is one goal away from 100 career goals.

Jacob Slavin is one point away from 300 career points.

K'Andre Miller is three games shy of 400 career games played.

Sebastian Aho is four goals away from 300 career goals.

Jesper Kotkaniemi is four games shy of 500 career games played.

Game Notes

Carolina is 47-47-8-6 all-time against Detroit, including going 2-1-0 last season.

The Hurricanes are 9-3-1 in the two team's last 13 meetings.

Nikolaj Ehlers (6g, 16pts in 15gp) is a point-per-game player for his career against the Red Wings.

Shayne Gostisbehere played one season in Detroit (2023-24), registering 56 points in 81 games.

Key Matchups

Projected Starting Goalies

Brandon Bussi: 11-1-1; 0.913 Sv%; 2.11 GAA

John Gibson: 12-7-1; 0.891 Sv%; 3.01 GAA

Leading Scorers

Goals - Seth Jarvis (19) / Dylan Larkin & Alex DeBrincat (20)

Points - Sebastian Aho (32) / Lucas Raymond (41)

Power Play

Carolina - 16.8% (24th)

Detroit - 24.8% (8th)

Penalty Kill

Carolina - 81.4% (13th)

Detroit - 80.4% (18th)

Hurricanes Projected Lineup

Nikolaj Ehlers - Sebastian Aho - Jackson Blake

Andrei Svechnikov - Jordan Staal - Logan Stankoven

Taylor Hall - Mark Jankowski - Eric Robinson

Bradly Nadeau - Jesperi Kotkaniemi - William Carrier

K'Andre Miller - Sean Walker

Shayne Gostisbehere - Jalen Chatfield

Alexander Nikishin - Joel Nystrom

Brandon Bussi

Pyotr Kochetkov

Injuries and Scratches: Mike Reilly, Frederik Andersen, Jordan Martinook (LBI), Jacob Slavin (UBI), Seth Jarvis (UBI)



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Red Wings Projected Lineup

Emmitt Finnie - Dylan Larkin - Lucas Raymond

Alex DeBrincat - Andrew Copp - John Leonard

Marco Kasper - Nate Danielson - Mason Appleton

Michael Rasmussen - J.T. Compher - James van Riemsdyk

Simon Edvinsson - Moritz Seider

Ben Chiarot - Axel Sandin-Pellikka

Albert Johnsson - Jacob Bernard-Docker

John Gibson

Cam Talbot

Injuries and Scratches: Patrick Kane (UBI), Elmer Soderblom

LINKS

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SportScan

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

1373293 Carolina Hurricanes

Svechnikov, Gostisbehere help Hurricanes snap 3-game skid

Cory Lavoie 5-6 minutes 28/12/2025

RALEIGH — For the fourth straight game, the Hurricanes entered the third period with a multigoal lead. And for the fourth straight game, their opponent chipped away at it and gained momentum.

This time, Carolina finished the job.

With the Hurricanes clinging to a one-goal lead, Andrei Svechnikov stole the puck from Red Wings captain Dylan Larkin and scored to extinguish the threat, and Carolina snapped a three-game losing streak with a 5-2 win Saturday at Lenovo Center.

"That's a big goal. ... They were coming, and that just silenced it," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

After a Red Wings goal cut Carolina's lead to 3-2, Svechnikov pressured Larkin just inside the Detroit blue line. The Red Wings captain lost an edge and turned the puck over to Svechnikov, who accelerated into the clear and snapped a shot past the blocker of Detroit goalie John Gibson (33 saves) to push the Hurricanes' lead back to two goals.

"I actually scored one goal against Seattle, maybe a few years ago, and exactly the same thing happened," Svechnikov said of a similar goal he scored against the Kraken in December 2022. "And I think it was in my head right away, like I know where I'm going to shoot, and that was a good thing."

It was the second three-point game of the season for Svechnikov, who picked up primary assists on Eric Robinson's second period goal and Jordan Martinook's empty-netter — the 100th goal of the veteran's career — to help the Hurricanes shake off three pre-Christmas meltdowns.

"We had some emotional games before the break, and they obviously didn't go our way either," said Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, who also had a goal and two assists. "So for us to respond against a really good team that's playing really well right now, it's big for our group."



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The Hurricanes blew multigoal leads in three straight games — two against Florida and one vs. Tampa Bay — to enter the three-day Christmas break on a low note.

The opening 20 minutes were surely similarly frustrating for the Hurricanes, who dominated the entire period only to be down 1-0.

Gibson, who entered the game a perfect 8-0-0 in December, made 16 first period stops and got some help from Carolina — specifically Mark Jankowski.

Shortly after Jankowski hit the crossbar and pushed another chance on an open net wide, defenseman Sean Walker's defensive zone turnover ended up in the home team's net.

Walker got himself in trouble trying to stickhandle away from a Detroit forechecker and fired a too-hot-to-handle pass to nearby partner Alexander Nikishin. The puck went off the boards and to Detroit's J.T. Compher, who set up a streaking Michael Rasmussen in the slot. His shot beat Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (18 saves) for his fifth goal of the year and a 1-0 Red Wings lead at 12:39 of the first.

But Carolina finally cracked Gibson in the second period by getting to the front of the net.

