



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 30, 2026

## The News & Observer

### Carolina Hurricanes fall to Montreal Canadiens after second-period swoon

By: Staff report

Given the Olympic break in this year's NHL regular season, and the time constraints to fit the whole season in before all the ice melts of natural causes, teams across the league are dealing with myriad back-to-back game weekends this season.

Pardon the Hurricanes if they're not sympathetic to other teams' plight. Sunday's 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens was the second leg of the Canes' 13th of 15 back-to-back set this season. Carolina is 8-2-3 this season in the first of back-to-back games, but just 6-6-1 in Game 2s after Sunday's result.

Though it came on the heels of a rare three-day break in the schedule, this weekend's back-to-back set was the first of three such sets in the final 11 games of the regular season for Carolina, which continues to sit atop the NHL's Metropolitan Division and is vying for the top playoff seed in the Eastern Conference.

Now, with nine games remaining, the playoffs have essentially arrived, if not for the Canes then certainly for a handful of the teams remaining on their schedule, which will serve to ramp up the intensity and theoretically help prepare Carolina for the rigors of the playoff chase.

The Hurricanes are going to have to do a better job handling that than they did Sunday.

Andrei Svechnikov was a bright spot early for Carolina, but three Montreal goals in the second period set the Canadiens up for victory, their sixth in seven games as they try to fend

off Boston and maintain a hold on third place in the Atlantic Division.

Nick Suzuki scored twice in the second for the Habs and added an assist on Cole Caufield's 46th goal of the season. Suzuki's second of the frame came with seven seconds to play, on a power play, and sent the Canes into the locker room reeling.

Svechnikov put the Hurricanes on the board first at 8:37 of the first period as part of the Canes' suddenly red-hot power play. After Martinook drew the call, the top unit went to work and Svechnikov beat Dobes with a wired one-timer from the top of the right circle over the keeper's short-side left shoulder.

Suzuki's first of the game, on a feed from Caufield on a fast break, tied the game after a period of extended Carolina pressure, and came on just the eighth shot on goal against Frederik Andersen.

Caufield's marker came on a wrister from the mid-slot after he shook free and beat Andersen under the arm on the blocker side. Suzuki's second came on the doorstep on the power play after Eric Robinson was penalized for tripping the Canadiens' Noah Dobson.

Carolina fought off one penalty kill in the third period, and failed on two more power play chances. The Hurricanes also pulled the goalie in the game's final minutes, but could draw no closer.

The Canes play six of their final nine regular-season games on the road.



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## The Athletic

### Jack Adams Award candidates: Here are 8 to watch as the NHL's top coach

By: Julian McKenzie

There is a competitive race for the Jack Adams Award, given to the league's best coach — perhaps the strongest race we've seen in recent memory. With fewer than three weeks to go until the playoffs begin, nearly half the league's coaches have a legitimate chance to be recognized as the best.

Some of the longtime best bench bosses, including Jared Bednar and Jon Cooper — neither of whom, somehow, has ever won the award — are in the conversation this year. But newer coaches also have reason to be considered favorites, as do veteran coaches who were in consideration for the Jack Adams in the past and now have returned to the fold.

NHL broadcasters (not writers) vote on this award at the end of the regular season. It wasn't easy, but we whittled down a list of candidates to eight, plus a few honorable mentions.

Jon Cooper, Tampa Bay

We continue to recognize Cooper as one of the league's best coaches because he perennially guides one of the most prominent franchises to the playoffs. But Cooper, a two-time Jack Adams finalist, has never won the award and hasn't been a finalist since 2019. That year, the Lightning had the league's best record, and that's as much as the team would like to discuss about that season. That nomination came a year before Cooper won his first championship with the Lightning. This year, Cooper again could be among the league's three finalists, because he has guided one of the most balanced teams.

Tampa Bay is in the league's top three in goals for, fewest goals allowed, Corsi and expected goals percentage. It ranks first in high-danger chances for and has a top-10 penalty kill. Yes, the Lightning have a Hart Trophy candidate in Nikita Kucherov and a Vezina candidate in Andrei Vasilevskiy. But Cooper deserves credit for coaching a strong team that could win its first Atlantic Division title since 2019.

Lindy Ruff, Buffalo

There will be groans here about NHL awards being narrative-driven. Fine. But would anyone be wrong to name Lindy Ruff as this year's Jack Adams Award winner? In a year when the Sabres are on the verge of ending a lengthy playoff drought? Ruff and the Sabres haven't had it rough since early December. Their run to the top began as they were transitioning from general manager Kevyn Adams to Jarmo Kekäläinen, and it could lead to the Sabres winning a division title and having the Eastern Conference's best record.

The Sabres are 34-6-4 since Dec. 9, the best record by any team in that span. In that period, Buffalo ranks fourth in goals and sixth in goals per game, and fifth in penalty-kill

percentage. If Ruff wins, he will have gone two decades between Jack Adams Awards, having previously won in 2006 with the Sabres. The Sabres have a ton of young talent that, perhaps, should've had them in the playoffs sooner than now. But Ruff will go down as the coach who finally got them over the hump. And that might be enough to entice voters to choose him.

Jared Bednar, Colorado

The league's best team that has done everything right (except their power play, for some reason), and Bednar is at the forefront. He should be, at the very least. Considering the Avalanche's last three seasons, in which they finished seventh and eighth-best in the league, the fact that the Avs are atop the standings this season shouldn't be held against Bednar — even though the Avs have two all-world players in Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar.

Last year, they were the sixth-best offensive team (goals and goals per game) and 12th-best in goals allowed per game. This season, the Avs are the best in goals for and have allowed the fewest in the league. The Avalanche's penalty kill has also risen from 12th-best to second-best in the league. Yes, the Avalanche should be a contending team, given the talent they have. But there's been genuine improvement this season, which has led to the Avs becoming the best team in the league. Colorado's (likely) rise to the Presidents' Trophy should help, not hurt, Bednar's case.

Dan Muse, Pittsburgh

Dan Muse is relatively unknown compared to others on this list. But his performance with the supposedly draft-lottery-destined Penguins has turned many heads. Expectations were low for the first-year head coach, who previously worked under Peter Laviolette with Nashville and the New York Rangers. And despite being a newcomer, Muse has won over the team's veterans who didn't want previous coach Mike Sullivan to leave.

The Penguins were once considered a likely draft destination for Gavin McKenna after he finished his collegiate season at Penn State. Instead, the Pens are battling for a playoff spot while hoping injuries don't do them in. If the Penguins stay afloat and make the postseason, Muse, who leads an aging core with a top-10 offense that is playing well above expectations and projections, might be popular among voters.

Senators coach Travis Green could be a dark-horse candidate for the Jack Adams Award if Ottawa makes the playoffs. James Guillory / Imagin Images

Travis Green, Ottawa

In his second year with the Senators, Travis Green continues to help his players progress. The advanced numbers,



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including Corsi, expected goals against and high-danger chances, have them rubbing shoulders with the NHL's elite. The only team in the NHL that can match the Senators in shot suppression is Carolina. If not for their issues with goaltending and their penalty kill, the Sens would be worried less about their playoff hopes.

In December and January, a 2-6-1 slide had them falling down the standings toward last place in the Eastern Conference. However, the Senators have since dug out of that hole with a 15-4-3 run since Jan. 25. Ottawa remains in trouble because of injuries to its back end, namely Jake Sanderson and Thomas Chabot. Which means if the Senators make the playoffs in spite of that, Green deserves consideration.

Rick Bowness, Columbus

Rick Bowness was on a boat with his wife in January when Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell called and asked him to take over the club. Bowness joined a Blue Jackets team that was 28th in the NHL, tied for the worst record in the Eastern Conference. He has elevated Columbus into a playoff spot. Bowness deserves a ton of credit for pushing an underachieving Blue Jackets team into a dark horse, endearing himself to the players in the process.

Since Bowness was hired on Jan. 12, the Jackets have gone 19-5-4 and have improved greatly in limiting goals. The Jackets were 19-19-7 when Bowness took over. Now, they've become one of the league's best defensive teams in the second half of the season and one of its biggest surprises. Bowness should be a contender for the Jack Adams this year, especially if his team returns to the top three in the Metropolitan Division.

Rod Brind'Amour, Carolina

There seems to be some fatigue, and maybe even some skepticism, around the Carolina Hurricanes and Rod

Brind'Amour. It's a team that consistently ranks among the league's best in advanced metrics such as expected goals, chance generation and limiting chances. This season's Hurricanes are no different, as they are in the top five in goals per game and in the top 10 in goals against per game. So, if coaches such as Bednar and Cooper can get love for the Jack Adams, so should Brind'Amour, who won it in 2021.

The Canes finished second in their division last season, behind the conference-best Washington Capitals. This season, Carolina could be the East's best team if it can hold off Buffalo and Tampa Bay. And Carolina could make another run to the conference finals. Brind'Amour is again at the forefront of Carolina's success.

Joel Quenneville, Anaheim

The Pacific Division has been poor, so it is tough to give any of these teams too much praise. At present, none of the teams in the division would hold a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. But the Anaheim Ducks are wading in favorable waters and on track for their first division title in nearly a decade and their first playoff appearance since 2018. Veteran coach Joel Quenneville is playing a significant role in the Ducks' return to prominence.

The Ducks, with a core of young talent, wouldn't have been faulted for missing the playoffs this season. But Cutter Gauthier, Beckett Sennecke, Jackson LaCombe and Leo Carlsson are among those who have played above expectations. Quenneville, who won the Jack Adams in 2000 with St. Louis, clearly has elevated the standard in Anaheim, and the players have risen to the occasion with a top-10 offense.

Honorable mentions: Marco Sturm (Boston), Glen Gulutzan (Dallas), Martin St. Louis (Montreal), André Tourigny (Utah), Patrick Roy (New York Islanders)

## NHL weekend rankings: A stunning coaching change in Vegas shakes up the Pacific

By: Sean McIndoe

Well, we didn't see that one coming.

Maybe we should have, given that the Vegas Golden Knights don't exactly have a reputation as a patient franchise. They've spent every year of their existence as aspiring Stanley Cup contenders, and they've made it clear that failure isn't an option. Given how much failing they've been doing this year, maybe we should have expected yesterday's bombshell, with John Tortorella replacing Bruce Cassidy as head coach with just eight games left to play.

What does it all mean? Let's dig into it...

Bonus five: Reactions to a coaching shocker

5. The Golden Knights are bad: This isn't news, but the change really brings it into focus. They're going to lose more games than they'll win for the first time in franchise history, and only loser points and a weak Pacific have disguised just how bad they've been. Nobody can score, they can't get a save, Jack Eichel somehow has zero power-play goals, Rasmus Andersson looks like a bust, and offseason prize Mitch Marner is playing out of position on the way to his

worst offensive output since he was 20 years old. Other than that, going great.

