



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 21, 2026

## The News & Observer

### Hurricanes' OT goal against Ottawa in Game 2 was redemption for Jordan Martinook

By: Chip Alexander

In the Stanley Cup playoffs, players are forever talking about being able to handle the highs and lows that inevitably come with the pressure-filled games.

With that in mind, think about Jordan Martinook of the Carolina Hurricanes (Shopping Cart IconShop Canes Fan Gear).

With the Canes and Ottawa Senators locked up in Game 2 of their first-round playoff series Monday, Martinook had a chance to win it on a penalty shot late in a first overtime at Lenovo Center. Denied and dejected after being stopped, the forward then gave the Canes a 3-2 win with a goal at 13:53 of the second OT.

Taking a pass in the slot from Nikolaj Ehlers, Martinook whipped a shot through traffic that Sens goalie Linus Ullmark, who had made some sensational stops in the game, could not see with Canes captain Jordan Staal setting a 6-foot-4 screen.

Just like that the Canes had a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series, which now goes to Ottawa for the next two games.

"I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot," Martinook said after the hard-fought game. "It was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

The penalty shot came after an odd sequence that had many shaking their heads. Martinook broke free up the middle of the Sens zone, took a pass up from Staal and was going in alone on Ullmark when he was hooked from behind by Sens forward Warren Foegele.

Play continued on the delayed penalty and Canes center Mark Jankowski banged the rebound of a Seth Jarvis shot past Ullmark for an apparent winner. The arena rumbled, the Canes surrounded Jankowski to celebrate and fans quickly started heading off into the night.

But the play was challenged and then reviewed as both teams waited anxiously at their benches. The ruling: Staal did not have full possession of the puck as he crossed the blue line and was offside on the play — no goal.

Despite the offside call, under the rules the penalty against Foegele stood. Martinook was awarded the penalty shot with 3:11 left in the overtime.

Ullmark made the stop, play continued, and soon the game was in the second overtime. Martinook got a second chance and delivered the winner, setting off another, final celebration.

"Ever been on a teeter-totter before?" Martinook joked, breaking into a smile. "I was the big guy on the one end. Yeah, I felt pretty bad when I didn't score that one. Then obviously, when you score ..."

"I don't know, hockey's crazy. Sports are crazy. To be able to score after that, I'll be able to tell my grandkids about that."

It was that kind of game, which stretched four hours. The Canes had a 2-0 lead in the second period, getting a power-play goal from Logan Stankoven in the first and then a score from Sebastian Aho in the second — Aho tapping in a Staal pass off the rush one second after the Canes had killed off a penalty.

But the Senators, shut out 2-0 in the series opener Saturday, fought back for a 2-2 tie in the second as Drake Batherson and Dylan Cozens scored — Cozens on a soft goal that slipped through Hurricanes keeper Frederik Andersen's pads.

But Andersen, who faced 39 shots, made some scrambling stops and some high-quality stops, including one against Brady Tkachuk in the first OT and another against Michael Amadio in the second — the puck hitting the post after Andersen got a piece. And Ullmark, who anticipates well, used his glove to make some terrific saves among his 43 stops.

Ullmark lunged to his left to stop a one-timer by Taylor Hall in the second that would have given the Canes a 3-0 lead. He then fought off a point-blank shot by Staal some 20 seconds before the end of regulation. In the second overtime, he twice denied good scoring chances by Hall.

"It was an emotional rollercoaster for everyone," Andersen said of the game. "Had the lead, give it up, had the win for a minute or two, lost it and had a new chance at it. And here we are."

For the Hurricanes, "here" is halfway to an opening-round series win.

"But they're not going to go easy," Andersen said of the Senators, the second wild-card team in the Eastern Conference.

The Senators played without defenseman Artem Zub, who was injured in Game 1. Defensemen Jake Sanderson and Thomas Chabot each played more than 40 minutes.

"It was a helluva effort," Sens coach Travis Green said. "Playoffs are hard, sometimes. Some of the games you lose, they sting. This one is going to sting, but we've got a couple of days to regroup and we get to go play in our building."



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## The Athletic

### Senators head home down but not out facing 2-0 series deficit vs. Hurricanes

By: Julian McKenzie

RALEIGH, N.C. — There was no hiding the frustration and disappointment among the Ottawa Senators moments after a heartbreaking overtime loss in a building they had come so close to silencing on multiple occasions.

Veteran forward Claude Giroux scowled as he walked past the media horde waiting to enter the visiting dressing room, heading to an exercise area to cool down. When the Senators' best players took questions, disappointment and fatigue dripped from their voices. As Drake Batherson answered questions, a loud "f—!" rang out from a nearby room. Even Senators GM Steve Staios was in no mood, walking down the Lenovo Center hallway toward the exits so he could board a team bus to the airport.

"Obviously, it sucks," Senators captain Brady Tkachuk said postgame after his team lost 3-2 in a four-hour, double-overtime game against the Carolina Hurricanes. "But we've got a really important game in front of our fans that are going to be fired up and give us a lot of momentum.

"Of course, (we're) going to be pretty unhappy about it. But we're going to move on eventually and get ready for Game 3."

For the second straight year, the Senators are facing a 2-0 deficit in an opening-round playoff series. Last year, the Tkachuk-led core was mostly new to the playoffs and still appeared confident they could turn things around against the Toronto Maple Leafs. This year, the belief is there, somewhere. But the Sens sound more somber this time around, dwelling on a lost opportunity to split the series.

The game was an emotional battle in which the Senators had their chances and nearly lost in the first overtime on an overturned goal-turned-penalty shot. The Senators ultimately couldn't get the better of Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen, who made 37 saves but also had his posts and crossbars to thank.

"I think we had a lot of good looks," Senators forward Dylan Cozens said. "A lot of chances to put that one away. It hurts right now. But we've just got to move on and get ready for the next one."

The Senators really could've used that victory, for obvious reasons. But let's not forget that their defense is still hurting.

Tyler Kleven is working back to the lineup after taking a puck to the face earlier this month. But the Senators are now also without Artem Zub, who collided with Hurricanes forward Seth Jarvis in Game 1 and hasn't returned since. And Nick Jensen won't be back in the lineup any time soon.

Depth options like Nikolas Matinpalo, Dennis Gilbert and Lassi Thomson have seen more ice time as a result. But the

Senators will still lean on their tried-and-true defenders, which explains why Jake Sanderson led all skaters in ice time at 43:06. Thomas Chabot followed that total by playing 40:50.

Most frustrating of all is that Linus Ullmark is playing at his absolute best for the Senators. His postseason numbers haven't always been great, and some early-season performances didn't always instill confidence. But he's looked like the Senators' best player through two games.

On Monday, Ullmark made 43 saves — his most ever in a playoff game — in a losing effort. That includes the penalty shot he saved to keep the Senators alive moments after seemingly losing on a Mark Jankowski game-winner in overtime before it was erased from the history books.

Ullmark's best save was with his glove on a one-time shot from Canes forward Taylor Hall. After initially snagging it, the puck nearly crawled behind Ullmark, but he quickly retrieved it from the goal line. Ullmark made the save when his team was down 2-0 in the second. It spurred his teammates on.

"He was great," Batherson said. "It could've been easily 3 or 4-0. He keeps us in it, and we were able to tie it up. He's been playing awesome. (He) keeps us in it with the penalty shot. I've got nothing but good things to say."

"We can do a better job for him back there," Cozens said. "And helping limit some of those looks (on him)."

Linus Ullmark has played like the Senators' best player through two games in this series. Jared C. Tilton / Getty Images

Both the Sens and Hurricanes might have enjoyed more stickhandling room in a phone booth than they did against each other during Game 1. This game was visibly more free-flowing and open, and the Senators worked to match the Hurricanes' intensity. As a result, they had a handful of quality chances that could've — even should've — bested Andersen.

"I think they simplified their game a bit," Canes hero Jordan Martinook, who scored the eventual double-overtime winner, said after the game. "They were just putting pucks in (the zone) and forechecking, and we knew that that's the type of team they are. You know what each team's bringing, and I think they got to what they do a little better tonight."

Even with injuries on the back end, the Senators had enough going to win, which would've galvanized the group ahead of Game 3 on Thursday night. But instead, the Senators have to overcome a two-game deficit. The Sens are home for the next two games, knowing they want no part of another 3-0 series deficit like they faced last year. But that's after they lick their wounds from losing a chance steal momentum



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against the East's best seed in the Hurricanes, who also happen to be 10-2 all-time in series where they leads 2-0.

"The confidence and the belief is still the highest you could possibly get," Tkachuk said. "We've shown we can hang in there. Of course, (we) don't like both the results, but I mean

the confidence and the belief that I have in my teammates and we have each other as high as it's ever been."

The Senators have two more days to foster that belief and take a game in this series, working their way back from behind.

## Hurricanes vs. Senators Game 2: Key takeaways as Carolina wins double-OT thriller

By: Julian McKenzie

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jordan Martinook returned to the Hurricanes' dressing room at Lenovo Center, still processing all of his emotions from the first overtime period on Monday night.

Moments earlier, Martinook and his teammates were overjoyed in swarming Carolina forward Mark Jankowski after what appeared to be the winning goal against the Senators in Game 2 of their first-round matchup.

"You exhale," Martinook said. "You think it's over."

After a lengthy offside review, though, Martinook was determined to have entered the offensive zone in an offside position, nullifying Jankowski's goal. Except that, in between, a delayed penalty was also called on Ottawa's Warren Foegele, who hooked Martinook on a breakaway.

No Stanley Cup playoff game has ever ended on a penalty shot in overtime, but Martinook was thwarted in his history-making attempt by Senators goalie Linus Ullmark. And while he saw the benefits of having time to "regroup" over the ensuing intermission, he admitted to not feeling good about himself as he prepared for the second overtime.

Given another chance to play hero, Martinook converted. At 13:53 of the second overtime, he took a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers in the slot and whipped a wrister past Ullmark to send Carolina to a 3-2 win and a 2-0 series lead.

"Hockey's crazy," Martinook said. "Sports are crazy. Being able to score after that, I'll tell my grandkids about that one."

The Canes had raced out to a 2-0 advantage in the game, thanks to goals from Logan Stankoven and Sebastian Aho, before the Senators roared back to tie it in the second period. A scoreless third period and first overtime led to Martinook's heroics.

Frederik Andersen made 37 saves in the victory while Ullmark stopped 43 shots in the loss.

The Hurricanes became the first team in NHL history to take a 2-0 lead in their first best-of-seven series for six consecutive postseasons with the win. The series now shifts to Ottawa for Game 3 on Thursday.

Inside a confusing OT sequence

Above press row, as Jankowski appeared to score in overtime, Senators general manager Steve Staios and team owner Michael Andlauer stormed out of their visiting team suite, with Andlauer furiously pushing the door out of his way.

When the overtime period ended, restless Canes fans booed. But those who hadn't already left the building returned to their seats for the second overtime. So did Andlauer and Staios.

Down on the ice, Senators players grouped up along the bench awaiting the review. But coach Travis Green was confident it would be overturned.

"It's a weird play," Green said. "Don't see it a lot in overtime. We knew right away when the puck went in the zone, it looked like it was offside. So, you could see from our bench we weren't going anywhere. Felt like it was offside."

The game was already emotional enough for Martinook, who likened the back-and-forth to a teeter-totter.

"Try having a penalty shot after all that," Martinook said.

Martinook skated towards Ullmark, keeping himself within the red dots and faceoff margins before snapping a shot. The puck hit Ullmark's pads before sliding into the corner behind him, to the shock of Hurricanes fans still coming down from Jankowski's overturned goal.

This wasn't Martinook's first time taking a penalty shot in the playoffs. Three years ago, he earned one while skating shorthanded in Game 3 of the Canes' second-round series against the Devils. Martinook faked out and beat then-New Jersey goalie Vitek Vanecek by going forehand to backhand.

"I was trying to channel my penalty shot from a couple years ago, and I definitely didn't do that," Martinook said.

Andersen outduels Ullmark

Once again, a goaltending duel took place between Ullmark and Andersen. And for the second time in this series, Andersen got the better of Ullmark, even as Ullmark did everything he could to keep his team in Game 2.

"He was amazing," Senators captain Brady Tkachuk said of Ullmark. "He's been amazing his last two games, and he kept us in it just to give us a chance."

The Senators goaltender experienced a roller-coaster 2025-26, both on and off the ice, but he played some of his best hockey in an Ottawa uniform over the final weeks of the regular season. He has continued that trend for much of the first two games of this playoff series.

Ullmark made several incredible saves to start Game 2, at one point diving onto the ice to keep the puck from crawling past him after gloving it down. He then got the better of Taylor Hall with a stretch glove save after Hall received a cross-ice pass. Later, in the second period, Ullmark made



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another flashy glove save to deny Seth Jarvis on a shorthanded, two-on-one breakaway.

## LINUS ULLMARK MAKES THE SAVE OF THE PLAYOFFS 🤖

📱: Sportsnet pic.twitter.com/SDXXrmyXFS

— Daily Faceoff (@DailyFaceoff) April 21, 2026

In the dying seconds of regulation, Ullmark made a crucial save on Jordan Staal in close, redirecting a shot off his shoulder and over the crossbar. He relied on his glove again to deny Martinook's penalty shot, and kicked away Hall's slot chance midway through double overtime.

"But did you see our guy?" Martinook said.

Andersen faced 39 shots in the Canes win, coming up huge through double overtime. Tkachuk had perhaps the best of the six shots in the first overtime, receiving a tight pass from Drake Batherson only for Andersen to be up to the task. Hours earlier, in the first period, Tkachuk generated two quality chances on Andersen but the Dane stopped them both — including one with help from his left post.

Claude Giroux, Tim Stützle and Michael Amadio all also had close calls on Andersen, with several chances hitting the post and crossbar for the Sens in their defeat.

Across the series, Ullmark has stopped 70 of 75 shots. But he couldn't prevent Martinook from beating him in the second overtime. Now, despite the goalie's best efforts, the Senators head home with the series odds tilted against them.

By comparison, Andersen has saved 59 out of 61 shots after some wondered whether he was even the right choice to start the series for Carolina.

### A wide-open start

The Senators and Canes played a tight Game 1, combining for only 51 shots on goal — including zero through the opening six-plus minutes. It was a different story in Game 2, with the teams quickly trading odd-man rushes and quality chances. The Hurricanes ended the game with a slight edge in expected goals at five-on-five, while the Sens had an 18-17 advantage in high-danger chances at five-on-five, according to Natural Stat Trick.

The Senators had several prime opportunities to score in the first period, edging the Hurricanes 5-4 in high-danger chances at five-on-five, according to Natural Stat Trick. Stützle had a wide-open net after receiving a backdoor pass in close, but the puck kicked to his skate instead of his stick. Tkachuk also had a pair of prime looks near the crease, but he hit the post and Andersen's pads in succession before Fabian Zetterlund failed to score off the ensuing rebound.

Carolina countered with speed, pressuring the Sens on odd-man rushes; Jarvis had one of the Canes' best early chances, only to be stymied by Ullmark's left-handed glove. Later, the Canes took advantage of a first-period penalty by Tkachuk, and a roughing call against Aho, as Stankoven scored untouched from the bumper spot for his second goal and third point of the series. In the second period, as a Senators power play expired, Aho converted on a two-on-one with Staal to put Carolina ahead 2-0.

The Sens pressed offensively by reuniting Tkachuk, Stützle and Batherson on their top line. In fact, the Senators out shot the Hurricanes in the third period and both overtimes. But they failed to score when it mattered most.

"We had a few looks," Batherson said. "Obviously, in overtime there we had a few good chances that almost went in. We played together before, and they're two fun guys to play with, and we were close on a couple."

Defensive hockey should continue to be a central theme in this series. But both teams took advantage of the open space allotted, after a series-opening game that offered so little.

### Sanderson shoulders heavy load

The Senators were without defenseman Artem Zub on Monday night after he left partway through Game 1 due to an undisclosed injury. His value to Ottawa had been essential, as he played top-pairing minutes with Jake Sanderson and could be counted on to kill penalties. The Senators certainly could've used him on Carolina's opening goal when Stankoven strolled into the bumper spot without resistance before beating Ullmark.

Sanderson was paired with Nikolas Matinpalo, while another Finn, Lassi Thomson, made his Stanley Cup playoff debut alongside Dennis Gilbert on Ottawa's third pair. Naturally, it was the Olympic gold medalist Sanderson who led the way. Midway through the second period, he saved the puck from exiting Carolina's zone by catching it in mid-air and then passed to Batherson, who scored his team's first goal of the series.

The Senators eventually tied the game thanks to another well-timed takeaway from Sanderson, as he intercepted a Hurricanes pass in the neutral zone and sprung Ridly Greig with a pass at the offensive blue line. Greig then slipped the puck to Cozens, who scored a weak one past Andersen — the first time the Danish goaltender has looked human all series long.

In the end, Sanderson played more than 43 minutes on Monday, leading all skaters in ice time for the second consecutive game.



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## Martinook's OT winner ends Hurricanes' wild 3-2 win in Game 2 | The North State Journal

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — Jordan Martinook is the emotional leader of the Carolina Hurricanes, and in Monday's Game 2 against the visiting Senators, he proved he can handle the highest of highs and lowest of lows.

Martinook's goal at 13:53 of the second overtime gave the Hurricanes a 3-2 win Monday and a 2-0 series lead.

"You couldn't have written it any better," Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said. "What a shot. The place was electric, so it was super fun. Definitely in the memory bank."

The path to Carolina's second win in the series was anything but linear.

After the NHL's Situation Room nullified Carolina center Mark Jankowski's winning goal in the first overtime on a delayed penalty, Martinook was awarded a penalty shot from the same infraction that presented a second chance to win the game.

He did — just 17 minutes later.

After Martinook was stopped by Linus Ullmark (43 saves) on the shootout attempt with 3:11 left in the first overtime, he and the Hurricanes regrouped.

