



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 11, 2026

## The News & Observer

### Inside Frederik Andersen's blazing start for the Hurricanes in 2026 NHL playoffs

By: Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (31) stops a scoring attempt by Ottawa right wing Drake Batherson (19) in the third period on Saturday, April 18, 2026 during the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Raleigh

Fred-die, Fred-die, Fred-die ...

It's all the rage, you know. Goaltender Frederik Andersen has been making saves, winning games and impressing, well, everyone, as the Canes (Shopping Cart IconShop Canes Fan Gear) have zoomed into the Eastern Conference Final in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

"He's locked in, an absolute brick wall," defenseman Jaccob Slavin said.

Who can argue?

Not Canes fans. They've been chanting his name at Lenovo Center since the playoffs began.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (31) is recognized after making 22 saves in the Hurricanes 2-0 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Saturday, April 18, 2026 during the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour has been asked about Andersen more and more as Andersen has started and won the first eight playoff games. Brind'Amour has said all the right praiseworthy things.

But it's almost like that baseball superstition about the pitcher in the midst of throwing a no-hitter: admire from afar but the less said, the better. Just leave him alone and let him keep hanging up the zeroes.

Or in Andersen's case, it has been 0, 2, 1, 2, 0, 2, 1, 2.

That's his goals-allowed linescore, so to speak, as the Canes swept the Ottawa Senators in four games in the opening round of the playoffs, then did the same to the Philadelphia Flyers in the second. Andersen became the first goalie since Hall of Famer Jacques Plante in 1969 to begin the playoffs allowing two goals or fewer in his first eight games.

"I'm just sitting back and watching that. I don't think anyone predicted that," Brind'Amour said.

Andersen 'playing lights out'

Andersen opened each series with a shutout win, in the Canes' case the perfect tone-setting start. Three of the eight wins came in overtime, when one lapse in net can cost you a game, perhaps shift momentum in the series.

The Hurricanes twice went to OT against the Flyers, who clawed their way into the playoffs down the stretch and then held off the Pittsburgh Penguins in the opening round. Jackson Blake's goal, his second of the game, was the winner Saturday in a 3-2 victory that ended the series in Philadelphia's Xfinity Mobile Arena.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen defends the goal against Christian Dvorak of the Philadelphia Flyers during the second period in Game 3 of their Stanley Cup Playoffs second-round series at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 7, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Andersen's numbers through the first two rounds: a 1.12 goals-against average and .950 save percentage, having stopped 191 of 201 shots.

"He's been playing lights-out," Brind'Amour said Saturday.

Andersen has been in such a groove, so unflappable, that he once defended the net with his paddle upside down after being jostled and knocked down in the crease by the Flyers' Alex Bump.

Brind'Amour went into the playoffs saying the Canes probably would need to use both Andersen and goalie Brandon Bussi. He hasn't had to call Bussi's name yet.

"They both deserve to play, but there's been no reason to go in any other direction," Brind'Amour said.

Andersen, 36, has had playoff success before in his career, with the Anaheim Ducks and Toronto Maple Leafs before coming to Carolina in 2022. He has now played in 93 playoff games and has 54 wins, seven of them shutouts. His career numbers are a 2.28 GAA and .916 save percentage.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen (31) stops a scoring attempt by Ottawa left wing Brady Tkachuk (7) in the third period on Saturday, April 18, 2026 during the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, N.C.

Hurricanes benefit from keeper's calm

Andersen isn't a flashy goalie. The Dane, a big presence in net at 6-4 and 229 pounds, makes the occasional flopping, scrambling save but at his best is poker-faced and smooth in his play, making tough saves appear routine, with a modicum of movement. He has been unfazed by the havoc around him in the playoffs, especially when the Canes have been shorthanded and had to kill off penalties.

"And what some people may not notice is how well he handles the puck," forward Taylor Hall said Saturday. "He's so calm back there. He makes the right play every time and makes it a lot easier on our D."



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The Canes' defense has made it easier for Andersen at times, too. He faced just 17 shots Saturday.

"The extra layer," Andersen called Slavin and his D corps.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen tracks the puck against Christian Dvorak (22) of the Philadelphia Flyers during the first period of Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup Playoff game at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Andersen has had his share of knee issues in his career. His numbers during the regular season were pedestrian as Bussi carried much of the load.

But Andersen enjoyed the thrill of a lifetime in playing for his native Denmark in the Milan Winter Olympics. He didn't win a medal, but now is after the NHL's biggest prize and seemingly inspired by it all, judging by his play.

Buffalo or Montreal? The Canes plan on being ready for either in the conference final and for now can sit back and watch those two battle it out.

The Eastern Conference final will begin with two games at Lenovo Center. The dates and game times for the best-of-seven series will be announced later by the league.

"Every series is a race to four," Andersen said Saturday. "That's our mindset. You want to win the next one, however you have to do it. That's really the focus."

## Carolina Hurricanes make history with Game 4 overtime win over Flyers

By: Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes winger Jackson Blake (53) celebrates with K'andre Miller after scoring the game-winning goal against the Philadelphia Flyers in overtime of Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup playoff series at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Eight up and eight down.

The Carolina Hurricanes (Shopping Cart IconShop Canes Fan Gear) have taken the fastest route possible to the Eastern Conference final in the 2026 Stanley Cup playoffs.

The question now: Can the Canes take the next step?

With a 3-2 overtime victory Saturday over the Philadelphia Flyers, the Canes moved into the Eastern Conference Final for the second consecutive season, and third time in four years.

Jackson Blake's goal at 5:31 of overtime, the winger's second of the game, created a madcap celebration on the ice at Xfinity Mobile Arena in Philadelphia before the traditional handshake line for the two teams.

After sweeping the Ottawa Senators in the opening round, the Canes again got the job done in short order against the Flyers to make it eight straight wins in the playoffs. The Hurricanes are the first team since Edmonton in 1985 to start the Stanley Cup playoffs with eight straight wins, and are the first team to sweep two best-of-seven series to open the postseason. (Edmonton swept a best-of-5 series to open its run.)

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen tracks the puck against Christian Dvorak (22) of the Philadelphia Flyers during the first period of Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup Playoff game at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Canes will face the winner of the Buffalo-Montreal series in the conference final, and again should have a sizable break before playing again, allowing time for rest, healing and some practice sessions to try and stay sharp.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour was the captain of Carolina's 2006 Stanley Cup champions and now badly wants a Cup for this year's team, and for the franchise.

Asked about winning Saturday, and how the series was won, Brind'Amour said, "Those guys are having the time of their life right now."

Brind'Amour was talking about the Logan Stankoven line, which has consistently come up with scintillating goals and big plays in the eight games. Blake and Stankoven each scored in regulation Saturday with Taylor Hall contributing assists on both.

Logan Stankoven (22) of the Carolina Hurricanes collides with Alex Bump of the Philadelphia Flyers during the third period of Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup Playoff series at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Blake in right place, right time

On the game winner, Canes defenseman Jaccob Slavin made a play in the neutral zone to get the puck to Hall along the left boards. With Stankoven driving the middle, Hall passed to Blake, who found a spot to shoot from the top of the slot.

Flyers goalie Dan Vladar, who played well in defeat in the series, got a piece of the puck with his glove, but it bounded over his shoulder and into the net.

As for his celebration, a smiling Blake said, "I blacked out on it."

Jackson Blake of the Carolina Hurricanes celebrates after scoring the game-winning goal against the Philadelphia Flyers in overtime during Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup Playoff series at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

"No, once I saw it go in, it's just excitement," he said. "I was just happy we got the win and can go home and get the rest."

For the eighth straight game, Frederik Andersen was in net for the Hurricanes. The veteran again made the critical saves when needed, allowing a first-period goal to Tyson Foerster and third-period score by rookie Alex Bump but denying the Flyers on other high-quality chances.

"He's so calm and you're almost expecting it every night now," Hall said. "He forces them to almost make the perfect shot or make the perfect play to score."



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Carolina Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen makes a save against the Philadelphia Flyers during overtime in Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup Playoff series at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Stankoven's goal, his seventh of the playoffs, gave the Canes a 2-1 lead four minutes into the third period. The Canes had one goal — by center Mark Jankowski — overturned on review in the second period because of goaltender interference, but Stankoven ripped a shot past Vladar on the rush.

The Flyers countered quickly. Travis Konecny forced a turnover behind the Canes net, then made a crisp pass to Bump in the low slot for the tying goal.

Porter Martone (94) of the Philadelphia Flyers celebrates teammate Tyson Foerster's goal against the Carolina Hurricanes during the first period of Game 4 of the teams' second-round Stanley Cup Playoff game at Xfinity Mobile Arena on May 9, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Canes, who beat the Flyers in overtime in Game 2 on a Hall goal, kept the puck in the Flyers' zone much of the OT on Saturday. Then, Blake delivered with his fourth goal of the playoffs.

