



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 9, 2026

## The News & Observer

### Stanley Cup Final Game 4: Carolina, Vegas ready for another physical battle

By: Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes all of their skaters on the ice Monday for practice as they prepared for Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Forward William Carrier, who left Game 3 with an upper-body injury, was back and at full speed. Other players who appeared dinged up at some point in the double-overtime loss — Jalen Chatfield, Taylor Hall and K'Andre Miller — were also on the ice at T-Mobile Arena.

The only player missing was goaltender Frederik Andersen, who Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said was given a maintenance day. Andersen was pulled after a four-goal second period by the Knights and relieved by Brandon Bussi, who made his playoffs debut.

Losing in double overtime was excruciating enough. But to lose it on a shot by defenseman Shea Theodore that was wide of the net, hit the bottom of the end boards, then bounced back and off the skate of Bussi made it doubly tough to handle.

What was a classic game had a less-than-classic ending, "That's hockey," Brind'Amour said after the game.

Coaches in all sports like to tell their teams not to let a tough loss beat them twice. The Hurricanes had an extra day between games to shake it off and refocus on winning Game 4 to tie the series.

"In any series if you lose two in a row you're in a world of hurt," Canes captain Jordan Staal said Monday. "We know it's a massive game. It's not the end, but we've got to make sure it has to be our best."

Chatfield played more than 28 minutes in a bruising Game 3, and the defenseman once went crashing back-first into an open gate at the Vegas bench.

The Knights were credited with 66 hits in the game, 14 by Cole Smith. The Canes had 44 as Andrei Svechnikov, Alexander Nikishin and Sean Walker each had five.

Most physical game of the playoffs?

"Each round we've had some games similar to that," Chatfield said Monday. "It's the Final and that's the way the hockey is going to be.

"It's about the recovery. We have two days between games. At this time of the year, there's not one guy on the ice feeling

100 percent. You just get as close as you can, and let the adrenaline and why you're playing take you from there."

Chatfield had to leave Game 3 when he was pushed into the open gate on the Vegas bench. It's a hazardous situation. Chatfield came away hurting, but able to continue playing.

"I didn't know what happened," he said. "Sometimes, those doors get loose and not closed all the way and you get bumped into it.

"That was the first time it happened to me. Definitely not ideal. I've seen in the past that it can be a dangerous play. Bad things can happen and I'm just happy I'm all right."

The Hurricanes spent much of Sunday again going over video and seeing what can, and needs to be corrected. The Knights' Mitch Marner had the fastest hat trick in Final history as Vegas took a 4-0 lead after two. The Canes then scored three times in 39 seconds, another Final record, and tied the score on a late power-play goal by Svechnikov after pulling Bussi for a sixth attacker.

It was back and forth in the overtimes — the Canes with eight shots, Vegas with 10 in the OTs — before Theodore won it, 5-4.

"Giving up five goals is obviously not the answer," Staal said. "It's been some crazy hockey, for sure. But each team is trying to find a way to win.

"That's the beauty of these playoffs. You've got to find ways to win, and some games look completely different than others. The script can always change completely."

One part of the script the Hurricanes need to change is trying to slow Vegas forward Mitch Marner. The Canes faced him for years when he was with Toronto, but has been a shining star in the playoffs with a league-high 28 points.

Marner, the Conn Smythe Trophy favorite as playoffs MVP, had the three goals and an assist in Game 4 and could have had more. Bussi stopped him on a breakaway early in the third that earned Marner a penalty shot, Bussi stopped that, too.

"In Toronto, you knew he was out there, every shift," Brind'Amour said. "It's 'OK, here he comes, making plays, scoring goals, setting someone up.' He was always like that.

"So I don't see any different, unfortunately. He's one of the elite players of the game, and you have to find ways not to give him free ones.



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## The Athletic

### Can a team win the Stanley Cup without a good power play? Hurricanes wouldn't be the first

By: Pierre LeBrun

LAS VEGAS — One positive the Carolina Hurricanes can look to ahead of Tuesday's Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final: Their forever-moribund power play has come to life.