4. John Tortorella is a fascinating choice: Maybe not a bad one, although we'll have to see how it all plays out. He's a known commodity, and you wonder how his schtick will play in Vegas. His reputation as a guy that players hate playing for is overwrought, but it's fair to ask whether a roster of superstars who chose this destination will be on board for the Torts Experience. Pete DeBoer? Total bum.

3. Tortorella should probably rent: If he fails, he'll get fired. If he succeeds, he'll still get fired, but maybe a year or two later. Tortorella becomes the fourth coach in the Knights' nine-season history. Gerard Gallant won a conference title and the Jack Adams with an expansion team and lasted two more years; Cassidy won a Cup and got two more and change.

2. You didn't expect this: Yes, you. Or at least you in the general sense of my readers, because Cassidy was the ninth-safest coach in this year's prediction contest. Then again, the coach right above him is Craig Berube, and the two right below him are Sheldon Keefe and Dean Evason, so maybe we should have figured it out.



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1. This could work: As everyone almost instantly pointed out, this kind of move is close to unprecedented, but it has worked before — namely when the Devils went from Robbie Fforek to Larry Robinson with days left in the season and then won the Cup. The Knights still have to get past the whole being bad thing, but if Tortorella can juice them up to “marginally better than mediocre,” that might be enough in the Pacific, at least.

On to this week’s rankings...

## Road to the Cup

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

Heartbreaking: The worst person you know just scored a great goal.

5. Buffalo Sabres (45-21-8, +36 true goals differential\*) – I did not jinx the Sabres. Don’t put in the newspaper that I jinxed the Sabres. They only lost three in a row since we declared them playoff locks, and they snapped that streak on Saturday. It’s fine. We’re fine.

4. Tampa Bay Lightning (46-21-6, +62) – All the best to Victor Hedman.

3. Dallas Stars (44-18-12, +48) – I don’t care how many times you see it, it’s scary every time.

2. Carolina Hurricanes (46-21-6, +40) – With the division wrapped, there isn’t much to play for down the stretch beyond home ice in the conference final. For what it’s worth, this is their first time being this high in the rankings since November.

1. Colorado Avalanche (48-14-10, +88) – It really feels like the Hart Trophy might be slipping away from Nathan MacKinnon, as fans and media voters lock in on Nikita Kucherov’s recent heroics and Connor McDavid dragging the Leon Draisaitl-less Oilers to a playoff spot. There’s still a very strong case for MacKinnon, but at this point you wonder if being the front-runner all season isn’t hurting his chances with voters who are looking for some late-season novelty.

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

Not ranked: Anaheim Ducks – So this might really be happening.

The Anaheim Ducks look like they’re going to win the Pacific Division, at least as far as the regular-season standings go. The Oilers beat them on Saturday, which keeps the race open, but Edmonton seems likely to run out of time. The Ducks control their own destiny and are still the favorites to take the top seed.

And no, that’s not going to get them into the top five, because the Pacific is still the Pacific and it’s bad. My guess is you won’t see many experts picking the Ducks to emerge from the first two rounds, with the Oilers and Knights still getting the benefit of the doubt as legitimate contenders. The majority probably won’t even pick Anaheim in round one, because the novelty of the crossover Mammoth will be too hard to resist.

But that doesn’t mean it’s not one of the season’s best stories. The Ducks came into the season as the classic

rebuild trying to make the transition into ... well, something. This is supposed to be the hardest part of a true rebuild scenario; anyone can strip a team down to the studs and collect picks, but we’ve seen plenty try to flip the switch and start winning again only to find they can’t make the transition. This was the Ducks’ year to at least get back into the mix. That felt like the best-case scenario.

Instead, they’ve skipped the entire mushy middle and gone straight to the top of the division. You could have got 35-to-1 odds on that at the start of the season, and you’d have felt like a fool for taking them, because it would have been a sucker’s bet. Even with Joel Quenneville and a young core aging into its prime, it was too big a leap. Back in my season preview, I left the Ducks to the very end and then made my dramatic prediction: “I kind of sort of think they’re making the playoffs this season.” And even that felt like a bold stand at the time. Today? It barely even counts as a good call.

The bigger question is what comes next. Are this year’s Ducks going to follow in the path of, say, last year’s Canadiens — the good young team that makes a surprise playoff appearance, loses quickly, but learns from the experience and comes back ready to take another step? Or will they be more like the Devils, a flawed team having a strong year that immediately regresses?

We’ll find out. For now, Ducks fans are under no obligation to even pretend to care, because they’re just enjoying the ride. And if six weeks from now, they’re watching their team prep for the Western Conference final, they can save this column and toss it on the pile of predictions that completely whiffed on this year’s team. It will have plenty of company.

They’re hosting Toronto tonight, which was going to be the big Radko Gudas payback game until his injury put that in doubt. For now, it should be an easy two points as they make up their game in hand over Edmonton.

## The bottom five

The five teams headed towards dead last and a shot at Gavin McKenna or Ivar Stenberg.

Wait, writers on this site are allowed to get predictions right?

5. St. Louis Blues (31-30-11, -33) – This California road trip will make or break their chances at a miracle playoff run. I’m still betting on “break,” but their recent wins have certainly put the bottom of the lottery into flux.

4. Calgary Flames (31-34-8, -37) – They’ve got points in six straight, including five wins. But before you worry too much about their lottery odds, check out the brutal schedule on this upcoming road trip. If they start winning those games, we can get concerned.

3. New York Rangers (30-35-9, -23) – The whole “the J.T. Miller trade may have been one of the worst in NHL history for both teams” thing is gaining steam and I’m kind of here for it.

2. Chicago Blackhawks (27-34-13, -50) – Friday’s blowout loss to the Rangers did two things: put the Hawks solidly in contention for the second-best lottery odds, and produced one hell of a photo.

1. Vancouver Canucks (21-43-8, -91) – They’ve lost five in a row and given up 25 goals along the way, while also becoming the first team mathematically eliminated from the



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postseason. Honestly, for an active tank, that's a pretty good week.

**Not ranked: Winnipeg Jets** – The big question heading into the second half for the Jets was whether they could make a push back into the playoff picture, or would instead plummet all the way down to the bottom of the standings.

The season isn't over, but it's close enough that now we know the answer: No. As in, neither.

There was a time when it looked like that playoff push could happen, peaking with three straight wins in early March that at least made you wonder. That on its own felt like a surprise, given how far off the pace they'd fallen after a disastrous midseason losing streak that hit 11 games. It didn't last long, but was just enough to move the Jets into the dreaded mushy middle where fans aren't even sure what they should want.

**What we do know:** The Jets will become just the fifth team to ever follow a Presidents' Trophy win with a playoff miss. We looked at a few of those teams last season, when the Rangers were dropping out of the race. For good, as it turns out; they became the fourth team on the list, and it's fair to say the season they're having right now won't give Jets fans much optimism.

**So now what?** Murat's been doing some good work with that question, wondering what next year's lineup might look like and just how close the Jets really are to contending. The

short answer to that second question is "closer than you might think, but not as close as you'd want to be." The Connor Hellebuyck factor looms large here, and his presence probably makes a bottom-out rebuild impossible. That might be a good thing — there's a reasonable question of whether the Winnipeg market could handle a multi-year absence from contending. And if you had to start with only one piece in place, a consistently elite goalie is probably the hardest to find in today's league.

Could the Jets be a playoff team next year? Absolutely, and that's true even if Hellebuyck doesn't singlehandedly carry them there. Could they be Cup contenders? That's a much tougher call, especially after how we watched the top of the Central separate this year. Add it all up, and the Jets seem like they could be headed for the dreaded mushy middle, the wasteland of bubble playoff teams that pick in the mid-teens every year.

Jets fans, what do you want to see this summer? Is it time to take a step or two back, if only to build some momentum for the future? Do you double down on what was, let's remember, a 116-point team just a year ago? Do you trust Kevin Cheveldayoff to thread the needle between those two options, and come out on the other side with something that isn't just spinning its wheels? Or are you already getting that sinking feeling that the mushy middle scenario might be unavoidable? Let me know in the comments.



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## Recap: Canes Can't Cash In Against Canadiens

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

"We played well. We created enough opportunities. We just didn't score..."

RALEIGH, N.C. - The Carolina Hurricanes struck first on Sunday, but three unanswered goals in the second period cost them a 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens at Lenovo Center.

Dominating the early going with the first 10 shots of the game, Carolina jumped out to a quick lead thanks to Andrei Svechnikov's power-play thunderbolt at 8:37. From there, though, a similar script to Tuesday's tilt between these clubs ensued; Carolina enjoyed extended forechecking shifts in the offensive zone, but couldn't convert quality chances into additional results on the scoreboard.

With Jakub Dobeš standing tall in net, the opportunistic Canadiens capitalized on three of their eight shots in the middle frame — including two in the final 2:28 — to take a two-goal lead into the third period. A pair of power plays then opened the door for the Canes to climb back into the contest, but Dobeš and a dedicated crew of shot blockers in front of him kept the scoreline static.

Frederik Andersen stopped 15 of 18 shots as he suffered a second straight defeat between the pipes.

MTL at CAR | Recap

Stats & Standouts

Forward Andrei Svechnikov netted his ninth power-play goal of the season, matching his second-highest single-season output and moving to within one of his career-high of 10, recorded last year.

Forward Seth Jarvis extended his point streak to six games (2G, 7A) with an assist on Svechnikov's power-play goal.

Forward Sebastian Aho also picked up a helper on that play to reach 74 points on the year, matching last season's total in just 73 games.

The Hurricanes have now scored a power-play goal in six straight games, their longest such run of the season.

Carolina fired 35+ shots on net for the 28th time this season, which is the second-most among NHL clubs. On the flipside, Montreal's 32 blocked shots marked the fourth-highest single-game total by any team this season.

They Said It...

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

"It's pretty much identical to the game up there (on Tuesday.) We played well. We created enough opportunities. We just didn't score. Tip your hat to their goalie. He played great, again."

Rod Brind'Amour continuing, and referencing Montreal's 32 blocked shots, the fourth-most by a team in a game this season...

"They had a lot of blocks. We still had 30-plus shots. They blocked a ton at the end, obviously. It's a tough game. Their top guys cashed in. We definitely had looks. We didn't cash in, that's all you can say about it... They executed better than we did at the end of the day. I thought we had a lot more of the play. I liked most of the game, almost all of it."

Jordan Staal talking about tonight, and the three-game season series against the Canadiens...

"We had enough chances to win the game. Throughout a lot of the games, their goalie played well. We can do a better job capitalizing on our chances and make them pay for their mistakes. All in all, they played a solid defensive game, leaving it to kind of one shot. Not too many rebounds, not too (much) stuff around the net. They did a good job boxing out and keeping it to the same shot."

Sebastian Aho on one goal not being enough...

"On a night like this, you need to find a way to score, and obviously, we weren't able to do that. I had a few looks too. You can't get too frustrated because you have to keep on going and trust that it'll come eventually, but tonight it didn't, and that's on us."