With just over six minutes left in the second overtime, Martinook collected a loose puck at the left sideboards, passed to defenseman K'Andre Miller and circled to the slot. Miller handed off the puck to Nikolaj Ehlers, who passed to Martinook.

His shot whizzed past a screen by Staal and Ottawa defenseman Thomas Chabot and behind Ullmark at 13:53 of double overtime to give the Hurricanes a roller coaster 3-2 win and a 2-0 series lead.

"I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot," Martinook said. "The intermission felt really long. That was cool though. I'm happy it worked out that way. It didn't matter who scored, but it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

Instead, Carolina delivered a blow to the Senators, who rallied from a 2-0 deficit to tie the game in the second period and were inches from winning the game in the second overtime when Frederik Andersen (37 saves) got just enough of a piece of Michael Amadio's 1-on-1 chance to deflect the puck off the post.

"Every moment matters, and any situation it's right then and there," Andersen said. "You just prepare like you would any other shot. And every time you make a save, you give the boys a new chance to score."

On Monday — nearly Tuesday as the game stretched to more than four hours — the chance ended up on Martinook's stick.

"I'd be lying if I said I picked my head up and looked and picked the corner," Martinook said. "At that point, you're just trying to put as many pucks on net as you can. I felt we kind of had them on the run a little bit, and (Ehlers) made a great play in the middle, and I just got it and ripped it. Luckily it went in."

The Hurricanes appeared to end the game with 3:11 left in overtime. After Staal set up Martinook for a chance, Ottawa's Warren Foegele was called for hooking. Carolina brought on Sebastian Aho as the sixth attacker on the delayed penalty sequence.

Staal then went off the ice for a line change, with Jankowski replacing him. Jankowski got the puck and passed to Seth Jarvis in the right circle. Jarvis' shot hit Ullmark's right pad and kicked directly to Jankowski, who banged it in the net.

But the zone entry with Staal and Martinook was reviewed, and the NHL Situation ruled Staal did not have possession of the puck upon entering the zone, nullifying the goal.

"I don't know that rule," Staal said. "I pick up the puck, I look up where (Martinook) is and apparently I lost control of it. And then I make a nice pass to (Martinook) for a breakaway."

"I don't really get it. To call back an overtime goal for that is ..."

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour could be seen rallying his team on the bench before the officials announced that the goal had been overturned.

"I wasn't surprised, I can tell you that," Brind'Amour said with a grimace.

Martinook added, "Try having a penalty shot after all that. You exhale, think it's over, especially in overtime. It's hard."

After Ullmark's penalty shot save, both teams refocused, and redemption was on the menu for Martinook.

"Just happy for Marty," Brind'Amour said. "He's been one of those guys, and it's nice to see him get that recognition for a game like that."

The Hurricanes were in control at the midway point of regulation after building a 2-0 lead, but Ottawa pushed back to tie the game.

Three minutes after Staal set up Aho for the goal that extended the lead to 2-0, Drake Batherson attempted a centering pass that Carolina defenseman Jaccob Slavin



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blocked. But the puck went right back to Batherson, who roofed a shot past Andersen at 10:47 of the second period. It was the first goal allowed by Andersen in more than 90 minutes to start the series.

Ottawa needed fewer than six minutes to get its second and tie the game.

After a neutral zone turnover by Hurricanes center Logan Stankoven, the Senators counterattacked, and Dylan Cozens' bad-angle shot from the bottom of the right circle hit Andersen's pads and trickled in at 16:40 to even the score at 2-2.

"You're going to make mistakes. Everyone does," Andersen said. "It's about what's next. And obviously we had to play a lot going forward. Just refocus and get ready for the next one."

Carolina took an early lead thanks to its power play.

On its only chance of the game in the first period, the Hurricanes sent out their second unit to start the man advantage. Taylor Hall set up behind the Ottawa net and waited for a lane to open. His pass to Stankoven in the low slot found its mark, and Stankoven scored his second goal of the series for a 1-0 Hurricanes lead at 6:31 of the first period.

"A really good pass," Stankoven said. "I was just sitting in the middle, and he made a nice play to find me."

The Hurricanes extended their lead in the second period just after killing off a penalty.

Staal and Aho came in on a 2-on-1 rush just after Sean Walker exited the box, and Staal's pass was finished by Aho to double the lead at 7:50 of the second period.

It was just the second time this season the tandem connected on a goal, and it was Staal's first time assisting on an Aho goal since Nov. 30, 2023.

What happened in the final 17 minutes of the game has probably never happened before.

"Hockey's crazy. Sports are crazy," Martinook said. "Being able to score after that, I'll tell my grandkids about that one, that's for sure."

Notes: Ottawa defensemen Jake Sanderson and Chabot each eclipsed 40 minutes. ... William Carrier had 12 hits. ... Ottawa won 51 of 80 faceoffs. ... Forwards Nicolas Deslauriers and Jesperi Kotkaniemi, defenseman Mike Reilly and goalie Pyotr Kochetkov were healthy scratches for Carolina.



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## Martinook's goal lifts Hurricanes past Senators 3-2 in 2OT after he misses rare OT penalty shot

By: Aaron Beard - AP

Jordan Martinook beat Linus Ullmark from the slot at 13:53 of the second overtime to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Ottawa Senators 3-2 on Monday night. That gave Carolina a 2-0 lead in their first-round series in the NHL playoffs.

Martinook: Hockey is crazy

By AARON BEARD — AP Sports Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Jordan Martinook beat Linus Ullmark from the slot at 13:53 of the second overtime to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Ottawa Senators 3-2 on Monday night and take a 2-0 lead in their first-round playoff series.

Martinook — who was stopped on a penalty shot in the first OT — kept the winning play alive by chasing down a loose rebound toward the boards to keep the possession in the offensive zone. Moments later, Nikolaj Ehlers found Martinook between the circles to beat Ullmark, who was partially shielded by Carolina captain Jordan Staal at the top of the crease.

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That set off a mob celebration by the Hurricanes around Martinook in a corner of the ice, ending a game that saw them hang on despite blowing a 2-0 lead and having an apparent winner by Mark Jankowski waved off in the first overtime due to an offside call on review.

The Hurricanes still had a chance to win it after the overturned goal, only for Ullmark to stop Martinook on the NHL's first OT postseason penalty-shot attempt since 2020.

"I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot, and that intermission felt really long," Martinook said. "That was cool. I'm happy it worked out that way. It didn't matter who scored, but it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

The Eastern Conference's top seed managed to protect home-ice advantage — barely — as the series moves to Canada's capital for Game 3 on Thursday.

"That's the toughest thing: You have it won, a hard-fought game, and then to have it turned over," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "You've got to give the guys tons of credit, because our game didn't change. We actually got better, I think, in the second overtime."

Logan Stankoven and Sebastian Aho also scored for Carolina, while Frederik Andersen shook off giving up two second-period goals to finish with 37 saves and multiple key stops late.

Drake Batherson and Dylan Cozens scored for Ottawa, while Ullmark finished with 43 saves and was terrific all night. He had multiple big stops in the second period, one when he extended his glove to knock down a hammered one-timer from Taylor Hall as the puck shifted cross-ice to his left side. Another came in the final seconds of regulation when he got his left shoulder on Staal's shot from the top of the crease.

"A hell of an effort," Senators coach Travis Green said. "Playoffs are hard sometimes. Some of the games you lose, they sting. This one's going to sting."

The Hurricanes appeared to have pushed through late in the first OT, with Jankowski skating in to pounce on a loose rebound and beat Ullmark on the left side with 2:42 left to send the home crowd into a frenzy. But officials reviewed the sequence and determined that Staal didn't have possession and control of the puck as he entered the zone, coming as Martinook skated through the middle across the blue line for a 1-on-1 chance on Ullmark.

That sequence ultimately led to a hooking penalty on Warren Foegele, with Carolina scrambling an extra attacker and getting Jankowski's offside-overtaken score and then Martinook's penalty shot.

"Hockey's crazy, sports are crazy," Martinook said. "Being able to score after that, I'll tell my grandkids about that one, that's for sure."

The Senators played without defenseman Artem Zub, who left Game 1 with an undisclosed injury. He had been considered a game-time decision.

Series schedule

Game 1: Carolina 2, Ottawa 0

Game 2: Carolina 3, Ottawa 2 (2OT)

Game 3: Carolina at Ottawa, Thursday, April 23, 7:30 p.m. (TBS, HBO Max, FanDuel Sports Network, 99.9 The Fan)

Game 4: Carolina at Ottawa, Saturday, April 25, 7:30 p.m. (TBS, HBO Max, FanDuel Sports Network, 99.9 The Fan)

Game 5 (if necessary): Ottawa at Carolina, Monday, April 27, TBD (FanDuel Sports Network, 99.9 The Fan)

Game 6 (if necessary): Carolina at Ottawa, Thursday, April 30, TBD (FanDuel Sports Network, 99.9 The Fan)

Game 7 (if necessary): Ottawa at Carolina, Saturday, May 2, TBD (FanDuel Sports Network, 99.9 The Fan)

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Logan Stankoven and Taylor Hall scored and Frederik Andersen came through with a big third-period performance in net to help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Ottawa Senators 2-0 to open their first-round playoff series.

Asset Thumbnail

The top-seeded Carolina Hurricanes and wild-card Ottawa Senators meet in the first round of the NHL playoffs.

Asset Thumbnail

The Carolina Hurricanes open the playoffs on Saturday against the Ottawa Senators.



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## Recap: Martinook Plays Hero As Canes Win Wild Game 2

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

Carolina takes 2-0 lead as series shifts to Ottawa for Game 3

RALEIGH, N.C. - After more than 90 minutes of action, Jordan Martinook potted the double-overtime dagger to lift the Carolina Hurricanes to a 3-2 win over the Ottawa Senators in Game 2 of their first-round Stanley Cup Playoffs series.

While Monday's tilt didn't start with fisticuffs, Logan Stankoven was happy to provide the action in the early going. Minutes after swiping the puck off the Canes' goal line, the Game 1 star opened the scoring once again, slamming home a Taylor Hall setup on the power play at 6:31.

Boasting a healthy shot advantage through the first half of the contest, Carolina eventually capitalized once more to double its lead. Converting a 2-on-1 rush chance, Jordan Staal threaded the needle to Sebastian Aho for a back-door tap-in at 7:50 of the second period.

Three minutes later, though, the Senators found twine for the first time this postseason. That spark yielded a tying tally soon after, and provided momentum that enabled the visitors to hold the Canes at bay through the end of regulation time.

Close calls ensued for both clubs in the first overtime, but none closer than Mark Jankowski's would-be game-winner that was called back for the play being offside in the buildup. In an interesting twist, though, a penalty that was called amid the action still stood, resulting in a penalty shot for Martinook, but his attempt was answered by Ottawa's Linus Ullmark.

As the contest moved into the back half of a second overtime, the Canes' steady forechecking finally bore fruit. K'Andre Miller sent a pass from the blue line to Nikolaj Ehlers in the corner, who quickly curled and found Martinook alone in the high slot. And despite being stymied by Ullmark's glove on his earlier penalty shot, the Canes' alternate captain went back to the same spot, this time whistling a wrister off the post and in to seal the victory.

Back in the Carolina cage, Frederik Andersen stopped 37 of 39 shots as he got the nod for the second straight game.

### Stats & Standouts

Jordan Martinook's game-winner marked his first career playoff overtime tally. He also became the third player in franchise history to score the winning goal in a playoff game that required multiple overtimes, joining Sebastian Aho (Game 5 of 2025 R1) and Brock McGinn (Game 7 of 2019 R1).

Logan Stankoven opened the scoring and became the fifth player in team history (since relocation) to open a postseason with goals in the first two games, joining Stefan Noesen (2023), Nino Niederreiter (2022), Matt Cullen (2006) and Erik Cole (2002). Only one player in franchise history has posted a longer run: Pat Verbeek (1991 w/ HFD).

Sebastian Aho scored his first goal of the 2026 postseason and his 86th career playoff point, tying Valtteri Filppula for the fifth-most playoff points by a Finnish player. The only Finns with more: Jari Kurri (233), Esa Tikkanen (132), Mikko Rantanen (123) and Teemu Selanne (88).

Frederik Andersen's shutout streak finished at 90:47, surpassing Petr Mrazek for the 12th-longest playoff run in franchise history. He is the first goaltender to start a postseason with a shutout streak of 80 or more minutes since Cam Talbot in 2021 (95:45).

With Monday's win, the Hurricanes became the first team in NHL history to own a 2-0 lead during its first best-of-seven series in six straight postseasons, breaking a tie with the NY Islanders (1977 – 1981), Chicago Blackhawks (1970 – 1974) and Montreal Canadiens (1965 – 1969; 1951 – 1955) for the lengthiest in League history.

### They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on his group sticking with it after a wild sequence of events post-regulation...

"We've been through a lot, obviously. This is just another thing to add. We make it exciting, that's for sure. We've got a lot to look back on and say, 'Wow.' That was another one of those games. I'm just happy for Marty. He's been one of those guys [who has been here for a while]. It's nice to see him get that recognition for a game like that."

Jordan Martinook sharing his range of emotions after being offside to negate the would-have-been Jankowski winner, and not converting on the subsequent penalty shot, before ultimately playing hero...

"I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot, and that intermission felt very long. But, (scoring the winner) was cool. I'm happy it worked out that way. It didn't matter who scored, but it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

Jordan Martinook describing his winner...

"I'd be lying if I said I picked my head up and looked and picked the corner. At that point, you're just trying to put as many pucks on (net) that you can. I felt like we kind of had them on the run a little bit. Fly made a great play to the middle, and I just ripped it. Luckily, it went in."



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Jordan Staal sharing his emotions after seeing the puck go in the net...

"Of course it was (Jordan Martinook). You couldn't have written it up any better. What a shot. The place was electric. It was super fun and definitely in the memory bank."

Jordan Martinook when asked if doubt started to creep in, given how well Linus Ullmark was playing...

"Yeah, you're thinking that. But did you see our guy?... (Ullmark) was great tonight. Then you look at Freddie, and they're going save for save. It was pretty impressive, both of them. You just keep shooting, and hopefully one finds a way."

Jordan Staal attributing the win to his team's experience...

"It doesn't hurt. It's not getting squirrely. It's just staying with the grind and believing in what we're doing and trusting the process. Guys did that tonight, and it paid off. Sometimes it doesn't, but tonight it did."

Jordan Staal continuing on Frederik Andersen...

"Freddie was unbelievable. There was probably one too many saves that he made for us. It was good to see him bounce back and continue to fight for us, and give us a chance to win."

Freddie Andersen elaborating on how he keeps his composure in a near 100-minute game...

"It's 'this moment', right? Every moment matters in these situations... You just prepare like you would any other shot. Every time you make a save, you get to give the boys a new chance to score."

Jordan Martinook on defending home ice and earning a 2-0 series lead...

"We did our job. Every home team, you want to hold court in your building. We won our two at home, and now we go up there, and they're going to try and do the same. So it's on us to go in there and put our best game forward, and get the next one."

What's Next?

The Canes are next scheduled to practice on Wednesday before flying to Ottawa for Thursday's Game 3.

Next Game: Thursday, April 23 | Round 1, Game 3 at Ottawa | 7:30 p.m. | [How To Watch](#)

Next Home Game: Monday, April 27 | Round 1, Game 5 vs. Ottawa (if necessary) | TBD | [How To Watch](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



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## Martinook's goal in 2OT lifts Hurricanes past Senators in Game 2

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Forward wins it at 13:53 after he had penalty shot stopped in first extra period for Carolina

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Jordan Martinook scored at 13:53 of double overtime to give the Carolina Hurricanes a 3-2 win against the Ottawa Senators in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference First Round at Lenovo Center on Monday.

Martinook took a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers in the slot and beat a screened Linus Ullmark with a wrist shot that went in off the right post.

"I'd be lying if I said I picked my head up and looked to pick the corner," Martinook said. "At that point you're trying to put as many pucks on net as you can, and I felt like we kind of had them on the run a little bit. ... I got it and just ripped it."

Martinook's goal came after Mark Jankowski thought he had won it for the Hurricanes during a delayed penalty at 17:18 of the first overtime. However, a review initiated by the Situation Room determined that the play was offside prior to the goal.

Despite the overturned goal, Martinook was still awarded a penalty shot for being hooked on a breakaway by Warren Foegele at 16:49. Martinook attempted to beat Ullmark with a shot from the slot, but the goaltender was able to get his glove on it.

"You exhale and you think it's over, especially in overtime," Martinook said. "I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot, and that intermission felt really long. It was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

Sebastian Aho and Logan Stankoven scored for the Hurricanes, who are the No. 1 seed from the Metropolitan Division and Eastern Conference. Frederik Andersen made 37 saves.

"We make it exciting, that's for sure," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We've got a lot to look back on, another one of those games. The goalies both played tremendous, kept their teams in the game."

"I'm obviously happy for Marty. He's one of those guys -- it's nice to see him get that kind of recognition."

Drake Batherson and Dylan Cozens scored, and Jake Sanderson had two assists for the Senators, who are the second wild card from the Eastern Conference. Ullmark made 43 saves.

"Hell of a game," Batherson said. "Quite the turn of events there with the no goal and the penalty shot. I think both teams played great and it was a great game."

Carolina leads the best-of-7 series 2-0. Game 3 will be at Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa on Thursday (7:30 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, TBS, FDSNSO, HBO MAX).

"Playoffs are hard, the games you lose," Senators coach Travis Green said. "This one is going to sting. We get a couple of days to recoup."

Carolina scored on a power play to take a 1-0 lead at 6:31 of the first period. Taylor Hall sent a pass from behind the net out to Stankoven, who beat Ullmark five-hole with a one-timer from below the right hash marks.