"That line in general has scored some pretty special goals," Brind'Amour said "It's been fun to sit back there and watch it."

For Canes, another chance

What hasn't been fun for the Hurricanes have been trips to the Eastern Conference final. Since winning the Cup in 2006, the Canes have reached the conference final four times — in 2009, 2019, 2023 and 2025 — and fallen short each time.

The Florida Panthers (Shopping Cart IconShop Panthers Fan Gear) ousted the Canes the past two times. Carolina's win in Game 4 a year ago, in Florida, was its first in the conference final since beating the Sabres in 2006 on its way to the Cup.

The Canes talked Saturday of having to raise their play another notch for the next round. It takes 16 wins to claim the Cup and the last eight are the toughest, but they're back in hockey's final four again.

"It's a huge accomplishment," Brind'Amour said. "This team has played well for eight months. They didn't just get hot at the end. It's been night-in and night-out like this. That's what I'm most proud of from the group.

"And now, here we are. We've got to find a way to get that next step. Obviously, that's easier said than done. But one thing I know is they're going to give that same effort."

Of note: Walker a new father

Canes defenseman Sean Walker had to hustle Saturday. Walker was in Raleigh with his wife, Taylor, for the birth of their first child, a daughter. Walker then flew to Philadelphia on owner Tom Dundon's plane.

"It was quite the whirlwind over the last couple of days but it all worked out really well," a smiling Walker said after the game. "I got to experience it all and it was an amazing experience."

And the hockey, Game 4? "It was one of the easiest and hardest I've maybe ever played, if that makes sense," Walker said.



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## The Athletic

### With another sweep, Hurricanes show they're ready to level up in playoffs

By: Sean Gentille

PHILADELPHIA — We've seen hockey players, with an odd degree of frequency, become fathers in the middle of a playoff series. We can safely wager that not many have eaten their pregame meals in a hospital cafeteria, then hopped on a plane to compete later that night.

And we can say, with a degree of certitude, that nobody, until Saturday, capped all that by helping their teammates close out a sweep of their second straight opponent.

Sean Walker, come on down.

Walker put in 31 shifts as a defenseman a little more than 24 hours after his first shift as Quinn's dad. Taylor, his wife, gave birth to their daughter on Friday. By the following afternoon, Walker had flown from Philadelphia to Raleigh, N.C., and back to Philadelphia, where the Hurricanes became the fifth team in NHL history and the first since the 1985 Edmonton Oilers to win their first eight postseason games, beating the Philadelphia Flyers in overtime, 3-2.

Carolina could wait up to 10 days for the start of the Eastern Conference finals. It's their third such trip in four seasons — and, for one of the era's most consistently high-quality regular-season teams, it's also their postseason high-water mark. They're looking to change that, and are equipped to make it happen.

Walker, though, has already leveled up. And he sounded happier than anyone about the break.

"I didn't want to get on the boys and tell them we better win tonight," he said. "I'm really appreciative that everybody dug in, and the sweep's huge for everybody, but to take this time to just be with my family is going to be really special."

On Thursday afternoon, Taylor had a doctor's appointment. By that night, her water had broken. She called Walker, who was awake and lying in a hotel bed after the Hurricanes' 4-1 win in Game 3. The first flight back to North Carolina wasn't for another five hours, so the two stayed on FaceTime through the night and until he boarded the plane. By then, "things were kind of getting going," Walker said. "I can't put into words how proud I am of her. She had to go through it for a little bit without me there."

After the 90-minute flight, Walker headed for the hospital — and he made it in time.

"I was there for everything," he said. "The baby gods were on my side on that one and I got to experience it all."

On Saturday, after Walker arrived back in Philadelphia and "freshened up" at the team hotel, he and the rest of the Hurricanes accomplished something the league hadn't seen in more than four decades. The Flyers dragged things into

overtime, despite Carolina out-attempting them by 45, out-chancing them by 16 and holding an expected goal share of a staggering 74 percent. Eventually, as the Hurricanes so often do, they broke the dam.

They came back from a pair of deficits, too. Until Game 2 against Philadelphia, all way through their four-game sweep of the Ottawa Senators, they'd faced zero. It started with a second period that put Carolina up 2-1, featuring goals from linemates Jackson Blake and Logan Stankoven.

"We got to that in the second period and we didn't really look back," said Taylor Hall, who won a faceoff to start the sequence that led to Blake's goal, directly set up Stankoven's, and, a little more than five minutes into overtime, scooped up a mishandled clearing pass, streaked down the left wing and zipped a centering pass to Blake, who beat Dan Vladar to put Carolina through to the second round.

There are many reasons to believe in Carolina, perhaps none larger than the play of the Hall-Stankoven-Blake line. Hall, the 2017-18 Hart Trophy winner, has aged into a been-there, done-that, all-zones multitool. Stankoven, at 5-foot-8 and still in his first season as an NHL center, leads the league with seven playoff goals. Blake is ferociously involved and highly productive, and just had himself a two-goal closeout game.

With the top line of Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov and Seth Jarvis still in the starting blocks, as far as production goes, the second line has grabbed the baton and finished two legs of the race. As recently as last year, a series in which, say, Aho went without a goal would've ended the Hurricanes' season. Guess how many he had against Philadelphia?

Walker, by the way, plated 23 minutes and 10 seconds without missing a beat. He's a high-end puck-carrier out of the defensive zone, and that part of his game was clearly unaffected, as Hall noted. Stankoven seemed baffled, while Jaccob Slavin attributed it to "dad strength." All were impressed, and all were thrilled for Walker and his family.

Another vibe from the Hurricanes, starting with coach Rod Brind'Amour and trickling on down, is that good as they've all been, they're also still working toward their apex. That's a fact that's equal parts odd and true, given that Carolina has yet to drop a game in a postseason that began on April 18. There are too many odd-man breaks, Slavin said. Their first period didn't feature the requisite amount of forechecking, Hall said. They're relying too heavily on their penalty kill, plenty of them have said.

And yet, they're here, aiming higher and looking ahead, to the point that even their coach, a man without much of a



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reputation for compromise, is stressing the need to bask in it, if only for a day or two.

“It’s a huge accomplishment,” Brind’Amour said. “This season is so long, and there’s that 82-game season we talk about that no one really gives much credit to. And yet this team has played well for eight months. It didn’t just get hot at the end. It’s been night in, night out like this. ... And now, here we are. We gotta find a way to get that next step.”

They could have more than a week to plot it out, but it’s starting to feel like the plan is already in place and being

executed. Part of that entails following a script they wrote for the seven-day break that followed the Senators series.

“Clearly,” Brind’Amour said, “that was OK.” They’re content to wait on the Buffalo Sabres or the Montreal Canadiens to emerge from the other Eastern Conference semifinal, which could last until May 18.

The next level awaits. In the meantime, Quinn’s dad can try to squeeze in a few naps.



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## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Blake's OT winner sends Hurricanes back to Eastern Conference final

By: Cory Lavalette

Hurricanes right wing Jackson Blake's (53) shot hits Flyers goalie Dan Vladar's glove before fluttering into the net for the overtime winner of Game 4 of their second round series Saturday in Philadelphia. Carolina completed a sweep to advance to the Eastern Conference final for the third time in four years. (Matt Slocum / AP Photo)

PHILADELPHIA — The Hurricanes are perfect through eight games of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

They're also off to their third Eastern Conference final in four seasons.

Jackson Blake's overtime goal handed the Flyers a 3-2 loss as Carolina completed its second straight series sweep Saturday to move on in the postseason.

"I remember (Taylor Hall) even told me this last year, he said, 'What you're doing right now isn't normal. You don't always get to go to the conference finals and stuff like that,'" said Blake, who scored twice as his line with Hall and Logan Stankoven accounted for all three Hurricanes goals. "It being my second year and to already reach it again is pretty special, and the culture and the group we have this year, it's another level from even last year.

"I think last year we had a great group and we were really tight knit, but this year, it just feels a little different. I don't know what it is, but I like the way we're rolling."

Blake's winner was textbook Hurricanes hockey.

Flyers defenseman Jamie Drysdale picked up the puck in his own zone but tried to force an outlet pass to winger Porter Martone near the red line. Carolina defenseman Jacob Slavin, however, was gapped up on the Philadelphia rookie, and he jabbed the puck away allowing Hall to collect it.

Hall — who assisted on all three Hurricanes goals — entered the Flyers zone on the left flank. Stankoven's net drive gave Carolina numbers, and Hall found Blake trailing the play. Blake snapped a shot that hit the glove of Dan Vladar (37 saves), fluttered in the air and into the net at 5:31 of overtime to complete the sweep.