Rod Brind'Amour Postgame Quotes

What's Next?

The Canes will fly to Columbus on Monday, before taking on the Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena on Tuesday.

Next Game: Tuesday, March 31 at Columbus | 7:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO

Next Home Game: Thursday, April 2 vs. Columbus | 7:00 p.m. ET | FDSNSO | Tickets | Parking



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## Suzuki gets 3 points, Canadiens defeat Hurricanes for 5th win in row

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Caufield scores 46th, Dobes makes 34 saves for Montreal; Carolina has lost 2 of 3

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Nick Suzuki had two goals and an assist, and the Montreal Canadiens won their season-high fifth straight game with a 3-1 victory against the Carolina Hurricanes at Lenovo Center on Sunday.

The Montreal captain pushed his season total to an NHL career-high 91 points (26 goals, 65 assists), surpassing the 89 he had last season.

MTL@CAR: Suzuki rips Caufield's pass into the twine

Cole Caufield scored his 46th goal and had an assist, Lane Hutson had two assists and Jakub Dobes made 34 saves for the Canadiens (42-21-10), who defeated the Nashville Predators 4-1 on Saturday.

"Sometimes in this league, it doesn't have to be pretty," Montreal defenseman Noah Dobson said. "But it says a lot about the guys, how we grind it out and wait for opportunities. Obviously, a tremendous commitment at the end by everyone, and Dobes played another great game for us."

The Canadiens are third in the Atlantic Division, two points ahead of the Boston Bruins with a game in hand.

Andrei Svechnikov scored for the Hurricanes (46-21-6), who have lost two of their past three games. Frederik Andersen made 15 saves.

Carolina is first in the Metropolitan Division, nine points ahead of the New York Islanders.

The Canadiens swept the season series 3-0, including a 5-2 win at Montreal on Tuesday when they were outshot 43-19.

"It's pretty much identical as the game up there," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We played well, we definitely created enough opportunities, we just didn't score. So, you tip your hat to that goalie. He played great again."

Carolina took a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal at 8:37 of the first period. Svechnikov took a pass from Seth Jarvis in the right circle and one-timed a shot under the crossbar.

Montreal scored off the rush to tie the game 1-1 at 6:18 of the second period. Caufield took a stretch pass from Hutson before pulling up in the left circle and feeding Suzuki, who scored while driving the net.

"They're such an aggressive team. If (we) have any time and space, we can send our wingers out, and Cole did that on the first goal," Suzuki said. "You can try to use their aggressiveness against them, and we were able to do that on our first two (goals)."

The Canadiens scored on a similar play to make it 2-1 at 17:32. Suzuki took a pass from Hutson through the neutral zone and passed to Caufield for a snap shot that beat Andersen blocker side.

"(Hutson) is a special player," Dobson said. "... He drives the offense from the back end, so it's great to see him have success."

MTL@CAR: Caufield gets the chip from Suzuki and buries it far side

Suzuki made it 3-1 with a power-play goal at 19:53. Andersen made a sprawling right-pad save on Suzuki at the top of the crease, but the forward scored on the rebound.

"Obviously, their goalie played well, but it's what you give up, too," Carolina captain Jordan Staal said. "It was a couple mishaps in the second, and being down a couple against a goalie who is playing well is never easy."

Dobes, who improved to 25-8-4, was strong throughout. Early the third period, he stopped Jordan Martinook's backhand in traffic. Then, with less than four minutes remaining, he made key saves on Jackson Blake and Taylor Hall from the right circle.

"He's really finding himself as a goalie in this league," Suzuki said. "He's been there for us every single time he's been in the net. He made some unbelievable saves tonight when we didn't really have our best game."

NOTES: Caufield has 15 points (nine goals, six assists) in his past nine games. ... Suzuki has 26 points (eight goals, 18 assists) in the past 15 games. ... Dobes has allowed two goals or fewer in each of his past five starts (4-1-0). ... The Hurricanes have scored a power play goal in six straight games (8-for-18; 44.4 percent).



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## Suzuki lifts streaking Canadiens to 3-1 win over Hurricanes

By: The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Nick Suzuki scored two goals and had an assist to lead the Montreal Canadiens to a 3-1 win over the Carolina Hurricanes on Sunday.

Suzuki fueled a three-goal second period for the Canadiens, who have won five straight and won all three regular-season games against the Metropolitan Division-leading Hurricanes.

Cole Caufield added a goal and assist for Montreal and goalie Jakub Dobes made 34 saves in his third win of the season over the Hurricanes.

Andrei Svechnikov scored for the Hurricanes, and Frederik Andersen stopped 15 shots.

Suzuki tied the game 1-1 by beating a diving Sean Walker to the net at 6:18 in the second period.

After a Dobes' glove save on Jordan Staal with 3:13 left in the period, Caufield made it 2-1 after Suzuki drew two

defenders to the left circle and gave Caufield a clean look at Andersen.

Montreal scored on the power play after a tripping penalty was called on Eric Robinson with 15 seconds left in the period.

Suzuki leads the Canadiens with 91 points. He has five goals and 12 assists in the past 10 games as Montreal vies for position in a tight playoff race in the Atlantic Division.

Svechnikov gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal at 8:37 in the first period. It was the eighth power-play goal in 16 opportunities for the Hurricanes but they went 0 for 2 the rest of the game.

The Hurricanes have won four of their last six game with both losses to Montreal.

Up next

Canadiens: At Tampa Bay on Tuesday.

Hurricanes: Visit Columbus on Tuesday.

## Blue Jackets take on the Hurricanes on losing streak

By: The Associated Press

Carolina Hurricanes (46-21-6, in the Metropolitan Division) vs. Columbus Blue Jackets (38-24-12, in the Metropolitan Division)

Columbus, Ohio; Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. EDT

**BOTTOM LINE:** The Columbus Blue Jackets play the Carolina Hurricanes after losing three games in a row.

Columbus is 11-8-4 against the Metropolitan Division and 38-24-12 overall. The Blue Jackets are 13-3-5 in games they convert at least one power play.

Carolina is 46-21-6 overall with a 16-4-1 record in Metropolitan Division games. The Hurricanes are 20-8-1 when scoring a power-play goal.

The teams meet Tuesday for the third time this season. The Blue Jackets won the last meeting 5-1.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Kirill Marchenko has 25 goals and 36 assists for the Blue Jackets. Adam Fantilli has three goals and six assists over the last 10 games.

Andrei Svechnikov has 26 goals and 36 assists for the Hurricanes. Nikolaj Ehlers has three goals and eight assists over the past 10 games.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Blue Jackets: 5-3-2, averaging 2.7 goals, 4.5 assists, 3.6 penalties and 8.7 penalty minutes while giving up two goals per game.

Hurricanes: 6-4-0, averaging 3.3 goals, 5.2 assists, 3.9 penalties and 8.8 penalty minutes while giving up 3.1 goals per game.

**INJURIES:** Blue Jackets: Brendan Smith: out (knee), Mathieu Olivier: day to day (upper body), Dmitri Voronkov: out (upper-body), Damon Severson: out (upper-body).

Hurricanes: Pyotr Kochetkov: out (hip).



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 30, 2026



## NHL playoff watch: Penguins, Isles destined for first-round matchup?

By: ESPN Staff

There have been a number of permutations of Eastern Conference playoff teams in the past few weeks beyond the Buffalo Sabres, Tampa Bay Lightning and Carolina Hurricanes, who appear pretty stable in their positions atop the Atlantic and Metropolitan divisions, respectively.

Two of the teams that have been riding the teacups are the Pittsburgh Penguins and New York Islanders.

### Editor's Picks

Ranking the top Stanley Cup playoff bandwagons for ousted fans

Arda Ocal

NHL Power Rankings: Each franchise's career playoff points leader

Arda Ocal

'Changing of the guard': Cole Hutson poised to take big role in next wave for the Capitals

Kristen Shilton

The ship probably has sailed on either club catching the Canes for the No. 1 seed in the division, but both are squarely in the mix for the Nos. 2 and 3 seeds; and if the pair do wind up in those slots, they'd square off in the first round of the 2026 Stanley Cup playoffs.

Monday is the final regular-season matchup between the clubs (7 p.m. ET, NHL Network), and they've split the season series to this point. So this final game will have a major impact on the standings.

Heading into Monday's game, the Isles will be in the No. 2 position, with 89 points and 28 regulation wins through 74 games; the Penguins are No. 3, with 88 points and 29 regulation wins through 73 games. What are the chances they wind up matched up in Round 1?

According to Stathletes projections, there is a 27.03% chance of Penguins-Islanders being one of the first matchups in the 2026 bracket. But there's a greater chance that the third Metro team in the mix -- the Columbus Blue Jackets -- takes the Isles' place; Stathletes projects a Penguins-Blue Jackets first-round series occurring in 33.34% of simulations.

### Advertising

Given the small margins, expect this race to come right down to the final days of the regular season.

Every team has no more than 11 games remaining before the regular season concludes April 16, and we'll help you keep track of it all here on the NHL playoff watch every day. As we traverse the final stretch, we'll provide details on all

the playoff races -- along with the teams jockeying for position in the 2026 NHL draft lottery.

Note: Playoff chances are via Stathletes.

Jump ahead:

Current playoff matchups

Today's schedule

Last night's scores

Expanded standings

Race for No. 1 pick

Current playoff matchups

Eastern Conference

A1 Tampa Bay Lightning vs. WC2 Columbus Blue Jackets

A2 Buffalo Sabres vs. A3 Montreal Canadiens

M1 Carolina Hurricanes vs. WC1 Boston Bruins

M2 New York Islanders vs. M3 Pittsburgh Penguins

Western Conference

C1 Colorado Avalanche vs. WC2 Nashville Predators

C2 Dallas Stars vs. C3 Minnesota Wild

P1 Anaheim Ducks vs. WC1 Utah Mammoth

P2 Edmonton Oilers vs. P3 Vegas Golden Knights

Today's games

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

Pittsburgh Penguins at New York Islanders, 7 p.m. (NHLN)

Calgary Flames at Colorado Avalanche, 8:30 p.m.

Vancouver Canucks at Vegas Golden Knights, 10 p.m.

Toronto Maple Leafs at Anaheim Ducks, 10 p.m.

St. Louis Blues at San Jose Sharks, 10 p.m.