Aho made it 2-0 at 7:50 of the second period. He intercepted the puck in the defensive zone and started a 2-on-1 rush with Jordan Staal as a penalty kill expired. The Hurricanes captain then skated into the right circle before sending a pass back across to Aho, who tapped it past the outstretched right pad of Ullmark.

"That's (Aho) to a T," Staal said. "He reads the game so well and he understands when he can go and find openings. I was along for the ride on that one. He made a great play on my pass, and a big goal for our group."

Batherson cut the lead to 2-1 at 10:47. Sanderson gloved down Aho's clearing attempt at the blue line and passed down to Batherson near the left post. Batherson's centering attempt for Claude Giroux hit off the skate of Carolina defenseman Jacob Slavin and deflected right back to Senators forward, who quickly scored short side on Andersen.

Cozens tied it 2-2 at 16:40 of the second with a sharp-angled wrist shot from the bottom of the right circle that slipped through Andersen's five-hole.

"Obviously, you're going to make mistakes, everyone does," Andersen said. "It's about what's next, and obviously we had to play a lot going forward."

Ullmark pushed the game to overtime by making a crucial save with 22 seconds remaining in regulation. Ehlers sent a centering pass out front to Staal, whose one-timer from the edge of the crease was stopped by the flailing left shoulder of Ullmark.

"He's been amazing these past two games," Ottawa captain Brady Tkachuk said. "He kept us in it, just to have a chance."



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Andersen made a game-saving stop of his own at 11:21 of the second overtime. Michael Amadio got behind the defense and made a move in tight to his forehand, but Andersen got a piece of the shot with his glove before it hit off the crossbar.

"'Freddie' was unbelievable," Staal said. "It was probably one too many saves he had to make for us. It was good to see him bounce back and continue to fight for us."

NOTES: Sanderson played a game-high 43:06. ... The Hurricanes are the first team in NHL history to take a 2-0 lead in its first best-of-7 series in six straight postseasons.



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## Martinook rescues Hurricanes in 2OT after overturned goal - ESPN

By: Greg Wyshynski

Carolina Hurricanes forward Jordan Martinook blew his first chance at being the hero of Game 2, failing to convert on a rare penalty shot in the first overtime. But in the second OT session, he wasn't about to squander a second chance to put away the Ottawa Senators.

Martinook ended Game 2 at 13:53 of the second extra session in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Monday night, giving the Hurricanes a 3-2 victory and a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference first-round series. It was redemption for the 33-year-old, who earlier couldn't convert on just the fifth overtime penalty shot in Stanley Cup playoff history, firing the puck directly into the glove of Ottawa goalie Linus Ullmark with 3:11 left in the first overtime.

"I felt pretty bad when I didn't score that one. But obviously the emotion when you score ... hockey's crazy," he said. "Being able to score after that, I'll tell my grandkids about that one, that's for sure."

In the second overtime, Martinook's line was again buzzing in the Senators' zone. Defenseman K'Andre Miller fed the puck to forward Nikolaj Ehlers, who found Martinook in the slot. His quick shot beat goalie Ullmark (43 saves), who was screened by Carolina captain Jordan Staal.

"I'd be lying if I said I picked my head up and looked and picked the corner. At that point, you're just trying to put as many pucks on net you can," Martinook said. "I got it and just ripped it. Luckily, it went in."

Martinook's penalty shot occurred after a surreal sequence in the first overtime in which an apparent winning goal was wiped off the board via video review.

Senators forward Warren Foegele took a slashing penalty against Martinook, as the Carolina forward slipped in between him and Ullmark for a scoring chance.

On the delayed penalty, Ullmark deflected a shot by Hurricanes forward Seth Jarvis that center Mark Jankowski

collected and fired into the net with 2:42 remaining in the first overtime for what appeared to be a 3-2 win.

But the on-ice officials soon gathered near the penalty boxes, as NHL Hockey Operations initiated a video review to see if Staal was offside on the zone entry.

"They determined that the player did not have control and possession of the puck prior to his feet breaking the plane at the blue line. You need to have possession and control as you're entering the zone. They felt he didn't," ESPN rules analyst Dave Jackson said. "He had possession -- the puck hit his stick -- but he never controlled it until the puck was inside the zone. He put himself offside essentially."

Despite 29 seconds of play between Staal's zone entry and Jankowski putting the puck in the net, the offside decision nullified the goal. But it did not nullify the penalty on Foegele, as NHL rules state: "If one or more penalties (minor or major) are assessed between the time of the missed infraction and the video review that disallows the apparent goal, the offending team will still be required to serve the penalties identified and assessed."

Martinook said the emotional swing of the moment was hard to process.

"Try having a penalty shot after all that," he joked. "You exhale. You think it's over."

It was the first overtime penalty shot in the playoffs since August 2020, when Montreal's Jonathan Drouin took one against Pittsburgh's Matt Murray. Teams are now 0-for-5 on overtime penalty shots. Martinook became the fifth player in Stanley Cup playoff history with multiple penalty shot attempts, having previously scored on one in 2023.

"The intermission felt really long," Martinook said. "That was cool though. I'm happy it worked out that way. It didn't matter who scored, but it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

Game 3 of the series is Thursday night in Ottawa.



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## Explaining wild review, penalty shot sequence in Senators-Hurricanes

By: Sportsnet Staff

If you thought you'd seen everything in an NHL hockey game, think again.

In one of the most chaotic sequences you will ever see, the Ottawa Senators were able to survive to a second period of overtime against the Carolina Hurricanes in Game 2 on Monday.

With the Senators called for a delayed penalty, Hurricanes forward Mark Jankowski appeared to bury the overtime winner to give Carolina a 2-0 series lead.

But after a league-mandated review, the goal was waved off for offside.

The league determined that Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal had possession but not control of the puck when his skates went over the blue line on the initial entry to the zone, per Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman.

Rule 83.1 of the NHL rulebook states in part: "A player controlling the puck who shall cross the line ahead of the puck shall not be considered 'off-side,' provided he had possession and control of the puck with his stick prior to both skates completely crossing the leading edge of the blue line."

However, the absurdity of the sequence was far from over.

Because the Hurricanes scored with the Senators on a delayed penalty, Carolina was still in line to receive the penalty after the disallowed goal.

That call was made with reference to Rule 38.7 of the NHL rulebook, which states in part: "If one or more penalties (minor or major) are assessed between the time of the missed infraction and the video review that disallows the apparent goal, the offending team(s) (and responsible Player(s)) will still be required to serve the penalty(ies) identified and assessed, and the time of the penalty(ies) will be recorded as the time at which the play should have been stopped for the missed infraction."

But this call wasn't just a regular penalty, as the referees determined that Jordan Martinook had a clear scoring chance taken away and awarded the Hurricanes forward a penalty shot.

Senators goalie Linus Ullmark came up big and stopped Martinook, and after all was said and done, the game headed to another 20 minutes of overtime.

Martinook would get the last laugh, however, as he made up for his penalty shot miss in the second overtime by scoring the game-winner.

Luckily for both teams, there are two days off to recover before Game 3 in Ottawa on Thursday.



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## Hurricanes 3, Senators 2 - Double OT

By: Bob Wage

Jordan Martinook notched the game-winner in double overtime to lead the Carolina Hurricanes to a 3-2 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Monday night at the Lenovo Center. The win gives Carolina a 2-0 lead in this playoff series and allows them to keep their home ice advantage.

The Canes thought they had won the game in the first overtime when Mark Jankowski ripped in a goal, but after a long review, it was ruled that Jordan Staal was offside on the play because the desk in Toronto determined that he did not have control of the puck when he crossed the blueline.

Staal was not happy with the controversial call and said post game that he looked to pass the puck to Martinook, he did not feel like he lost possession or control. Poor Mark Jankowski said that he was on cloud nine for about two minutes when he celebrated his supposed goal.

Martinook had been the victim of a penalty earlier and weirdly enough, was awarded a penalty shot after the offside decision. He missed the shot so he was certainly looking for redemption afterward and eventually got it.

When asked after the game how difficult was it to recover after celebrating and thinking you had won the game, to settling back down to the business and seriousness of playing hockey, "Try shooting a penalty shot right after that!" Martinook quipped.

The game started off with fast skating and hitting for both teams. The Canes took the lead off another goal by Logan Stankoven, who has been red hot since the Olympic break. He got a perfect pass by Taylor Hall, who set him up on the powerplay.

In the second period, the Hurricanes jumped to a 2-0 lead when Jordan Staal led Sebastian Aho, who made no mistake. This was another shorthanded goal for Carolina, who leads the league with shorties.

The Sens would strike back though with two goals of their own later in that period.

Ottawa came close to scoring several times in this game but had the worse luck as the puck either hit the crossbar or post or stopped just short of the goal line. Fred Andersen let in a goal he wished he didn't on goal number two, but he was scrambling and played very well afterward, especially in the overtime periods.

In all, he made 37 saves on 39 shots.

Linus Ullmark played lights out in his own right, making several high level saves throughout. He made 43 saves on 46 Carolina shots.

It is late so I'm going to wrap this up and choose a "Player of the Game" later. The Canes will take Tuesday off before a practice on Wednesday and a flight to Ottawa.



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## The Hockey News

### Redemption: Jordan Martinook Scores First Career Playoff OT Winner After Penalty Shot Miss; Hurricanes Take 2-0 Series Lead

By: Ryan Henkel

A disallowed OT winner, a missed penalty shot, then sweet redemption. Jordan Martinook nets his first career playoff OT goal, clinching a 2-0 series lead.

Jordan Martinook and Logan Stankoven discuss Carolina's 3-2 OTW

"I was on such a high there for two minutes."

After a tense, back-and-forth thriller, the Carolina Hurricanes scored the overtime game winner in Game 2 of their first-round series on a delayed penalty, as Mark Jankowski jumped over the boards as an extra skater and banged home a rebound past Linus Ullmark.

At least, that's what the team thought had happened.

As the team mobbed around Jankowski, the on-ice officials started to gather around the penalty box and the Ottawa Senators weren't leaving the bench either.

Soon enough, it became clear to the nearly 20,000 attendees at Lenovo Center's Monday night game that the goal was under review.

After five minutes of deliberation, official Furman South broke from the huddle and took to center ice.

He flipped on his microphone and, much to the dismay of the home crowd, announced that the play had originally been offside 30 seconds earlier and that the goal was being rescinded.

The NHL situation room had deemed that while Jordan Staal had possession of the puck as he crossed the blueline, he did not have full control of puck, thereby making the play offside.

"I pick up the puck, I look up where Marty is and apparently I lost control of it," Staal said. "And then I make a nice pass to Marty for a breakaway... I don't really get it. To call back an overtime goal for that is..."

However, it wasn't all for naught, as Jordan Martinook was to be awarded a penalty shot for the call he had initially drawn, just the fifth time ever in NHL history that one had been awarded in overtime of a playoff game.

As "Rockstar" by Nickelback blared across the speakers, Martinook composed himself at the opposite blueline, waiting for the official's signal.

Once he got it, he collected the puck, cut to the left, cut back to the middle and snapped one glove-side on Ullmark.

But it wasn't to be, as the big Swede stymied the Hurricanes alternate captain, keeping the game alive.

"I felt pretty bad when I didn't score that one," Martinook said. "I was trying to tell them we needed the power play and not the penalty shot."

Fate has a funny way of showing itself though and after nearly another full overtime period, Martinook would once again be given the chance to end it and this time, he delivered.

"I'd be lying if I said I picked my head up and looked and picked the corner," Martinook said. "At that point, you're just trying to put as many pucks on net as you can. I felt we kind of had them on the run a little bit and Fly made a great play in the middle and I just got it and ripped it. Luckily it went in."

From the terrible low of thinking you may have just cost your team to the jubilant highs of your first ever playoff overtime goal.

"I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot," Martinook said. "The intermission felt really long and it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me. That was cool though. I'm happy it worked out that way. Hockey's crazy. Sport's are crazy. Being able to score after that, I'll tell my grandkids about that one, that's for sure."

"You couldn't have written it any better," Staal said. "What a shot. The place was electric, so it was super fun. Definitely in the memory bank."

"Just happy for Marty," Brind'Amour said. "It's nice to see him get that recognition for a game like that."

Game 2 of the Carolina Hurricanes' first-round series against the Ottawa Senators couldn't have been more different than Game 1.

After a tight, but straight forward 2-0 shutout, the Canes and Sens flipped the script en route to a double overtime thriller.

In Game 1, the two teams combined for two goals, 51 shots on goal and 114 shot attempts.

In Game 2, both teams found themselves all of a sudden with a lot more space and a lot more time as the final counts were five total goals, 85 shots on goal and 208 shot attempts.

The trio of Logan Stankoven, Jackson Blake and Taylor Hall were once again doing their thing — as the three combined for the Canes' first goal on the power play, with Stankoven notching his second of the postseason — and even Sebastian Aho got involved too as he scored off of a nice rush play set up by Staal.

But the tale of the tape for this game was the outstanding performances put on by both netminders.

Frederik Andersen had a little hiccup on the game-tying goal as a Dylan Cozens shot from well outside the circles and



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from a bad angle beat him five-hole, but outside of that he was tremendous.

"You're gonna make mistakes," Andersen said. "Everyone does. But it's about what's next. Obviously we had to play a lot going forward. Just refocused and get ready for the next one."

Andersen would stop all 15 of the shots he faced in overtime, including multiple in-tight and in-alone looks, and was credited with 2.67 goals saved above expected for the game according to Natural Stat Trick.

On the other side, Linus Ullmark was sensational too, stopping 43 total shots and saving 2.24 goals above expected.

In fact, it was Ullmark's save on Taylor Hall in the second period that was really the turning point of the game for Ottawa.

If Hall scores there, Carolina goes up 3-0 and probably easily wins in regulation.

Instead, the Senators were given life and they scored their first goal just 1:14 after the miraculous save as Drake Batherson got a fortunate bounce.

The Sens would keep pushing from there and eventually tie the game, but Andersen wasn't going to be beat again, setting the stage for Martinook's thrilling goal.

"Every moment matters, and any situation, it's right then and there," Andersen said. "You just prepare like you would any other shot and every time you make a save, you give the boys a new chance to score."

The Hurricanes will now take their 2-0 series lead onto the road as they head to Ottawa to try and steal a game.

## 'Hockey's Crazy': Jordan Martinook, Logan Stankoven, Frederik Andersen, Jordan Staal, Rod Brind'Amour On Game 2 OT Win

By: Ryan Henkel

Staal, Martinook, Stankoven, Andersen, and Brind'Amour break down the wild Game 2 overtime thriller. Hear their candid reactions.

The Carolina Hurricanes pulled off a gritty victory, defeating the Ottawa Senators 3-2 in double overtime in Game 2, Monday night at Lenovo Center.

The Canes jumped out to an early 2-0 lead thanks to goals by Logan Stankoven and Sebastian Aho, but the Senators found a way to push back in the second half of the game to eventually force overtime.

After a called-back potential game winner, the Hurricanes kept pushing and eventually Jordan Martinook sealed the win.

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

Jordan Martinook's Game 2 OT penalty shot attempt

Rod Brind'Amour

On the team's experience helping them get through the highs and lows of overtime: I guess, I don't know. I really don't. Not much to say about all of that. We've been through a lot obviously and this is just another thing to add. We make it exciting, that's for sure. We have a lot to look back on. That was one of those games... Just happy for Marty. He's been one of those guys and it's nice to see him get that recognition for a game like that.

On resetting after the called back goal: That's the toughest thing, you know? You have it won, a hard fought game and then to have it turned over... got to give the guys a ton of credit because our game didn't change. We actually got better, I thought, in the second overtime. Give the guys a lot of credit for finding a way.

On how he felt about Jordan Staal being called offside on the called back game-winner: I wasn't surprised. I can tell you that. It's hard to say. It used to be if you touched it outside the line... You do pass it to yourself, and that's kind of a play, but it did look like he was trying to handle it. I guess they deemed that he didn't, I don't know. It's a tough call to go against you, especially when you go on for 30 seconds, but I'm not worried about it.

On the swing of emotions: You think the game is over and, like I said, a hard fought battle. I think everyone in the building felt the same, but it is what it is.

On if there were more scoring opportunities in Game 2 as opposed to Game 1: The first half of the game. I thought we were creating a lot. There was a sequence where we were up 2-0 and their goalie made some unbelievable saves. I think one was a seam pass and Hallsy ripped a one-timer and he just dove across. That goes in, I think things are different. That's what goaltending does for you. Then they get one back, they're going to have their push and they did, kind of get one that I know Freddie wishes he could have back and all of a sudden, it's a tied game. And then both goalies just played tremendous and kept their teams in the game.

On the absurdity of the Jordan Staal, Mark Jankowski, Jordan Martinook sequence: Again, the whole thing, you could probably spend a lot of time talking about it for a play that didn't count. There was a lot there to unwind, that's for sure.

On the power play: We had a lot of good opportunities the night before and they just made their plays. The plays are there, you just need to execute and that's what happened on that one.

Jordan Martinook

On the highs and lows of overtime: I didn't feel very good about myself after that penalty shot. The intermission felt



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really long. That was cool though. I'm happy it worked out that way. Well, it didn't matter who scored, but it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me.

On coming down from the emotional highs of thinking they had won: Try having a penalty shot after all that. But no, you exhale, think it's over, especially in overtime. It's hard. I don't know how much time was left in the period, maybe a couple of minutes. So it benefitted us to get it into intermission and then we could regroup there better.

On the Senators improved efforts: I think they simplified their game a bit. They were just putting pucks in and forechecking. We knew that's the type of team they are. You know what each team's bringing and I think they got to what they do a little better tonight. It's on us to make adjustments and be better for Game 3.

On taking a 2-0 series lead: We did our job. I think every home team, you want to hold court in your building. We won our two at home and now we go up there and they're going to try and do the same. It's on us to go in there, put our best game forward and try to get the next one.