"A lot went down on that goal," Blake said. "(Slavin) makes an unbelievable play, and then (Stankoven) middle line drives and pushes those D back. And then (Hall) makes a play that not a lot of people can make there. Fortunately got the bounce and it went in. A lot of great plays there."

Each time the Flyers tried to keep their season alive, Carolina's red-hot second line had an answer.

The Flyers gave their home fans an early boost by opening the scoring.

Philadelphia center Trevor Zegras curled back at the left circle and floated a pass to a crashing Tyson Foerster. Foerster shot from the hashmarks and beat Frederik Andersen (15 saves) to give the Flyers a 1-0 lead at 7:50 of the first period.

After killing off their sixth 5-on-3 sequence of the postseason, the Hurricanes used the momentum to tie the game.

Stankoven was thrown out of the faceoff circle in the Flyers' zone, but Hall won the draw on his weak side against Flyers center Christian Dvorak.

"It's just a puck battle at the end of the day," Hall said of his only faceoff of the night, "and if you can get your body over the circle, then it gives you an advantage."

Off the draw, the puck went toward the boards, Stankoven tied up his winger, and Hall pushed the puck back to the right point. K'Andre Miller was able to get it down to Blake in the right circle. Blake pivoted away from a defender and shot into traffic from alongside the boards.

His shot hit Drysdale and went in to tie the game 1-1 at 12:35 of the second period.

"You don't draw those up like that," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Hall winding up in the circle. "But like I said, that line has been incredible, obviously. (Hall), you've got to give him a lot of credit. (That line), they've just really meshed, and you just saw it tonight. It was obvious — the best guys out there for us, and we needed them."

The Hurricanes appeared to take the lead 28 seconds later when Mark Jankowski scored, but Flyers coach Rick Tocchet challenged for goaltender interference, and the league ruled William Carrier had impeded Vladar.

Carolina did claim its first lead early in the third period.

Hall carried the puck up the left wing and slid a pass across the goal mouth to Stankoven, who scored his seventh goal of the postseason for a 2-1 lead at 4:13 of the third.

"Great to get back on the board," said Stankoven, who has scored in six of Carolina's eight playoff games.

The lead was short-lived.

Miller turned the puck over behind the Hurricanes net on a Philadelphia forecheck, and Travis Konecny centered it to



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Alex Bump, who snapped a shot past Andersen for his second goal of the playoffs at 5:52.

The Hurricanes controlled play much of the night, limiting Philadelphia to no more than six shots in the first three periods, and Andersen allowed two or fewer goals for the eighth straight game.

Then in overtime, Carolina's most potent line did what it has done all postseason.

"I didn't want to get on the boys and tell them we better win tonight," defenseman Sean Walker, who trekked back to Raleigh in time to arrive for the birth of his daughter Friday before returning to Philadelphia about four hours before game time, said of his feelings going into overtime. "But I'm really appreciative everybody dug in. And the sweep's huge for everybody, but to take this time to just be with my family is going to be really special."

Now the Hurricanes wait to see who they will host in Games 1 and 2 of the conference final. Montreal and Buffalo are tied at one game apiece, so Carolina could be looking at more than a week of downtime before it makes its latest attempt to reach the NHL's final two.

"And now, here we are," Brind'Amour said. "We've got to find a way to get that next step, and that's obviously easier said than done. But I know one thing is they're going to give that same effort, and that's what we have to have."

Notes: Slavin registered his first point of the postseason with an assist on the game-winning goal. ... Hall has 12 points in the playoffs, one behind Vegas' Mitch Marner — who has played one more game — for the league lead. ... Stankoven's seventh goal pushed him past Marner for the most goals this postseason. ... Andersen ranks first in goals-against average (1.12), save percentage (.950) and shutouts (2). ... Forwards Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Nicolas Deslauriers, defenseman Mike Reilly and goalie Pyotr Kochetkov were healthy scratches for Carolina.



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## Walker's 'Whirlwind' Baby Arrival Leads To Unique Opportunity For Canes Fans

By: Walt Ruff

PHILADELPHIA - Sean Walker lay awake in the early hours of Friday morning, still winding down from a Game 3 victory for his Carolina Hurricanes in Philadelphia the night before.

It's a good thing he was.

Around 1 a.m., his phone rang, and he knew exactly what the call was about.

His wife, Taylor, was in Raleigh and on her way to the hospital, where she was just hours away from welcoming the couple's firstborn child.

"She had an appointment on Thursday, and they said things were kind of getting going, but they weren't too worried about it," Walker explained, following Saturday's series-clinching Game 4. "After the game, she called me and said her water broke, so I called (Manager of Team Services Mike Brown) right away, and thankfully, there was a 6 a.m. flight."

Making it in time for the arrival, Quinn Walker was brought into the world healthy, and all went according to plan on that front.

"The baby gods were on my side, and I got to experience it all. It was amazing," the defenseman added.

With mom and the newborn well taken care of in North Carolina, Walker was all systems go to head back to Philly and rejoin his teammates for a potential close-out contest.

Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon had a private jet ready for Walker, with a few open seats on it. Instead of letting them go to waste, a few Hurricanes Season Ticket Members (STMs) were offered the opportunity to jump aboard in exchange for a donation to the Carolina Hurricanes Foundation.

Tim Thomas, a longtime STM in Section 103, received a call with the offer on Friday night and jumped at it.

"We wanted to see a sweep," Thomas laughed as he prepared to join a happy ride home to RDU with the Canes on Saturday night. "We were glad to see that (Sean) had his kid, everyone was healthy, and it was fun to ride with him."

Taking in the game from Dundon's suite inside Xfinity Mobile Arena, the Thomas' and six others watched Rod Brind'Amour's roster become the first team to go 8-0 since 1987, when all four rounds of the Stanley Cup Playoffs became best-of-seven series.

## Recap: Canes Sweep Flyers In OT, Advance To ECF

By: Walt Ruff & Peter Dewar

Blake scores the dagger as Carolina becomes first team in 41 years to start playoffs 8-0

PHILADELPHIA - Jackson Blake tallied two goals, including the overtime game-winner, to help the Carolina Hurricanes take a 3-2 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers in Game 4 and complete a second straight series sweep.

For the third time in as many games, Philadelphia came out of the gates hot, earning the better scoring chances early on. Held scoreless in the opening stages of Game 3, this time around, their fortune was more similar to their multi-goal Game 2, striking for the game-opening tally as Tyson Foerster shook loose in the slot just before the eight-minute mark.

Foerster's opener stood as the lone number on the scoreboard through the first half of the contest, but Carolina eventually responded in the middle stages of the second period. After both teams failed to convert on a pair of power play opportunities, Blake flung a puck to the net from the wall in the offensive zone, redirecting off of a Flyers defenseman and in to level the score.

A would-have-been go-ahead goal came just 28 seconds later for the Canes; however, goaltender interference nullified what would have been Mark Jankowski's first time (legally) finding twine in the postseason.

In the third, a postseason-leading seventh goal from Logan Stankoven placed the Canes in the driver's seat at 4:13, but just 1:39 later, Philadelphia had an answer, ultimately forcing overtime.

After a lengthy extra frame in Game 2, Carolina wrapped things up just 5:31 into overtime on Blake's second of the night. Jaccob Slavin picked off a Philadelphia breakout pass in the neutral zone before sending Taylor Hall down the left wing on a 3-on-2. With numbers on his side, Hall found Blake wide open in the high slot, whose sizzling wrist powered through Dan Vladar's attempted glove save and bounced across the goal line.

Frederik Andersen once again allowed two or fewer goals, stopping 15 of 17 shots for his and the team's eighth win of the postseason.

CAR at PHI | Recap



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## Stats & Standouts

Jackson Blake posted his first career multi-goal playoff performance as well as his first playoff overtime game-winner. At 22 years, 279 days old, Blake the second-youngest player in Hurricanes/Whalers history to score a series-clinching goal, behind Ulf Samuelsson (22 years, 17 days in Game 3 of 1986 DSF).

Taylor Hall (1A) factored on Carolina's tying goal and boosted his totals in the 2026 Stanley Cup Playoffs to 3-7—10 (8 GP). He tied John Anderson and Kevin Dineen (both w/ 8 GP in 1986) for the third-fewest games by a Hurricanes/Whalers player to a double-digit point total in a single postseason, behind only Sebastian Aho (5 GP in 2020) and Eric Staal (7 GP in 2006).

K'Andre Miller (1A), already the first defenseman in franchise history with an assist in each of the team's first four road games of a playoff year, is the NHL's fifth different blueliner to do so since 2021. The others: Evan Bouchard (6 GP in 2023), Quinn Hughes (4 GP in 2026) and Cale Makar (4 GP in 2024 & 2022).