Last night's scoreboard

New York Rangers 3, Florida Panthers 1

Tampa Bay Lightning 3, Nashville Predators 2

Montreal Canadiens 3, Carolina Hurricanes 1

Boston Bruins 4, Columbus Blue Jackets 3 (SO)

New Jersey Devils 5, Chicago Blackhawks 3

Philadelphia Flyers 2, Dallas Stars 1 (OT)

Expanded standings



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 30, 2026

Atlantic Division

Tampa Bay Lightning

Points: 98

Regulation wins: 37

Playoff position: A1

Games left: 9

Points pace: 110.1

Next game: vs. MTL (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Magic number: 6

Tragic number: N/A

Buffalo Sabres

Points: 98

Regulation wins: 37

Playoff position: A2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 108.6

Next game: vs. NYI (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Magic number: 6

Tragic number: N/A

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Montreal Canadiens

Points: 94

Regulation wins: 30

Playoff position: A3

Games left: 9

Points pace: 105.6

Next game: @ TB (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 98.1%

Magic number: 10

Tragic number: N/A

Boston Bruins

Points: 92

Regulation wins: 30

Playoff position: WC1

Games left: 8

Points pace: 102.0

Next game: vs. DAL (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 81.2%

Magic number: 12

Tragic number: N/A

Ottawa Senators

Points: 86

Regulation wins: 32

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 96.6

Next game: @ FLA (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 69.3%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 17

Detroit Red Wings

Points: 86

Regulation wins: 28

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 96.6

Next game: @ PIT (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 24.9%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 17

Toronto Maple Leafs

Points: 75

Regulation wins: 23

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 83.1

Next game: @ ANA (Monday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 4

Florida Panthers

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 27

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 82.0

Next game: vs. OTT (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 0%



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 4

Metro Division

Carolina Hurricanes

Points: 98

Regulation wins: 33

Playoff position: M1

Games left: 9

Points pace: 110.1

Next game: @ CBJ (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Magic number: 6

Tragic number: N/A

New York Islanders

Points: 89

Regulation wins: 28

Playoff position: M2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 98.6

Next game: vs. PIT (Monday)

Playoff chances: 62.4%

Magic number: 15

Tragic number: N/A

Playoff Hockey Challenge

Who will lift the Stanley Cup? Create up to two brackets today. Create A Bracket

Pittsburgh Penguins

Points: 88

Regulation wins: 29

Playoff position: M3

Games left: 9

Points pace: 98.9

Next game: @ NYI (Monday)

Playoff chances: 73.1%

Magic number: 16

Tragic number: N/A

Columbus Blue Jackets

Points: 88

Regulation wins: 27

Playoff position: WC2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 97.5

Next game: vs. CAR (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 68.3%

Magic number: 16

Tragic number: N/A

Philadelphia Flyers

Points: 86

Regulation wins: 23

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 96.6

Next game: @ WSH (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 16.4%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 16

Washington Capitals

Points: 83

Regulation wins: 31

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 92.0

Next game: vs. PHI (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 6.3%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 11

New Jersey Devils

Points: 78

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 87.6

Next game: @ NYR (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 0.1%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 8

e - New York Rangers

Points: 69

Regulation wins: 21

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 76.5



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Next game: vs. NJ (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: OUT

Central Division

x - Colorado Avalanche

Points: 106

Regulation wins: 42

Playoff position: C1

Games left: 10

Points pace: 120.7

Next game: vs. CGY (Monday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Magic number: IN

Tragic number: N/A

x - Dallas Stars

Points: 100

Regulation wins: 34

Playoff position: C2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 110.8

Next game: @ BOS (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Magic number: IN

Tragic number: N/A

Minnesota Wild

Points: 94

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: C3

Games left: 8

Points pace: 104.2

Next game: vs. VAN (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Magic number: 1

Tragic number: N/A

Breaking News from Emily Kaplan

Download the ESPN app and enable Emily Kaplan's news alerts to receive push notifications for the latest updates first. Opt in by tapping the alerts bell in the top right corner. For more information, [click here](#).

Utah Mammoth

Points: 82

Regulation wins: 29

Playoff position: WC1

Games left: 8

Points pace: 90.9

Next game: vs. SEA (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 98.5%

Magic number: 13

Tragic number: N/A

Nashville Predators

Points: 77

Regulation wins: 25

Playoff position: WC2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 85.3

Next game: @ LA (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 17.3%

Magic number: 18

Tragic number: N/A

Winnipeg Jets

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 25

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 83.1

Next game: @ CHI (Tuesday)

Playoff chances: 2.4%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 15

St. Louis Blues

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 27

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 10

Points pace: 83.1

Next game: @ SJ (Monday)

Playoff chances: 14%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: 16

Chicago Blackhawks

Points: 67

Regulation wins: 20



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Playoff position: N/A  
Games left: 8  
Points pace: 74.2  
Next game: vs. WPG (Tuesday)  
Playoff chances: 0.1%  
Magic number: N/A  
Tragic number: 6  
Pacific Division  
Anaheim Ducks  
Points: 86  
Regulation wins: 24  
Playoff position: P1  
Games left: 9  
Points pace: 96.6  
Next game: vs. TOR (Monday)  
Playoff chances: 99.9%  
Magic number: 9  
Tragic number: N/A  
Edmonton Oilers  
Points: 83  
Regulation wins: 28  
Playoff position: P2  
Games left: 8  
Points pace: 92.0  
Next game: vs. SEA (Tuesday)  
Playoff chances: 96.8%  
Magic number: 12  
Tragic number: N/A  
Vegas Golden Knights  
Points: 80  
Regulation wins: 24  
Playoff position: P3  
Games left: 8  
Points pace: 88.7  
Next game: vs. VAN (Monday)  
Playoff chances: 96.7%  
Magic number: 15  
Tragic number: N/A  
Los Angeles Kings  
Points: 76  
Regulation wins: 19

Playoff position: N/A  
Games left: 9  
Points pace: 85.4  
Next game: vs. STL (Wednesday)  
Playoff chances: 24.7%  
Magic number: N/A  
Tragic number: 17  
Seattle Kraken  
Points: 75  
Regulation wins: 25  
Playoff position: N/A  
Games left: 10  
Points pace: 85.4  
Next game: @ EDM (Tuesday)  
Playoff chances: 9.3%  
Magic number: N/A  
Tragic number: 18  
San Jose Sharks  
Points: 73  
Regulation wins: 21  
Playoff position: N/A  
Games left: 11  
Points pace: 84.3  
Next game: vs. STL (Monday)  
Playoff chances: 40.4%  
Magic number: N/A  
Tragic number: 18  
Calgary Flames  
Points: 70  
Regulation wins: 24  
Playoff position: N/A  
Games left: 9  
Points pace: 78.6  
Next game: @ COL (Monday)  
Playoff chances: 0.1%  
Magic number: N/A  
Tragic number: 11  
e - Vancouver Canucks  
Points: 50  
Regulation wins: 14  
Playoff position: N/A



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Games left: 10

Points pace: 56.9

Next game: @ VGK (Monday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Magic number: N/A

Tragic number: OUT

Note: An "x" with a team's name means the club has clinched a playoff spot. An "e" means that the club has been mathematically eliminated.

Race for the No. 1 pick

The NHL uses a draft lottery to determine the order of the first round, so the team that finishes in last place is not guaranteed the No. 1 selection. As of 2021, a team can move up a maximum of 10 spots if it wins the lottery, so only 11 teams are eligible for the draw for the No. 1 pick. Full details on the process can be found [here](#). Atop draft boards for this summer is Gavin McKenna, a forward for Penn State.

1. Vancouver Canucks

Points: 50

Regulation wins: 14

2. Chicago Blackhawks

Points: 67

Regulation wins: 20

3. New York Rangers

Points: 69

Regulation wins: 21

4. Calgary Flames

Points: 70

Regulation wins: 24

5. Florida Panthers

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 27

6. St. Louis Blues

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 27

7. San Jose Sharks

Points: 73

Regulation wins: 21

8. Winnipeg Jets

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 25

9. Toronto Maple Leafs\*

Points: 75

Regulation wins: 23

10. Seattle Kraken

Points: 75

Regulation wins: 25

11. Los Angeles Kings

Points: 76

Regulation wins: 19

12. New Jersey Devils

Points: 78

Regulation wins: 26

13. Washington Capitals

Points: 83

Regulation wins: 31

14. Philadelphia Flyers

Points: 86

Regulation wins: 23

15. Detroit Red Wings

Points: 86

Regulation wins: 28

16. Ottawa Senators

Points: 86

Regulation wins: 32

\*Note: The Maple Leafs' pick belongs to the Bruins, unless it lands in the top five.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Canadiens' Suzuki continues to prove he's among world's most complete player

By: Eric Engels

Nick Suzuki closed the gap on Sebastian Aho, dropped to one knee and put the finishing touches on one of his most desperate performances of the season with his strongest defensive play of the night.

Suzuki's only block of Sunday's game came with his Montreal Canadiens barely clinging to a 3-1 lead, with just under three minutes to play against a Carolina Hurricanes team that had put them in a spin cycle all night.

It came with the Hurricanes' net empty, in a five-on-six situation, with the Canadiens burning every ounce of gas remaining in their reserve tank, and it was no coincidence it came from him. Because no Canadien has come up with bigger plays at either end of the ice this season than their captain, who's in the process of simultaneously becoming the team's first Selke Trophy winner since Guy Carbonneau won his third in 1992 and its first 100-point player since Mats Naslund in 1986.

Naslund, who had 110 points for the Canadiens the year they won their second-to-last Stanley Cup, wasn't exactly a defensive maven nor shot-blocker. He didn't have to be, though, because Carbonneau left a lot of goals and points on the table on his way to being first crowned the best defensive forward in the NHL three years later.

In the decades that have passed since, no player for the Canadiens has blended Naslund and Carbonneau's skills as well as Suzuki, who registered points 89, 90 and 91 on Sunday before making his 58th block of the season to keep himself at plus-2 on the night and plus-32 through 73 games.

"Those are the little plays you need to win," assistant captain Mike Matheson told reporters at PNC Arena after the Canadiens closed out their fifth consecutive regulation win. "At this time of the season, going into the playoffs, that's what you have to do."

You must make small plays and big plays all the same, and Suzuki does that every single game.

He sets the standard, and the Canadiens follow, even if on this night they blocked 31 shots before Suzuki got his leg on Aho's last attempt.

When they needed a rescue breath earlier, down 1-0, Suzuki provided it by skating the length of the ice to score his 25th goal of the season.

Lane Hutson stretched a three-zone pass up to Cole Caufield, and Caufield drew coverage in to lay the puck up for Suzuki to dunk it right as he arrived in front of Frederik Andersen.

Suzuki returned the favour when he set up Caufield's 46th goal of the season a little over 11 minutes later.

And then, in the dying seconds of that middle frame, Suzuki drew a faceoff back to the point, drove to the net, took a

shot, and then buried his own rebound to put the game out of reach.

They were two of a team-leading five shots on net the 26-year-old registered over his 20:17 spread over 22 shifts of this second game in 22 hours, which was played in a different time zone than the one the Canadiens were in the night prior.

Suzuki was desperate, and so were the tired Canadiens. Especially as the Hurricanes pressed and pulverized them early.