Hovering at around 11 percent for the playoffs at one point in Game 2 after starting the series 0-for-5 and looking listless doing so, Carolina now finds itself up to 15.6 percent following two huge power-play goals to key the win that night and another goal to cap a furious four-goal third-period rally on Saturday.

That still isn't very good. But it's better. And it comes at a crucial time.

It's polish vs. chaos for the Golden Knights and Hurricanes

Max Bultman and Thomas Drance

"It's funny how that works, right?" Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We were pretty much trying the same things for a couple of games, and it's not working, and all of a sudden, a shot goes through, and everything is great again. It's just the nature of our game. Power plays really come down to execution. Putting passes in the right spots so you can shoot. All these little things that we weren't really doing before."

The real question is, does a team need a good power play to win the Stanley Cup? It certainly helps, but the answer is actually no.

I looked back at the past 15 Stanley Cup champions to get my answer. Six had power plays that operated under 20 percent, all ranking in the bottom half of the 16 playoff teams in their respective years:

Team	Year	PP%	Rank
Panthers	2024	18.5	11
	Blues	2019	16.3
	Blackhawks	2015	12

17.9

10

Blackhawks

2013

11.4

13

Kings

2012

12.8

12

Bruins

2011

11.4

14

So a good power play is hardly a necessity — if a team is excellent at five-on-five and on the penalty kill.

The 2024 Florida Panthers never sweated their lackluster power play. Their second-ranked penalty kill (88 percent) is what gave them security.

"I really never thought of the PP as something that you wanted to rely on," two-time Stanley Cup champion Panthers coach Paul Maurice told The Athletic on Sunday. "We felt strongly that our PK would have a great influence because it also can cause problems for other teams' confidence five-on-five."

Those 2013 and 2015 Chicago Blackhawks absolutely made up for their power play elsewhere, too, with the third-best penalty kill in 2013 (90.8 percent) and the most five-on-five goals in 2015.

"I never felt like our power play increased any pressure on us because we weren't scoring on it," Hall of Famer Duncan Keith, a key member of those Chicago championship squads, told The Athletic over the weekend. "Our team game and identity was how we checked defensively to beat teams five-on-five. Our penalty kill was good, and any time we did manage to get one in the power play, which was rare, just felt like a bonus to us. At least that is my interpretation.

Top League Content

"As long as the power play gets some chances and doesn't lose the team's momentum, then it's not the end of the world.



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Having said all that, it would've been nice to have the power play firing on all cylinders, and maybe had we been able to score more on it, other parts of our game might've sagged."

The 2011 Boston Bruins made up for their power play with an 84 percent penalty-kill rate and strong five-on-five play.

"I don't know if we felt extra pressure for the rest of our game," former star Bruins center Patrice Bergeron told The Athletic over the weekend. "We were very comfortable playing tight defense. I think our penalty kill was very good and evened things out. Pretty similar to Carolina. Maybe it does add some pressure on the PK to offset the special teams percentage. But we didn't feel it like that in the moment. We just concentrated on winning games, no matter how."

The 2019 St. Louis Blues may have struggled on the power play in their Cup championship year, but they more than made up for it by leading the playoff field in five-on-five goals per game (2.15) and total five-on-five goals (56, far ahead of second-place Boston at 42).

The key was not allowing their power play to bring them down mentally. That's important for Carolina, too, in this series.

"I think that was huge for them the other night, getting those PP goals. Might get their PP going a bit," 2019 Blues coach Craig Berube told The Athletic via text message over the weekend. "But I don't think Carolina seems like they get too bothered by not producing on the PP, which can be a good thing. Just keep playing."

"I know in 2019 it did not affect the team not scoring on the PP. Our PK and five-on-five was more important."

The 2012 Los Angeles Kings also made up for a struggling power play with the No. 1-ranked penalty kill in the playoffs that year at a whopping 92.1 percent.

"Special teams in finals basically start over when the series starts, because both teams haven't played each other much," two-time Cup champion coach Darryl Sutter told The Athletic over the weekend of his 2012 Kings team.

He pointed out that the Kings' Cup opponent, the New Jersey Devils, had led the league that year during the regular season, at 89.6 percent. But then, "Clinching game, we scored three PP goals," he said. "So I don't know. Big boys got to come through."