First, Blake got his 11th of the year by redirecting a Gostisbehere shot to tie the game at 3:22. Then 75 seconds later, Svechnikov made good on his muffed pass on a rush by still getting the puck across the crease, where Robinson knocked it in for his ninth goal of the year.

The Hurricanes scored their third of the middle frame when, off a faceoff win, Jalen Chatfield and Gostisbehere switched sides, and Gostisbehere's wrist shot beat Gibson's glove at 15:22 to extend Carolina's lead to 3-1.

"He was lights out," Brind'Amour said of Gostisbehere, who has 29 points in 28 games this season. "He should have had another one. He was all over it. And he played really well defensively."

But adversity again awaited the Hurricanes.

With Chatfield in the penalty box for holding, Andrew Copp finished a backdoor pass from John Leonard at 3:11 of the third to cut the Carolina lead back to one.

Instead of collapsing as they had in the previous three games, the Hurricanes held on to the slim lead until Svechnikov's steal and score.

"They get a quick one early in the period, and for us to hang on and play the right way and get rewarded for it is kind of nice," Gostisbehere said.

Notes: Bussi improved to 12-1-1 on the season. ... Nikishin played a team-high 24:59. ... Gostisbehere was plus 4, the second time he's been better than plus 3 in his career. His career best was plus 6 on March 5, 2022, when he played for the Coyotes. ... The Hurricanes held a large edge in 5-on-5 scoring chances (43-12) and high-danger chances (24-6), according to NaturalStatTrick.com. ... K'Andre Miller missed the game with a lower-body injury. Jaccob Slavin and Seth Jarvis remain week to week with injuries.

The North State Journal LOADED: 12.29.2025

1373385 Websites

The Athletic / World Juniors takeaways: Top teams still unconvincing after Day 3, pair of Swedish D stepping up

By Scott Wheeler and Corey Pronman

Dec. 28, 2025 Updated 7:41 pm EST

Day 3 was a quieter two-game slate in the Twin Cities, highlighted by Sweden needing a third-period comeback to beat Switzerland.

Here are The Athletic's daily takeaways and standouts from prospects writers Corey Pronman and Scott Wheeler.

Sweden defeated Switzerland 4-2 on a late empty-netter. A pair of 2026 prospects, Sweden's Viggo Björck and Switzerland's Lars Steiner, were named players of the game. Ducks second-rounder Lucas Pettersson also scored twice for Sweden.

The Finns beat Latvia 8-0. Emil Hemming (DAL) scored twice. Julius Miettinen (SEA) returned from injury to Finland's first line and picked up an assist. Heikki Ruohonen (PHI) also had a three-point game for the Finns.

Top teams still unconvincing

None of the presumptive top teams have separated themselves as the favorite through their first two games of the tournament. Canada, Sweden and USA have all won two games, but Canada gave a point back to Latvia and trailed against Czechia, Sweden's wins against Switzerland and Slovakia were both narrow, and USA struggled at times against both Germany and Switzerland — and are now without their No. 1 D, at least for the time being (the latest on Cole Hutson is that he's day-to-day but it doesn't sound like he'll play against Slovakia on Monday).

All three teams clearly haven't played their best hockey yet, but the competitiveness of the tournament's other nations has also been a trend at the last five tournaments. The Swiss have a strong blue line. The Latvians have a handful of legit players instead of one or two, and are well-coached (though they had a tough time on the tail end of a back-to-back with Finland). We're still likely going to see three of the same five countries medal, but the preliminary round is now playing tighter, and nobody's talking about blowouts or contraction. — Wheeler

Sweden waiting for Stenberg to take charge

Ivar Stenberg has had some mild struggles in this tournament, particularly in Sunday's game against Switzerland. He has still displayed very good skill and has created some chances, but for an offensive dynamo, he's made some tough decisions at times and hasn't generated as much even-strength offense as hoped. He was also bumped off Sweden's top power-play unit. It's only two games, but between the top two 2026 draft-eligible wingers in Stenberg and Gavin McKenna, McKenna has been more impressive to start the tournament. — Pronman

Pair of Swedish defensemen emerging

The Swedish blue line has been a strength of their team over the last couple of tournaments. Tom Willander and Theo Lindstein formed a shutdown pairing for them last year. Axel Sandin Pellikka was named the tournament's top defenseman in both 2024 and 2025. Mattias Havelid was a top player at this level. But there were questions, coming into this year's tournament, about whether they had a D or two that could be go-to guys.

So far, I've really liked second-rounders Leo Sahlin Wallenius (SJS) and Alfons Freij (WPG). Freij has been their best defenseman through two games, but Sahlin Wallenius was excellent on Sunday and went end-to-end to set up the first goal of the game. Freij was viewed as a potential first-rounder at 15-16 but didn't have the draft year he needed to go there, similar to fellow Jets prospect Elias Salomonsson (who really took off again post-draft after an up-and-down draft year). Freij has played exclusively in the SHL this year and is now moving pucks well back with his peers and playing with confidence, and Sahlin Wallenius' skating always stands out. — Wheeler



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Eric Nilson SCORES less than a minute in for Sweden! 🇸🇪 #WorldJuniors
pic.twitter.com/7N03KIXvJZ

— TSN (@TSN_Sports) December 28, 2025

Day 4 schedule

Here's your schedule for a busier four-game slate on Dec. 29:

Sweden vs. Germany in St. Paul at 12 p.m. CT

Finland vs. Czechia in Minneapolis at 2:30 p.m. CT

USA vs. Slovakia in St. Paul at 5 p.m. CT

Denmark vs. Canada in Minneapolis at 7:30 p.m. CT

The Athletic LOADED: 12.29.2025

1373386 Websites

The Athletic / Senators goalie Linus Ullmark takes leave of absence for 'personal reasons'

By Julian McKenzie

Dec. 28, 2025 Updated 5:49 pm EST

Ottawa Senators goaltender Linus Ullmark is taking a leave of absence for "personal reasons," the team announced Sunday.