"Not an easy team to play against here on a back-to-back," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis. "We had a tough time getting going, and not because we weren't engaged. We just had trouble executing after their forecheck. We weren't able to get forechecking ourselves. When you don't have the puck, it's hard to gain momentum..."

"When you play Carolina, you expect a team that'll surely have more shots than you, and you're going to have to for sure weather a storm, and then you have to capitalize on chances when they're over-aggressive."

That's what the Canadiens did.

When they bent, Jakub Dobes kept them from breaking.

The goaltender, who made a career-high 41 saves in a win over the Hurricanes at the Bell Centre to start the week, made another 34 against them Sunday. He stopped 33 consecutive shots after allowing the game's first two goals Tuesday, and he stopped 26 straight after Andrei Svechnikov ripped one past him on the power play to start the scoring in the final game of the week.

In between, Dobes saved 25 shots in a 2-1 win over the red-hot Columbus Blue Jackets.

"He's really finding himself as a goalie in this league," said Suzuki, "and he's been there for us every single time he's been in the net."

In front of Dobes, no player has been more consistent at both ends than Suzuki.

Playing every shift against either the best defensive players in the league or the most offensively potent ones, he's dominated his matchups, never going more than two consecutive games without a point and rarely allowing anyone to get the over on him.

As a result, Suzuki is already two points up on the 89 he posted in 82 games last season. He ranks seventh in league scoring and is on pace to score 11 more points over the final nine games. And we know that Aho shot won't be the last one he blocks this season.

It was Suzuki's final play in a game that highlighted how he's become one of the most complete players in the world.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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**SB NATION**  
**CANES COUNTRY**

## Canadiens complete season sweep with 3-1 win

By: Evan Davis

The Montreal Canadiens finished off their season-series sweep of the Carolina Hurricanes on Sunday, riding a 34-save performance by Jakub Dobes and a three-goal second period explosion to a 3-1 win at Lenovo Center. Carolina outshot Montreal 35-18 and held a 1-0 lead after a dominant first period.

For the second time in a week, the Canes watched the Canadiens convert on their chances, receive elite goaltending, and walk away with two points.

The first period was vintage Hurricanes hockey. The Canes peppered Dobes early and often, building an 11-1 shot advantage in the opening frame, and allowed just one five-on-five shot the entire period.

Andrei Svechnikov opened the scoring at 8:37 on the power play, ripping a slap shot past Dobes

Carolina took advantage of Montreal's glaring weakness, and it was looking like a fine night in Raleigh.

Then the second period happened.

Nick Suzuki tied the game at 6:18, assisted by Cole Caufield and Lane Hutson. The Canes kept pressing, kept generating chances, but Dobes stopped everything.

At 17:32, Caufield buried a snap shot to give Montreal their first lead. Then, with just seven seconds left in the period, Eric Robinson took a bad tripping penalty. And just eight seconds later, Suzuki wired a wrist shot with just seven seconds in the second period.

Three goals in just over 13 minutes of game time, turning a 1-0 Carolina lead into a 3-1 deficit. The Hurricanes generated 14 shots that period, but could not find the back of the net.

The third period was scoreless. Carolina generated chances, but Dobes slammed the door on all of them. Frederik Andersen was pulled with about four minutes remaining for the extra attacker, but the Canes couldn't capitalize.

Dobes stopped 34 of 35 shots for a .971 save percentage, earning first-star honors with a great performance. The Montreal defense deserves a lot of credit with 32 blocked shots.

Over his last two starts against Carolina, Dobes turned aside 75 of 78 shots, good for a .962 save percentage. The Canes outshot the Habs 78-37, but were outscored 8-3.

On the other end, Andersen allowed three goals on just 18 shots. None of the goals were egregiously bad, but the optics are rough. In his last two starts against Montreal, Andersen has surrendered seven goals on 36 shots.

The Canadiens are the only team to beat the Hurricanes three times in regulation this season.

Losing a game you outshoot 35-18 is maddening. Losing three games to the same opponent while outshooting them by a combined 103-60 across the series warrants a serious look by the coaching staff, especially if there is potential for a first or second round series against this team.

The Hurricanes need to generate higher-quality chances rather than relying on volume, and their goaltending needs to come up big in games where the opponent's netminder is stealing the show.

The silver lining, if you're looking for one, is that Carolina's Metropolitan Division lead is nine points with nine to go.

Staff writer Al Hood was on the scene in the Lenovo Center, so check out his postgame notes from the press box and locker room.

The Canes are back in action on Tuesday in Columbus.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## The Hockey News

### Trois Défaites: Hurricanes Fall 3-1, Canadiens Complete Season Sweep

By: Ryan Henkel

Hurricanes dominate play but falter again. Stellar Canadiens goaltending and missed opportunities seal their season sweep defeat.

For the third time in as many games, the Carolina Hurricanes were defeated by the Montreal Canadiens, this time falling 3-1 Sunday night at Lenovo Center.

This game was much the same as the other losses: the team plays well and dominates the shot share, but can't capitalize enough, ultimately giving up a bunch in succession to lose.

In all three games, the Hurricanes have also led after the first period, only to see it all collapse in the second.

Carolina falls 3-1 to Montreal

Here are three takeaways from the loss:

#### 1. Goalie Differential

Rod Brind'Amour said it best in his postgame comments: The difference in this game was goaltending.

While Jakub Dobes had another herculean effort for Montreal, stopping 34 of the 35 shots he faced, Frederik Andersen failed to make key stops, allowing three goals on just 18 shots.

It isn't like Andersen played bad by any means, but he wasn't great either. At this level of hockey, you need your goalie to be a steady contributor, not a passerby.

Dobes, meanwhile, won all three games he played against Carolina this season, stopping 95 total shots and posting a 0.922 save percentage.

"You just have to tip your cap sometimes," Brind'Amour said. "They played well, but their goalie was the difference."

He wasn't great in the first meeting, mind you, but he was outstanding in the last two and was the primary reason why Montreal won.

Andersen didn't lose Carolina these games, but he certainly didn't help them win them either.

"It's tough," Brind'Amour said. "You can't blame him on them, but at the end of the day, that's the difference in the game. I mean, clearly."

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#### 2. Top Line's 5v5 Struggles

While they've certainly been producing on the power play, 5v5 has been a different story for the Hurricanes' top line.

The trio of Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov and Seth Jarvis have combined for just one goal at 5v5 over their last 10 games, while conceding 10.

"They have to be on the sheet," Brind'Amour said. "They play all the minutes and get all the opportunities. And they did have them. In the third period, Fishy goes right off the bar from 10-feet out. It was just countless chances, but you still have to cash in."

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Despite that, they actually control a 60% expected goals for percentage in that span, so they've really just been super unlucky.

Take tonight for example where all three players drew iron at different points of the game.

They have an on-ice shooting percentage of just 1.52% and an on-ice save percentage of 0.804, and you really can't expect both to stay like that forever.

The line is doing what they need to do, it's just about waiting for the bounces to even back out.

"On a night like this, you need to find a way to score and obviously we weren't able to do that," Aho said. "You can't get too frustrated because you have to keep on going and trust that it will come eventually, but tonight, it didn't. That's on us."

#### 3. Triple Digit Shot Attempts

The Hurricanes certainly did everything they could to try and break through against the Habs, as their 100 shot attempts was the most by any team this season for a game that ended in regulation.

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In fact the only other team to have that many shot attempts was the Colorado Avalanche in a 6-5 shootout win over the Vegas Golden Knights back in December.

The Canes did it all in regulation, putting a ton of rubber on net.

They had 35 shots that got through to the goal, 33 shots that missed the net and a whopping 32 that were blocked by the Montreal skaters.

And of those 100 attempts, 19 were high-danger chances, so Carolina certainly had more than enough opportunities to score in that game, they just happened to run into a hot goaltender.

"We definitely had enough looks, we just didn't cash in," Brind'Amour said. "That's all you can say about it."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## 'Their Goalie Was The Difference': Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal, Rod Brind'Amour On Loss To Montreal

By: Ryan Henkel

Brind'Amour, Aho, and Staal dissect the Hurricanes' season sweep loss, pinpointing missed chances and a stellar opposing goalie.

The Carolina Hurricanes fell 3-1 to the Montreal Canadiens Sunday evening at Lenovo Center.

The loss completed the season sweep of the Hurricanes at the hands of the Habs, as Carolina lost all three games this season.

After the game, Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour along with Sebastian Aho and Jordan Staal spoke with the media. Here's what they had to say:

Carolina Hurricanes lose 3-1 to Montreal Canadiens

Hurricanes dominate play but falter again. Stellar Canadiens goaltending and missed opportunities seal their season sweep defeat.

thehockeynews.comTrois Défaites: Hurricanes Fall 3-1, Canadiens Complete Season SweepHurricanes dominate play but falter again. Stellar Canadiens goaltending and missed opportunities seal their season sweep defeat.

Rod Brind'Amour

On the game: It was pretty much identical as the game up there. Played both well. Definitely created enough opportunities, we just didn't score. You tip your hat to that goalie. He played great, again.

On Sean Walker's status: Not sure. I don't have any update there.

On Montreal's shot blocking: They had a lot of blocks, but I think we still had 30-plus shots. They blocked a ton at the end obviously. It's a tough game. I mean, their top guys cashed in. We definitely had enough looks, we just didn't cash in. That's all you can say about it. Don't want to take a couple of o-zone penalties, those kill you, but they executed better than we did at the end of the day, even though I thought we had a lot more of the play. I liked most of the game, almost all of it.

On the late second period penalty that led to a goal against: That's a tough one. Like I said, they executed. At the end of the day, that's the difference.

On the top line's 5v5 scoring struggles: They have to be on the sheet. They play all the minutes and get all the opportunities. And they did have them. In the third period, Fishy goes right off the bar from 10-feet out. It was just countless chances, but you still have to cash in. You just have to tip your cap sometimes. They played well, but their goalie was the difference.

On net getting more key saves from Frederik Andersen: It's tough. You can't blame him on them, but at the end of the day, that's the difference in the game. I mean, clearly.

Sebastian Aho

On the game: Good start, good first period. Up at that point. I mean, the second period we definitely had chances to extend the lead, but they got a couple of goals there. Pushed in the third, but didn't get there.

On the defensive struggles against Montreal this year: They're a skilled group. Plays fast like we do and I think they were just kind of making it count when they had their chances. Yeah, I don't know. I think we should have used our momentum a little bit better today. Not open up by any means, but kind of keep the pressure on and get that 2-0, maybe 3-0 goal there.

On not capitalizing on chances: On a night like this, you need to find a way to score and obviously we weren't able to do that. I had some looks too. You can't get too frustrated because you have to keep on going and trust that it will come eventually, but tonight, it didn't. That's on us.

On his lines struggle to score at 5v5: Like I said, you can't get too frustrated about anything. There's a lot of games and you have to be able to flush it whether it's a bad shift or a game. Just have to keep on working and trust that it will eventually go in and build on that.