Indeed, the Kings jumped out to a 3-0 lead that night in Game 6 on power-play goals by Dustin Brown, Jeff Carter and Trevor Lewis — all on the same power play after a Steve Bernier major penalty for boarding Rob Scuderi — en route to a 6-1 romp of the Devils to win the Cup. The power play woke up at the best possible time.

Like the 2012 Kings, these Hurricanes are monsters on the PK — second in the playoffs at a 91.9 percent kill rate, and doing it against a dangerous Montreal Canadiens power play last round and a Vegas team that they've held to 1-for-9 so far in the final.

And now if the power play is awakening, that could be huge for them.

Glen Gulutzan was the power-play whisperer during his time as assistant coach with the Edmonton Oilers, with Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and company scoring at an incredible 46.2 percent clip in the 2023 playoffs, 29.3 percent in 2024 and 25.4 percent in 2025. His Dallas Stars were at a whopping 40 percent in their six-game opening-round loss to the Minnesota Wild this year.

You may not need a great power play to win a Cup, as shown above, but the key is not allowing a bad power play to suck the life out of your team. Which is why Carolina finally getting a couple in Game 2 was paramount.

"It is deflating when things get so tight and you can't score on the power play, so it is very important that they got two," Gulutzan told The Athletic over the weekend. "They for sure can build on that momentum."

In a wild and chaotic Stanley Cup Final where all three games so far have been decided by one goal — the past two in overtime — the Canes will take any goal they can get, including on the power play.

What's led to the sudden power-play burst for Carolina?

"You try to watch video, and you talk about it — you try to find an edge on what they do and what we can do better," Hurricanes star Sebastian Aho said. "But at the end of the day, it usually comes down to executing the passes, executing the shots. I thought we went in with the right mindset and were doing the right things, and obviously got two big goals. Hopefully, we can keep that going."



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## Category 5: Hurricanes, Golden Knights renew madness of Cup final

By: Cory Lavalette

LAS VEGAS — Game 4 of the Stanley Cup final has a lot to live up to as each game of the series between the Hurricanes and Golden Knights seems to up the entertainment level to never-before-seen levels.

1. Hurricanes goalie Frederik Andersen, pulled from Game 3 after allowing four goals through two periods, did not take part in Monday's practice.

Many pondered whether Andersen had suffered a head injury on the second of two overturned goals in the second period, when Vegas forward Ivan Barbashev collided with the goalie's head.

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said Andersen's absence from the practice had nothing to do with the collision and that the goalie was simply having a "maintenance day."

One thing Brind'Amour wasn't revealing was who will start in goal in Tuesday's Game 4.

Brandon Bussi came on in relief and stopped 18 of 19 shots, the only blemish being the bizarre game-winning goal off the end boards in double overtime. It was a good enough performance that much of the discourse entering the pivotal fourth game in the Stanley Cup final surrounded who would be in the Hurricanes' net.

Brind'Amour said he has decided, but it wasn't for public consumption.

"Yep. I think we'll keep it quiet," he said following Monday's practice. "That's the only suspenseful thing around here that I have to hold onto. It seems to have taken the life of its own, so I kind of enjoy it."

A side note: Since joining the Hurricanes, Andersen is 10-8, with two of those losses in overtime, when he's had at least two games off between playoff starts.

2. Beyond Andersen, there were other injury concerns following Game 3. William Carrier twice left the game, for good after the second period, and Jalen Chatfield was visibly limping following the game after he awkwardly crashed through the open Vegas bench door.

Chatfield seemed to be moving fine Monday, both on skates and walking to the locker room, though there was plenty of online chatter about the status of fellow defenseman K'Andre Miller.

Late in Game 3, ESPN's broadcast cut to Miller on the bench, and ice-level analyst Ray Ferraro said Miller hadn't played in the second overtime. That was incorrect: Miller

took his normal shifts, three in all, with partner Sean Walker during the game's fifth period. He was also a full participant at Monday's practice.

On the other side, keep an eye on Noah Hanifin and Barbashev.