"Linus has the full support of our organization during this time," Senators general manager and president of hockey operations Steve Staios said in a statement released by the team. "Out of respect to Linus, we will not be making any further comments."

Ullmark holds a 14-8-5 record this season in 28 games with a 2.95 goals-against average and an .881 save percentage. On Saturday, he was pulled after allowing four goals on 14 shots in a 7-5 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The Swedish goaltender is in the first year of a four-year, \$33-million contract extension signed in October 2024, months after the Boston Bruins traded him to the Senators. Ullmark has a 39-22-8 record in 72 career games with the Senators, to go along with an .899 save percentage and a 2.82 goals-against average.

He previously won the Vezina and Jennings trophies as a member of the Bruins following the 2022-23 season, when he finished the year with a 1.89 goals-against average and a .938 save percentage.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.29.2025

1373387 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Good and bad surface in Maple Leafs' hard-fought overtime loss

Luke Fox

The latest submission by the Toronto Maple Leafs is a Rorschach test, a glass filled halfway to the brim.

Depending on your level of optimism/pessimism, read whatever you like into the team's hard-fought 3-2 overtime loss to the Atlantic Division's first-place(!) Detroit Red Wings.

Is the glass half full or half empty?

"A lot of good things, but we fell short by one point," Craig Berube told reporters at Little Caesars Arena.

The head coach wasn't happy or angry.

He just was.

Much like the entertaining but unconvincing back-and-forth tilt that unfolded Sunday.

On one hand, the Leafs have lost all three games this season to these resurgent Wings, who have supplanted Toronto as the team to catch in the Atlantic.

On the other hand, the Leafs have rebounded nicely from their disastrous 0-4 pre-holiday road trip and have now collected points in three straight — and have looked engaged and dynamic doing so.

"Our intensity is picking up," said John Tavares, whose diligent forecheck set up a vicious Nick Robertson strike. "That element of the game is so important."

The good: Toronto started on time, scoring first, and didn't appear to suffer any emotional letdown from Saturday's wild home victory over Ottawa.

The bad: The Leafs blew another early lead, which is a disturbing trend.

How's this for a wild stat? The Maple Leafs have lost as many games as they've won when scoring first (9-6-3).

A bunch more good: The Christmas break seems to have served Auston Matthews well. The captain led all skaters in shots Saturday (nine) and Sunday (five). He's blasting away and would've won the game for the road team had it not been for that pesky red piece of iron behind Cam Talbot.

Toronto's league-worst power play has awoken; its blueline is inching toward full health (Chris Tanev is back to 20 minutes, and Brandon Carlo is skating again); and third-string goaltender Dennis Hildeby looks like the real deal.

Granted, the towering Swede gave the puck away in the extra frame when he attempted to one-hand swat a loose puck in the slot to Matthews, and it instead landed on the tape of hero Simon Edvinsson. ("Should've used both hands," the goalie admitted.)

But Hildeby stopped 33 of 36 shots, was stellar on the penalty kill and was a major reason why the Leafs reached a fourth period in the first place.

Fun fact: Hildeby has made more saves this season (351) than Joseph Woll (325) and Anthony Stolarz (312) despite starting at least two fewer games than both.

He'll give Woll ample time to rest between starts during a hectic January schedule.

"He's showed he can be a long-time NHL goalie," Matthew Knies said.

The biggest bad: Despite their recent run of strong play, the Leafs still sit last in the Atlantic (40 points), and considering the conference's rampant parity, every point matters.

That Detroit improved to 5-1 in overtime and Toronto fell to 4-5, for example, is significant.

Still, the vibes are positive in Leafland. There are more glass-half-fullers in the room than there were a week ago.



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"They're a good team over there, but we held our own," Knies said, sounding encouraged. "I think we've found our identity. There's a lot of chemistry between lines now."

That chemistry must continue to translate to points, however.

Starting Tuesday at home versus the New Jersey Devils (42 points), another competitive but catchable foe ahead of the Leafs in the standings.

"Our game looks good right now," Berube said.

"We just gotta keep going."

Fox's Fast Five

- Bobby McMann is a streaky player, and we're seeing the best version of the winger right now.

Making the most of his promotion to the top line, McMann scored twice last week and was impactful again Sunday. He has posted 10 shots during the Leafs' three-game point streak and has been driving the net hard, unafraid of physicality or aggressive puck retrievals.

In Detroit, McMann's four hits matched a game high, and he drew the ire of goalie Cam Talbot, taking a debatable penalty in the process.

"Making it really hard on the opponent," Tavares said.

Because of McMann's speed, we would've liked to see Berube reward him with a shift during three-on-three OT.

Play the hot hand.

- William Nylander registered perfect regular-season attendance in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. He missed his fifth game of 2025-26 on Sunday due to the lower-body injury suffered in Saturday's home win and is listed as day-to-day.