Logan Stankoven scored his league-leading seventh goal of the postseason and became the first player in Hurricanes/Whalers franchise history to record two career go-ahead goals in a third period of a potential clinching game after previously doing so against the Senators in Round 1.

Advancing to the Eastern Conference Final for the second straight season and the third time in the last four years, the Hurricanes became the fifth team in NHL history to begin their postseason with eight consecutive wins. The others are the 1985 Oilers (9 GP), 1969 Blues (8 GP), 1960 Canadiens (8 GP) and the 1952 Red Wings (8 GP).

Carolina also won each of its first three overtime games in a single postseason for the second time in franchise history, following 2023 (3 GP). This is the ninth time in franchise history that the Canes/Whalers have won a playoff series in overtime.

The Canes won their 21st series since the franchise relocated to Raleigh in 1997-98, which is the sixth-most among all teams over that span. The only teams with more are the Lightning (25), Penguins (24), Stars (24), Red Wings (23) and Avalanche (22).

## They Said It...

Jackson Blake on the game-winning goal...

"A lot went down on that goal. Slavo makes an unbelievable play. Then Stanks middle-lane drives and pushes those two defensemen back. Hallsy makes a play that not a lot of

people can make there. Fortunately, I got the bounce and it went in..."

Frederik Andersen reflecting on the series and more recently, tonight...

"It was a lot of different games, but they pushed really hard this game. I don't think we came out the best way in the first period. We were a little tip-toeing into it. We came at it better and better, stuck with it, and got rewarded. It was a great job by everyone to battle for each other and get that goal."

Logan Stankoven on getting back in the goal column and his line scoring all three for the Canes...

"I thought the first period, I didn't play great, just individually. We talked about it as a line in between periods; we had to be simpler. Even if we're not scoring, just trying to create some momentum and some O-zone shifts. We did, and we were able to cash in a few times, so it was nice. Great to get back on the board."

Sean Walker on the whirlwind of coming back to Raleigh for the birth of his daughter and returning to Philadelphia in time for the game...

"It was weird. It was one of the easiest and hardest games I've maybe ever played, if that makes sense. You just kind of live in the moment. Running on no sleep, I ate my pregame meal in the hospital cafeteria. It's just crazy... The guys were amazing, team services (was amazing), the whole organization from the owner down really made it possible for me to be there and get back in time (for Game 4)."

Rod Brind'Amour after a second consecutive sweep...

"The impressive part is how we've gone about it. Obviously, we're getting some huge performances, but everybody's doing it. It's how we have to get it done. Go down the list, every guy had his hands in these two series wins."

Jacob Slavin on the importance of getting to the Eastern Conference Final for the fourth time in eight years...

"You take it one step at a time, and this is just another step in the process. We've got a good group in here who have all been there before now. Everyone knows what to expect and knows what's expected of us. We have to go in with the right mindset, chip away, and work hard like we do."

## What's Next?

The Canes are scheduled to be off on Sunday. They'll return to practice later in the week as they await their Eastern Conference Final opponent.

Next Game: Date TBD | Eastern Conference Final, Game 1 | Time TBD | How To Watch | Tickets | Parking



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 11, 2026



## Hurricanes aim to change fortunes in Eastern Final after sweep of Flyers

By: Tom Gulitti

Reach round for 3rd time in 4 seasons, eager 'to get that next step'

PHILADELPHIA -- There was plenty to celebrate in the joyous Carolina Hurricanes locker room following their 3-2 overtime victory against the Philadelphia Flyers in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Second Round at Xfinity Mobile Arena on Saturday.

That's what comes with being the first team to sweep its first two series in the Stanley Cup Playoffs since the NHL adopted the best-of-7 format in all four rounds in 1987.

Of course, there was Jackson Blake's winning goal 5:31 into overtime, which capped another tour de force game for his line with Taylor Hall and Logan Stankoven. There was Frederik Andersen's continued brilliance in net and defenseman Sean Walker returning from a whirlwind trip home for the birth of his daughter, Quinn, on Friday in time to help the Hurricanes close out another series.

The guys discuss what lead towards the Hurricanes sweep over the Flyers

There was even a yell from the players after they learned they'd have the next "Two days off!" from practice.

Above all of that, though, was earning a spot in the Eastern Conference Final for the second consecutive season and third time in four seasons.

The Hurricanes weren't taking it for granted as they began what could be a long wait to see who they play next -- the Montreal Canadiens or the Buffalo Sabres.

"It's a huge accomplishment, and, right now, you need to soak that part of it in because it is (huge)," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "The season is so long. There's that 82-game season we talk about that no one really gives as much credit for, and yet this team has played well for eight months. It didn't just get hot at the end. It's been night in and night out like this, and to me that's probably the thing I am most proud of with this group.

"And now, here we are. We've got to find a way to get that next step. And that's obviously easier said than done."

Hurricanes at Flyers | Recap

The Hurricanes know that well. This will be the fourth time they will play in the conference final in their eight seasons

under Brind'Amour. They won a total of one game in the round during their previous three (1-12), though.

That was a 3-0 victory in Game 4 against the Florida Panthers last season after losing the first three games of that series and being swept by the Panthers in the 2023 conference final and by the Boston Bruins in the 2019 conference final.

The Panthers, who went to the Stanley Cup Final three straight seasons and won the past two, are no longer standing in the Hurricanes' way after not qualifying for the playoffs this season. Carolina still needs to prove this team is different from its predecessors, though, by getting past whoever it plays next to reach the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since winning the Cup in 2006.

"You've got to take it one step at a time, and this is just another step in the process," defenseman Jaccob Slavin said. "We've got a good group in here who's all been there before now, and everyone knows what to expect and knows what is expected of us.

"So, we've got to make sure we go in with the right mindset and continue to just chip away and work hard like we do."

What the Hurricanes have done so far is beyond impressive. The only team in NHL history to open a playoff year with more consecutive wins is the 1984-85 Edmonton Oilers, who won their first nine games on the way to winning the Stanley Cup.

Carolina's advantage in experience showed throughout its first-round sweep of the Ottawa Senators and, again, against Philadelphia, a young team making its first playoff appearance since 2020. As in the Hurricanes' 3-2 overtime victory in Game 2, the Flyers took an early lead, with Tyson Foerster scoring 7:50 into the first period, and pushed hard.

The Hurricanes took control after the first intermission, outshooting the Flyers 32-12 over the remainder of the game. After being held without a point for the first time in the playoffs in Carolina's 4-1 win in Game 3, the line of Hall (three assists), Stankoven (goal) and Blake (two goals, one assist) led the way offensively again.

And Andersen was steady as usual, stopping 15 of 17 shots, to improve to 8-0 in the playoffs without allowing more than two goals in any of the eight games.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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CAR@PHI, Gm 4: Blake sends Hurricanes to Eastern Conference Final

After Blake tied the score 1-1 at 12:35 of the second period and Stankoven gave the Hurricanes a 2-1 lead 4:13 into the third, the Flyers responded to retie it with a goal from Alex Bump in front at 5:52. The relentless Hurricanes kept coming at the Flyers, though, and it paid off in overtime.

Slavin forced a turnover in the neutral zone that led to a 3-on-2 counter rush and Hall feeding Blake for a shot from the high slot that went off goalie Dan Vladar's catching glove and left shoulder before dropping into the net to end the series, again, in the minimum number of games.

"Every series is just a race to four," Andersen said. "I think that's our mindset. We want to win the next one and, however way we've got to do it, I think that's really the focus."

The Hurricanes will get a break now to rest and prepare to face either the Canadiens or Sabres, who play Game 3 of their series in Montreal on Sunday (7 p.m. ET; CBC, TVAS, SN, ESPN) with the series tied 1-1. While they wait, they have reasons to feel good about how far they've gotten already.

But, because they've been this far before, they also know their season will be judged by what happens next.

"I know one thing: They're going to give that same effort," Brind'Amour said of his players. "And that's what we have to have."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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

## Round 2, Game 4 - Player of the Game: Jackson Blake

By: Kyle Morton

The Carolina Hurricanes made history on Saturday by becoming the first team under the current Stanley Cup Playoff format to sweep its first two series with a 3-2 overtime win in Game 4 over the Philadelphia Flyers.

The second line of Logan Stankoven, Taylor Hall and Jackson Blake was excellent yet again, providing all of Carolina's scoring in the winning effort.

With two goals in the game giving him four in eight games in the playoffs, it's easy to land on Blake as the Hurricanes' player of the game in their eighth straight playoff win.

With the Flyers ahead 1-0 in the second period and the Hurricanes unable to find the back of the net on multiple power play opportunities, Blake finally broke the seal when he flung one on the net that found its way on with a bounce off Jamie Drysdale's pants.