Hanifin seemed to be favoring his right shoulder or collarbone after a hit by Jordan Martinook at 8:20 of the second period. Hanifin immediately went to the Golden Knights locker room, but he returned for the third period and played the rest of the way.

Barbashev looked like he suffered a charley horse on a hit by Sean Walker just past the midway point of the first overtime. Barbashev played just 2:22 after that.

3. The Hurricanes' lines were mostly back to normal at Monday's practice. Brind'Amour reverted to the lines that started Game 3 — his usual four lines with one swap: Seth Jarvis on Jordan Staal's wing with Nikolaj Ehlers, and Martinook alongside Sebastian Aho and opposite Andrei Svechnikov.

Carolina had all sorts of line combinations in Game 3, triggered both by the team's listless second period and the absence of Carrier. Still, it has to be encouraging for Brind'Amour that the "bingo ball" lines, as Taylor Hall described them, were able to score four times in the third period.

"You've got to be ready for anything," Hall said Monday of the line mixing. "But obviously playing with (Jackson) Blake and (Logan) Stankoven, we know each other well. And we need to have — I don't want to say a statement game, but we need to have a game where maybe we turn the tides for our team like that."

The Hurricanes would welcome that. Outside of Hall's goal off an Aho assist in Game 3, Carolina is unbeaten when one of the trio scores this postseason.

4. As a team, the Hurricanes have a hill to climb to win their first Stanley Cup in 20 years. If they do, they have a sneaky Conn Smythe candidate.

Staal has scored in all three games of the Cup final, and — per usual — he's taken on tough assignments all series and playoffs. Staal has mostly been assigned to the Golden Knights line of Barbashev and Pavel Dorofeyev centered by Jack Eichel, and he has kept them in check for much of the first three games.



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Most impressive is how he's fared against Mitch Marner. In 12:45 against each other at five-on-five, Staal has been on the ice for two goals for and none against.

Staal has scored four of his five playoff goals in the past five games, including having a couple of power play points. He's also won 66.2% of his faceoffs in the first three games of the Vegas series.

If Carolina finds its way to four wins first and Staal continues to be this impactful, expect his Conn Smythe credentials to get more notice.

5. The Chicago Wolves, Carolina's AHL affiliate, earned a spot in the Calder Cup finals with their 3-2 win in Monday's Game 7 against the Colorado Eagles.

Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky deserves a lot of credit for the team reaching a matchup with the Toronto Marlies and a chance for the organization to win its third AHL title since 2019. The Charlotte Checkers won that year, the Wolves in 2022.

The pivotal moment was the coaching change Tulsky made in mid-December. Cam Abbott was let go and replaced with assistant Spiros Anastas on an interim basis. Anastas guided Chicago to the postseason, earning the full-time job along the way, and his team won three elimination games — including winning two games on the road against the Eagles — to earn a berth in the final.

Carolina's prospect depth and deft veteran signings played huge dividends.

Ivan Ryabkin, a second round pick by the Hurricanes last year, started the year with the Wolves but was loaned back to the QMJHL after scoring one goal and six assists in 25 AHL games. After his playoff run with Charlottesville ended, Ryabkin rejoined Chicago and has looked better prepared for the pro game.

He had three assists in six games at the end of the regular season and has played in all 16 of the Wolves' playoff games. He's totaled seven points, and his fourth goal Monday — when he outmuscled 6-foot-6, 240-pound Keaton Middleton in front of the Colorado net — ended up being the game-winning goal in Game 7.

In-season blue line additions like center Noah Philp and defensemen Juuso Valimaki — who has 11 points this postseason — and Cal Foote have logged big minutes to complement Carolina's prospects.

And after No. 1 goalie Cayden Primeau suffered an injury in Game 5 against the Eagles, Amir Miftakov stepped in and stopped 79 of 84 shots he faced (.940 save percentage) in the next two-plus games to earn road wins in Games 6 and 7.

The status of Primeau and forward Felix Unger Sorum, who was hurt in Game 2 of the conference final, is undisclosed, but the franchise's depth needs to hold up for four more wins to claim an AHL crown.



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## Extra Day Between Games Has Canes Feeling 'Fresh and Prepared'

By: Walt Ruff

"In moments like this, when it's stressful, to get away from it for a little bit is good for everybody..."