Rookie Easton Cowan returned to the lineup after three straight scratches but was limited to a team-low 9:53 and struggled at times with D-zone play and physical battles.

- New assistant Steve Sullivan's power play is on fire. The Maple Leafs improved to 3-for-5 since Sullivan's promotion from the AHL Marlies.

"Power play looks a lot more confident," Berube said. "It's not static."

Further, the refreshed top unit empowers playmaker Matias Maccelli — a frequent resident of Berube's doghouse — to get more involved in the offence.

"New perspective is good. New voice is good," said Knies, who has sniped twice on the man-advantage since Sullivan took the reins.

"We have some new looks, and it's been working out for us."

- Toronto is on pace for its second-worst road record (5-10-1) in the past 30 years. (The club went 8-27-6 in 2014-15.)

The Leafs' gap in points percentage at home (.659) versus the road (.344) is the worst in the league this season. The Flames' gap (.647 / .333) is the second-worst.

- Let's give props to Edvinsson.

The Red Wings defenceman who looked like a guy unfit to finish a hockey game after having his leg pummeled point-blank by a Matthews' clapper.

Somehow, Edvinsson recovered after hobbling and flopping around the ice and needing to visit the trainers' room. He returned to score the OT winner.

And the sore leg?

"It's a long way from the heart," Edvinsson said.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Slafkovsky emerging as a threat that can't be ignored

Eric Engels

TAMPA BAY — Jon Cooper can't avoid the question.

Every time the Montreal Canadiens play his Tampa Bay Lightning, he knows it's coming about Nick Suzuki. The Tampa coach, who will also head up Team Canada at the upcoming Olympics, has been consistently effusive in his praise of the Canadiens' captain whenever he's been asked about him over the last couple of years, and he'd have likely delivered another great clip had he been asked once more about Suzuki following Sunday's game.

But Cooper was anything but surprised to be fielding a question about another Canadiens player whose name starts with "S" after his Lightning stole away the Atlantic Division lead in a shootout at Benchmark International Arena.

Even with the Canadian Olympic roster less than 72 hours from being revealed and Suzuki still battling for a spot to play for Cooper in Milan, the coach had the best vantage point to form an opinion on Juraj Slafkovsky — Sunday's most dominant player.

"I saw it up close," said Cooper, "he can really shoot it."

It was after setting up a goal for Ivan Demidov that Slafkovsky answered one from the Lightning with the laser from the middle of the slot Cooper was referring to.

Cooper also watched the six-foot-three, 225-pound winger score the game-tying goal with less than four seconds to go to cap a period he completely took over, and he was marked by it.

We're talking about a coach who's overseen the development of some of the greatest talent in hockey over a generation, so that's something.

"How old was (Slafkovsky) when he first played, 18? And how old is he now, 21? I feel like he's been around forever and he's just 21 years old," said Cooper. "What he does have is the physical attributes to be a dominant power forward. But he's also got a skillset..."

Without it, the Canadiens wouldn't have gotten a point, let alone had a chance at two on Sunday.

Without Slafkovsky, who was drafted first overall in 2022 to become the exact player he is right now, the Canadiens wouldn't be challenging the Lightning and Detroit Red Wings for first in the Atlantic. Without him, who knows how they'd have guaranteed themselves a winning record through a December that saw them play 13 games through the first 23 days.

It is Slafkovsky's progression that has been most noteworthy of late.

Beforehand, Suzuki was on an island as the only true play driver for the Canadiens up front commanding special attention from the opposition. But Slafkovsky's emergence in the role is now impossible to ignore.

"I think the game has slowed down for him, and that happens gradually, but sometimes it jumps a big, big, big step," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis. "I find the game has really slowed down for him; his reads are so much clearer, he's using his body, using his shot more, and it's a major evolution for him. It's fun to see him play like that."



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It's what the Canadiens need to see from Slafkovsky right now, with Suzuki and his linemates struggling a bit of late.

Sunday's game was one of only eight in which the captain didn't register a point since the start of the season. It came on the heels of some relatively ineffective performances — at least at five-on-five — from Suzuki's line, with Cole Caufield and Zach Bolduc, which was disassembled after two rough periods in Tampa.

What they haven't been managing well is exactly what Slafkovsky, Oliver Kapanen and Ivan Demidov have managed particularly well.

"I feel there's going to be less and less room out there as the season progresses," said St. Louis. "The standings are so tight and you're playing these games that are like playoff games. I think (the Suzuki line) has got to do a better job of playing in tight space and winning battles, because once they get the stuff in space, they're elite at it. But it's to create more instances. And it's not just one guy; I think they can do a better job as a line of keeping pucks alive and probably winning some of these battles to extend the O-zone possession and now they get those pucks in space. I just feel they lack instances of that, and I feel they're getting frustrated a bit. I lived it, it's not fun, but the answers are everywhere, and we'll find them."

Demidov and Kapanen are buying them a bit of time, with Slafkovsky doing the heavy lifting to elevate the trio.

As Cooper said, "That kid line they have going there is pretty special, and you could tell he's the leader of that group there."

It's what Slafkovsky is determined to be in just his fourth season in the NHL.

It's what he said he wants to be in his second Olympics with Slovakia.