Early in the third, Blake picked up his second point of the night on a secondary assist on Logan Stankoven's tie-breaking goal after he fed Taylor Hall in the neutral zone. Hall took the puck over the blue line, sped past rookie defenseman Oliver Bonk, and found a lane to deliver a perfect pass to Stankoven for his seventh of the playoffs.

The Flyers tied the game and forced overtime, but Carolina would not be denied. Once again, Hall gained the zone with speed down the left wing, and that combined with a strong center lane drive from Stankoven pushed the Philadelphia defense back.

Hall took advantage of that space by slipping a pass to Blake, who had plenty of time and space to load up a shot, and though he found Dan Vladar's glove, the Czech goalie could not hang on, as the puck went up into the air and landed behind the goal line for the winning blow.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## The Hockey News

### Hurricanes Made Genius Move Extending Red-Hot Forward

By: Michael DeRosa

The Hurricanes' decision to keep Taylor Hall around has undoubtedly been paying off.

The Carolina Hurricanes' post-season dominance continued on Saturday, as they defeated the Philadelphia Flyers in overtime by a 3-2 final score. With this, the Hurricanes have advanced to the Eastern Conference Final and now have an 8-0 record this post-season.

There have been many reasons behind the Hurricanes' excellent start to the playoffs. Taylor Hall has undoubtedly been a major one, as the 34-year-old forward has been fantastic for the Hurricanes so far this post-season.

In eight playoff games so far this spring, Hall has scored three goals and leads the Hurricanes with nine assists and 12 points. He also had three assists in the Hurricanes' Game 4 win over Philadelphia.

With how well Hall has been playing for the Hurricanes this post-season, the team's decision to sign him to a three-year, \$9.5 million contract extension last year is only continuing to look better. The 2010 first-overall pick had a strong regular-season for the Canes in the first year of his extension, posting 18 goals and 48 points in 80 games. Now, he is only playing better with the Hurricanes this post-season.

It will now be interesting to see how Hall builds on his strong post-season from here. The veteran forward has been red-hot at the perfect time.

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# SportScan

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

1390917 Carolina Hurricanes

6-8 minutes 10/05/2026

With another sweep, Hurricanes show they're ready to level up in playoffs

Sean Gentile

PHILADELPHIA — We've seen hockey players, with an odd degree of frequency, become fathers in the middle of a playoff series. We can safely wager that not many have eaten their pregame meals in a hospital cafeteria, then hopped on a plane to compete later that night.



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And we can say, with a degree of certitude, that nobody, until Saturday, capped all that by helping their teammates close out a sweep of their second straight opponent.

Sean Walker, come on down.

Walker put in 31 shifts as a defenseman a little more than 24 hours after his first shift as Quinn's dad. Taylor, his wife, gave birth to their daughter on Friday. By the following afternoon, Walker had flown from Philadelphia to Raleigh, N.C., and back to Philadelphia, where the Hurricanes became the fifth team in NHL history and the first since the 1985 Edmonton Oilers to win their first eight postseason games, beating the Philadelphia Flyers in overtime, 3-2.

Carolina could wait up to 10 days for the start of the Eastern Conference finals. It's their third such trip in four seasons — and, for one of the era's most consistently high-quality regular-season teams, it's also their postseason high-water mark. They're looking to change that, and are equipped to make it happen.

Walker, though, has already leveled up. And he sounded happier than anyone about the break.

"I didn't want to get on the boys and tell them we better win tonight," he said. "I'm really appreciative that everybody dug in, and the sweep's huge for everybody, but to take this time to just be with my family is going to be really special."

On Thursday afternoon, Taylor had a doctor's appointment. By that night, her water had broken. She called Walker, who was awake and lying in a hotel bed after the Hurricanes' 4-1 win in Game 3. The first flight back to North Carolina wasn't for another five hours, so the two stayed on FaceTime through the night and until he boarded the plane. By then, "things were kind of getting going," Walker said. "I can't put into words how proud I am of her. She had to go through it for a little bit without me there."

After the 90-minute flight, Walker headed for the hospital — and he made it in time.

"I was there for everything," he said. "The baby gods were on my side on that one and I got to experience it all."

On Saturday, after Walker arrived back in Philadelphia and "freshened up" at the team hotel, he and the rest of the Hurricanes accomplished something the league hadn't seen in more than four decades. The Flyers dragged things into overtime, despite Carolina out-attempting them by 45, out-chancing them by 16 and holding an expected goal share of a staggering 74 percent. Eventually, as the Hurricanes so often do, they broke the dam.

They came back from a pair of deficits, too. Until Game 2 against Philadelphia, all way through their four-game sweep of the Ottawa Senators, they'd faced zero. It started with a second period that put Carolina up 2-1, featuring goals from linemates Jackson Blake and Logan Stankoven.

"We got to that in the second period and we didn't really look back," said Taylor Hall, who won a faceoff to start the sequence that led to Blake's goal, directly set up Stankoven's, and, a little more than five minutes into overtime, scooped up a mishandled clearing pass, streaked down the left wing and zipped a centering pass to Blake, who beat Dan Vladar to put Carolina through to the second round.

There are many reasons to believe in Carolina, perhaps none larger than the play of the Hall-Stankoven-Blake line. Hall, the 2017-18 Hart Trophy winner, has aged into a been-there, done-that, all-zones multitool. Stankoven, at 5-foot-8 and still in his first season as an NHL center, leads the league with seven playoff goals. Blake is ferociously involved and highly productive, and just had himself a two-goal closeout game.

With the top line of Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov and Seth Jarvis still in the starting blocks, as far as production goes, the second line has

grabbed the baton and finished two legs of the race. As recently as last year, a series in which, say, Aho went without a goal would've ended the Hurricanes' season. Guess how many he had against Philadelphia?

Walker, by the way, plated 23 minutes and 10 seconds without missing a beat. He's a high-end puck-carrier out of the defensive zone, and that part of his game was clearly unaffected, as Hall noted. Stankoven seemed baffled, while Jaccob Slavin attributed it to "dad strength." All were impressed, and all were thrilled for Walker and his family.

Another vibe from the Hurricanes, starting with coach Rod Brind'Amour and trickling on down, is that good as they've all been, they're also still working toward their apex. That's a fact that's equal parts odd and true, given that Carolina has yet to drop a game in a postseason that began on April 18. There are too many odd-man breaks, Slavin said. Their first period didn't feature the requisite amount of forechecking, Hall said. They're relying too heavily on their penalty kill, plenty of them have said.

And yet, they're here, aiming higher and looking ahead, to the point that even their coach, a man without much of a reputation for compromise, is stressing the need to bask in it, if only for a day or two.

"It's a huge accomplishment," Brind'Amour said. "This season is so long, and there's that 82-game season we talk about that no one really gives much credit to. And yet this team has played well for eight months. It didn't just get hot at the end. It's been night in, night out like this. ... And now, here we are. We gotta find a way to get that next step."

They could have more than a week to plot it out, but it's starting to feel like the plan is already in place and being executed. Part of that entails following a script they wrote for the seven-day break that followed the Senators series. "Clearly," Brind'Amour said, "that was OK." They're content to wait on the Buffalo Sabres or the Montreal Canadiens to emerge from the other Eastern Conference semifinal, which could last until May 18.

The next level awaits. In the meantime, Quinn's dad can try to squeeze in a few naps.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.11.2026

1390971 Websites

The Athletic / Macklin Celebrini to captain Team Canada at World Championship: 'Everyone can learn from him'

By Chris Johnston

May 10, 2026

The future is now for Canada at the IIHF World Hockey Championship, where Macklin Celebrini has been selected as captain.

The 19-year-old is the youngest skater on the roster set to compete in Fribourg and Zurich, Switzerland, this month. He'll wear the "C," with veterans Ryan O'Reilly and John Tavares serving as alternate captains.

For Celebrini, it's a continuation of his meteoric rise through international hockey — from playing at the world under-18 championship to being on Canada's top line at the Milan Olympics in less than three years. He made his world championship debut at the senior level last spring, playing alongside Sidney Crosby on a team that was upset by Denmark in the quarterfinals, and is the only member of the Olympic team that won silver in Milan who accepted an invitation to this tournament.



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That's partly why Celebrini was selected as captain. He had every reason to stay home following a 115-point season for the San Jose Sharks, and he still chose to head to Europe.

Beyond that, he's viewed as the future of Canadian hockey on the men's side.

"He's an incredible player," Crosby said earlier this year. "Just his all-around game at his age is pretty impressive. He's committed defensively; he competes hard. He's got a pretty mature game for his age."

Celebrini headlines an experienced roster that includes O'Reilly, Tavares, Mark Scheifele, Mathew Barzal, Robert Thomas, Morgan Rielly, Darnell Nurse, Evan Bouchard and Cam Talbot, among others.