On if he saw any open net on his game winner: I'd be lying if I said I picked my head up and looked and picked the corner. At that point, you're just trying to put as many pucks on net as you can. I felt we kind of had them on the run a little bit and Fly made a great play in the middle and I just got it and ripped it. Luckily it went in.

On missing on a penalty shot, but then still scoring the game winner: Have you ever been on a teeter totter before? I had a big guy on the other end... er, no. I was the big guy on the one end. Maybe a bad analogy. I felt pretty bad when I didn't score that one. I was trying to channel my penalty shot from a couple of years ago and I definitely didn't do that. But then obviously the emotions when you score... I don't know. Hockey's crazy. Sport's are crazy. Being able to score after that, I'll tell my grandkids about that one, that's for sure.

On the absurdity of the whole sequence: I was trying to tell them we needed the power play not the penalty shot. I've never seen that, so that's a first.

On if Linus Ullmark's performance starts to creep into guys' heads: Yeah, you're thinking that, but did you see our guy? As much as we're thinking, 'How many of these are we going to go?' ... He was great, but you look at Freddie and they're going save-for-save. It was pretty impressive by both of them. You just keep shooting and hopefully one finds its way in.

Logan Stankoven

On regrouping after the called back goal: It was kind of a weird one. Coaches left the bench and we thought we had won, but they came back out to tell us it was offside... It's a tough one, but we still had a job to do and so we just had to go out there and get back to our game, be solid defensively and this guys scores winners.

On the mentality for shifts in OT: I think it's about just shortening them up and just trying to stay as fresh as possible. Not getting caught out there too long. I think when you do go into extra overtimes, you start to cramp up a little bit, at least I was at times. Just keep them short, smart changes, everyone get out there. Everyone's a great player in this league, so lots of ice time to go around.

On the power play: I think having Staal out there to start and take those big draws, it's so key being able to start with the puck instead of maybe losing the draw and having to go regroup and break it out again. When you can start with possession and set up plays and not have to go back into your own end and regroup, it's huge. He's been a great addition to the power play and it was great to pop one in. Special teams are huge at this time of the year.

On Taylor Hall's pass on his goal: It was great. A really good pass. I was just sitting in the middle and he made a nice play to find me.

Frederik Andersen

On the game: I think it was an emotional roller coaster for everyone. Obviously we got the lead, gave it up, and then had the win for a minute or two, and then lost it and then had a new chance at it and so here we are. Good for Marty to get that goal — it's huge and, obviously, the win.

On resetting after the Mark Jankowski goal was taken away: It's a huge reset for everyone. I think we couldn't have done it much better, just the way we came right back at it and continued.

On keeping focus in double overtime: Every moment matters, and any situation it's right then and there. You just prepare like you would any other shot and every time you make a save, you give the boys a new chance to score.

On having a 2-0 series lead: I think winning every game is huge. It takes four to knock a team out and obviously they're not going to go easy. So, yeah, huge to keep the home-ice advantage, and obviously the focus shifts to go up there and try to take the next one.

On bouncing back after the second goal: You're gonna make mistakes. Everyone does. And again, it's about what's next. Obviously we have to play a lot going forward. Just refocus and get ready for the next one.

On staying focused in such a long game: You just continue to focus on the next one. That's really all you can worry about. You can't wonder about how long it's going to go. You just want to try and make the next save. And like I said before, just give the guys one more chance to score. And obviously, tonight we did.

On the expected desperation from Ottawa: I think every win, you get a response from the team that just lost and so you want to match that energy. And I think obviously we've got to be prepared for them coming out even harder. I think that's going to be the challenge. I think we're up for it and continuing to up our game and just push forward.

On if seeing Ullmark play well was on his mind: It doesn't really affect my game. I think I can't really worry about what's going on down there. I think we were just happy that we were creating chances. Obviously, he saved some of them. And again, kept pushing and I just focus on what I can do to help him.

Jordan Staal

On the game: Obviously a tough call there, but then we battled through it and found a way to win. Yeah, it was a grind, but everyone was contributing and finding ways to win that game.



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On the offside call: I don't know the rule. I pick up the puck, I look up where Marty is and apparently I lost control of it. And then I make a nice pass to Marty for a breakaway... I don't really get it. To call back an overtime goal for that is... We battled through it. It is what it is.

On if the experience of the team helped to overcome that moment: Yeah, I would say so. It doesn't hurt. It's not getting squirrely. It's just staying with the grind and believing in what we're doing and trusting in the process. The guys did that tonight and it paid off. Sometimes it doesn't, but tonight it did.

On how good it was to see Martinook rewarded: You couldn't have written it any better. What a shot. The place was electric, so it was super fun. Definitely in the memory bank.

On if the series is tilting: It's Game 2. Both teams are grinding and playing great hockey and the Stanley Cup playoffs is always tight and can go either way. But I think we believe in what we're doing. It's nice to be up two. But again, I've said this before, that's just two. You've got to get to four.

They're going to come back with a better effort in a tough building. So it'll be a brand new challenge next game.

On Frederik Andersen: Freddie was unbelievable. There was probably one too many saves he made for us, but it was good to see him bounce back and continue to fight for us and give us a chance for a win.

On setting up Sebastian Aho's goal: That's Fishy to a T. The guy reads the game so well and he understands when he can go and find openings and I was along for a ride for that one. He made a great play on that pass. A big goal for our group.

On if he expects the Sens to be more desperate in Game 3: Yeah, of course. It's going to be, like I said, a brand new challenge. These series, they're long. I mean, it's not easy. And, like I said, it's going to be a tough building against a good team like that. I's going to be a brand new challenge and we're off to Game 3.

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## SportScan

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

1388172 Carolina Hurricanes

Get it done: Why the Hurricanes should now work extra hard to bury Ottawa quickly

Justin Pelletier8-9 minutes 21/04/2026

They've been here before, these Carolina Hurricanes.

This is the eighth consecutive season they've been to the NHL playoffs. Saturday marked the Canes' seventh consecutive win in a postseason opener, and Monday they made it 7-for-7 going 2-0 to start the playoffs, though this Game 2 took a game and a half.

After nearly eight periods of hockey over three days on home ice, the Hurricanes hold a 2-0 series lead after a 3-2 double-overtime win over Ottawa.

Now, it's imperative that Carolina comes home from Canada next weekend with two more wins.

As a team that prides itself on hard, physical play, the Hurricanes will inevitably suffer their share of nicks, scratches, scrapes and injuries, especially against a team that identifies similarly, like Ottawa.

"They're going to forecheck hard, and we're going to forecheck hard," Ottawa coach Travis Green said after Game 1. "There's going to be a lot of hits."

As a top seed and favorite to reach the Stanley Cup Final, risk of injury — those hits — are exactly why it's even more imperative for the Canes to put the hammer down on this first-round series.

No mercy. No holds barred. Sweep the leg.

The less time the Canes can spend on the ice against a team that helped combine for 190 hits over two games, the better off it will be in the long term.

A two-goal shutout win in Game 1 on Saturday afternoon was a good start.

An overtime win Monday was a good encore, and a necessary one.

While the game opened up more quickly Monday, it wasn't for lack of physicality. In addition to Logan Stankoven's second goal in as many games and 23 combined shots, the Hurricanes and Senators still found time to dish out 36 combined hits — 23 by Ottawa. At 8:49 of the first, Andrei Svechnikov went to the penalty box for roughing after the first of multiple goalmouth scums after he took exception to a gaggle of players poking and prodding Andersen after the whistle.

Those extra jabs, while most of the time aimed at dislodging the puck, still hurt. Composite carbon fiber at high velocity does not jive well with thinly gloved fingers or flesh exposed by shifting pads.

"It's playoff hockey," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said after Game 1. "It's the first round, and everybody has all the energy in the world."

Contact adds up over the course of a series of games, though, and early energy is often replaced by willpower and grit.

This time of year, extra games matter. Extra periods matter. Extra shifts matter. For the goalies, extra shots matter. More rubber. More red welts. More aching muscles.

For all the Canes' playoff success the past seven years, for all of their dominance to open every series in that stretch, only in the wacky COVID-induced play-in series in 2020 did they sweep a series — and that was only 3-0.

And only once during its current playoff streak has Carolina led a best-of-seven series 3-0 (First round, 2024 vs. Islanders), then falling in double-overtime in Game 4 before finishing the series off in Game 5.

On top of the physicality, whatever air of invincibility — perceived or otherwise — disappeared Monday. The Senators finally solved the Frederik Andersen puzzle midway through the second period Monday on a fortunate bounce, and then snuck a leaky one through his pads later in the frame to knot the game at 2-2.

No one was expecting a clean sheet for the series, as tightly contested as this series has been and will continue to be. But Ottawa now has tangible proof that, at the very least, Andersen is beatable.

Now the series shifts to Ottawa. The Hurricanes have enjoyed incredible home ice advantage in the postseason during their run, but their record on the road in the playoffs has been average. In four of the Canes' previous five first-round series, they lost Game 3 after a 2-0 start. They've not swept a seven-game series during the current eight-year playoff run.

If people felt the Canes bore any added pre-playoff pressure to perform into the late rounds this season — they did — that's nothing compared to the pressure that's going to start creeping into the locker room, coaches' room and boardroom if this series starts to get any closer than it already is.

The Hurricanes are the better team in this first-round playoff series. For the most part, they've played like it. Now, they need to finish it and move on — quickly.

News Observer LOADED: 04.21.2026

1388173 Carolina Hurricanes

Category 5: Hurricanes eye 2-0 series lead

Cory Lavalette6-7 minutes 20/04/2026

The Hurricanes limited the Senators in Game 1 of their first round series, coming away with a 2-0 win and a chance to hold serve at home in Monday's Game 2.



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Carolina is 8-3 under Brind'Amour in Game 2s at Lenovo Center, while the Senators haven't won a Game 2 on the road since April 14, 2012, a run of five straight losses — all but one by one goal.

1. The Hurricanes had just a couple of odd-man rushes in Game 1, the most notable being when Nikolaj Ehlers made a drop pass to Jordan Staal, the trailer on the sequence, for a shot that Ottawa goalie Linus Ullmark got enough of to steer wide.

The Senators, meanwhile, didn't have much of anything in that regard. It illustrated how buttoned-up both teams were to start the series — and it will likely be that way throughout the round.

"We said that from the get-go," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of expecting how the games and series would be played. "It didn't take one to figure that out. It played out (exactly) how we thought it would, and I'm sure they would say the same."

Hurricanes forward Jordan Martinook said Carolina's mentality of making sure every shift counts helped them stack a game that allowed the Senators very few chances.

"The people that are looking for the end-to-end, rush-type series, this is probably not the one for you," he said. "But it's fighting for every inch and every puck battle and every inch of ice out there. And that's what it's all about this time of year."

2. I spoke briefly to Alexander Nikishin on Monday morning, and he said playing the full season with the Hurricanes has made a huge difference in how prepared he is for this year's playoffs.

"Experience," he said.

Last year, he was thrust into Game 5 of the second round series against the Capitals as injuries mounted on Carolina's blue line. That's quite an introduction to the league — playing against Russian legend Alexander Ovechkin the first time you step on NHL ice — but Nikishin acquitted himself well.

Nikishin admitted to having some nerves in that game, but he said having a year with his teammates and a season of learning the NHL game has him more prepared for this year's playoffs.

"It's faster," he said. "But it's good."

Nikishin was on the ice for both Carolina goals in Game 1, and if hockey awarded third assists, the Russian rookie would have two — he played a big role in both of the Hurricanes' goals.

3. Frederik Andersen will be Carolina's Game 2 starter, and why not after he posted a 22-save shutout in Game 1.

We're a long way from early January, when Andersen had lost nine straight and Brandon Bussi had wrestled the No. 1 job from him. The question for Andersen is always durability, but the series sets up well for him. After Monday's game, there are two days off before Game 3 in Ottawa, giving the 36-year-old an extra day to recover.

Andersen played on one day's rest four times this season, going 2-2.

11, 4-3 overtime win over the Flyers, stopped 20 of 23

March 2, 2-1 loss at Seattle, stopped 13 of 15

March 24, 5-2 loss at Montreal, stopped 14 of 18

April 11, 4-1 win at Utah, stopped 26 of 27

That tracks with Andersen's overall numbers this season. His save percentage in those games was .880 vs. .874 for the year, though his goals-against average in those four games is closer to 2.50 than his 3.05 for the year. Two of the 10 goals he allowed were on an opponent's power play.

4. Senators defenseman Artem Zub, who was injured while delivering a hit on Seth Jarvis late in the second period of Game 1, is a game-time decision for the Senators, and it appears Lassi Thomson will play in his place should Zub be unable to play.

It would be a considerable loss for Ottawa coach Travis Green, who has given Zub nearly 21 minutes of ice time per game this season alongside star defenseman Jake Sanderson.

At Monday's morning skate, Sanderson was paired with Nikolas Matinpalo, who averaged 15:38 this season and played 17:08 in Game 1. The pairing of Jordan Spence and Thomas Chabot remained together, while Thomson was alongside Dennis Gilbert, who was limited to 8:26 on Saturday despite Zub missing all the third period.

One thing to WATCH: Tyler Kleven again skated with the team wearing a plastic jaw protector. He hasn't played since he was struck in the jaw with a puck April 2, and he was ruled out for Monday's game by Green. Kleven skated alongside 2024 seventh overall pick Carter Yakemchuk — who was just called up, along with a bunch of other players from Belleville — but they appeared to be the fourth pairing and skated with coaches after the rest of the team exited the ice after the morning skate.

Yakemchuk played four games with the Senators this year but has been very good in his first professional season in the AHL, totaling 10 goals and 40 points in 54 games — though he was minus 31. He's someone to watch should Ottawa get desperate later in the series.

5. Nick Cousins wasted little time reminding everyone of his reputation in Game 1. While the Senators forward has never been suspended by the NHL, he has been fined five times and is widely considered one of the league's dirtiest players.

He lived up to that reputation in Game 1, slew-footing Carolina defenseman Sean Walker near the end of the first period — and William Carrier appeared to let Cousins know that wouldn't fly — before taking an interference penalty in the third period for forcefully lifting his stick up into the groin of Nikishin.

Nikishin, by the way, told me he's fine.

North State Journal LOADED: 04.21.2026

1388174 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes vs. Senators Game 2: Key takeaways as Carolina wins double-OT thriller

Julian McKenzie9-11 minutes 21/04/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jordan Martinook returned to the Hurricanes' dressing room at Lenovo Center, still processing all of his emotions from the first overtime period on Monday night.

Moments earlier, Martinook and his teammates were overjoyed in swarming Carolina forward Mark Jankowski after what appeared to be the winning goal against the Senators in Game 2 of their first-round matchup.

"You exhale," Martinook said. "You think it's over."

After a lengthy offside review, though, Martinook was determined to have entered the offensive zone in an offside position, nullifying Jankowski's goal. Except that, in between, a delayed penalty was also called on Ottawa's Warren Foegele, who hooked Martinook on a breakaway.

No Stanley Cup playoff game has ever ended on a penalty shot in overtime, but Martinook was thwarted in his history-making attempt by



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Senators goalie Linus Ullmark. And while he saw the benefits of having time to “regroup” over the ensuing intermission, he admitted to not feeling good about himself as he prepared for the second overtime.

Given another chance to play hero, Martinook converted. At 13:53 of the second overtime, he took a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers in the slot and whipped a wristed pass past Ullmark to send Carolina to a 3-2 win and a 2-0 series lead.

“Hockey’s crazy,” Martinook said. “Sports are crazy. Being able to score after that, I’ll tell my grandkids about that one.”

The Canes had raced out to a 2-0 advantage in the game, thanks to goals from Logan Stankoven and Sebastian Aho, before the Senators roared back to tie it in the second period. A scoreless third period and first overtime led to Martinook’s heroics.

Fredrik Andersen made 37 saves in the victory while Ullmark stopped 43 shots in the loss.

The Hurricanes became the first team in NHL history to take a 2-0 lead in their first best-of-seven series for six consecutive postseasons with the win. The series now shifts to Ottawa for Game 3 on Thursday.

Inside a confusing OT sequence

Above press row, as Jankowski appeared to score in overtime, Senators general manager Steve Staios and team owner Michael Andlauer stormed out of their visiting team suite, with Andlauer furiously pushing the door out of his way.

When the overtime period ended, restless Canes fans booed. But those who hadn’t already left the building returned to their seats for the second overtime. So did Andlauer and Staios.

Down on the ice, Senators players grouped up along the bench awaiting the review. But coach Travis Green was confident it would be overturned.

“It’s a weird play,” Green said. “Don’t see it a lot in overtime. We knew right away when the puck went in the zone, it looked like it was offside. So, you could see from our bench we weren’t going anywhere. Felt like it was offside.”

The game was already emotional enough for Martinook, who likened the back-and-forth to a teeter-totter.

“Try having a penalty shot after all that,” Martinook said.

Martinook skated towards Ullmark, keeping himself within the red dots and faceoff margins before snapping a shot. The puck hit Ullmark’s pads before sliding into the corner behind him, to the shock of Hurricanes fans still coming down from Jankowski’s overturned goal.

This wasn’t Martinook’s first time taking a penalty shot in the playoffs. Three years ago, he earned one while skating shorthanded in Game 3 of the Canes’ second-round series against the Devils. Martinook faked out and beat then-New Jersey goalie Vitek Vanecek by going forehand to backhand.

“I was trying to channel my penalty shot from a couple years ago, and I definitely didn’t do that,” Martinook said.

Andersen outduels Ullmark

Once again, a goaltending duel took place between Ullmark and Andersen. And for the second time in this series, Andersen got the better of Ullmark, even as Ullmark did everything he could to keep his team in Game 2.

“He was amazing,” Senators captain Brady Tkachuk said of Ullmark. “He’s been amazing his last two games, and he kept us in it just to give us a chance.”