In Slafkovsky's first Games, in Beijing, he scored seven goals in seven contests as a 17-year-old.

"I was just a little kid when I went there the first time, and honestly, three out of the goals that went in there were just lucky shots," the Kosice native said.

Now Slafkovsky is a man.

Check that...

Now Slafkovsky is the Man.

"I'm a more complete player," he said.

"I feel like I just demand the puck more from the other guys, and I feel more comfortable with my touches and ability to create something and shoot and get goals," Slafkovsky added. "I just want to drive and play with the puck more, and that game kind of suits me."

Everyone's taking notice.

Four of Slafkovsky's 13 goals and four of his 15 assists on the season have been notched over his last four games, but his play for the better part of two months has popped to anyone watching.

If Slafkovsky keeps this up as Suzuki and Caufield rediscover their best selves, it'll bode extremely well for the Canadiens.

It's already made a big difference for them.

"There's a reason Montreal's knocking at the division lead," said Cooper. "This isn't a fluke. It's a team that's tasted the playoffs, and they've got young legs and skilled players."

Slafkovsky, Demidov, Kapanen, Suzuki and Caufield are just some of them.

Jacob Fowler's young legs have produced a 3-1-2 record through his first six games as a goaltender.

In front of him, fellow 21-year-old Lane Hutson notched his 31st assist of the season while 25-year-old Noah Dobson had a goal and an assist to bring his point total to 25 in his first 38 games with the Canadiens.

A lot of the big pieces are in place, but Slafkovsky is proving to be a huge one.

"I think first off, he's a specimen, right? He's massive, so strong on the puck, and then when you combine that with good vision and just the skillset to make plays, he's tough to handle, I'm sure, for defencemen," said Dobson. "Played against him a little; he's no fun down low when he's holding on to pucks, and those guys really work well off one another with Demi and Kappy, so he's playing great hockey."

It didn't cost Cooper's team an extra point, but he knew it earned the Canadiens one on this night.

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Sportsnet.ca / Sunday Overreactions: Can Sabres finally end playoff drought?

Michael Amato

Trade everyone. Fire the coach. Start the tank.

Those were the cries by many a frustrated fan early in the season when the Buffalo Sabres seemed destined for another year of crushed hopes and expectations. However, in a conference where no one is truly out of it, the Sabres have clawed their way back up the standings in what can only be described as a Christmas miracle.

Since the Sabres last made the playoffs, the NHL has gone through a lockout, a pandemic, seen two franchises relocate and welcomed two new expansion teams. It's been a minute. For Sabres fans who have endured a drought this long, this recent winning streak must look like a tall glass of ice water in the middle of the Sahara. The question is, are the playoffs an attainable goal for Buffalo, or is it a mirage?

Sabres have a legitimate chance to reach the post-season

At one point, it looked like the Sabres had the inside track at the No. 1 pick, though things have changed seemingly overnight. Losers of 12 of their first 17 games, the Sabres are suddenly tied for the final playoff spot in the East and are the hottest team in the league after eight straight victories. We've heard of new coach bumps before, but Buffalo really took off after Jarmo Kekäläinen replaced Kevyn Adams as the general manager. There seems to be a new energy around the team, and the Sabres are playing inspired hockey, winning three games during this hot streak in either overtime or a shootout. In a wide-open conference, Buffalo does have a legitimate chance to end its lengthy playoff drought.

Overreaction? – No

The biggest reason for optimism around this Sabres team should be a healthy Josh Norris. Since returning from injury, Norris has 11 points in 10 games this month, and Buffalo is now boasting some serious depth down the middle. Tage Thompson, Norris and Ryan McLeod are nothing to sneeze at in the top nine and help the Sabres match up with most teams in the East. Josh Doan has also been a great return in the JJ Peterka trade, playing on the first line and on pace for 22 goals.

Plus, Alex Lyon is now starting to separate himself from Buffalo's three-headed goalie monster. The journeyman netminder, who has a history of



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stabilizing a season or two in the past, has been in goal for six of Buffalo's eight victories over this torrid stretch and owns a .920 save percentage during this run.

The Sabres have more talent than their record showed earlier in the season, and if they can stay healthy and get good goaltending, there's no reason they shouldn't be able to stay in the mix down the stretch. If all the stars align, Buffalo might even finally reward its fans with another appearance in the post-season.

Marc-Andre Fleury can still help a goalie-needy team

Perhaps the comeback of 44-year-old Philip Rivers has inspired Marc-Andre Fleury. There have been rumblings that Fleury is open to a return in the right situation after retiring at the end of last season, and he's picked a good time to test the waters. There are a handful of teams that are fighting for playoff spots that could be looking for more help in goal. The Montreal Canadiens have been struggling for saves all season and resorted to calling up Jacob Fowler perhaps earlier than they wanted to. Edmonton traded for Tristan Jarry, who promptly got injured, putting the Oilers in a predicament once again. Then there's the Los Angeles Kings, who lost Darcy Kuemper after a collision with Mikko Rantanen. If one of those teams gets desperate enough, it wouldn't be the worst idea to give Fleury a call.