On facing teams that are desperate for points: It really shouldn't change how you approach the game. You try to play your best game every night, but yeah, maybe there is a little... I don't know what it is, but maybe that extra gear on the teams that are definitely in the fight. But no easy games.

Jordan Staal

On the game: Obviously their goalie played well, but it's still kind of what you give up too. A couple of mishaps in the second and being down against a goalie that's playing well is never easy. I think there are a few things we can learn from, but all in all, guys were working hard and I thought we had an opportunity to win that game.

On the defensive struggles against Montreal: I don't know. I thought we had enough chances to win the game, like I said, throughout a lot of the games. Goalie played well. We can do a better job of capitalizing on our chances and making them pay for their mistakes, but all in all, they played a solid defensive game. Leaving it to the one shot and not giving too many rebounds and stuff around the net. They did a good job of boxing out and keeping it to the single shot.

On the late second period penalty that led to a goal against: I mean, I have to win that draw and just get to the third period there. That wasn't ideal. Those are tough. They kind of sting a little more and obviously being down two in the third, we would have been much better just being down the one.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 30, 2026

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# SportScan

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

1384771 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes fall to Montreal Canadiens after second-period swoon

Staff report 3-4 minutes 30/03/2026

Given the Olympic break in this year's NHL regular season, and the time constraints to fit the whole season in before all the ice melts of natural causes, teams across the league are dealing with myriad back-to-back game weekends this season.

Pardon the Hurricanes if they're not sympathetic to other teams' plight. Sunday's 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens was the second leg of the Canes' 13th of 15 back-to-back set this season. Carolina is 8-2-3 this season in the first of back-to-back games, but just 6-6-1 in Game 2s after Sunday's result.

Though it came on the heels of a rare three-day break in the schedule, this weekend's back-to-back set was the first of three such sets in the final 11 games of the regular season for Carolina, which continues to sit atop the NHL's Metropolitan Division and is vying for the top playoff seed in the Eastern Conference.

Now, with nine games remaining, the playoffs have essentially arrived, if not for the Canes then certainly for a handful of the teams remaining on their schedule, which will serve to ramp up the intensity and theoretically help prepare Carolina for the rigors of the playoff chase.

The Hurricanes are going to have to do a better job handling that than they did Sunday.

Andrei Svechnikov was a bright spot early for Carolina, but three Montreal goals in the second period set the Canadiens up for victory, their sixth in seven games as they try to fend off Boston and maintain a hold on third place in the Atlantic Division.

Nick Suzuki scored twice in the second for the Habs and added an assist on Cole Caufield's 46th goal of the season. Suzuki's second of the frame came with seven seconds to play, on a power play, and sent the Canes into the locker room reeling.

Svechnikov put the Hurricanes on the board first at 8:37 of the first period as part of the Canes' suddenly red-hot power play. After Martinook drew the call, the top unit went to work and Svechnikov beat Dobes with a wired one-timer from the top of the right circle over the keeper's short-side left shoulder.

Suzuki's first of the game, on a feed from Caufield on a fast break, tied the game after a period of extended Carolina pressure, and came on just the eighth shot on goal against Frederik Andersen.

Caufield's marker came on a wrist from the mid-slot after he shook free and beat Andersen under the arm on the blocker side. Suzuki's second came on the doorstep on the power play after Eric Robinson was penalized for tripping the Canadiens' Noah Dobson.

Carolina fought off one penalty kill in the third period, and failed on two more power play chances. The Hurricanes also pulled the goalie in the game's final minutes, but could draw no closer.

The Canes play six of their final nine regular-season games on the road.

News Observer LOADED: 03.30.2026

1384865 Websites

The Athletic / Jack Adams Award candidates: Here are 8 to watch as the NHL's top coach

By Julian McKenzie

March 29, 2026



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 30, 2026

There is a competitive race for the Jack Adams Award, given to the league's best coach — perhaps the strongest race we've seen in recent memory. With fewer than three weeks to go until the playoffs begin, nearly half the league's coaches have a legitimate chance to be recognized as the best.

Some of the longtime best bench bosses, including Jared Bednar and Jon Cooper — neither of whom, somehow, has ever won the award — are in the conversation this year. But newer coaches also have reason to be considered favorites, as do veteran coaches who were in consideration for the Jack Adams in the past and now have returned to the fold.

NHL broadcasters (not writers) vote on this award at the end of the regular season. It wasn't easy, but we whittled down a list of candidates to eight, plus a few honorable mentions.

Jon Cooper, Tampa Bay

We continue to recognize Cooper as one of the league's best coaches because he perennially guides one of the most prominent franchises to the playoffs. But Cooper, a two-time Jack Adams finalist, has never won the award and hasn't been a finalist since 2019. That year, the Lightning had the league's best record, and that's as much as the team would like to discuss about that season. That nomination came a year before Cooper won his first championship with the Lightning. This year, Cooper again could be among the league's three finalists, because he has guided one of the most balanced teams.

Tampa Bay is in the league's top three in goals for, fewest goals allowed, Corsi and expected goals percentage. It ranks first in high-danger chances for and has a top-10 penalty kill. Yes, the Lightning have a Hart Trophy candidate in Nikita Kucherov and a Vezina candidate in Andrei Vasilevskiy. But Cooper deserves credit for coaching a strong team that could win its first Atlantic Division title since 2019.

Lindy Ruff, Buffalo

There will be groans here about NHL awards being narrative-driven. Fine. But would anyone be wrong to name Lindy Ruff as this year's Jack Adams Award winner? In a year when the Sabres are on the verge of ending a lengthy playoff drought? Ruff and the Sabres haven't had it rough since early December. Their run to the top began as they were transitioning from general manager Kevyn Adams to Jarmo Kekäläinen, and it could lead to the Sabres winning a division title and having the Eastern Conference's best record.

The Sabres are 34-6-4 since Dec. 9, the best record by any team in that span. In that period, Buffalo ranks fourth in goals and sixth in goals per game, and fifth in penalty-kill percentage. If Ruff wins, he will have gone two decades between Jack Adams Awards, having previously won in 2006 with the Sabres. The Sabres have a ton of young talent that, perhaps, should've had them in the playoffs sooner than now. But Ruff will go down as the coach who finally got them over the hump. And that might be enough to entice voters to choose him.

Jared Bednar, Colorado

The league's best team that has done everything right (except their power play, for some reason), and Bednar is at the forefront. He should be, at the very least. Considering the Avalanche's last three seasons, in which they finished seventh and eighth-best in the league, the fact that the Avs are atop the standings this season shouldn't be held against Bednar — even though the Avs have two all-world players in Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar.

Last year, they were the sixth-best offensive team (goals and goals per game) and 12th-best in goals allowed per game. This season, the Avs are the best in goals for and have allowed the fewest in the league. The Avalanche's penalty kill has also risen from 12th-best to second-best in the league. Yes, the Avalanche should be a contending team, given the talent they have. But there's been genuine improvement this season,

which has led to the Avs becoming the best team in the league. Colorado's (likely) rise to the Presidents' Trophy should help, not hurt, Bednar's case.

Dan Muse, Pittsburgh

Dan Muse is relatively unknown compared to others on this list. But his performance with the supposedly draft-lottery-destined Penguins has turned many heads. Expectations were low for the first-year head coach, who previously worked under Peter Laviolette with Nashville and the New York Rangers. And despite being a newcomer, Muse has won over the team's veterans who didn't want previous coach Mike Sullivan to leave.

The Penguins were once considered a likely draft destination for Gavin McKenna after he finished his collegiate season at Penn State. Instead, the Pens are battling for a playoff spot while hoping injuries don't do them in. If the Penguins stay afloat and make the postseason, Muse, who leads an aging core with a top-10 offense that is playing well above expectations and projections, might be popular among voters.

Travis Green, Ottawa

In his second year with the Senators, Travis Green continues to help his players progress. The advanced numbers, including Corsi, expected goals against and high-danger chances, have them rubbing shoulders with the NHL's elite. The only team in the NHL that can match the Senators in shot suppression is Carolina. If not for their issues with goaltending and their penalty kill, the Sens would be worried less about their playoff hopes.

In December and January, a 2-6-1 slide had them falling down the standings toward last place in the Eastern Conference. However, the Senators have since dug out of that hole with a 15-4-3 run since Jan. 25. Ottawa remains in trouble because of injuries to its back end, namely Jake Sanderson and Thomas Chabot. Which means if the Senators make the playoffs in spite of that, Green deserves consideration.

Rick Bowness, Columbus

Rick Bowness was on a boat with his wife in January when Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell called and asked him to take over the club. Bowness joined a Blue Jackets team that was 28th in the NHL, tied for the worst record in the Eastern Conference. He has elevated Columbus into a playoff spot. Bowness deserves a ton of credit for pushing an underachieving Blue Jackets team into a dark horse, endearing himself to the players in the process.

Since Bowness was hired on Jan. 12, the Jackets have gone 19-5-4 and have improved greatly in limiting goals. The Jackets were 19-19-7 when Bowness took over. Now, they've become one of the league's best defensive teams in the second half of the season and one of its biggest surprises. Bowness should be a contender for the Jack Adams this year, especially if his team returns to the top three in the Metropolitan Division.

Rod Brind'Amour, Carolina

There seems to be some fatigue, and maybe even some skepticism, around the Carolina Hurricanes and Rod Brind'Amour. It's a team that consistently ranks among the league's best in advanced metrics such as expected goals, chance generation and limiting chances. This season's Hurricanes are no different, as they are in the top five in goals per game and in the top 10 in goals against per game. So, if coaches such as Bednar and Cooper can get love for the Jack Adams, so should Brind'Amour, who won it in 2021.

The Canes finished second in their division last season, behind the conference-best Washington Capitals. This season, Carolina could be the East's best team if it can hold off Buffalo and Tampa Bay. And Carolina could make another run to the conference finals. Brind'Amour is again at the forefront of Carolina's success.

Joel Quenneville, Anaheim



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Pacific Division has been poor, so it is tough to give any of these teams too much praise. At present, none of the teams in the division would hold a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. But the Anaheim Ducks are wading in favorable waters and on track for their first division title in nearly a decade and their first playoff appearance since 2018. Veteran coach Joel Quenneville is playing a significant role in the Ducks' return to prominence.

The Ducks, with a core of young talent, wouldn't have been faulted for missing the playoffs this season. But Cutter Gauthier, Beckett Sennecke, Jackson LaCombe and Leo Carlsson are among those who have played above expectations. Quenneville, who won the Jack Adams in 2000 with St. Louis, clearly has elevated the standard in Anaheim, and the players have risen to the occasion with a top-10 offense.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.30.2026

1384866 Websites

ESPN / NHL playoff standings: Updated wild-card-race projections – ESPN

ESPN staff

Mar 29, 2026

With 30 out of 32 NHL teams in action during Showdown Saturday – and close races for many spots in the 2026 Stanley Cup playoffs – the standings and projections have shifted again.