LAS VEGAS - An off day in Las Vegas can be a recipe for disaster.

Bright lights, temptation, and anything you desire can be seen or found in the snap of a finger.

It can also be a wonderful thing. There's no shortage of great food, entertainment, and things to do.

For the Carolina Hurricanes, some of the more appropriate offerings were especially welcomed following the heartbreaking Game 3 double-overtime loss on Saturday.

Staying off the ice on Sunday, the team revisited the video before holding a workout and recovery day at the Ultimate Fighting Championship's (UFC) Performance Institute, utilizing a plethora of world-class resources to get their bodies right after nearly 100 emotional minutes of hockey the night before.

"I don't think it's easier, ever, to move on from those (games), but, yesterday, to have that extra day, to process it and kind of get away from a day (was a positive)," Jordan Martinook said when meeting with the media on Monday. (It helped to) look at some things that put us in that position, and how we're going to hopefully not get there moving forward. It sucked the way it happened, but now we've got to go even it up."

Cleansing the mind after cleansing their physical form, it was a "the page has been turned" mentality from the group on Monday, a rare second consecutive day without a game, as they practiced at T-Mobile Arena.

"I think we did a good job," Seth Jarvis said of the bonus time between battles. "We spent the morning looking over the game, looking over the details of what happened, and then the afternoon was up to us. Spend time with family, spend time away from the rink, nothing about hockey."

"I think in moments like this, when it's stressful, to get away from it for a little bit is good for everybody... Now, more importantly, [we'll] get ready for tomorrow."

With a chance to even the series and make their long flight back to Raleigh on Wednesday all the more enjoyable, it was all eyes forward throughout the group.

"It was nice to get a day and kind of regroup after an emotional game," Jordan Staal added. "I think the guys are

fresh today, ready to rock, and we're excited for the new challenge."

Between The Pipes...

Expecting Rod Brind'Amour to name his starting goaltender for Tuesday's Game 4 today could be compared to playing the penny slots and planning to leave with a five-figure payout. Possible, yet highly unlikely.

Of course, asked by the media, the head coach had some fun with his answer, calling it "the only suspenseful thing around here." He admitted a decision had been made, but the team would "keep it quiet" for now.

Frederik Andersen did not take part in today's practice, not an uncommon occurrence, leaving Brandon Bussi and Pyotr Kochetkov to defend the nets.

"They're both great goalies," Staal said of the drama du jour. "They've both been playing unbelievably all season long. We knew it was going to be a whole committee here if we wanted to win this whole thing, and either one we're comfortable playing in front of."

While Andersen shouldered the load for the first 15 games of the postseason, going 12-3 and pacing the Stanley Cup Playoffs in both save percentage and goals against average throughout, Bussi has the "what have you done for me lately" edge, after a stellar 18-for-19 relief appearance in Game 3, which allowed his team to mount a historic comeback.

"I thought he was incredible. I think the first shot he took was a penalty shot," Martinook said with a laugh. "He comes in and was just so calm for the whole time and gave us a chance to come back. That's what you want for your goalie. Let's be honest, he was great for us all year, he just hasn't got a chance to get in there, and he did, and he played really, really well."

During their Eastern Conference-topping 113-point regular season, Hurricanes skaters were used to a rotation of faces behind them. For portions of the season, the team had all three of Andersen, Bussi, and Kochetkov available. In fact, most times it was a different face behind them, as they went with a goaltender in consecutive games only 16 games over the course of the 82-game season.

"We want to play the same hockey that we know we can play, and in the end, it doesn't matter who is in the net," Nikolaj Ehlers emphatically said. "We're going to do our best to limit their chances and give them less hard work to do during the games. It doesn't matter. We've got full confidence in all three goalies."



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Brandon Bussi says he hasn't been told if he's starting Game 4 or not.

"You guys know Rod's our coach right?"

He laughed and said media might have better luck finding out than he does. [pic.twitter.com/3jNIB0QaO1](https://pic.twitter.com/3jNIB0QaO1)

— Travon Miles (@TrayABC11) June 8, 2026

Options Aplenty...