Overreaction? – No

There have been few NHLers more beloved than Fleury over the past 20 years, and it's always a treat to watch him play, but how much could he really help a team right now at 41 years of age? Even though Fleury's numbers weren't great over his final two seasons in Minnesota, he'd still likely be a step up from what a few teams have been getting in goal this season. Montreal (.885) and Edmonton (.883) are 29th and 30th, respectively, in team save percentage, and Fleury could benefit either one by providing some stability between the pipes. The Canadiens are giving Fowler a look right now, so the Oilers might be the best fit for Fleury. With Jarry hurt, Edmonton is down to Calvin Pickard and the recently recalled Connor Ingram, which is the furthest thing from ideal. Pickard has a losing record and an .861 this year, while Ingram, despite looking good in his first three starts with the Oilers, had some ugly numbers in the AHL prior to being called up. Fleury would be a nice insurance policy and a stopgap until Jarry gets back.

It wouldn't be the worst idea to bring Fleury in for his experience, and he could prove valuable as the season drags on. With the Olympic tournament coming up in February, the second half of the season will be very condensed, so relying on Jarry too heavily could be costly. Jarry has battled injuries in recent years, and if he were to miss more time, the prospect of an Ingram/Pickard tandem would be problematic in the playoffs. Having Fleury around would at least give the Oilers someone who has seen and done it all in the post-season if they needed to call on him.

Rantanen will finish top five in penalty minutes

One of these things is not like the other. Mikko Rantanen is currently sitting fourth in penalty minutes in the NHL this season, next to players like Nikita Zadorov, Logan Stanley, Adam Klapka and Curtis Douglas. The Dallas Stars forward was actually tied for the league lead in PIMs just prior to the holiday break, before Zadorov picked up a misconduct on a fight, which vaulted him ahead of the pack. The main reason Rantanen is high on the list is because of a pair of questionable hits in a week during late November, where he tallied 37 penalty minutes over two games. It's unusual to see a player of Rantanen's calibre this high on the PIMs list, and there's a chance he could finish in the top five this season with how many penalty minutes he's banked.

Overreaction? – Yes

Rantanen isn't your typical superstar when it comes to penalty minutes. Those misconducts notwithstanding, Rantanen does already have a season in which he posted more than 80 penalty minutes and another four campaigns with more than 50 PIMs. That said, I can't see him finishing the season ahead of a handful of these players, where physicality is more a part of their job description. Even if the New York Islanders and Calgary Flames are looking to avenge the questionable hits Rantanen delivered when the Stars play both teams again in March, don't expect the superstar to reciprocate. There's no doubt Dallas head coach Glen Gulutzan has warned Rantanen to avoid any future skirmishes, as he's too important to the Stars to be getting kicked out of games or sitting in the penalty box for any significant amount of time. Rantanen should be on his best behaviour going forward, which will likely preclude him from finishing top five in PIMs.

Raddysch earning himself huge extension this summer

Where would the Tampa Bay Lightning be without Darren Raddysch this season? The Lightning have dealt with a myriad of injuries on their blue line, and none more important than that of Victor Hedman. The Tampa captain has had two different stays on the sidelines due to injuries in 2025-26, with his latest injury keeping him out until February. That's forced the Lightning to lean on Raddysch significantly, as he's averaged more than 21 minutes per game this year and nearly 25 minutes in December, while scoring at a 71-point pace on the campaign. The 29-year-old is only making \$975k and will be a free agent this summer, so expect Raddysch to cash in for a big payday if this keeps up.

Overreaction? – No

When you look at this summer's free agent class of defencemen, it's pretty thin. Ryan McDonagh was recently re-signed, and it's hard to imagine John Carlson not doing the same with the Washington Capitals at some point. Rasmus Andersson is very likely to get traded and potentially sign an extension with his new team, and beyond that, there are a lot of older blueliners who are more physical than offensive. Raddysch could find himself with a big market.

The salary cap is also going to make a big jump, which will work in Raddysch's favour but maybe not Tampa's. They just inked fellow defenceman J.J. Moser to a significant extension, and if someone offers Raddysch 6x\$6M, or something in that range, it could be hard for the Lightning to match given their tight cap situation. Whether he stays in Tampa or moves on, expect Raddysch to cash in big time when free agency opens.

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Sportsnet.ca / Senators no longer the little brother in Battle of Ontario rivalry with Maple Leafs

Alex Adams

OTTAWA — The Battle of Ontario is back, and we are all here for it.

On Saturday night, in their first rematch since Toronto prevailed over Ottawa in the Stanley Cup Playoffs last spring, we witnessed the highest-scoring game ever between the Senators and the Maple Leafs.

It had everything: warm-up shenanigans between Thomas Chabot and Auston Matthews, goals, fisticuffs and stars being stars from each side of the provincial rivalry.



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But the Leafs are no longer reliably the older brother pounding on the little brother, although at times it did feel like that in their 7-5 victory. Ottawa has grown up all of a sudden and is playing at the pace of Ridley Greig on an empty net breakaway.

For a long time, the Toronto Maple Leafs were regular-season heroes, while for almost a decade, the Senators dreamt of "meaningful games" late in the season. During those years, the flame of archrivalry between the two teams has been kept alive mostly by the Senators and their fans. To the Leafs, Ottawa was mostly just a minor nuisance.

But the rivalry has swapped dynamics since the early 2000s, when the Senators were the skilled team, but not hard-nosed enough, while Toronto was the feisty, plucky, scrappy team. The roles have reversed with the feisty Greig, Brady Tkachuk, and Nick Cousins; even Tim Stutzle has some jam. Toronto misses Max Domi's father, Gary Roberts and Travis Green, now on the enemy's side, have been replaced by Matthews, William Nylander, John Tavares and the ghost of Mitch Marner.