He led Team Canada with five goals in six games at the Milan Olympics and was named to the tournament all-star team. He also had a massive breakout performance in his second NHL season, finishing fourth in league scoring and being named a finalist for the Ted Lindsay Award as the league's most outstanding player, as judged by his peers.

Celebrini, who wore an "A" for the Sharks last season, is adding off-ice responsibilities to his repertoire as well.

"I think he trusts his game, he trusts his process and how he does things, his preparation," Canadian teammate Nathan MacKinnon said during the Olympics. "It's impressive. It's amazing to see someone at 19 be that dialed in to their off-ice, their on-ice, their everything."

"I think everyone can learn from him, even though he's 19. None of us are perfect, and we always can learn new things, and I'm definitely trying to learn from him and everyone that's here."

Canada opens the world championship with a preliminary round game Thursday against Sweden.

The country is looking to claim gold at the event for the first time since 2023.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.11.2026

1390972 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' defence, goaltending giving them edge in series against Sabres

Eric Engels

MONTREAL — The Montreal Canadiens were up two goals on the Buffalo Sabres when they had a shift that typified why they're now up 2-1 in a series they could easily be leading 3-0.

The puck was in their end for almost two full minutes while the Sabres were pressing for a way back into the game, and the Canadiens held them to just one measly shot attempt, which was blocked by Alex Carrier.

It was Carrier and Mike Matheson doing the heavy lifting for the entire shift, while forwards Jake Evans, Alex Newhook and Ivan Demidov took care of the first minute and then left the second one to Alex Texier, Phillip Danault and Josh Anderson. All in all, they were eight players doing everything the Canadiens needed from them to preserve a healthy lead, defending a desperate team that's arguably more dangerous with the puck than any other team in the league, and there was nothing surprising about it.

That's who the Canadiens have become.

They were once a mess in their own zone, but they are no longer. They started the year as a team that could outscore that problem, and they did exactly that before figuring out how to solve it. They buckled down defensively after the trade deadline — and not just in their own zone, but all over the ice, properly managing the puck and immediately defending without it — and their first-round, seven-game series with the Tampa Bay Lightning forced them to get to a whole new level in that department and prepared them to play the Sabres.

"You go seven games, one-goal games, the margin of error is thin," said Canadiens coach Martin St. Louis, "and sometimes it's not necessarily the offensive things that are going to get you the win."

That was Sunday morning.

By the end of Sunday night, if you missed the game and only looked at the 6-2 score, you'd have easily concluded the offensive things got the Canadiens the win.

Even if you watched, that could've been what you took away, after the Canadiens scored some tic-tac goals and generated so many of the chances that made you marvel at their talent.

But they won this game on defence, which is exactly where the Sabres lost it — just like they lost Game 2, and just like they could've lost Game 1 had the Canadiens been more opportunistic.

Yes, these Sabres are lethal with the puck.

But they are absolutely killing themselves with — and especially without — it, hence Montreal's 21 high-danger shot attempts through two periods of Sunday's game.

The Canadiens were up 4-2 at that point and, if not for Sabres goaltender Alex Lyon, they could've been up 8-2.

Buffalo's porous defence and its mismanagement of the puck are two of the biggest reasons this series hasn't been as close as the 2-1 score would indicate.

"We made some ill-advised plays," said Sabres coach Lindy Ruff. "Some bad decisions we haven't been making."

And the Canadiens?

"They made us pay for our mistakes," Ruff said.

The Canadiens made some mistakes, too, particularly after that two-minute fire drill in their own end early in the third.

But that's when Jakub Dobes came up with the three best saves of his 26 on the night.

With Lane Hutson in the penalty box for interference, Sabres forward Alex Tuch got a rebound chance stuffed by Dobes. Zach Benson then got clean shots from both sides of the goal line, and those were the other two snuffed out by the 24-year-old rookie goaltender.

But after that sequence, the Canadiens regained their structure. They buckled down defensively. They killed yet another penalty.

And then they collected the puck in their own zone, burst up the ice two-on-one, and got a goal because Kirby Dach was faster to a loose rebound than Bowen Byram and Tage Thompson.

Thompson scored on Buffalo's first shot of the game, which was generated because Cole Caufield tried to flip a puck out of Montreal's zone and instead flubbed it.

But from that point forward, it was almost all Canadiens — with Alex Newhook tying the game, with Caufield finally converting on the power play, with Zach Bolduc and Juraj Slafkovsky also scoring before the end of the second period, and with Newhook awarded an empty-net goal after Rasmus Dahlin couldn't catch him and decided to take a penalty against him.



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It all started without the puck.

"The defence is the biggest part of playoffs," said Newhook. "We're finding offence right now, but we're defending hard, we're making it hard on them to get inside. On the looks they're getting, Dobes is coming up big obviously. But I think when we need to defend, we're doing that, and that's gotta be the biggest part of our identity moving forward."

It was the Canadiens' defining trait against Tampa.

"They forced us to play a tight game," Newhook said, "but I think it prepared us for what's ahead. Playing a veteran team like that, you've gotta defend at key moments at the series. I think we did that against Tampa to be able to move on, and we're carrying that into this round."

The Sabres, to a man, thought the Canadiens wouldn't.

Speaking with them in the lineup to last Wednesday's Game 1, they talked about how they'd be given more space than Boston gave them to play the rush game they enjoy so much because the Canadiens are young, fast, and just as aggressive as they are.

It was a miscalculation.

"Give them a lot of credit," said Ruff. "I said before this started, they beat a hell of a team. They are a hell of a team. Don't take them for granted. Now, if we don't realize it now, we're never going to realize it."

He played NHL hockey from 1979-1991. He's been a head coach since 1997. He knows what wins at this time of year, and it isn't high-octane, go-for-broke offence the Sabres are pushing for.

So does St. Louis, the Hall-of-Fame-player-turned-coach.

He's been teaching the Canadiens the details of how to play the right way for the better part of two years after his first two years as coach were spent mostly just teaching different general principles.

"I think we started a lot last year into understanding that defensive hockey is a big part of a winning recipe," St. Louis said earlier on Sunday. "You need to score goals, but I feel we've progressed, and progressed, and progressed throughout the last two seasons, and I don't feel our offensive game hurts because we're getting better defensively."

"I feel we're learning to manage games better, and when it's time to defend we can defend. We talk about defending so far from our end zone and to me when you lose the puck anywhere, you're defending. And I feel like we've gotten really better at that so that hopefully you have to defend less in your zone. And I feel when we have to defend in our zone, we're engaged there too."

That's what happened during that crucial, game-defining sequence early in the third period, and it's what will have to happen again against an even more desperate Sabres team in Tuesday's Game 4.

But if Buffalo keeps defending the way it has, this series won't go the distance.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.11.2026

1390973 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Ducks impress with bounce-back performance vs. Golden Knights

Ryan Dixon

The young Anaheim Ducks are proving they're made of sturdy stuff.

The Ducks levelled their series with the Vegas Golden Knights thanks to a 4-3, Game 4 victory at the Honda Center in Anaheim on Sunday night.

Coming off an atrocious effort in Game 3, when Vegas blew Anaheim out of its own rink with a 6-2 victory, the Ducks proved resilient. A power play that had gone dormant in Round 2 suddenly found some life, while coach Joel Quenneville pulled the right lineup levers by putting three guys — centre Mason McTavish and D-men Olen Zellweger and Ian Moore — back in the mix after they had been healthy scratches.

Moore rewarded his bench boss by blasting his first career playoff goal 3:43 into the third period for what proved to be the game-winning strike.

It was a huge response from the young Ducks, who showed they're more than ready to stay in this second-round fight.

"I just think there was a lot of urgency," Anaheim winger Alex Killorn said on the broadcast after the final buzzer. "You never want to go down 3-1 in a series and you don't want to lose two games at home, especially with this crowd."

Anaheim power play comes alive

Anaheim was deadly with the man advantage in Round 1, going 8-for-16 on the power play during a six-game victory over the Edmonton Oilers. But that part of the Ducks' game had gone dark against Vegas, as the team went 0-for-11 through the first three games of the series.

Game 4 was a different story, however.

Anaheim opened the scoring when super-rookie Beckett Sennecke took a pass from Killorn at the top of the right circle and crushed a puck past Vegas goalie Carter Hart less than 10 minutes into the game. The strike marked Sennecke's third straight contest with a goal, as the third-overall pick from 2024 continues to look like one of the deadliest young players in the game.

The score was tied 2-2 late in the second when the Ducks power play came through again. This time, instead of setting up a goal, Killorn finished the play when he took the puck to the net from deep in the zone and squeezed a puck past Hart.