The Senators goaltender experienced a roller-coaster 2025-26, both on and off the ice, but he played some of his best hockey in an Ottawa

uniform over the final weeks of the regular season. He has continued that trend for much of the first two games of this playoff series.

Ullmark made several incredible saves to start Game 2, at one point diving onto the ice to keep the puck from crawling past him after gloving it down. He then got the better of Taylor Hall with a stretch glove save after Hall received a cross-ice pass. Later, in the second period, Ullmark made another flashy glove save to deny Seth Jarvis on a shorthanded, two-on-one breakaway.

In the dying seconds of regulation, Ullmark made a crucial save on Jordan Staal in close, redirecting a shot off his shoulder and over the crossbar. He relied on his glove again to deny Martinook’s penalty shot, and kicked away Hall’s slot chance midway through double overtime.

“But did you see our guy?” Martinook said.

Andersen faced 39 shots in the Canes win, coming up huge through double overtime. Tkachuk had perhaps the best of the six shots in the first overtime, receiving a tight pass from Drake Batherson only for Andersen to be up to the task. Hours earlier, in the first period, Tkachuk generated two quality chances on Andersen but the Dane stopped them both — including one with help from his left post.

Claude Giroux, Tim Stützle and Michael Amadio all also had close calls on Andersen, with several chances hitting the post and crossbar for the Sens in their defeat.

Across the series, Ullmark has stopped 70 of 75 shots. But he couldn’t prevent Martinook from beating him in the second overtime. Now, despite the goalie’s best efforts, the Senators head home with the series odds tilted against them.

By comparison, Andersen has saved 59 out of 61 shots after some wondered whether he was even the right choice to start the series for Carolina.

A wide-open start

The Senators and Canes played a tight Game 1, combining for only 51 shots on goal — including zero through the opening six-plus minutes. It was a different story in Game 2, with the teams quickly trading odd-man rushes and quality chances. The Hurricanes ended the game with a slight edge in expected goals at five-on-five, while the Sens had an 18-17 advantage in high-danger chances at five-on-five, according to Natural Stat Trick.

The Senators had several prime opportunities to score in the first period, edging the Hurricanes 5-4 in high-danger chances at five-on-five, according to Natural Stat Trick. Stützle had a wide-open net after receiving a backdoor pass in close, but the puck kicked to his skate instead of his stick. Tkachuk also had a pair of prime looks near the crease, but he hit the post and Andersen’s pads in succession before Fabian Zetterlund failed to score off the ensuing rebound.

Carolina countered with speed, pressuring the Sens on odd-man rushes; Jarvis had one of the Canes’ best early chances, only to be stymied by Ullmark’s left-handed glove. Later, the Canes took advantage of a first-period penalty by Tkachuk, and a roughing call against Aho, as Stankoven scored untouched from the bumper spot for his second goal and third point of the series. In the second period, as a Senators power play expired, Aho converted on a two-on-one with Staal to put Carolina ahead 2-0.

The Sens pressed offensively by reuniting Tkachuk, Stützle and Batherson on their top line. In fact, the Senators out shot the Hurricanes in the third period and both overtimes. But they failed to score when it mattered most.

“We had a few looks,” Batherson said. “Obviously, in overtime there we had a few good chances that almost went in. We played together before, and they’re two fun guys to play with, and we were close on a couple.”



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Defensive hockey should continue to be a central theme in this series. But both teams took advantage of the open space allotted, after a series-opening game that offered so little.

Sanderson shoulders heavy load

The Senators were without defenseman Artem Zub on Monday night after he left partway through Game 1 due to an undisclosed injury. His value to Ottawa had been essential, as he played top-pairing minutes with Jake Sanderson and could be counted on to kill penalties. The Senators certainly could've used him on Carolina's opening goal when Stankoven strolled into the bumper spot without resistance before beating Ullmark.

Sanderson was paired with Nikolas Matinpalo, while another Finn, Lassi Thomson, made his Stanley Cup playoff debut alongside Dennis Gilbert on Ottawa's third pair. Naturally, it was the Olympic gold medalist Sanderson who led the way. Midway through the second period, he saved the puck from exiting Carolina's zone by catching it in mid-air and then passed to Batherson, who scored his team's first goal of the series.

The Senators eventually tied the game thanks to another well-timed takeaway from Sanderson, as he intercepted a Hurricanes pass in the neutral zone and sprung Ridly Greig with a pass at the offensive blue line. Greig then slipped the puck to Cozens, who scored a weak one past Andersen — the first time the Danish goaltender has looked human all series long.

In the end, Sanderson played more than 43 minutes on Monday, leading all skaters in ice time for the second consecutive game.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.21.2026

1388175 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes-Senators nearly ends on historic OT penalty shot after overturned goal

Julian McKenzie3-4 minutes 21/04/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. —Hockey history was almost made in Game 2 of the Carolina Hurricanes-Ottawa Senators first-round NHL playoff series, under a bit of controversy.

Carolina forward Jordan Martinook nearly won the game on a penalty shot in the first overtime period of a 2-2 game, but was denied by Senators goalie Linus Ullmark. Had he scored, it would've been the first time a Stanley Cup playoff game ended on an overtime penalty shot.

But Martinook was only given the penalty shot after a potential game-winning goal from Mark Jankowski was waved off following an offside review. As video replay showed, Martinook had entered the offensive zone just before the Hurricanes center Jordan Staal established control of the puck over the blue line. Staal then fed Martinook the puck on a partial breakaway, but Martinook was hooked by Warren Foegele, leading to a delayed penalty shot call.

"I was trying to tell (the ref), we needed the power play, not the penalty shot," Martinook said. "So yeah, I've never seen that. So, that's a first."

As the delayed penalty played out, Jankowski whipped a shot past Ullmark to spark a raucous celebration at Lenovo Center before the goal was called back and the crowd was silenced.

"(Our) coaches left the bench and thought we had won, but then they came back out to tell us that it was offside," Hurricanes forward Logan Stankoven said. "It's a tough one, but still have a job to do, and we just had to go out there and get back to our game and be solid defensively."

According to Rule 38.7 of the NHL's rulebook, if a goal is disallowed after following an offside review, the clock is reset back to when the play should've been stopped. And if a penalty or penalty shot is called during that time, it will be assessed.

Martinook was still able to make up for it later. He scored the game-winner at 13:53 of double overtime, beating Ullmark for his first career playoff overtime goal to send Carolina to a 2-0 series lead. The first-round matchup now shifts to Ottawa, with Game 3 taking place at Canadian Tire Centre on Thursday night.

"I didn't feel very good about myself after the penalty shot and the intermission felt really long," Martinook said. "I'm happy worked out that way. Well, it didn't matter who scored, but it was going to be a long night if that penalty shot came back to bite me."

The Athletic LOADED: 04.21.2026

1388176 Carolina Hurricanes

In Canes-Sens, Olympic gold medalists Slavin, Sanderson meet as rival stars

Julian McKenzie6-7 minutes 20/04/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — Late last season, as the Senators were chasing their first playoff berth in eight years, defenseman Jake Sanderson told The Athletic that he wanted to improve his game in Ottawa's end by emulating one fellow NHL blueliner in particular.

"I want to defend like a Jaccob Slavin," Sanderson said in March 2025.

This was one month after Sanderson shared a locker room with the Hurricanes' Slavin as members of Team USA at the 4 Nations Face-Off, where the Americans lost to Canada in the championship game. Slavin was often paired with another blueliner, but Sanderson clearly took note of his active stick work and shutdown prowess.

The two defensemen went on to win Olympic gold medals together with the U.S. in Milan, avenging their defeat against Canada. Now they are sharing the ice as rival stars in the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs. And Slavin has noticed Sanderson's continual growth.

"He's unbelievable," Slavin told The Athletic on Friday. "His feet, his legs are unbelievable. I don't know if he gets tired out there. And obviously he can make plays with the puck, too. I enjoyed my time with him at the Olympics. He's a great kid off the ice, loves the game, wants to learn, but really, he just plays both sides of the puck really well."

Defense has been top of mind for Carolina and Ottawa in their series, which opened with a 2-0 Hurricanes victory in Game 1. But this showdown between two elite defensemen was overshadowed by the teams' structural similarities, mutually standout goaltending, and a series-opening fight between captains.

The 23-year-old Sanderson is rising in prominence as a two-way, all-situations force who gains more and more consideration for the Norris Trophy with each passing year. At a time when the position is loaded with Cale Makar, Quinn Hughes, Rasmus Dahlin and other high-end talents, Sanderson ended the 2025-26 season in the top 10 among defensemen in time on ice (24:50) and the top 15 in points per game (0.81). It remains to be seen where he'll stack up in this year's Norris conversation, but he's proven he already belongs.

"He's just getting better every year," Senators centre Tim Stützle said. "I'm not surprised at all. I don't think anyone should be surprised anymore how much better he gets everywhere. He's just excellent in every single area of the game, and it's just a joy to watch."



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"He's an elite player," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Sanderson. "So, if you think (Slavin) is an elite player, you have to say Sanderson is an elite player. I think they're different, the way they play, but he is an elite player. There's no doubt about it."

Then there is Slavin, one of the game's most effective shutdown defensemen who consistently plays top-pairing minutes against other teams' best players. In Game 1 against the Senators, Slavin skated a 4:08 game-ending shift to help secure his team's 2-0 victory.

"That's his time to shine," Brind'Amour said of Slavin. "If he feels like he can stay out there, you're gonna give him that benefit of the doubt."

Because Slavin doesn't rack up points as the league's best defensemen do, the two-time Lady Byng Trophy winner sometimes doesn't get the Norris love he deserves. But that doesn't make him any less effective against opposing puck-handlers.

"I think his stick is extraordinary," Senators defenseman Thomas Chabot said. "Obviously, he's a big body, he's a good defender at both ends, but especially defensively. I think it's the way he defends. He's always got his stick in the right place."

"He's been a prominent defenseman for a long time. He's really good at what he does," Senators coach Travis Green said. "He's been a top defenseman in the league for a while."

Slavin and Sanderson experienced injuries in their lead-up to the playoffs. Slavin only played 39 games this season, battling a series of issues including a lower-body injury that caused him to miss 29 games. But even if he only finished with one goal and eight points, he remained analytically sound while playing alongside defenseman Jalen Chatfield, according to MoneyPuck.

Pairing Minutes xG% xG/60 xGA/60

Slavin-Chatfield

513.3

54.8%

2.79

2.3

The pair's effectiveness continued into Saturday, when it allowed the fewest on-ice shot attempts of any Canes defensive duo at five-on-five — excluding the temporary pairing of Chatfield and Alexander Nikishin that played 37 seconds together.

Sanderson, meanwhile, missed a month after leaving an early March game against the Seattle Kraken clutching his right shoulder from a hit by Kraken defenseman Brandon Montour. But Sanderson returned for five games in April, including the day Ottawa clinched a second consecutive playoff spot on April 11, recording points in four of those games.

On Saturday, Sanderson was the Senators' most-used player, logging 27:25. The Senators especially leaned on him after losing his partner, Artem Zub, to injury. Green provided no update on whether Zub will be back in time for Game 2, which ultimately means more work for Sanderson. And more reason for the Hurricanes to work to shut him down.

"We have to make sure we don't allow time and space for our forwards," Slavin said. "(We) have to do a good job tracking above him and taking away his options."

The feeling is mutual for Slavin, whom the Senators have to solve — along with the rest of the Canes — to produce offensively in this series.

"When you're in the playoffs, you're playing against the best teams in the National Hockey League," Chabot said of Slavin. "Each team is going to

have that type of extremely talented defenseman. So, it'll be on us to find a way to throw him off his game."

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The Athletic / In the NHL playoffs, which calls are reviewable, and how are officials assigned?

By Sean Gentile

The Stanley Cup playoffs had their first major controversial moment on Monday night, when the Carolina Hurricanes had an overtime goal overturned by video review because a player was offside. The Hurricanes then failed to score on a subsequent penalty shot — a penalty had been called on the disputed play — and Game 2 went to a second overtime session.

The Athletic has answers to some of the more common questions (and complaints) about the way hockey games are called, and about the people whose job it is to call them.

How are officials assigned to playoff games?

In its official rulebook for 2025-26, the NHL listed a roster of 70 officials (35 referees and 35 linespeople), with four (two referees, two linespeople) typically assigned to a game. Throughout the regular season, the league evaluates those 70 people and whittles the larger list down to the top 40 (20 referees paired with 20 linespeople). That is the officiating pool for the eight first-round series, with those paired crews shuttling between series on a game-to-game basis.

Early on, the plan is for no two-person crew to work two games between the same two teams, though that can change based on the length of a series.

Evaluation of officials continues throughout the postseason. For the four-series second round, the pool is cut to 24 (12 referees and 12 linespeople). For the two-series conference finals, it's cut to 16. For the Stanley Cup Final, it's cut to 10 officials (five referees, five linespeople), and the pair system is abandoned.

What is the role of a series supervisor?

In the late 1990s, the NHL started assigning a person to each series whose job was to act as a buffer between officials and teams. How much those supervisors are involved depends on the respective clubs.

"It all depends on what the GM and coach want regarding how it goes during the series," NHL's senior executive vice president Colin Campbell told The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun in 2024. "If you don't want us to talk to you, we're not going to talk to you. We're just available."

Most teams meet with the series supervisor on the morning of game days, although that also can vary. Typically, they'll discuss trends, revisit controversial calls and incidents, and raise awareness over perceived issues in the series overall. In other words, if teams want to complain, this is their opportunity.

Supervisors also meeting with referees and linespeople — remember, they typically change from game to game — and give them an idea of what to watch for on a given night.

What plays are subject to an official review?



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The NHL Situation Room in Toronto and an off-ice official, who is seated in the arena, review every goal — regular-season and postseason — whether it's challenged or not. Typically, there's no need for an expanded review. When there is, that's communicated to the on-ice official, who in turn communicates it to fans. The Situation Room also watches for potential goals that were missed by the on-ice officials and can stop play for the replay accordingly. The Situation Room also has the final say.

The most typical reasons to review a goal are to determine whether a player "deliberately propelled the puck with a kick of his foot or skate" into the net, which is not allowed, and if a player made contact with a puck above the net and knocked it into the net, which is not allowed.

Here is a more general list of situations subject to review by the Situation Room, with some language directly from the NHL rulebook.

- Did the puck cross the goal line?
- Was the puck in the net prior to the goal frame being dislodged?
- Was the puck in the net prior to (or after) the end of a period?
- With the use of a foot/skate, was a "distinct kicking motion" evident?
- Was the puck deliberately directed, batted, or thrown into the net by an attacking player by any means (and with any part of his body) other than with his stick?
- Was the puck deflected directly into the net off an on-ice official?
- Was the puck struck or deflected into the net with a high stick, above the height of the crossbar?
- Did the puck enter the net in a proper manner through the goal mouth (as opposed to through the net meshing or underneath the net frame, etc.)?
- Did the puck enter the net during a play when the referee blew a whistle after losing sight of the puck?
- Was there a legitimate goal scored on a penalty shot? (i.e., no double tap, goalkeeper throwing stick, goalkeeper dislodging goal, shooter cradling puck above the normal height of the shoulders, shooter performing illegal spin-o-rama move, skater's continued forward advancement of puck, goalkeeper leaving crease prior to puck touch at center ice, etc.)

What plays are subject to a coach's challenge?

Coaches can challenge "goal/no-goal" calls when they believe they were impacted by a missed offside call, a missed stoppage in play in the offensive zone or an incorrect application of the goalie interference rule. They can also challenge a call of "puck over glass" if they believe the puck hit a player, a stick or part of the glass/boards on the way out.

As the rulebook states: "If a review is not conclusive and/or there is any doubt whatsoever as to whether the call on the ice was correct, the original call on the ice will be confirmed."

If a challenge isn't successful, the challenging team serves a two-minute penalty. Any subsequent challenges by the same team will carry a four-minute, double-minor penalty.

When can a coach initiate a challenge?

On appropriate plays at any time during the game, except during the final minute of regulation play and during overtime. In those instances, plays that would be subject to coach's challenges are the purview of the Situation Room.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.21.2026

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' depth steps up in Game 1 win on slow night for superstars

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — The 'A' cliché at this time of year is a true hockeyism: Your best players have to be your best players.

So when Connor McDavid goes pointless, yet you win for the first time this season when the captain posted zeroes; when you get the October version of Evan Bouchard instead of the June version; when you're power play doesn't fire and the entire top line goes pointless — yet you still beat the Anaheim Ducks 4-3 in Game 1 of a playoff series — you've got to feel like the Edmonton Oilers stole one to open their 2026 playoff run.

The solution to a slow night from the superstars?

How about two goals each from winger Kasperi Kapanen and third line centre Jason Dickinson, as the playoffs began with a depth win for an Oilers team that so often leans on their big boys in games like these.

"Your top players have to be your top players," said Leon Draisaitl, "but you're not going anywhere if you don't have guys like that chipping in. We don't expect two goals from guys like that every night, of course. But you need that."

Like Draisaitl, who missed the final 14 games of the season but chipped in two assists in Game 1, Dickinson hopped off the trainer's table to play against Anaheim after missing the final three games of the season.

He scored off a lovely breakaway pass from Jake Walman (two assists) — a third-pairing defenceman who was better than most of the guys above him in the lineup — and then banged in the tying goal, charging to the net to collect a rebound off a Mattias Ekholm shot.

Kapanen snapped home a deft feed from Vasily Podkolzin to break the tie with 1:54 to play, his second of the night. It sealed a win on a pointless night for McDavid, the first time Edmonton has pulled that off all season long (0-12-2).

"It's super important," Kapanen said of some depth scoring in Game 1. "Teams are going to play extra hard on (McDavid) and double coverage him, and other guys need to step up."

Usually, the "other guys" wear numbers like 29, 18, 2 and 93. But on this night, it was Kapanen and Dickinson who had the jump, proving out hockey's other mainstay cliché: They don't ask how, they just ask how many.