The Senators love beating Toronto: even ask their owner, Michael Andlauer, who, to memorialize the empty-net slapshot, has declared Jan. 10 — when the Florida Panthers travel to the Canadian Tire Centre for the first time this season — as Greig bobblehead night.

Since 2005-06, at least one of the two teams has made the playoffs in 16 of the 20 seasons. However, this has only happened three times in the same season. Last spring, when the regional foes squared off in a hotly contested playoff series, Toronto bested the Sens in six tight games, extending their historical 5-0 dominance in Battle of Ontario playoff series.

Things have changed in the last six months.

Mitch Marner is gone, while Toronto has been sporadic with an underperforming Matthews. Nylander was fabulous until he wasn't, as losses piled up, leading to Craig Berube claiming to be mystified by his team's woes: "ask those guys, not me." Toronto has been rife with injuries to its backend, with Chris Tanev and Brandon Carlo missing significant time.

Nevertheless, despite the turmoil, the Leafs find themselves just two points behind the Senators.

Meanwhile, the Sens too have had a stop-and-start season, with key injuries to their captain, Tkachuk, as well as Chabot and Shane Pinto, who's been one of the NHL breakout players of the 2025-26 campaign. Linus Ullmark has struggled mightily, and the Senators have found ways to lose, often outplaying teams while still grabbing the L.

At the moment, neither team is in a playoff spot. Both have their intentions squarely on getting to the dance, which was evident Saturday night in the first clash of the season between the two teams.

Both teams have their star centres (Matthews/Tim Stutzle), charismatic winger born of NHL bloodlines (Nylander/Tkachuk) and a set of good to great complementary pieces.

On Toronto's side, Matthews might have had his best game of the season against Ottawa, with a season-high nine shots, notching three points. We still don't know what to expect of Matthews these days. Is he the superstar who showed up against Ottawa, or the good but not great player now on pace for the fewest points since his rookie season?

It's been a similar story lately with many of the Leafs' stars. Nylander opened the scoring versus Ottawa but left the game. He's an all-world talent who has feuded with his coach and recently went scoreless in eleven straight. With Marner gone, the core four is no more, and an aging Tavares is slowly losing his umph.

In the meantime, Morgan Rielly is not having a great season, though he showed what he can still do Saturday night, setting up Matthew Knies for a beautiful game-winning goal.

Juxtapose Rielly with Ottawa's best defenceman, Jake Sanderson, who has slowly elevated into one of the best defencemen in the league.

While many of the premier players on the Leafs are sagging this season, the best of the Sens are surging. Stutzle has morphed into one of the best centres in the game while still only being 23 years of age. He scored one of the nicest goals on one of the nastiest moves you'll ever see on Hockey Night in Canada.

Finally, Ottawa has depth from Pinto and Claude Giroux on their third line, and Chabot's growth as an elite second-pairing defenceman.

Tkachuk was out with an injury for much of the season, but is regaining form.

When you look at the analytics, Ottawa's skaters have clearly been superior to Toronto's this season. Ottawa is fourth in expected goals share at five-on-five; Toronto is 22nd. Ottawa is sixth in shot differential; Toronto is 30th.

What Toronto has had, which Ottawa hasn't, is elite goaltending, which was probably the biggest difference when the two sides met in the playoffs last season and again on Saturday night. Ottawa sits last in team save percentage this season, while Toronto is 15th. Joseph Woll and Dennis Hildeby have been great, while the injured Anthony Stolarz outduelled Linus Ullmark in the playoffs last season.

Saturday night's game turned on two shots Ullmark should not have allowed. "I didn't like the two goals... and I put Leevi (Merilainen) in," said Travis Green about why he swapped goaltenders in the second.

Ullmark sits last in the NHL in goals saved above expected this season.

If Ottawa doesn't get stops, this feud could be moot.

Looking beyond this season, the two teams are in very different places. The Senators have locked up their core for the next few years, all of whom are in their early to mid-twenties. Stutzle and Sanderson are signed until at least 2030 on team-friendly deals. There's plenty of reason for hope in the next few years.

Admittedly, the Sens don't have a first-round pick this season, but the Leafs don't have one until 2028. Toronto has few prospects, and if Matthews isn't an MVP-calibre player, the window to contend may be over. But he is a player with a 69-goal season under his belt and is still under 30 years old.

There is a pathway to Beleaf in Toronto.

What Toronto has is a proven track record, making the playoffs for nine consecutive seasons. Ottawa is still plotting that course. The Leafs are also a big market team that can easily spend to the cap, which will rise in the years to come, while as a small market team, Ottawa will have to be prudent and may not be able to spend to the upper echelons.

It was Troy Stetcher of all people, with his impassioned celebration after the buzzer rang in Toronto's victory on Saturday as a brawl ensued around him, who typified the passion of the Battle of Ontario.

It wasn't just a regular-season game. It was more.

We know what hockey fans in Ontario want for their fandoms: hockey in April of every year.

Battle of Ontario 2.0.

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TSN.CA / Canucks' home-ice woes continue in loss to Sharks: 'Not good enough'

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — “Come out to the Coast, we’ll get together, have a few laughs.”