Sennecke picked up an assist on the play and the kid was once again showing his all-world skill by turning a zone entry into a work of art when he pirouetted away from Vegas forward Brett Howden at the blueline to establish possession inside the Knights zone.

Going 2-for-4 with the man advantage was a huge development for an Anaheim squad that had to get that part of its game firing again.

Old guys getting it done

Most of the attention around the Ducks focuses on the team's impressive young core, and rightfully so. However, veteran players are also performing very well for this squad and a couple of them shone during the Game 4 victory. Killorn's tally was his fourth of the playoffs, as the 36-year-old is showing he can still get it done. Another vet, 34-year-old Mikael Granlund, also deposited his fourth of the playoffs, finding the net late in the first period.

And don't forget about workhorse Jacob Trouba on the back end. The 32-year-old played over 26 minutes for the second time in these playoffs, logging nearly four minutes of short-handed time alone.

Golden Brett

On a team dotted with high-end talent, Brett Howden is playing the role of goal-scoring hero for the Knights.

After netting 12 goals in 58 regular-season contests, Howden is tied with Minnesota's Matt Boldy and Logan Stankoven of the Carolina Hurricanes with seven post-season goals. His strike in Game 4 pulled Vegas even 2-



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2 in the second period when he drove the net and converted a pass from centre William Karlsson.

Speaking of Karlsson, it's becoming increasingly apparent how important his return to the lineup is for Vegas. The veteran Swede hadn't played since early November until drawing back in at the start of this Round 2 set. He did incredible work in the leadup to Howden's goal, retrieving a puck below the goal line and finding Howden in the slot just before absorbing serious contact from the bruising Trouba.

Surely it can't be easy for Karlsson returning to high-octane hockey after six months on the sidelines. He looks more comfortable with each passing game, though, and his presence certainly balances out the Vegas lineup.

A direct benefit of having Karlsson back is allowing Mitch Marner to swing back out to his usual position of right wing. Marner, who has been red-hot of late, picked up three more assists in this contest to retake the post-season scoring lead with 16 points.

While the offence is flowing for Marner, one Golden Knight who's been snake-bitten for months now is Tomas Hertl. The big Czech finally got one in Game 4, snapping a 29-game goalless by getting the 6-on-5 strike for Vegas that made it a one-goal game with 64 seconds left.

It may have ultimately been too little, too late for the Knights, but Hertl will surely be feeling a little lighter in Game 5, when his team tries to regain the upper hand in this tight battle.

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Sportsnet.ca / Pressure falls on Avalanche as they aim to purge playoff ghosts

Iain MacIntyre

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Wild are not the only team in this playoff series with ghosts.

Their apparitions were just more obvious and easily purged than the phantoms that haunt the Colorado Avalanche.

When the Wild beat the Dallas Stars in six games in the opening stage of the National Hockey League playoffs, it ended a run of eight straight first-round exits by the Wild. After spending a fortune this winter to acquire ghost-buster Quinn Hughes, nobody in Minnesota will be happy if its Stanley Cup run ends now, less than halfway to the goal.

But the Wild are still farther than they've been since 2015, and a second-round defeat would give them an encouraging launching pad for next season.

For the Avalanche, however, anything short of an appearance in the Stanley Cup Final will be a crushing disappointment.

They were not only the runaway Presidents' Trophy winners during the regular season, but since 2018 have won more games than any NHL team.

Over this season and the previous three, the Avalanche have averaged nearly 52 wins and 109 points. But they won only one playoff series the last three years, twice losing coin-flip matchups against Dallas after being upset by the Seattle Kraken in 2023's first round.

The Avalanche are not afraid of their ghosts; Stanley Cup rings from 2022 make a pretty good shield.

Still, that was the only time since coach Jared Bednar arrived in Denver 10 years ago and soon elevated the Avalanche to a consistent, championship-caliber team that Colorado has been past the second round.

When Minnesota goalie Jesper Wallstedt said after Saturday's 5-1 win that cleaved Colorado's series lead to 2-1 that the pressure is actually on the Avalanche, there was truth in that.

Of course, pressure is on everyone in the Stanley Cup playoffs. There's no guarantee for anyone that you'll get this far again.

But the demand on Colorado to win – and the expectations that have made them so good annually – were reflected by Bednar's sharp and honest criticism post-game on Saturday.

NHL reporters can be a tough crowd, but the hardest guy by far in the interview room was the Avalanche's coach, who calmly noted that his players did not match the competitiveness and determination of the Wild.

"I saw it in some guys but not with others," he said. "If you're going to win a hockey game against a really good team in the playoffs, it's got to be everyone – and everyone all the time. It's not, you know, here and there from certain guys."

He said "I don't coach" determination.

"It's something that comes from within," he explained. "We've got to look within a little bit here."

Did we mention that this was the Avalanche's first loss since April 11 – after winning their first six playoff games?

"I wouldn't say anything to you in a press conference that I'm not going to (say) or haven't already said to our team," Bednar said Sunday in an off-day media availability at the Avalanche's hotel in Minneapolis. "Our guys know me. Like, I only have one way to coach. And I told them from Day 1 when I got here 10 years ago, that 'I'm going to tell you the truth, whether you like it or not.' And ... you might not like what I say or even how I say it, (but) I'll say it as respectfully as I can. I'm going to do the work and the breakdown and the preparation to give you the message that I think is correct, and then what they do with it after that, it's up to them. And that's just kind of the way I operate there."

"I'm never going to demean our guys, but they're going to get the truth, good and bad, because I think that's the only way to operate. They have to trust me in what I do, and they've got to know that I'm giving them the truth, that I'm not selling them a line. And when I see a thing a certain way – they may even agree or disagree with it at times – there's no secrets with me and our team, and hopefully them with me. I think, you know, that's just the way we conduct our business and always have and will continue to."

It was an elegant, thorough declaration about ideals and standards, a culture that so many NHL teams two, three or six rungs down the ladder from the Avalanche are trying to construct.

Remember, this is the team of Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar, Devon Toews and Gabriel Landeskog, the organization built by president Joe Sakic and managed by Chris MacFarland. A team whose 121 regular-season points were more than the year when Colorado won its last Cup.

"If we don't perform the way we're supposed to, he's going to let us know," Toews told reporters on Sunday. "That's what makes him such a great coach and us such a great team – we understand what's needed from us and what's expected from us. Jared does a good job of laying that out and letting us know and breaking it down when it's not good."

Bednar said Saturday that video of Game 3 would not lie, and apparently the truth was obvious when Avalanche players saw it packaged for them the next day, just before their coach met the media.



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"Everyone coming into that meeting may have similar opinions as to what happened last night or they may have completely different opinions as to what happened last night," Bednar explained. "Some guys will kind of know what they did, personally, (but) might not know exactly what the overall picture is. And it takes a lot of work to kind of break through it and look at every aspect of our game, and then kind of pinpoint: What's the best way to get back on track and do the right thing?"

"There'll be meetings after the meeting with our guys. Like, they'll have conversations today – this afternoon, dinner, whatever – to make sure that they're all on the same page. That's where a guy like Landy (Landeskog) and Mac (MacKinnon), they really help with that, sort of reselling my message or adding to that message. But I think when you come out of a meeting after a game like that, now everyone has clarity, you know? And like I said, they'll agree with it to varying degrees, but it will get them as close as possible to being on the same page for tomorrow."

Game 4 is Monday night.

It seems remarkable that Bednar, who is from Yorkton, Sask., and coached more NHL wins than anyone over the last eight years, has never been part of a Team Canada staff. He hasn't won the Jack Adams Award, either, and was not one of the three finalists for this season who were named last week.

He must have the trust of his talented players to coach the way he does.

Asked by a Denver reporter about the anxiousness Game 3 caused around the Avalanche and their fan base, and whether as a coach he should elevate or de-escalate it, Bednar said: "I think after last night, it's crank-up mode. It depends on the game, depends on your mistakes, depends on what you're doing. To me, it was pretty clear on why we lost and some of the things that we need to improve upon. (The Wild) cranked it up and went to a different level for Game 3 in somewhat of a must-win. And that's where the level is going to go for the rest of the series, and we've got to get there for tomorrow. So to me, it's dial-it-up time."

ICE CHIPS – Neither team practised and the Wild did not make coach John Hynes or players available to the media. . . Bednar said injured Colorado players Josh Manson and Joel Kiviranta were skating Sunday and might be available for Game 4. . . The Avalanche coach is considering adjusting his forward lines for Monday to try to get more offence from Brock Nelson's second unit. . . He is also considering changing his starting goalie after Mackenzie Blackwood replaced Scott Wedgewood in Game 3.

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Sportsnet.ca / Sunday Overreactions: How creative should Maple Leafs get with No. 1 pick?