"Connor is going to get his chances and get his looks, and we're not worried about that," Kapanen said. "But that was just, kind of, me and Dickie scoring a couple goals tonight, just very important for this team. And other guys stepping up and making big defensive plays that you don't really see on the highlight reel, but that are just as important."

Add to that a goalie who gave Edmonton the big save at the right moment, as Connor Ingram stoned big centre Leo Carlsson in alone seconds before Kapanen's winner. It was an early series-changer, the kind of save Oilers fans have longed for.

"Another big game from him," said head coach Kris Knoblauch. "One goal they got was a deflection off the hip of one of our defencemen. (Another was) a rebound goal. He made a huge save with five minutes left (Carlsson) and the last one in the last few seconds, an empty net...I think Ekky made the save."

It was Ingram's first career playoff win, after playing four games for Nashville in '22.



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"Yeah, took me four tries, bro. Thank you," he joked with reporters. "No, it means a lot. It's been cool, a wild year. I hit 100 games, 50 wins, things like that."

On Monday, Ingram walked out of the tunnel into a raging Rogers Place in all its playoff glory, one of the great moments in the career of any NHL player. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, that's a moment that raises the hair on the back of even the most grizzled neck.

"It was awesome," marvelled Ingram. "The bulk of my career I played out of Mullett Arena (in Tempe, Arizona), so to walk out that tunnel today, it's a different animal. It's loud in there. It was fun. After the anthem, I usually smile and take it all in."

"That was one today where I was like 'this is cool.'"

That's not what the Ducks were saying, as they walked out into a spring night knowing they'd let a big opportunity slip away.

They erased a 2-0 first-period lead with a three-goal second, and held that 3-2 lead with eight minutes to play. On a night where they shut down the vaunted Oilers power play — and the best player in the world — Anaheim still got the ol' ham sandwich.

Now, you just know the Oilers will only get harder to beat.

"It was just not our game. Too many turnovers, not hard enough on pucks," Draisaitl said of the second period. He had two assists but has much, much more in his bag than he showed in Game 1. "I felt OK. It's certainly going to take a couple of games to really be myself and really trust myself again."

**OIL SPILLS** — Adam Henrique left the game in Period 1 and did not return. No news from the coach, but we're expecting Josh Samanski in the Oilers' Game 2 lineup.

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Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Oettinger's resilience leads Stars over Wild in Game 2

Emily Sadler

That's more like it.

After stumbling out of the gates in Saturday night's series-opener, the Dallas Stars showed up Monday night and took back a little control with a 4-2 victory to even up the first-round series before it shifts to Minnesota.

Dallas learned the hard way in Game 1 that there's no slowing down the Wild. You can only hope to match their pace. And on Monday night, they won the race, all while matching the hockey world's expectations of what this series should be.

It helped that the Stars received a major boost in net with a bounce-back performance by goaltender Jake Oettinger.

Blame for Saturday's lop-sided loss wasn't squarely on Oettinger — that was a true team-effort — but much like the rest of the roster, the No. 1 netminder's play didn't bode well for the series ahead. Oettinger looked shaky at times, as though perhaps a few ghosts of series past had come back to haunt him. Or, more realistically, as though his season-low regular-season save percentage might get worse under the brighter lights of the playoffs.

But the Oettinger we saw in Monday night's victory looked like a man who'd put those struggles behind him. He was sharp right from the start,

not only staving off an early Minnesota attack but shifting the momentum in the first period. Dallas's first goal of the night would never have happened without Oettinger's clutch save on a point-blank snipe from Danila Yurov. The stop led to a quick rush in the opposite direction for the Stars and a noticeable shift in momentum as Wyatt Johnston cashed in on a lucky bounce off the end board behind Wild goalie Jesper Wallstedt.

That might have been Oettinger's best save of the night. Or perhaps that title goes to his glove save on a Matt Boldy backhand later in the frame — one of five saves against the winger on Monday — that would have seen the Wild take a 2-1 lead. Or maybe it was his save on Boldy's breakaway opportunity a few minutes later. Minnesota excels at finding cracks and breaking them wide open, but Oettinger's resilience was strong enough to keep the Wild from mustering up the kind of momentum that saw them cruise to victory on Saturday. It was on full display during the Wild's final push to tie things up, too, but even after allowing Minnesota to climb back to within one goal halfway through the third period, Oettinger stood tall.

At the other end of the ice, Wallstedt put up another strong performance — he stopped 28 of 31 shots. But this was Oettinger's night, and the series now shifts to a best-of-five because of it.

Puck luck sides with Stars

While it clearly took some extremely clutch performances, especially from the man in the blue paint, for Dallas to even up the series on Monday night, it also took a touch of luck. The hockey god sided with the home team in Dallas.

Take their game-opening goal, for example, which saw Johnston fire a puck just behind the net only to see it take a lucky bounce off the end board, then deflect off Wallstedt and in to give Dallas the game's early lead.

Look closely at the trajectory of Johnston's empty-netter insurance goal in the dying minutes of the game, and you could argue a lucky bounce may have been the difference there, too. It certainly fooled Quinn Hughes, who was in hot pursuit of the puck as it rolled down the ice towards Minnesota's wide-open cage, but slowed slightly in anticipation of it going just wide before it curled into the net.

The Hughes-Faber pairing is the best in hockey

We're watching a masterclass of blue-line chemistry every time Quinn Hughes and Brock Faber are on the ice — which, according to Monday's ice-time totals of 28:35 and 26:42, respectively, was pretty often.

Minnesota's top defence pairing has been elite ever since the two teamed up following Hughes' move from Vancouver, with Faber's offensive game blossoming. That was certainly the case Monday night in Dallas, with the duo combining on both of Minnesota's goals in the 4-2 loss. In addition to leading the team in shots (6), Faber registered both goals — the first and second playoff goals of his career. After being held without a point in his first two trips to the playoffs, Faber now has three in two games.

The defencemen had their fingerprints all over Saturday's series-opening victory, too, though not in as obvious a way. Their ability to drive play from the blue line, orchestrate entries with seeming ease, and keep Dallas' top stars (mostly) in check is unmatched. Two games in, it feels like the Wild will go as far as Hughes and Faber will take them. And we've only just seen the beginning.

Minnesota misses Zuccarello

Forward Mats Zuccarello was ruled out of Game 2 with an upper-body injury. The announcement came as a bit of a surprise, as Zuccarello participated in the Wild's morning skate Monday but was later listed as day-to-day, with Bobby Brink suiting up in his place.



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Zuccarello's playmaking was missed on Monday, and never more than during Minnesota's power plays. The winger's pass-first game is a significant driver of the Wild's third-ranked PP. Two of his three helpers in Game 1 came with the man advantage. Without the veteran in the lineup, Minnesota did not convert on any of its four PP opportunities. His status for Game 3 will be closely watched, as will that of Yakov Trenin. Trenin was seriously shaken up after taking a blistering (but clean) open-ice hit from Stars forward Colin Blackwell late in the first period. He was slow to get up, and went straight to the dressing room and did not return. Trenin led the league in hits this season and, despite Monday's early exit, leads the category in the post-season, too (tied with teammate Marcus Foligno's 16). His physical presence was missed following his departure.

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Sportsnet.ca / 'We got outplayed': Penguins shut out as Vladar, Flyers take 2-0 series lead

Sonny Sachdeva

They'd been pushed back, hemmed in, cornered. After walking all over the Pittsburgh Penguins in Game 1 of this series, the Flyers had taken the ice in the middle frame of Game 2 and seen Sidney Crosby's club slowly start to come to life, seen the league's third-best regular-season offence begin to find some juice.

"They were pressing us," head coach Rick Tocchet said late Monday night. "For about three or four minutes, [before] we got to the timeout. They were coming in waves at us."

Then netminder Dan Vladar strode over to Philly's bench, the picture of calm. He had a message.

"He said, 'We're okay,'" the coach remembered. "'Guys, don't worry about it. Relax.' He says that. He's the goalie — he's getting peppered. It means a lot. Now, guys are like, 'I've got to pick my game up. I've got to block a shot for this guy.'"

The TV timeout concluded, the Flyers went back over the boards, and the visitors tilted the ice back in their favour. A few minutes later, teenage phenom Porter Martone was shovelling a deflected puck into the back of the Penguins net to draw first blood. Then Garnet Hathaway was finishing off a savvy short-handed sequence from Owen Tippett to put the Broad Street squad up 2-0.

Momentum killed, pressure deflated.

And on the other end of the sheet, Vladar backed up his words of wisdom, and proved just how relaxed he was. The 28-year-old turned aside everything the Penguins threw at him, posting his first career post-season shutout and sending the Flyers back to Philadelphia with a 2-0 lead in this first-round series.

"He's been like that all year for us. Guys enjoy playing for him," Tocchet said of his netminder as the fans filtered out of PPG Paints Arena, fresh off his club's 3-0 win Monday night. "He comes by the bench, he's talking to the players, talking to the bench. A lot of guys aren't used to goalies talking that much, but that's the way Vladdy is — I love his personality."

It was another banner night for the Flyers. For the second straight game, the underdog squad that came into these playoffs rolling like a freight train ran right over the veteran Penguins. Though Pittsburgh managed a better offensive effort this time around, and looked steadier in the face of the Flyers' physicality, the home side still looked a ways off the fluid, free-flowing form they found for much of the regular season.

"I don't think that we've played, collectively, the game that we have throughout the year," veteran Erik Karlsson said from the Penguins locker room post-game. "It doesn't feel like we're as comfortable as we want to be, and it's frustrating. They're doing a good job. There's nothing else to it — they outplayed us. For six periods now.

"It's unfortunate. It sucks right now. But at the end of the day, we can't do much about it. We got outplayed for two games at home. It hurts. But we've got no one else to blame but ourselves. All we can do is take care of that and move forward."

What's worrying for the Penguins faithful is that on the other side of the sheet, the Flyers — who head home to their own rink two wins away from ending this series — didn't much like their performance, either.

"I didn't think we had our game tonight. They were coming," said Tocchet. "But I liked our resolve. You know, we gave them some outside stuff, and when we didn't, Vladdy was there. We know we can't play like that again. ... Give them credit, they played well. It was a goofy game for us.

"Sometimes in playoffs you're going to have to win those ugly games. It was an ugly game, for us."

No doubt uglier for a Pittsburgh squad that now must win one of two in as hostile an environment as they could find if they hope to stay alive and keep this return to the post-season rolling.

"I mean, playoffs aren't easy. That's the way it is sometimes. It doesn't always go your way," said Crosby, who's been held pointless through two games. "Especially here at home, we would've liked to get at least one, obviously both, and it didn't happen. So, we've got to find a way to regroup and be better for Game 3, and get the next one."

The captain was asked if the Flyers are doing anything specific to make it difficult for he and his linemates to produce.

"No. It's playoff hockey," he said. "It's tight-checking. You've got to find a way to generate."

As this series shifts to Philadelphia, his club is running out of chances to do so. After finishing the regular season as one of the most prolific offensive outfits in the league, the Penguins' attack has sputtered through two games, stringing together only a handful of sequences that saw them truly look like the offensive juggernaut they'd been for much of this campaign.

But it won't get any easier come Wednesday, in Game 3.

"I don't think this is something that's common to just us, in this series. This is playoff hockey," said Penguins head coach Dan Muse post-game. "You look around the league — everything's hard. It's supposed to be hard. It's the NHL playoffs. Everybody's going to be in lanes. Everybody should be in lanes. You're going to have to do those little things that can give you an extra inch — finding the shot lane a little bit quicker, working to get to the netfront a little bit faster. All those things are in play.

"Not just for us — that's across the league. We have to get to that point. We haven't yet."

The Penguins' frustration came to a boiling point in the dying minutes of Monday's tilt, the game finishing an ugly scene after Luke Glendening potted a late empty-netter for Philadelphia. Helmets and gloves littered the ice, officials sprinted to separate combatants, the home side clearly perturbed at another night that had gone off the rails.

And rightfully so, said their coach.

"There should be frustration. We should be frustrated. We just lost two games at home," Muse said. "I think with frustration, though, comes 'How are we going to respond?' I would hope every single guy in that room, on our staff, nobody's happy right now. Nobody should be. Tomorrow we're going to have to make a decision in terms of, you know, are we going to stay with it? Stay with what we want to do, get to our game — which we



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haven't gotten to in two games — or are we going to let frustration continue to boil over into the next one?

"That's going to be a choice we, together, all of us, including myself, are going to have to make here over the next 24 hours."

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' notebook: Carrier helps fill void left by Dobson; Xhekaj finds best self

Eric Engels

TAMPA, Fla. — It was six shifts into his first game in three weeks that Alex Carrier made a series of plays that perfectly encapsulated his value to the Montreal Canadiens.

The first one came nine seconds before Josh Anderson opened the scoring on Sunday. As soon as Carrier saw Mike Matheson rimming the puck from across the blue line, he identified the only way for the Canadiens to win it and maintain their balance in the offensive zone was for him to dive down deep to get it.

Carrier did it without hesitation, beating Tampa Bay Lightning forward Gage Goncalvez in a race and jackknifing the loose puck forward. And then, finally, he maintained his pressure on Goncalvez, won a battle, and pushed the puck Anderson's way.

We're talking about three smart, simple, fearless actions. The kind that Carrier brings every time he pulls a Canadiens sweater over his head. The kind his team would need most in the absence of their only other right-handed veteran blue-liner.

"With (Noah Dobson) out, I know we're all going to have to step up a little bit and pick up on some of those minutes, which we're ready to do," said Kaiden Guhle, before Game 1. "(Carrier) plays so hard and simple, the type of player you need to make a long run in the playoffs."

The type who won't dip his toe into the water. The type to flip right off the high-diving board, caution be damned.

Carrier would've had reason to hesitate, with rust to shake off and the lingering effects of an upper-body injury that was supposed to keep him out of action for up to four weeks likely being felt.

But that's not who Carrier is.

And the 29-year-old showed in Game 1 just how important he is at both ends of the ice.

Carrier's assist on Anderson's goal was his 11th point in his 22nd career playoff game. Closer to his end, he did what he always does, finishing with three hits, two blocked shots, and spent 4:13 of his 18:36 fighting hard to keep Lightning players away from goaltender Jakub Dobeš on the penalty kill.

Those are all things Dobson did especially well this season, and things the Canadiens would've struggled to do without Carrier.

The six-foot-four, 240-pound defenceman Arber Xhekaj played fewer than 11 minutes in 30 of his 65 regular-season games and was scratched from 17 of them because he struggled playing to his identity in such limited and sporadic minutes.

But Xhekaj learned from it and delivered his best performance under those circumstances in the most important game of the season to date. In 10:59 on the ice Sunday, the 25-year-old had five shot attempts and

five hits, and he put up zeroes in the most important categories (penalties and giveaways) to have zeroes in.

In between, Xhekaj got a runway to play more, with both Dobson and Carrier injured, stacking up close to 20 minutes in two of the last three regular-season games, and that played a big role in what we saw from him Sunday.

At least that's how Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis saw it.

"I feel like he really benefited down the stretch of playing a lot of minutes and building his game," said St. Louis on Monday. "Sometimes, it's hard for a player who doesn't get all these minutes to build his game, and I feel that his simplicity yesterday, his predictability too for his teammates and stuff, and being composed — he played a physical game, but he was composed, towed the line, and I think that's important. But I think it really helped him down the stretch to stack up good games with more minutes and, obviously, it goes hand in hand that if you play more minutes, you'll probably gain more confidence. He took advantage of those extra minutes, and he's carried that definitely into Game 1."

Special teams pushed Xhekaj under 11 minutes Sunday.

But he played so well that he ended up on the ice with fewer than two minutes to play in the game, which was something that didn't generally happen in other games he played as little.

"We're always calculated," said St. Louis, "but we're not afraid to give him those types of minutes."

Defence boxed out

From Carrier to Xhekaj, to Guhle, Lane Hutson, Mike Matheson and Jayden Struble, the Canadiens limited second-chance opportunities for the Lightning to practically nil in Game 1.

It's something they improved on significantly down the stretch of the regular season.

"Physical, letting the goalie see the puck," said Guhle. "I think it's something, definitely, that's been a bigger topic for the D-men: clearing out the front of the net and letting our goalie see the puck. I think it's just being physical and not letting guys there. And they know if they want to get there, they're going to have to work for it."

The Lightning were limited to just 12 slot-driving plays at five-on-five, which nine less than the Canadiens were able to generate.

Special teams weren't the only difference

Although each team took five penalties and the Canadiens scored three power-play goals to the Lightning's two, control of the game at five-on-five wasn't as lopsided as the shot attempts through two periods made it appear.

After three periods — there was no five-on-five play in overtime — a lot of the numbers tilted toward the Canadiens.

Here's the breakdown from SportLogiq:

Even strength

Canadiens

Lightning

Goals



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1

Expected goals

5

1.46

4

Lack of discipline a cause for concern for Lightning

0.87

After the last two regular-season games between these teams saw the Lightning try—and totally fail—to bully the Canadiens out of the rink, they wisely strayed from that game plan Sunday.

Puck in OZ time

Coach Jon Cooper said before the game, “We’re going to have to find a way to not do some of the things we did in the regular season, but I don’t want to take that mentality away from our players, either.”

16:17

The Lightning straddled that line well but crossed another one completely with costly stick high-sticking penalties up to 200 feet away from their own net.

19:50

OZ possession time

Cooper wasn’t blaming the officials for them.

3:56

“No, I had a problem with us. I mean, come on, we took four offensive-zone penalties,” said Cooper. “Just look at them. That’s not over-aggression; that’s just stupidity, you know, a lot of them. That was on us. That was a game that we just gave them an opportunity to win. This is the Stanley Cup Playoffs; this isn’t Game 62. So that is extremely disappointing in the way we conducted ourselves and the amount of penalties we took.”