After leaving Saturday's Game 3 following the second period with an upper-body injury and not returning, William Carrier was a full participant in today's practice. Working alongside Mark Jankowski and Eric Robinson, it appeared to be business as usual for a trio who have combined for 130 hits this postseason.

In front of them, after making an in-game switch during Game 2's comeback in Raleigh, notably swapping Jarvis and Martinook, the Canes rolled out their usual bread and butter combos for Game 3 warmups, keeping Jarvis with Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov, while Martinook flanked Staal and Ehlers. But when puck drop came, the change was made again and remained that way until the loss of Carrier forced a good deal of shuffling from the remaining 11 forwards.

During Sunday's media availability, Rod Brind'Amour said he "enjoyed the flow" of the new-ish combos, and this afternoon,

it was Martinook with Aho and Svechnikov, while Jarvis operated as a trio with Staal and Ehlers.

"When we made those switches, it was definitely better," Brind'Amour said of the offense. "We certainly had some good opportunities, especially in overtime."

Whichever way the staff utilizes their weapons tomorrow (8 p.m. ET; ABC), there is a belief that goals can be found up and down the lineup, no matter who is playing with whom.

"There's a lot of guys in here who are starting to feel better with their game and see some production. That's really good for us," Taylor Hall said. "Now, it's about limiting the goals against and maintaining some of that confidence guys are getting offensively."

What's Next?

The Canes will not hold a morning skate before the 5 p.m. local Game 4 start on Tuesday.

Rod Brind'Amour will speak to reporters around 5:15 p.m. ET, and will once again assuredly be asked if he'd like to reveal who will start in net.

Next Game: Tuesday, June 9 | SCF, Game 4 at Vegas | 8:00 p.m. ET | [How To Watch](#) | [Watch Parties](#)

Next Home Game: Thursday, June 11 | SCF, Game 5 vs. Vegas | 8:00 p.m. ET | [How To Watch](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)

## Chicago Wolves Advance To Calder Cup Finals

By: Walt Ruff

LOVELAND, Colo. - For the third time in eight seasons, the Carolina Hurricanes' American Hockey League (AHL) affiliate is headed to the Calder Cup Finals.

The latest installment of the trio comes after a performance that could only be described as resilient.

Trailing 3-2 in the Western Conference Finals, the Chicago Wolves flew to Colorado for a second time with their backs against the wall, but found a way to win both Game 6 and Game 7 to punch their ticket to the final dance.

How they did it makes it all the more impressive.

On Sunday, three unanswered goals, including two in the final 7:03 of regulation, provided a shocking, come-from-behind victory to keep their hopes alive for one more night.

Just 24 hours later, the group squandered a two-goal lead, but overcame adversity to claim a 4-3 victory and secure a conference title for the franchise's sixth time as a member of the league. 2025 second-round draft pick Ivan Ryabkin had the game-winning goal in the third period.

In both of the final two games of the series, Amir Miftakhov was victorious in net. Turning away 75 of 80 shots faced in the two games, the impromptu starts were necessitated after

workhorse backstop Cayden Primeau was injured in Friday's Game 5. Prior to the relief appearance, Miftakhov had not played since Apr. 18. Sound familiar?

In addition to Primeau, the Wolves got the job done without their regular-season leading scorer, Felix Unger Sorum. Injured in Game 2 of the series, the 20-year-old prospect did not return. Defenseman Dominik Badinka, who was the Canes' first choice in the 2024 draft, reaggravated a previous injury in Game 6 and could not go for the series-deciding contest.

As for those who elevated in the absence of the three, Brady Nadeau had his best round of the postseason yet. Turning in four goals and a pair of assists over the seven games, the 2023 first-round draft pick has now totaled 14 points in 16 playoff games.

The Calder Cup Finals will begin on Friday at Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill. The Wolves hold home ice advantage and take on the Toronto Marlies, AHL affiliate of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

To view the full series schedule, [click here](#).

All games in the series can be watched on FloHockey on a pay-per-view basis.