Ahead of Sunday's slate of six contests, how are the races shaping up?

In the East, the Boston Bruins (90 points and 30 regulation wins through 73 games) and Columbus Blue Jackets (87 points, 27 regulation wins in 73 games) hold the precious wild-card positions. They are trailed most closely by the Ottawa Senators (86 points, 32 regulation wins in 73 games) and Detroit Red Wings (86 points, 28 regulation wins in 73 games).

With the B's and Blue Jackets squaring off Sunday (5 p.m. ET, ESPN+), the Sens, Wings and other teams on the outside will be hoping for a regulation win for one team or the other (an overtime/shootout loss provides an extra point). The Philadelphia Flyers are also in action Sunday (7 p.m. ET, ESPN+) vs. the Dallas Stars. If Philly (84 points, 23 regulation wins in 72 games) is going to make a run to the postseason, grabbing two points off Dallas would be a nice boost.

The Washington Capitals (83 points, 31 regulation wins in 74 games) are idle Sunday, but remain on the fringes.

How do the projections look? Stathletes has the Blue Jackets qualifying as the No. 3 seed in the Metro Division (99.5 points), with the Senators (98.6) and Bruins (98.2) earning the wild cards. The idle New York Islanders (who entered the day as the No. 3 Metro team) and the Red Wings both miss out.

Fewer teams of interest in the Western wild-card race hit the ice Sunday – but the one that does is pretty important: the Nashville Predators, who currently hold the No. 2 wild card.

The Preds visit the Tampa Bay Lightning (5 p.m. ET, ESPN+), looking to bolster their buffer. Nashville enters play Sunday with 77 points and 25 regulation wins in 73 games, ahead of the Los Angeles Kings (76 points, 19 regulation wins in 73 games), Seattle Kraken (75 points, 25 regulation wins in 72 games), Winnipeg Jets (74 points, 25 regulation wins in 73

games) and San Jose Sharks (73 points, 21 regulation wins in 71 games).

The projections fall the Kings' way. Stathletes has L.A. finishing in the second wild-card spot with 86.6 points, ahead of Nashville (85.3), San Jose (84.9), Seattle (81.9) and Winnipeg (81.1).

Every team has around 10 games remaining before the regular season concludes April 16, and we'll help you keep track of it all here on the NHL playoff watch every day. As we traverse the final stretch, we'll provide details on all the playoff races – along with the teams jockeying for position in the 2026 NHL draft lottery.

The NHL uses a draft lottery to determine the order of the first round, so the team that finishes in last place is not guaranteed the No. 1 selection. As of 2021, a team can move up a maximum of 10 spots if it wins the lottery, so only 11 teams are eligible for the draw for the No. 1 pick. Full details on the process can be found here. Atop draft boards for this summer is Gavin McKenna, a forward for Penn State.

ESPN LOADED: 03.30.2026

1384867 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Suzuki continues to prove he's among world's most complete player

Eric Engels

Nick Suzuki closed the gap on Sebastian Aho, dropped to one knee and put the finishing touches on one of his most desperate performances of the season with his strongest defensive play of the night.

Suzuki's only block of Sunday's game came with his Montreal Canadiens barely clinging to a 3-1 lead, with just under three minutes to play against a Carolina Hurricanes team that had put them in a spin cycle all night.

It came with the Hurricanes' net empty, in a five-on-six situation, with the Canadiens burning every ounce of gas remaining in their reserve tank, and it was no coincidence it came from him. Because no Canadien has come up with bigger plays at either end of the ice this season than their captain, who's in the process of simultaneously becoming the team's first Selke Trophy winner since Guy Carbonneau in 1989 and its first 100-point player since Mats Naslund in 1986.

Naslund, who had 110 points for the Canadiens the year they won their second-to-last Stanley Cup, wasn't exactly a defensive maven nor shot-blocker. He didn't have to be, though, because Carbonneau left a lot of goals and points on the table on his way to finally being crowned the best defensive forward in the NHL three years later, when the Canadiens returned to the Stanley Cup Final.

In the decades that have passed since, no player for the Canadiens has blended Naslund and Carbonneau's skills as well as Suzuki, who registered points 89, 90 and 91 on Sunday before making his 58th block of the season to keep himself at plus-2 on the night and plus-32 through 73 games.

"Those are the little plays you need to win," assistant captain Mike Matheson told reporters at PNC Arena after the Canadiens closed out their fifth consecutive regulation win. "At this time of the season, going into the playoffs, that's what you have to do."

You must make small plays and big plays all the same, and Suzuki does that every single game.



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He sets the standard, and the Canadiens follow, even if on this night they blocked 31 shots before Suzuki got his leg on Aho's last attempt.

When they needed a rescue breath earlier, down 1-0, Suzuki provided it by skating the length of the ice to score his 25th goal of the season.

Lane Hutson stretched a three-zone pass up to Cole Caufield, and Caufield drew coverage in to lay the puck up for Suzuki to dunk it right as he arrived in front of Frederik Andersen.

Suzuki returned the favour when he set up Caufield's 46th goal of the season a little over 11 minutes later.

And then, in the dying seconds of that middle frame, Suzuki drew a faceoff back to the point, drove to the net, took a shot, and then buried his own rebound to put the game out of reach.

They were two of a team-leading five shots on net the 26-year-old registered over his 20:17 spread over 22 shifts of this second game in 22 hours, which was played in a different time zone than the one the Canadiens were in the night prior.

Suzuki was desperate, and so were the tired Canadiens. Especially as the Hurricanes pressed and pulverized them early.

"Not an easy team to play against here on a back-to-back," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis. "We had a tough time getting going, and not because we weren't engaged. We just had trouble executing after their forecheck. We weren't able to get forechecking ourselves. When you don't have the puck, it's hard to gain momentum..."

"When you play Carolina, you expect a team that'll surely have more shots than you, and you're going to have to for sure weather a storm, and then you have to capitalize on chances when they're over-aggressive."

That's what the Canadiens did.

When they bent, Jakub Dobes kept them from breaking.

The goaltender, who made a career-high 41 saves in a win over the Hurricanes at the Bell Centre to start the week, made another 34 against them Sunday. He stopped 33 consecutive shots after allowing the game's first two goals Tuesday, and he stopped 26 straight after Andrei Svechnikov ripped one past him on the power play to start the scoring in the final game of the week.

In between, Dobes saved 25 shots in a 2-1 win over the red-hot Columbus Blue Jackets.

"He's really finding himself as a goalie in this league," said Suzuki, "and he's been there for us every single time he's been in the net."

In front of Dobes, no player has been more consistent at both ends than Suzuki.

Playing every shift against either the best defensive players in the league or the most offensively potent ones, he's dominated his matchups, never going more than two consecutive games without a point and rarely allowing anyone to get the over on him.

As a result, Suzuki is already two points up on the 89 he posted in 82 games last season. He ranks seventh in league scoring and is on pace to score 11 more points over the final nine games. And we know that Aho shot won't be the last one he blocks this season.

It was Suzuki's final play in a game that highlighted how he's become one of the most complete players in the world.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.30.2026

1384868 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Sunday Overreactions: Should Yzerman be on hot seat if Red Wings miss playoffs?

Michael Amato

One of the few guarantees in life used to be the Detroit Red Wings making the playoffs.

The Red Wings made the post-season every year for a quarter century between 1991 and 2016, with current general manager Steve Yzerman playing a starring role for many of those teams, including a few that went on to win the Stanley Cup. Now, the Wings aren't just having a tough time getting back to the summit — they've struggled just getting back to the dance.

Detroit has missed the playoffs for close to a decade, and just when it seemed like the drought was coming to an end, the Wings are suddenly seeing their post-season hopes slip away. The Red Wings are now one point out of a wild-card spot after spending the majority of the season locked in a top-three spot in the Atlantic. Teams like the Buffalo Sabres, Boston Bruins and Columbus Blue Jackets seem to pick up points just about every night, leaving Detroit struggling to keep pace.

After a big win over the Sabres on Friday, Saturday's loss to the Philadelphia Flyers was a massive missed opportunity. Ottawa, Columbus and Pittsburgh — teams the Wings are fighting with for a playoff spot — all lost in regulation, not to mention the Flyers' victory put them back into the mix as well. If Detroit wants to qualify for the tournament, there's going to be a ton of work to do over the last few weeks of the season.

The Red Wings had been somewhat insulated from criticism for their playoff drought thanks to the futile Sabres having a lengthier one. But that is coming to an end this season, and Buffalo looks like it's going to be a post-season mainstay for the foreseeable future. If Detroit doesn't collect itself and find its way in, fingers are going to start being squarely pointed at Yzerman for any shortcomings.

Yzerman deserves to be on the hot seat if Detroit fails to make post-season

When Yzerman took over in 2019, he planned to rebuild and stockpile picks and young prospects — an outlook affectionately known as the Yzerplan. Quickly put into action, it has seen the Wings re-stock the cupboards and create a new core of talent with players like Moritz Seider, Lucas Raymond, Simon Edvinsson and Marco Kasper. There is more talent to come as well, with the likes of Sebastian Cossa, Nate Danielson and others.

The influx of new faces has yet to pay major dividends on the ice, though. Detroit made some strides two years ago while narrowly missing the playoffs, but took a step back last season. There are still depth issues down the middle and on the blue line the Wings need to improve upon.

If they fail to make the playoffs this season, the seventh in Yzerman's tenure as general manager, fans will no doubt start to get restless. Seven seasons is an eternity for a rebuild, and while the Wings are clearly in a better state today compared to when Yzerman took over, it could be difficult to justify continuing down the same path without some success and tangible results.

Overreaction? Yes

It really does feel like Detroit is starting to turn a corner, even if it is happening as slowly as an ocean liner rounding a peninsula. That said, things can change quickly, and Detroit should look no further than division rival Buffalo as an example. It really did feel like the Sabres were



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going to watch another season spiral into disaster before they suddenly turned things around. Buffalo fired general manager Kevyn Adams during its early-season struggles, only to suddenly watch the team he built turn into a wagon seemingly overnight. Now, the Sabres could very well end up finishing first in the Eastern Conference. That doesn't necessarily mean the same thing is going to happen in Detroit, but you can certainly see the makings of a good young team coming together in the Motor City.

You also can't fault Yzerman for trying to improve the team this year in a wide-open conference at the deadline. I do think he could've made a bigger splash, though he added Justin Faulk and David Perron to the group in an environment that appeared difficult to make trades. He also traded for John Gibson last summer to help solidify the goaltending, and he has been excellent.

In a season where Toronto and Florida are going to miss the playoffs in the Atlantic, and potentially Ottawa or Boston as well, it would be very disappointing if Detroit can't capitalize. Patience should definitely be running thin in the Wings organization, but moving on from Yzerman would still be a little bit hasty.