Michael Amato

Lucky No. 12.

Two digits on a ping pong ball bouncing the right way is all it took to change the entire mood of a fanbase. A season filled with frustrations, bad decisions and disappointment for the Toronto Maple Leafs is melting away like the last remnants of snow on a warm spring day. Now, hope,

optimism and enthusiasm fill the air, as the Leafs will have their pick of any player they like in the upcoming 2026 draft.

It's something the team desperately needed. Toronto's cupboards are bare. It wasn't going to have a first-round selection for two of the next three years, and the future of Auston Matthews remains unclear. John Chayka noted how he and Mats Sundin were going to have to catch a moving train, and even though the draft lottery win doesn't solve everything, it's definitely given them a titanic boost.

Having the No. 1 pick also means the Leafs have choices and more flexibility. It's a highly coveted selection, and while the obvious choice to most is to draft Gavin McKenna and not think twice, Chayka and Sundin could look for creative ways to utilize it and fill more holes on the roster.

Maple Leafs should explore trades, drafting someone other than Gavin McKenna

One of the most obvious needs for the Leafs is on the blue line, as they've been lacking a true No. 1 defenceman for, well, decades really. Had they simply kept the fifth pick, that's likely the path they would've gone down, since there are a few talented blue-liners at the top of this draft. That said, could Toronto move down a few slots in a trade that includes a few other assets and still grab a high-end player like Chase Reid or Keaton Verhoeff on the back end?

There's also a possibility the Leafs could consider trading the pick for multiple assets that could help them today. Would the St. Louis Blues consider moving Robert Thomas and the 11th overall pick, for example, for the right to the top selection? Thomas was on the block at the deadline but ultimately stayed put. We know the Leafs want to get back into the playoff mix immediately, and getting a quality, established centre would certainly help the cause.

Plus, Chayka's resume shows he isn't afraid to move high picks. While with the Arizona Coyotes, Chayka flipped the seventh overall pick for Derek Stepan. That was a bad swap, but it does point to the fact Chayka is willing to get aggressive with top-10 picks.

There's also the possibility that the Leafs could keep the pick and draft someone other than McKenna. If there's a defenceman they really covet, they could choose to take him at one, or they could look at another forward. Some value Ivar Stenberg ahead of McKenna and Caleb Malhotra, who plays centre, wouldn't be far behind. Toronto has plenty of options worth considering.

Overreaction? Yes

There are some scenarios where it would make sense for the Leafs to consider doing something other than drafting McKenna, but making him their selection gives them the player with the highest upside, and it's also what's best long-term.

You can't assume McKenna is going to have the same impact as a teenager like Macklin Celebrini and Matthew Schaefer did, but it really does feel like his ceiling is the highest in his class. He's still going to be able to step in right away and play in Toronto's top six, taking care of one hole the Leafs needed to address. McKenna would also instantly help a power play that has struggled to find consistency since Mitch Mamer departed.

There are also only a handful of trade scenarios that would make sense to pass up for someone with McKenna's potential. The talent level of players really drops once you get out of the top five in most drafts, so trading down wouldn't be worth it unless you're getting a handful of other assets. If you wanted to look at moving it for an established NHLer or two, they would have to be elite talents, and few teams would probably dangle those in this situation.

The Leafs also need to prepare for the scenario that this retool may not work. What if they are sitting in 11th or 12th in the East at the midway point of the season, and Auston Matthews decides he doesn't want to



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extend? You'd almost certainly be heading towards a rebuild at that point, and it would be much better to start that off by building around someone like McKenna.

There will definitely be tempting opportunities for the Maple Leafs to consider regarding this No. 1 pick, but the safest and smartest play is to take McKenna.

The Lightning have major questions to address this off-season

It's hard to believe a team as talented as the Tampa Bay Lightning has now exited the playoffs in the opening round four years in a row. The Lightning were close to breaking the streak against the Montreal Canadiens, but they came up short, and many of the issues from past years resurfaced. Andrei Vasilevskiy was really good for stretches, although he ultimately finished with a save percentage below .900 for the fourth consecutive post-season. As for Nikita Kucherov, he's still factoring in on the scoresheet, though he's tallied just two goals in Tampa's past four playoff series. Kucherov is also now pointless in seven career Game 7s.

The majority of the Lightning's core is 30 or older, and Darren Raddysh will be a UFA after a breakout season. Tampa is facing more questions this off-season than ever before, and if it doesn't address them, its contention window could start shrinking quickly.

Overreaction? No

Raddysh's situation looms largest for Tampa, as the emerging blue liner scored 70 points last season, and that offence would be hard to replace if he walks out the door. Retaining him would come with risk, though. Raddysh is likely looking for a massive raise on the \$975K he made this year, and handing out big dollars with significant term for a 30-year-old with only one good offensive year could backfire. If he leaves, Victor Hedman would likely take back the power-play duties, though the unit could suffer without Raddysh.

When it comes to Vasilevskiy, Tampa may have to finally invest in a more capable No. 2 option to reduce the former Conn Smythe winner's regular-season minutes. Vasilevskiy will turn 32 in July and has played a ton of hockey over the past several seasons, so prioritizing keeping him fresh for the playoffs going forward will be paramount. Jonas Johansson has handled the backup duties for the past three seasons, though the Lightning haven't really been able to trust him. With the cap going up, it could be beneficial to invest in someone capable of playing 30-35 games to lighten Vasilevskiy's workload a little.

The Lightning may have to target a centre, too. Brayden Point is one of the best in the business, but after him, things really drop off from an offensive perspective. Anthony Cirelli was nominated for the Selke this year, though his offence is on the low end for a top-six centre. Tampa and Kucherov are easier to defend without another high-end offensive pivot on their top two lines. It's easier said than done, of course, but if it could add a centre who could make it more threatening in the offensive zone, Tampa would become more balanced and tougher to match up against.

General manager Julien BriseBois may not be able to tackle everything on his wish list. However, I'd argue that if he doesn't upgrade in a couple of areas, it's going to be tough for Tampa to compete with the younger up-and-coming teams in the East.

Mitch Marner has shed the narrative he can't come through in the clutch

There is no denying Mitch Marner is a fabulous player and one of the best at his craft, but many, especially Leafs fans, will point to his shortcomings in the playoffs. At first glance, Marner's playoff numbers in Toronto look good, though he did most of his damage earlier in a playoff series. The 29-year-old scored just once in a Game 5, 6 or 7 during his time with the Maple Leafs across nine playoff appearances. In this go-around with Vegas, though, things are starting off on a much better foot.

Marner scored twice in Game 6 versus Utah in the opening round, including the game-winning goal that sent the Mammoth home. He looks more comfortable this post-season without the weight of carrying several playoff disappointments like he did in a hockey-mad market in Toronto, and was dominant Friday night against the Anaheim Ducks, scoring a hat trick. Let's also not overlook a couple of massive overtime goals he tallied for Team Canada at the 4 Nations and Olympics. Perhaps Marner has put the narrative that he can't produce in the clutch behind him.

Overreaction? Yes

Marner has certainly been impressive for the Golden Knights so far this spring, but it's still early. There's a lot of hockey yet to be played, and one clutch outing in the first round against a first-time playoff team won't completely erase the memories of past post-seasons. That said, the fact that Marner is playing a new position at times, and the most critical one on the ice for skaters, for that matter, while elevating a player like Brett Howden deserves a lot of praise. He's given Vegas a lot more versatility and flexibility in its forward group. That could propel the Golden Knights on a deep run, where Marner would get more opportunities to deliver in the clutch and silence his critics once and for all.

What Frederik Andersen is doing this post-season is really incredible. The Carolina Hurricanes netminder has conceded just 10 goals in eight games thus far, barely giving up more than an average of a goal per game. Andersen's save percentage is also sitting at .950, which is a massive increase from his regular-season number. The 36-year-old didn't have a strong campaign, posting just an .874 save percentage with a goals against average of over three. This unexpected surge in play from Andersen has powered the Canes to an 8-0 record in the playoffs, as Carolina looks like it's going to steamroll through the East. Even though there's still more than two rounds to go, it really does feel like the Conn Smythe Trophy is Andersen's to lose at this point.

Overreaction? No

There are some others that have really stepped up this post-season, but none are on the level of Andersen. Kirill Kaprizov, Quinn Hughes and Matt Boldy have all been excellent for the Minnesota Wild, but they are trailing the Colorado Avalanche in their series, and none have been so exceptional to unseat Andersen. Nathan MacKinnon and Jackson LaCombe have a case as well, although I don't think you could argue either has been as far ahead of his peers as Andersen is. Goalies often end up winning the award, and it's hard to believe Andersen wouldn't claim it if this keeps up and Carolina goes on to win it all.

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