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## 3 Things to Watch: Hurricanes at Golden Knights, Game 4 of Stanley Cup Final

By: Dan Rosen

Carolina yet to reveal starting goalie; Vegas' transition providing scoring opportunities

(1M) Carolina Hurricanes at (1P) Vegas Golden Knights  
Stanley Cup Final, Game 4

Vegas leads best-of-7 series 2-1

8 p.m. ET; ABC, SN, TVAS, CBC

LAS VEGAS -- The Carolina Hurricanes haven't lost two games in a row since mid-January. They really don't want it to happen in Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights at T-Mobile Arena on Tuesday.

A 5-4 loss in double overtime on Saturday has the Hurricanes trailing 2-1 in the best-of-7 series.

"It's a massive game," Carolina captain Jordan Staal said. "I mean, 3-1 or 2-2, what are you going to pick? We know it's huge."

It is for both teams, because the last thing the Golden Knights want is for the Hurricanes to find a way back after such a deflating loss in Game 3 on Saturday, when they rallied from down 4-0 in the third period only to lose on Shea Theodore's shot off the end boards at 5:38 of the second overtime.

"A win is a win," Vegas captain Mark Stone said. "Would we have liked to close that game out a lot earlier? Of course. But they're a good team, and they're not just going to sit down and roll over. So, we've got to have that killer instinct when we get those leads."

A lead has not meant much in this series.

Carolina led 2-1 in the first period of Game 1. The Golden Knights had a 3-2 lead less than five minutes into the second period, and they won 5-4.

Vegas led 2-0 with less than 10 minutes remaining in the third period of Game 2. Just over five minutes later, it was 3-2 Hurricanes. They won 4-3 in overtime.

The Golden Knights led 4-0 after 40 minutes in Game 3. They won 5-4 in double-overtime.

It's the first Stanley Cup Final in history to feature a team erasing a multigoal deficit in three straight games.

"I have zero answers as far as the lead changes going back and forth," Vegas coach John Tortorella said. "We're trying to play defense. They're trying to play defense. Give the credit

to the players as far as some of the plays they've made and just some of the bounces that have gone to each team."

Teams that take a 3-1 lead in a best-of-7 Stanley Cup Final have historically gone on to win the series 97.4 percent of the time (38-1).

"We know what time of year it is, we know how important the game is," Stone said. "We've been in these situations plenty of times over the last five to six years, so nothing changes for us."

Here are 3 things to watch in Game 4:

### 1. Goalie games

Rod Brind'Amour kept the suspense Monday when the Hurricanes coach wouldn't reveal who Carolina's starting goalie will be in Game 4 despite saying his decision is already made.

Frederik Andersen has started all 16 games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs and played every minute until Brandon Bussi replaced him to start the third period of Game 3.

Bussi played well, making 18 saves on 19 shots, as the Hurricanes rallied from down four goals, and now it's possible he gets his first career NHL postseason start.

"He's grateful for the moment," Brind'Amour said. "Every day, he's just happy to be here, grateful for any opportunity he can get. To be honest, pretty much every time we've given him any type of opportunity, he's seized the moment. That's what he did the other night too."

Andersen gave up four goals on 16 shots in the first two periods of Game 3 before Bussi replaced him. Andersen has allowed 12 goals on 65 shots in the series for a 4.44 goals-against average and .815 save percentage.

### 2. Vegas' quick-up play

The Golden Knights are getting scoring chances out of a play designed to relieve the pressure Carolina's forecheck puts on them in in the defensive zone.

Oftentimes, when the Golden Knights get the puck in the defensive zone, they have a winger flying out into the neutral zone and they're finding him by either lofting the puck up in the air and flipping it out of the zone or sending a crisp pass up to him in stride.

The puck clears past the red line and with the Hurricanes' defensemen pressuring up, they're getting breakaways or odd-man rush chances.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"They pressure hard up the ice, so we're trying to be smart with pucks, see what they give us," Vegas forward Brett Howden said.

The play worked especially well in the second period of Game 3, and it's something the Hurricanes know they have to guard against, especially when forward Mitch Marner, who had a hat trick in Game 3, and Howden are on the ice.