It’s easy to imagine the Vancouver Canucks sounding sarcastically like John McClane, Bruce Willis’ besieged and bloodied character from the movie Die Hard.

Every time the Canucks come home to Vancouver, it’s like, “Sure, get the fans behind us, use home ice to our advantage, have a few wins.”

In their penultimate home game of 2025, the Canucks were beaten 6-3 Saturday by the San Jose Sharks, one of the teams that still looks catchable for Vancouver in the National Hockey League standings. Nearly three months since this season began, the Canucks have won four times at Rogers Arena.

They are 4-11-1 on home ice this season. It’s like they’re playing in Nakatomi Plaza.

After going 4-1 on their pre-Christmas road trip, improving their away record to a commendable 11-8-2 (only three teams had more road wins coming out of the holiday break), the Canucks lost in Vancouver for the sixth time in seven games.

And although there was an unlucky own-goal and a strange non-call (and non-challenge) on what appeared to be pretty clear goaltender interference on the Sharks’ first goal, Vancouver fully earned the defeat.

After four days off, the Canucks were flat at the start, a step behind the speedy Sharks for most of the first two periods, and were outshot 37-27 by a team that had lost its previous three games by an aggregate score of 16-7.

“It’s not good enough,” Conor Garland, one of the Canucks who was good enough, muttered post-game. “We deserved the outcome. Just didn’t make enough plays, you know. I don’t think we got to the net enough either. I just didn’t think we were good overall.”

After three weeks of improved defensive play, when the Canucks allowed just 23.5 shots per game over a 10-game spell even as they descended to the bottom of the NHL standings, Vancouver has yielded 119 shots on goal over their last three games. Including Saturday’s empty-netter, opponents have scored 15 times.

“Early on in the year, we gave up a lot, too,” defenceman Marcus Pettersson said. “I just think we’ve got to be tighter to our checks. Sometimes we get a little hesitant, thinking you want to protect (an area) and you get too far away from your check. That last goal was a prime example. I’m protecting the front (of the net), but I get a little bit too far away from (Macklin) Celebrini and it gives him room to shoot. So, yeah, we’ve given up a lot. A lot of it is turnovers, too.”

Celebrini, the 19-year-old from North Vancouver who has become a lock for the Canadian Olympic team, was the best player on Saturday, finishing with a goal and assist, eight shots on target and 16 attempts over 21:47 of ice time.

Faster, sharper and more determined than the Canucks at the start, the Sharks led 2-0 within eight minutes and won wire to wire, although Vancouver did cut a two-goal deficit in half three times.

The Canucks never recovered from the contentious opening goal when Ryan Reaves bulldozed the puck into the net from under goalie Thatcher

Demko’s glove at 6:11 of the first period. A deflected puck trickled behind the goalie, but Demko located it in time and reached back with his blocker and appeared to have the puck covered before Reaves steamrolled through with his stick.

Referee Graham Skilliter called a good goal on the ice and, more surprisingly, Canuck coach Adam Foote, after consulting with his staff, chose not to challenge that dubious interpretation even after Demko had raised his hand immediately after the scrambled goal.

During the television timeout that soon followed the goal, Demko skated straight to the bench to speak with Foote. Twice.

“I mean, when I found it, I got my hand on top of it and swept it out,” the goalie said of the play. “And then he pushed my entire arm in the net. I mean, you see challenges where guys are jabbing legs and whatever else in the net, and they usually get called back.”

Demko said he thought the Canucks should have challenged the goal.

Foote said: “It was hard to see on that (camera) angle if he had it completely covered, but our guys didn’t think it was going to get called back.”

Sometimes coaches call for a review just to show his players or, specifically, his goalie that he has their back. But Saturday wasn’t that time for Foote.

A master at compartmentalization — as most goalies are — Demko looked out of sorts when the game restarted and was sliding to his right, guessing behind a moving screen, when John Klingberg’s wrist from the point beat him to his left to make it 2-0 at 7:55.

Demko said the second goal had nothing to do with the first.

“I didn’t like the second one,” he said of his performance. “Didn’t love the fourth one. I thought we should have challenged the first one. Tough bounce on the third one. But yeah, I thought I just had to play better. I thought I did some things good and some things bad.”

“Thatcher wasn’t an issue tonight,” Foote said, protecting his goalie post-game. “It was more of we just weren’t ready to start. You can’t cruise into a game, and we got caught a little bit.”

The Canucks got goals from Linus Karlsson on the power play, Drew O’Connor shorthanded, and Marco Rossi at even strength, the latter’s first in six games with Vancouver since Quinn Hughes was traded to the Minnesota Wild.

But the centre also scored an own-goal, putting the Sharks up 3-1 at 12:38 of the second period, when he tried to clear a puck that hopped up off William Eklund’s stick in the Vancouver slot, but instead bumped it over Demko and into the net.

“There was a lot that happened (with the trade), but I think we’ve been able to digest it a little bit,” Pettersson said. “We should have had more jump tonight.”

• After missing eight games with an undisclosed injury, top centre Elias Pettersson returned to the Canucks lineup. He had three shots on net but finished minus-three over 20:47 of ice time. . . Centre Filip Chytil, out since Oct. 19 due to the latest in a series of serious concussions, skated with teammates Saturday morning in a non-contact jersey.

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