Few players have had the type of season Macklin Celebrini is putting together before their 20th birthday. The San Jose Sharks forward is easily going to eclipse 100 points and remains in the Hart conversation as we head into the final month of the campaign. Any chances at winning the award will likely hinge on the Sharks making the playoffs, something that could be a long shot. San Jose had lost six in a row prior to Saturday, in part because Celebrini was starting to slow down. As he goes, they go. Celebrini had just a single assist in five games before picking up a pair of points Saturday, and the Sharks are now 1-16-3 in games where he doesn't record a point. Given his recent lengthy slump, it's fair to say Celebrini is hitting a wall after all the hockey he's played this year.

Overreaction? No

Celebrini has been so outstanding this season that it's easy to forget he's still only 19. Two years ago, in his final season at Boston University, Celebrini played in just 38 games, and as a rookie, he was limited to 70 because of injury. Grinding through a full NHL season is a big adjustment for any 19-year-old, especially under these circumstances, with the Olympics having condensed the NHL schedule, giving teams more back-to-backs and fewer nights off. Plus, Celebrini played at said Olympics. He's also skating massive minutes for the Sharks, averaging 21:24 per night. It's completely understandable if Celebrini isn't clicking at the rate he did earlier in the year, but unfortunately for the Sharks, their post-season hopes are hinging on Celebrini finishing strong.

Joel Hofer will be the Blues' starting goalie next season

It may not be the ideal time for it, but Joel Hofer is playing some very good hockey down the stretch. Unfortunately, the St. Louis Blues are out of the playoff race and would be better off increasing their lottery odds, though that's been tough to do with Hofer between the pipes. The 25-year-old owns an incredible .959 save percentage in March and has won six of his past eight starts. Hofer has also allowed more than two goals in only one of his eight appearances this month. He's starting to put together a pretty decent sample size over the past three seasons and now boasts a .909 career save percentage, with six shutouts in 2025-26. Given the way Jordan Binnington has struggled in recent years, it wouldn't be surprising to see Hofer take over the starting duties in 2026-27.

Overreaction? No

Hofer's play is too hard to ignore. There's been a lot of grace given to Binnington because of how he guided the Blues to a Stanley Cup victory, but that was several years ago. Since then, he's mostly regressed, bottoming out this year with an .873 save percentage. There's also a possibility that Binnington could be traded this off-season. St. Louis was trying to sell around the deadline, and with Binnington heading into the

final year of his deal at \$6 million with a rising cap, his contract is a lot more moveable. Hofer could easily be the goaltender of the future for the Blues, and even if Binnington returns, he may find himself in a backup role moving forward.

It's almost time for a tradition unlike any other. No, not The Masters. I'm talking about the annual complaints about the NHL's playoff format. A large majority of fans have been unhappy with the current setup for years and have been hoping the league would eventually go back to the 1-vs.-8 model.

Some of those complaints are certainly justified. This new format was created to spark new rivalries, but instead, we're often seeing high-profile teams bow out in the first round while others have much easier paths. This year, the Central may arguably have the three best teams in the league, but two of those are guaranteed to miss out on the conference finals. Meanwhile, the entire Pacific division would not be better than ninth place if they were in the Eastern Conference. Is it finally time for the league to go back to the old playoff format?

Overreaction? Yes

This may be an unpopular opinion, but I don't hate the current structure. For one, knowing the path you have to take and what teams you have to go through to make a deep playoff run should inform how you build your team. Do the Minnesota Wild go all in on a Quinn Hughes trade without an eye on the Colorado-Dallas gauntlet? Perhaps, but realizing early on they had to topple two of the league's best teams if they want to make a conference final run probably pushed Bill Guerin to go all out to improve his squad.

Plus, you get a lot of really good first-round matchups. Some might say it's better to try to save those for the conference finals, but usually by that point, teams are so banged up that the quality of hockey drops considerably. There's a good chance that by Round 3, a handful of players from every team are being held together by scotch tape, and quite a few probably wouldn't even be playing if it were the regular season. Having your best matchups earlier rather than later helps showcase a better product on the ice.

The strength of teams and divisions is very cyclical, so maybe the Central will have a tough go of it this post-season, though there's no guarantee what next year will bring. Organizations need to look around their division and build a team that can compete with anybody and push to improve at the trade deadline, since it doesn't sound like there's any appetite from the league to change the format anytime soon.

If you are a general manager hoping to transform your team in free agency this summer, you're likely going to be very disappointed. It's a very thin free-agent class, and with Nick Schmaltz coming off the board recently with a contract extension, it's maybe most bleak at the centre position. That could mean someone like Charlie Coyle, who is having a career season for the Blue Jackets, could be the most sought-after centre on the market. The 34-year-old already has 55 points on the season, so he figures to easily surpass his career high of 60. It's the perfect time for Coyle to have a huge season, but at his age and with so many teams desperate for help down the middle, there's a big risk of someone giving Coyle a contract they're going to regret.

Overreaction? No

The biggest issue with a Coyle contract this summer is going to be term. At 34, the Blue Jackets forward is likely going to be looking for as much of it as he can get, considering his age and the fact that this might be his last/best shot to cash in. It's a dangerous proposition for a team hoping to sign him, as Coyle has only cleared the 50-point mark three times in his career, with one of those coming nearly a decade ago. Someone is likely going to be desperate enough to give him a lucrative deal, though. Too many teams have a need for a centre, and there just isn't much available. With the cap going up, an organization will surely convince itself it can



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afford to overspend a bit on Coyle, even with the risk the deal may not age well. Buyer beware.

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Sportsnet.ca / 'We'll be fired up': Maple Leafs eye Gudas revenge, look past Blues

Luke Fox

When the results stop mattering and the season is long lost, you squint harder to spot meaning in the grind.

Morsels of inspiration as you skate out the schedule.

So, upon returning to St. Louis, where the coach is still seeking his first win since being fired from the Blues, Craig Berube started Missouri native Joseph Woll in net, even though he was the less rested of his goaltending options.

Perhaps getting a hometown win for Woll, if not doing Berube one last solid, would summon a strong showing from the Toronto Maple Leafs Saturday.

Nah, not even close.

The visitors got pummeled 5-1 by an opponent that also sold off talent at the trade deadline. They got outshot 38-13. They registered zero shots on a four-minute power-play. Sportlogiq counted the high-danger chances 22-8 and scoring chances off the rush 11-1 for the winning team.

"We had one player show up tonight, and that was our goalie," Berube told reporters in St. Louis, following loss No. 43.

We could mention that callup Jacob Quillan registered his first NHL point, a secondary assist on Jake McCabe's third-period strike.

Or that William Nylander — who poked some fun at Berube's constant prodding for him to shoot when he sniped one at Friday's practice — failed to hit the net once in his 20-plus minutes of ice time, most among all forwards.

Or wax on about the Leafs' hanging Woll out to dry so often, the springs on the clothespins are wearing out. (Toronto has been outshot 300-162 over Woll's past eight starts.)

But we'd rather look past the Blues, like the Leafs did, and consider the only game of the eight remaining on Toronto's calendar that should be appointment viewing.

Monday in Anaheim shouldn't require a pep talk or a sentimental start (although ex-Duck Anthony Stolarz should get the nod).

Revenge Night against Radko Gudas has been circled since the Leafs lost captain Auston Matthews to a greasy knee-on-knee hit, then lost respect for not responding to Gudas in the moment.

"You never want to see anyone go down like that, especially the captain," an angry Max Domi said two weeks ago. "Certainly not happy about it, and we play 'em in a couple weeks."

While the Leafs have been a punchy bunch since, seemingly eager to make up for opportunity lost, Gudas's availability to answer the bell has come under question.

The defenceman suffered an injury to his left leg Thursday in Calgary, sat out Saturday's loss in Edmonton, and was seen wearing a walking boot. He'll visit a doctor in California Sunday.

Gudas says he apologized to Matthews and wants to face the Leafs "no matter what," Elliotte Friedman reported on Hockey Night in Canada. "He recognizes the Maple Leafs want a piece of him, and he wants to play... because it's the right thing to do."

How will the Maple Leafs, so listless in St. Louis, enter Honda Center 48 hours from now?

"I hope very fired up," McCabe said.

"A large chunk of us are going to be back here next year, and you need to continue to build bonds with your teammates and not leaving your buddy out to dry."

"It's a game that means a lot for our side, so, yeah, we'll be fired up," echoed Nylander, who was on the ice when Matthews went down, busy flagging the penalty.

No, the Maple Leafs don't get a mulligan for the embarrassing scene when the Ducks flew into Toronto. And no, we're not certain Gudas's doctor will give even him a green light.

But the Leafs can make sure their goalie isn't the only one who shows up.

"We're gonna be ready to come. We know what happened last game, so we got something to prove next game, for sure," Quillan said.

Help spoil the Ducks' bid for top spot in the Pacific. Leave a mark. Or at least with heads held high.

Finding inspiration should be easy this time.

"You can't go out and do stupid things and (get) suspensions," Berube said.

"But we definitely have to go out and play a physical, hard game against that team."

Fox's Fast Five

- Earlier this season, Matthew Knies spoke with training partner and former University of Minnesota linemate Jimmy Snuggerud about how best to adapt to the NHL grind.

"The biggest piece of advice that he's given me," the 21-year-old freshman relayed, "is just like the stretching and the little things are so important. Getting treatment, things like that, because it's a long season. It's 82 games, so it gets to be a lot."

Snuggerud has blasted through the rookie wall.

His opening strike Saturday gives him 17 goals and 39 points. And he's a plus-8 asset on a minus-36 team.

Among all rookies, only Calder favourite Matthew Schaefer (31 points) has been more productive than the red-hot Snuggerud (27 points) in 2026.

Snuggerud earned bragging rights in the close friends' first NHL meeting. Knies went minus-3 without a shot on this night.

- Nylander has now had time to digest the idea of missing the playoffs for the first time in his 10 seasons, but told reporters it's still "an awful feeling" knowing he'll be done hockey on April 15.

Where did it go wrong in 2025-26?

"I have my thoughts about maybe some stuff," Nylander said. "But that's something I'm going to keep to myself."

Hmmm...



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"Takes a lot of balls to do that," Anthony Stolarz confirmed.

- Justin Holl's first goal as a St. Louis Blue comes against the Maple Leafs — and holds as the game winner.

Holl's final goal as a Detroit Red Wing also came against the Leafs.

- Because Bo Groulx has played nine games with the Leafs, the Marlies' leading scorer was returned to the AHL.

GM Brad Treliving didn't want to risk losing Groulx, 26, to waivers and would rather he gain playoff experience — even if it's at the minor-league level. (Groulx can now only be recalled on an emergency basis.)

"He wanted to go down and help them and play," Berube said. "That's a testament to his character and what he believes in, and how it all works, and he understands it. He's good."

The coach added that the depth centre has "a very good opportunity" to crack the Leafs' opening roster in 2026-27.

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