4:43

Slot shots on net

The Lightning also ran the third-best penalty kill in the league all season but flopped in Game 1.

7

That’ll need to change in Game 2.

5

If not?

Slot-driving plays

“Then you’re probably not going to last very long,” said Cooper. “If you’re killing penalties off at 50 per cent when you only (took two), so it’s 1-for-2, maybe you can survive. But you can’t let that happen, so that’s on us. There’s no excuses. Nothing.”

21

Quick hits

12

High-danger scoring chances

• It’s one game, and the Lightning are as battle-tested as they come. But you have to think it hurts to come out on the losing end of a game in which you held Nick Suzuki (101 regular-season points) and Cole Caufield (51 goals) to one shot attempt between them at five-on-five.

10

Still, Brandon Hagel, who played a huge role in that and was Tampa’s best player, saw it as a positive.

6

Scoring chances off the cycle

“I thought we executed our game plan on those guys five-on-five really well yesterday,” Hagel said. “Listen, they’re too good of hockey players not to get their chances here. ... They’re really good, they’ve got a lot of chemistry, they’ve been together for a long time. ... We’re going to try to (do the same) every single night, but, at the same time, they’re going to get their chances. It’s just the reality of the hockey game.”

7

• Charle-Edouard D’Astous’ presumed head injury, suffered on a second-period hit from Josh Anderson, thins out Tampa’s blue line considerably. Especially in the absence of Victor Hedman, who has been skating on his own but doesn’t appear any closer to playing in this series.

4

Scoring chances off the rush

• D’Astous’ replacement at Monday’s practice was Declan Carlile, who’d be wise not to try to avenge D’Astous. Last time he picked a fight with Anderson, in the last regular-season meeting between these teams, he got demolished.

3

• No changes to the Lightning lines or pairings, otherwise.

3

Turnover scoring chances

• From April 1 through the end of the regular season, the Canadiens ran the 22nd-best power play in the league, converting on only 12.9 per cent



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of their chances. That dropped them from fifth to 10th in the category for the season. Whatever they worked in closed pre-practice sessions in the leadup to the playoffs paid major dividends immediately. It definitely also helped that they were no longer trying to help Caufield win the "Rocket" Richard Trophy.

• He may not have had many chances to score in Game 1, but Caufield did notch two assists and was wise not to waste shots on plays that required him to pass.

"You've got to do what the game asks you to do," Caufield said. "I think it's just being between coverage and reading what they give you. I think there's times to shoot and there's times to do something else, and whether that's back to Suzy or even up to Lane, I think one of the three options is open and you just have to kind of look for those things."

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Sportsnet.ca / Rehabbing Demko motivated to help Canucks turn corner

Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — The person who will have the greatest impact on the Vancouver Canucks next season is the general manager who has yet to be hired.

The player who will have the greatest impact last played on Jan. 10.

Gone but not forgotten, injured goalie Thatcher Demko remains a massive figure to a National Hockey League franchise plotting a course through a rebuild.

With Quinn Hughes and J.T. Miller traded and what looks increasingly like the permanent diminishment of Elias Pettersson as an impact player, Demko is the last Canuck from the team's once-glimmering core who can still single-handedly win games and materially affect the team's trajectory.

We're not for a second suggesting that a healthy Demko makes the Canucks a playoff team next year. But they wouldn't have finished 32nd this season had he been healthy and maintained the opening-month form that made the 30-year-old arguably the NHL's best goalie in October.

Yes, the Californian has that kind of gravitational pull on the Canucks.

Except Demko hasn't been in orbit for most of the last two years as he dealt with a series of knee, groin and back issues related to structural damage in his hip.

Shortly after allowing three goals on six shots in the first period of a 5-0 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Jan. 10, Demko was shut down for the season and underwent major hip surgery.

"The last two years I was playing with zero degrees of internal rotation in the hip," Demko revealed to reporters during Friday's year-end press conferences. "Everything above and below is going to kind of take the hit — you know, it's the back, it's the knees, it's the groins trying to do too much work. I've already seen incredible strides in kind of my movement, my mobility."

Demko's ongoing rehab should see him, he hopes, be back on skates by July and fully ready to play next season.

Literally and figuratively, Demko is a game-changer for the organization. On the ice, as one of the top five goalies in the NHL when healthy, he makes the Canucks a significantly better team.

But if he starts well — and stays healthy — the goalie will also provide another precious trade option to the new general manager, who would have to work with Demko on the no-movement clause negotiated last summer into the three-year, \$25.5-million contract extension that starts on Canada Day.

The career Canuck, however, insisted to reporters he wants to be part of the rebuild that was forced (and accelerated) by December's trade of Hughes to the Minnesota Wild for four assets, including talented early-20s players Zeev Buium, Marco Rossi and Liam Ohgren.

"I've said that I want to be here since the day I got drafted, regardless of what that looks like," Demko said as the headliner of the first player press conference. "Obviously this year wasn't good enough from our perspective. A lot of things happened. I do think that we have a better team than what we showed this year. I think that we have a lot of really good pieces.

"The last, probably, two weeks you've kind of seen some of the things that I'm talking about being cultivated. . . just the willingness to play for each other and kind of building that camaraderie in the room, and guys sticking up for each other and hanging out outside the rink. You guys don't see a lot of the stuff that goes on off the ice, but there's been significant changes in that front as well, the last couple weeks. Different guys are stepping up in leadership roles. You've seen guys take strides in that area and commit to kind of what the bigger picture looks like moving forward. And we have a lot of young energy in the room, and I think that's really exciting."

As prickly as Demko can be with reporters in-season, he demonstrated again Friday during his first media availability since January that he is one of the smartest and most thoughtful interviews when he wants to be.

And as with his ability, there is also no doubting his passion.

As we've said before, the true measure of a player's toughness is not how often he gets hurt, but how often he comes back.

With his latest surgery, there is a daunting mass to the rehab and what Demko must do physically to return. But for players who have endured multiple injuries, the greatest challenge is always mental.

"It's brutal, quite frankly," Demko confirmed. "You have to have a sense of positivity going through all those situations, and keep telling yourself that, you know, 'maybe this time would be different.' You have this hope that you build up, even when you don't feel like it, and just to kind of have that let down every time, time and time again, it's tough.

"I think that this last operation that I had is going to be the answer for all that. So it's kind of like that one last time going through all this, hopefully. I mean, obviously it's a game, and you don't know what the future holds as far as injuries. Anyone can get hurt any night. But just some of the nagging stuff I had hopefully kind of dissipates. We've addressed the larger picture.

"Not playing and kind of going through this, I feel that passion and that fire kind of building every day. And watching to see what these guys have done, leadership-wise and what they've been building the last few weeks and months here, you know, I've never really felt this excited to play here and be a part of building something next year.

"Obviously, you know, I'm probably in the back half of my career here. It's tough when I'm not in the room every day. But, like I said, I'm so proud of how guys have stepped up. It's super inspiring for me to see other guys do it, and it makes you want to... become a better leader, become a better man."

Demko and his wife, Lexie, moved from San Diego to Michigan a few years ago to be nearer her family. The couple have two children under age three. But the goalie said on Friday that he will be spending the off-season in Vancouver to focus on his rehab and training.



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"I mean, this will be a unique summer," he said. "I still have a ton of work to do (but) I'm excited for that work. I'm excited to kind of build it from the ground up, and get back to where I was that year that we were in the playoffs (2023-24) and the year that I felt like myself. So, yeah, I'm excited to kind of dig in.

"I'm going to be in a great spot in a couple months here. Just kind of that overlying disappointment watching the guys kind of go through what happened this year, and not feel like I could really contribute or help out, I think that when I'm playing the way I can play... I can help (them) kind of get through some rough times. So it was definitely tough. It's been a tough two years; I'm not going to sugarcoat that. But I think just my willingness to kind of get through that and stay committed to these guys up here, and to the city and to the organization, like I said, my fire and my passion has just been growing and growing the last few weeks and few months here."

Demko will be a powerful wildcard for the Canucks when he returns.

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Sportsnet.ca / Scout's Analysis: Early draft targets for the Winnipeg Jets

Jason Bukala

Over the past week, I've spent some time looking at the Canadian NHL teams that failed to qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs and peered into what their options might be at the draft. I started with the Calgary Flames and followed up with the Vancouver Canucks.

The Jets missed the playoffs for the first time since 2022 and, as of today, hold the seventh overall pick. That could still change at the draft lottery on May 5, where the Jets could still move up as high as the No. 1 overall slot, or fall no farther than No. 9.

### WINNIPEG JETS OUTLOOK

Winnipeg had a down season in almost every statistical category compared to 2024-2025.

Their middle- and bottom-six forwards weren't able to produce the amount of offence or defend the way I had envisioned they could at the beginning of the season.

Nikolaj Ehlers signing in Carolina last summer created a hole and meant a player like Cole Perfetti, for example, had to produce more than he previously did. Perfetti's 32 points, combined with a minus-9 rating, fell short of expectations.

Making matters even worse was the steep drop in overall detail from the top players in the Jets' lineup. Here's a look at who their top scorers were this season:

Scheifele reached 100 points for the first time in his career and Kyle Connor just missed out on reaching the 40-goal plateau for a second straight season, but what really stands out is the fact that Winnipeg's top scorers were a combined minus-17 this season. Last year, their top five scorers were a combined plus-69.

In 2024-25, the Jets averaged 3.35 goals per game, had a 28.9 per cent power play and a 79.4 per cent penalty kill. This season, the Jets only averaged 2.79 goals per game, an 18.5 per cent power play and a 77.6 per cent penalty kill.

Their top five scorers still produced a similar amount to last year (370 points last season vs. 351 this season), but their defensive metrics fell off

by 86 goals in the wrong direction, and the production behind them fell off a cliff.

It's one thing to count on your scorers to contribute offence, but the Jets' leaders also have to play with more consistent detail defensively for a team that believed it had a chance to contend for a playoff spot.

### Draft board and strategy

As it stands today, here's how the Jets' draft pick lineup looks for the next three years:

Note: Winnipeg doesn't have its own fourth-round pick this year, but do have a conditional one from the Luke Schenn and Logan Stanley trade with Buffalo. To complete that deal, the Jets will get whichever pick is the better one between Buffalo's and Edmonton's.

As far as the first round goes, if the Jets just stick with the seventh overall pick after the draft lottery, they will be staring at some very good players. Their options will include a mix of forwards and defencemen with a wide range of skill and size.

However, the team might be considering other options here, too.

Connor Hellebuyck's comments on clean-out day certainly grabbed the attention of Jets coaches and management, and perhaps that will motivate them to find ways to improve the roster immediately this off-season. But Winnipeg needs to be careful navigating its draft capital in relation to the current roster.

I certainly understand the urge to investigate which teams have interest in the seventh overall draft slot. Trading that pick could land a very valuable NHL player in return, who could help with the "now" that Hellebuyck is talking about. However, in my opinion, Winnipeg needs an up-and-coming top-end forward or defenceman they can build their next wave of contention around.

The Jets can try to add to their team in other ways without sacrificing draft capital and team control over a young prospect who could be with the organization for years to come.

For example, free agency might help bring in a player to assist with their current shortcomings. It's not a deep class, and the Jets might have to overpay to land someone, but I'm recommending they try to go that route.

The way I see this team, they need to keep their first-round pick and add a prospect this June.

All of the following prospects play the game fast and can be relied upon in a variety of roles:

### Players to target at seventh overall

Viggo Bjorck, 5-foot-10, 172 pounds, right-shot centre, Djurgardens (J20/SHL)

Bjorck was outstanding for Team Sweden at the world juniors over the Christmas holidays, where he produced 3G-6A in seven games. He was deployed in all situations and never took a shift off. The same can be said for his overall approach at the pro level, playing for Djurgardens in the SHL. His offensive numbers don't jump off the page like his teammate Ivar Stenberg's, but he projects to contribute offence similar to Ehlers, he plays centre and he can kill penalties.

I value Bjorck's relentless approach. He has the type of 'A' and 'B' game that Winnipeg could use in its top-six.

Here are two examples of what Bjorck can provide. Both clips have been identified from his games played at the pro level in Sweden.

The first clip displays Bjorck's attention to detail off the puck defensively, his ability to read how plays are developing, intercept passes, and his speed bursting up ice to finish the play:



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The second clip also displays how Bjorck assists defensively and escapes from down low in the defensive zone, attacks off the rush and ends up as F1 on the forecheck before the puck ends up out of play:

Note: Bjorck's updated height and weight will be confirmed at the combine in Buffalo next month. He was listed at 5-foot-10, 172 pounds at the time these clips were created at the pro level.

Carson Carels, 6-foot-1, 198 pounds, left-shot defenceman, Prince George Cougars (WHL)

If the Jets are searching for a future top-pairing defenceman as Josh Morrissey edges his way towards his mid-30s, Carels is a prime target for the role.

Carels does it all at the junior level. He's deployed in all situations, contributes offence (20G-53A in 58 regular-season games), and pushes back physically (66 PIMs). Carels is a fantastic skater who can escape pressure from the defensive zone and lead the rush, or use his small-area quickness and physicality to kill plays defensively.

As far as the Jets are concerned, it also doesn't hurt that he's a Manitoba native who hails from Cypress River. The stars could be aligning for Winnipeg when it comes to Carels.

Here's an example of how elusive Carels can be in the offensive zone. His agility and vision are on full display in this clip, including how he attacks the middle of the ice as soon as he sees an opportunity to snap home a puck from a high danger spot in the deep slot:

Daxon Rudolph, 6-foot-2, 206 pounds, right-shot defenceman, Prince Albert Raiders (WHL)

Rudolph is a highly coveted right-shot blue liner who can be deployed in all situations and has established himself as the top-scoring defenceman in the draft class. Rudolph contributed 28G-50A in 68 regular-season games playing in Prince Albert. Thirteen of his goals came on the power play. Rudolph is an excellent skater, sees the ice well and is a dual threat to distribute and join the offensive rush as an extra layer or beat goalies clean from distance with a hard and accurate shot. He could end up a top-pairing NHL defenceman as well.

Closing thoughts

The Winnipeg Jets could use a shot in the arm with a young, elite prospect joining their roster as soon as possible. Winnipeg has done a nice job securing some of their home-grown talent for several more years, but they have to convince themselves to move off of prioritizing veteran talent who are getting close to aging out of the league.

Any one of the three prospects I've proposed as targets for Winnipeg at the 2026 NHL Draft should be capable of competing for an NHL roster spot as early as next season.

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Sportsnet.ca / Seven positives to take from Flames' 2025-26 season

Eric Francis

CALGARY — A losing season doesn't necessarily mean a lost season.

In fact, there were plenty of positives that came out of the Flames' 29th-place finish, including the monumental organizational shift that gives general manager Craig Conroy a chance to re-shape the team with a long-term view in mind.

Here's a look at the seven most positive developments from a 34-39-6 season, during which the Flames were the league's lowest-scoring team:

Path chosen

Finally, the organization picked a lane.

No more mushy middle, trying to balance making the playoffs every year with building for the future. Doesn't work. Never has, not in this town anyway.

Trading veteran pillars Rasmus Andersson, Nazem Kadri and MacKenzie Weegar, the latter two who had long-term deals in place, significantly shook up a roster that had proven it was no longer capable of challenging as it was structured.

It's now about the youth movement fans have been clamouring for.

In many ways, there's a feeling of relief.

Stockpiling picks and prospects

The aforementioned trades added significantly to the team's coffers, giving the Flames two first-round picks in each of the next three years, as well as eight second rounders over that span.

It gives them plenty of options and ammunition moving forward in their quest to find future stars.

The team also added to their growing list of college hotshots in the system, which now includes recently-signed Jonathan Castagna and Abram Wiebe, to go with Cole Reschny, Cullen Potter and Ethan Wyttenbach, who will all make the jump to pro after another year of seasoning.

By finishing fourth-last, the team will have a 9.5 per cent chance of winning the draft lottery, and are guaranteed to pick no later than sixth overall — a spot where the Flames have previously plucked Matthew Tkachuk and Sean Monahan.

This is an organization woefully short on difference-makers — high-end skilled players who sell tickets and build hope. Now it's up to the scouts and management to use their picks to find the next pillars around which to build.

His emergence at age 28 is not only one of the best feel-good stories of the season, but it gives the Flames one of the better tandems in the league moving forward.

Sitting among league leaders in goals-against average and save percentage, Cooley earned a two-year extension that can do wonders to ensure Dustin Wolf isn't overused as the organization builds.

Frostabee flourished

As part of the team's middle-age group, which the team is counting on to grow into more prominent leadership roles, Morgan Frost and Joel Farabee took significant strides this season.

Both hit the 20-goal mark and settled into new roles, with Frost elevating his game befitting a first-line centre, while Farabee has evolved into a dependable, team-first penalty killer who can get things done at both ends of the ice.

There were plenty of question marks surrounding the duo after they arrived from Philadelphia, but they have emerged as important pieces.

Culture/leadership strong

Despite the departure of letter-wearing leaders Kadri, Weegar and Andersson, the leadership group remained strong with the addition of Zach Whitecloud.



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With little to play for the final few months of the season, the team still exhibited the tremendous work ethic that has been their hallmark for years. The tight-knit group fought until the end.

Credit captain Mikael Backlund, and alternate captain Blake Coleman, who spearheaded a group hellbent on ensuring the team's identity as one of the hardest-working squads remains intact.

Despite the losing, the culture in Calgary is strong, which is partially why Conroy opted to keep Coleman past the trade deadline.

The emergence of Frost and Farabee as leaders bodes well moving forward.

Youth inserted

Matvei Gridin, Hunter Brzustewicz, Yan Kuznetsov and Zayne Parekh all demonstrated they are NHLers who will be young mainstays around which to build.

Yes, they all have plenty of room to grow, but identifying them as legit pros was significant.

Kuznetsov wasted no time after his recall proving he's a top-four fixture, while it wasn't clear until late in the year the other three were capable of being opening-night pieces next season.

Parekh's season was nightmarish early on, but he persevered, and by the last three weeks was filling the net, dangling like he did in junior, and exhibiting the poise and swagger that help make him one of the most exciting prospects in the organization.

Gridin's high-end skillset and well-rounded game have many thinking he'll be a top-line candidate who could lead the team in scoring for years.

The organization also used the last few months taking peeks at Rory Kerins, Brennan Othmann, Aydar Suniev, William Stromgren, Tyson Gross, Sam Morton and Wiebe, giving management a better idea of their capabilities.

Team architect locked up

Conroy signed a two-year contract extension, which starts next season, keeping him under contract through the end of 2027-28.

It gives the popular GM plenty of runway to continue implementing a long-term plan that will almost certainly come with short-term pain.

Sticking with it is the key, and the well-respected Conroy is the man to see this through.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Slafkovsky lives up to reputation as 'big-game player' in Game 1 win

Eric Engels

TAMPA, Fla. — Nick Suzuki suggested his six-foot-three, 225-pound linemate would play like a giant as soon as the puck dropped in this Stanley Cup Playoff series between his Montreal Canadiens and the Tampa Bay Lightning, and he was right.

"His attributes fit perfectly for this type of hockey," Suzuki said of Juraj Slafkovsky before the game.

By the end of Sunday night, Slafkovsky had become the first Canadiens player in history to score three power-play goals in a playoff game.

His last one came 1:22 into overtime, giving the Canadiens a 4-3 win in a seesaw Game 1 at Benchmark International Arena.

It was the 22-year-old's seventh shot on net, his 10th attempt of the night, and it rubber-stamped a performance he's been building toward ever since he first donned a Canadiens uniform just months after being taken first overall in the 2022 draft.

As Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis said after the game, Slafkovsky's path to this point "wasn't linear."

"You understand that," St. Louis continued. "I think when you're dealing with young players, talented players like that, I think, as a coach, you have to have some patience, empathy, whatever it is. But the goal is to always advance, him growing but understanding that it's not going to be linear. There was ups and dips, but I feel like as he's evolved the last year, there's not a lot of dips."

Over Slafkovsky's first year, there seemed to be nothing but dips.

He practically spent more time swimming on the ice than skating on it, often knocked sprawling by hits he'd had no previous experience taking — including some major ones to his confidence, as he went on to collect only four goals and 10 points through 39 games before injury prematurely ended his season.

Over the next season, Slafkovsky was able to take steps forward without taking as many backward.

Then, his evolution into the power forward he was meant to be came steadily from the halfway point of last season through the entirety of this one.

"It's been unbelievable," said Josh Anderson, who scored Montreal's first goal and set the physical tone for a Canadiens side that had 42 hits in this game.

The 31-year-old, who's also six-foot-three and 225 pounds, had also set the tone for Slafkovsky ever since they became teammates.

"Ever since I got here, I sit next to him in the locker room," said Slafkovsky. "He's a great guy to take from, and he's helped me (by) always being positive and telling me when not to make plays and go hit some people. We can see he does it a lot, so I'm just trying to do it whenever I can."

It's given Slafkovsky a better understanding of how to access the type of skill that Anderson never quite possessed.

That skill enabled the kid to push three pucks past Andrei Vasilevskiy in the most important game of the season to date. But Slafkovsky got to it on this night — and over a season that saw him score 30 goals and 73 points to set career highs in both categories — by using his speed and tenacity the way Anderson always does.

"He's a power forward. Big guy that's hard to stop," said Anderson. "And you'd think that Nick and Cole (Caufield) make him better, but he makes them better too. Obviously, he's a huge-time player for us. He's got a lot of confidence, a lot of swagger, and I just love his game."

It hit another level at the Milan Olympics in February, where Slafkovsky scored four goals and four assists in six games, willing Slovakia to the semifinals.

"I was definitely impressed, but I wasn't surprised," Canadiens teammate Lane Hutson told Sportsnet last week. "I was impressed because it's such a high level. No disrespect to Slovakia, but they don't have a ton of star power, so to do it with not much, it was really impressive."

"But I think when those stakes get higher and the game's on the line, he wants to make an impact any way he can, whether it's throwing a hit, getting in hard on the forecheck, making a big play, or extending



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possession. He can do it all, and he knows it, and it's a luxury to have him on our team."

On this night, against a Tampa team that clawed back 1-0 and 3-2 leads, it was essential.

Brandon Hagel, Anthony Cirelli and Jake Guentzel threw a blanket over Suzuki and Caufield, holding the 101-point man and his 51-goal accomplice to one shot attempt at five-on-five between them.

But they couldn't stop Slafkovsky on the power play. Especially with the game on the line.

"I got some open space there and decided to shoot it," he said, "and it went in."

Slafkovsky had the composure to make that big play in overtime — and several others in the game.

"We know what he's capable of bringing, and he brought it tonight," said St. Louis. "Not just his goals; he was physical, he won his battles, he was annoying. It was a big game for him."

It was a huge one for the Canadiens, who also kept their composure despite a wild momentum swing in the second period.

Anderson had a goal wiped off the board after it was ruled he made contact with the puck above the crossbar.

Twelve seconds later, he was given a questionable charging penalty for a hit that knocked Charle-Edouard D'Astous out of the game, and while he was serving it, the Lightning scored the first of two goals in 29 seconds to take a 2-1 lead.

The Canadiens weathered that storm before Slafkovsky scored his first goal of the night in the final minute of the period.

Slafkovsky's second came 5:56 into the third, and it felt like destiny he'd get that third after Guentzel's penalty with 20 seconds remaining in the frame put the Lightning's comeback bid in jeopardy.

"He showed that he can be a dominant player," Suzuki said before the game. "I think being around him the last week, he's excited for that."

Slafkovsky showed it immediately.

"He's been so good for us," said Jakub Dobes, who stopped 20 shots and also played a huge role in the Canadiens' win. "Hopefully, he'll do the same thing on Tuesday (in Game 2)."

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Sportsnet.ca / Buffalo roars as Sabres complete epic comeback vs. Bruins in playoff return

Ryan Dixon

BUFFALO — They went 14 years without playoff hockey. Then, when it returned, somehow the wait for a single goal likely felt just as long. But when the dam broke and keyed a thunderous Buffalo stampede, it was all worth it for hockey's longest-suffering fans.

As expected, the city of Buffalo was on tilt as the Sabres hosted the Boston Bruins on Sunday night for a match that marked the first NHL post-season hockey in Western New York since 2011. Before the game, KeyBank Center was surrounded by Sabres supporters fueled by — among other things — the exhilarating knowledge that their team was

about to emerge from what seemed like a never-ending winter and finally play hockey in the season it matters most.

Then came a game that felt like air slowly leaking from a tire.

Already put to the test beyond any reasonable expectation, Sabres supporters had to do 52:02 more of hard time before they had something specific to centre all that pent-up emotion on. With his team down 2-0 to a crafty Bruins team backed by Jeremy Swayman's strong goaltending, Tage Thompson — after two Boston defenders pinned his teammate, Peyton Krebs, against the boards — took a puck that squirted loose behind the net and stuffed it past Swayman before the goalie could get a toe to the post.

Belief blossomed and permeated the building, starting with the 20 guys wearing blue and yellow.

"The energy on the bench, the energy in the building after we got the first one, I just felt, we're going to get one; we're going to have a good look to get the next one," said Sabres coach Lindy Ruff. "Because we were garnering a lot of the offensive-zone play; it was just whether we could break them down and get that good chance."

When the next opportunity came, it was Thompson finding the net again, sniping his second tally in a span of 3:42. Fifty-two seconds later, defenceman Mattias Samuelsson buried from the slot, then did a celebratory slam into the glass with the same force he used to smack Bruins forwards all night.

"Tommer (Thompson) got us going there and the place just erupted," Samuelsson said. "You could feel the energy building. As a group we felt, once we cracked them, we could roll from there."

By the time native son Alex Tuch was heading toward an empty net with no Bruin in between, the pre-game hysteria had not only returned, but elevated to a whole other level, the wildest of emotions validated by a rollicking victory that landed on a 4-3 count after Boston's David Pastrnak scored with just eight ticks remaining in the third.

What better way to end a drought than with a flood?

"Tonight's game was full of emotion for everyone, so I'm just happy we could come out on the right side," Thompson said.

While the comeback required everyone pulling on the rope — not to mention some key saves by Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, including thwarting Pastrnak on a pair of second-period breakaways — there's no denying Thompson's skill and determination keyed the comeback. After catching Swayman a touch off guard on his first strike, the six-foot-six Thompson was a tenacious demon on his second, forechecking below the goal line and ultimately beating Boston centre Elias Lindholm to a loose puck at the side of the net, before wiring it past Swayman on the glove side.

It was the kind of play that showed the ferocity Thompson and Sabres captain Rasmus Dahlin are in constant conversation about.

"We always talk about, dogs have to be dogs said and today he showed up and led the team," Dahlin said. "That was special."

That was the way it looked from all the way down in the Sabres crease, too.

"I feel like Tage has grown as a leader so much this year and he's been a really, really big part of our success on the ice, off the ice," said Luukkonen. "He takes care of everybody. Those big moments, he's shown it in many levels that he's built for that. He showed his best tonight."

Suffice to say, there's been more than enough anger and disappointment to go around in Buffalo, both inside and outside the dressing room. Thompson, though, has been there as long as anyone, having landed still shy of his 21st birthday in a 2018 trade with the St. Louis Blues. Like 10



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other teammates Sunday, Thompson was making his post-season debut and was determined to meet the moment.

"I think eight years of adversity is enough experience to get you ready for something like this," he said. "Any time you go eight years of not making the playoffs and then it's finally here, the last thing you want is regret. There's just a heightened feeling of hunger; you just don't want to let this opportunity slip. I thought tonight was really important to make a statement and set our standard. We still have another level to get to and we're going to keep trying every game to find another level."

Certainly, despite the win, there's room for improvement. Ruff acknowledged there was some jittery puck play in the early going. And, perhaps more concerningly, a power play that entered the game on an 0-for-22 skid went 0-for-4 and seemed to be less threatening with each successive opportunity.

Even if Buffalo had lost this game, though, it would have been hard to get too bogged down in the negative given the circumstances. But to win it the way the club did, with the same never-say-die attitude it showed all year while storming back to NHL relevance, it only stokes fires of belief and makes it easy to put the focus where it should be on a night like this.

"It was definitely cooler than I expected," Dahlin said of the atmosphere. "I couldn't hear anything except the crowd."

Ruff, the rare person on the Sabres with all kinds of post-season chapters in his book, was just as rosy as the newbies.

"You could feel the building shaking," the 66-year-old veteran bench boss said with a glow. "The atmosphere was unbelievable. It was great to give our fans (that) third period."

Thompson said the anticipation for what the Sabres would be skating into was on his mind for several days leading up to Game 1. The people in the stands came through, just like he did on the sheet.

"These are the kind of games you live for," Thompson said.

And, after that one, Buffalo could not be more alive.

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Sportsnet.ca / Things we learned: No love lost between Mammoth, Golden Knights

Emily Sadler

For a franchise experiencing playoff hockey for the first time ever, the Utah Mammoth certainly understood the assignment. The team flew out of the gates in Game 1 against the Vegas Golden Knights, setting the tone early with their fleet-footed game... and plenty of extra-curriculars.

The Golden Knights brought the glitz. Utah brought the grit. And 60 minutes of chippy, chirpy hockey later, it looks like we've got a new rivalry on our hands. This one brought plenty of heat, and lots of hate.

There was no love lost between the Pacific-topping Golden Knights and the league's newest franchise, which earned a post-season berth in just their second season in Salt Lake City but couldn't kick things off with a win on Sunday. Vegas's 4-2 series-opening victory gives them the upper hand for now.

But the rough stuff was the biggest story of this one. Net-front scuffles broke out early and often. Face-washes were plentiful, as were fighting words. There was even a head-butt — Utah's Sean Durzi got away unpenalized after (lightly) head-butting an irate Rasmus Andersson, but

would be wise not to use his noggin in battle again. He got a lucky break here.

The camera caught a bloody-faced Nic Dowd, scorer of the game-winning goal, shouting not-so-niceties across the ice after the final buzzer. Perhaps a promise for Game 2. After all the fracas, it's worth wondering if officials will be quicker to call penalties in Game 2 before things get out of hand.

Considering how this one played out, Utah won't be going anywhere without a fight.

Cooley writes his name into Utah's history books

Logan Cooley is known for his killer shot and his penchant for scoring against Vegas — he had four in a single game (including two empty-netters) against the Golden Knights back in November.

Late in the first period of Game 1 in Vegas, Cooley scored the biggest of them all when he potted the first playoff goal in Utah Mammoth history. That puck's a keeper.

The goal opened the scoring for the series, and the timing of it could've been a real momentum-shifter. But Vegas' experience ultimately shone through, the home team staying patient and keeping pace through the second period before a three-goal third to claim the 4-2 victory.

Kings contain Avalanche's stars, but Colorado's depth shines through

There are no moral victories in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, but it's hard not to look at the way the Los Angeles Kings approached Game 1 against the Colorado Avalanche and not see a few small victories within the 2-1 loss.

L.A. held Nathan MacKinnon to just a single assist, goal-less on three shots. Cale Makar and Martin Necas were kept off the scoresheet. Top-line winger (and noted playoff performer) Artturi Lehkonen opened the scoring for Colorado, and it was an unlikely hero who registered the game-winner: Logan O'Connor, who only made his season debut on Mar. 24 after missing most of the campaign with an injury. Sunday's goal was the first of his season.

Artemi Panarin's power-play goal with less than three minutes remaining in regulation was too little, too late for the Kings, but it might prove to be the shot in the arm the team needs to generate a bit more offence heading into Game 2.

Colorado's power play could be a sleeping giant

It certainly should be... but will it ever wake up? There were signs of life on Saturday as the Avalanche put on a passing clinic with the man advantage, but not in any way that mattered on the scoreboard.

In four power-play opportunities against the Los Angeles Kings' 30th-ranked penalty kill in Game 1 of their first-round series, Colorado couldn't capitalize. Cue the snooze button.

While the club's power-play issues didn't stop the home team from registering a 2-1 series-opening win, it's certainly a head-scratcher for a squad that boasts such dominant offensive numbers.

The team that led the league in goals per game (3.63) and goal differential (plus-99) while posting a Presidents' Trophy-winning 121 points and boasting two 100-plus point-getters, finished the regular season with the 27th-ranked power play. That just doesn't compute.

Equally head-scratching is L.A.'s penalty kill rate in the regular season. The team's reputation for shut-down defensive play hasn't typically translated on special teams, but it was certainly on full display Sunday.

Meanwhile, it was the Kings' power play that got on the score sheet in this one, with Panarin breaking Scott Wedgewood's shutout bid with less than two minutes to go in regulation against Colorado's top-ranked PK unit.



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Perhaps Colorado could take a few notes from the Canadiens...

Slafkovsky makes Tampa Bay pay for undisciplined penalties

No team took more penalties in the 2025-26 regular season than Tampa Bay, and it wasn't particularly close — the Lightning's 425 trips to the penalty box were 53 more than the next most-penalized team.

They didn't exactly change their ways in Sunday's series-opener against the Montreal Canadiens, and they paid a hefty price for it. Montreal went 3-for-5 with the man advantage for a 60 per cent success rate.

It should be noted, of course, that Montreal didn't go unscathed, either. They gave up a pair of power-play goals on five opportunities, the first of which brought the Lightning's offence to life — just 29 seconds after Darren Raddysh got Tampa Bay on the board midway through the second period with the man advantage, Brandon Hagel gave the Lightning a 2-1 lead.

But undisciplined play by Tampa Bay — a high-sticking minor for Conor Geekie late in the second, an interference call against Anthony Cirelli early in the third, and Jake Guentzel's high-sticking penalty that saw Tampa open overtime short-handed — got the best of the home team, and ultimately cost them a shot at opening Round 1 with a win.

It was Slafkovsky who came to collect, scoring all three power-play goals in Montreal's 4-3 overtime win. His hat trick was truly a heroic performance — and a historic one, too:

The Slovakian goal-scorer came up clutch, but in a game of details, head coach Martin St. Louis' decision to call a timeout just one minute into overtime might just be the most clutch move of all. It was easy to question the timing of it at first, with the OT period having just gotten underway. But it gave his top PP unit an opportunity to catch its breath and stay out — and we all saw how it paid off.

Buffalo wins series-opener in most Buffalo way possible

The stage was set for a celebration 15 years in the making as the Sabres hosted the Bruins for Game 1 of their first-round series. Fans showed up in droves, the festivities starting long before puck drop... and after all that, the Sabres were late to their own party.

Turns out, the Sabres were planning a surprise party — one in which they lulled home fans back into the familiar darkness of disappointment, only to set off fireworks 12 minutes into the third frame of a 2-0 game with four straight goals to claim the 4-3 win.

It was, for much of the matchup, a deeply flawed performance by Buffalo. But the win was so perfectly fitting for these Sabres. After the long wait, what's a few more periods, anyway?

It was historic: The third-period surge was the first such comeback since Brad May led the Sabres to victory in April 1993. That win, too, was against the Bruins. What unfolded Sunday in Buffalo wasn't a series-clincher like the one that took place more than 30 years ago, but it was a "May Day!" moment for a new generation.

That Tage Thompson got the party started with Buffalo's first two goals to tie things up was fitting, too. He's been the team's offensive leader all season and was a main driver of their first-place finish atop the Atlantic Division. The Sabres finished the season with the second-most goals by defencemen, and Mattias Samuelsson's go-ahead marker to take the lead was a perfect example of how Buffalo's blue liners have contributed all year. That hometown kid Alex Tuch's empty-net goal wound up serving as the game-winner was the perfect ending to what was a perfectly Sabres win.

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