"There's no question we talked about that," Staal said. "We can't just give breakaways out of a high flip and a quick-up far side. That shouldn't happen. There's no question our 'D' for sure have to be aware of that when they're leaving the zone, especially in the second (period). They're taking off and we know that, and we understand we have to be better for sure not giving up those. We're on top of guys all the time, so they're trying to stretch our 'D' out and find openings. It's clearly been a game plan of theirs and we definitely have to shore that up."

### 3. Marner's encore

Marner set two single-game Stanley Cup Final records in Game 3: fastest hat trick (6:10) and first player with four points in a period (three goals, one assist in the second).

In the process, he set the Vegas record for most points in a single postseason. He has 28 points (10 goals, 18 assists) in 19 games, besting Jack Eichel's record of 26 points (six goals, 20 assists) in 22 games in 2023, when the Golden Knights won the Stanley Cup.

A strong and productive Game 4 from Marner that also features a Vegas win will only further solidify his candidacy to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player for his team in the playoffs.

He has to be the leading candidate now after what he did in Game 3.

"When he gets the puck and he moves it, they're looking to give it right back to him, all over the ice and I don't blame them, he's a fantastic hockey player," Carolina forward Taylor Hall said. "He's very tough to get a lick on. He's hard to hit. He's slippery and he's more sturdy than he looks. There's a few things we can do, but if he's playing like that and scoring goals like that, it gives them an advantage, and we have to figure that out."

### Hurricanes projected lineup

Andrei Svechnikov -- Sebastian Aho -- Jordan Martinook

Taylor Hall -- Logan Stankoven -- Jackson Blake

Nikolaj Ehlers -- Jordan Staal -- Seth Jarvis

William Carrier -- Mark Jankowski -- Eric Robinson

Jacob Slavin -- Jalen Chatfield

K'Andre Miller -- Sean Walker

Shayne Gostisbehere -- Alexander Nikishin

Frederik Andersen

Brandon Bussi

Scratched: Jesperi Kotkaniemi, Nicolas Deslauriers, Mike Reilly, Pyotr Kochetkov

Injured: None

### Golden Knights projected lineup

Ivan Barbashev -- Jack Eichel -- Mark Stone

Brett Howden -- William Karlsson -- Mitch Marner

Tomas Hertl -- Colton Sissons -- Pavel Dorofeyev

Cole Smith -- Nic Dowd -- Keegan Kolesar

Brayden McNabb -- Shea Theodore

Noah Hanifin -- Rasmus Andersson

Jeremy Lauzon -- Dylan Coghlan

Carter Hart

Adin Hill

Scratched: Brandon Saad, Akira Schmid, Reilly Smith, Ben Hutton, Jaycob Megna, Braeden Bowman, Kaedan Korczak

Injured: Jonas Rondbjerg (lower body)

### Status report

Brind'Amour did not name a starting goalie Monday, but on Sunday he said he doesn't anticipate lineup changes. ... Andersen didn't practice Monday because of maintenance, Brind'Amour said. ... Vegas defensemen Brayden McNabb and Noah Hanifin did not practice Monday. McNabb is still recovering from facial injuries he sustained in Game 2, but he played 35:47 in Game 3 wearing a full cage on his helmet. Hanifin left Game 3 with 11:34 remaining in the second period but returned for the third and finished the game with 20:53 of ice time.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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**AP** ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Carolina Hurricanes face Vegas Golden Knights in crucial Game 4 of Stanley Cup Final | AP News

By: Mark Anderson

LAS VEGAS (AP) — In a Stanley Cup Final filled with more twists and turns than a Six Flags roller coaster, it's difficult to imagine what more could be in store when the Carolina Hurricanes visit the Vegas Golden Knights for Game 4 on Tuesday.

There certainly is plenty at stake.

Should the Golden Knights win and take a 3-1 series lead, they will be in an almost unbeatable position. Teams with such an advantage in the final are 38-1, the one defeat occurring 84 years ago when Detroit lost a 3-0 lead and fell to Toronto.

A Hurricanes victory would not only even the best-of-seven series, but regain home-ice advantage with potentially two of the three remaining games in Carolina.

Good luck trying to predict where this series will go. What was largely expected to be a high-checking, low-scoring championship round has been wide open at times, with each team capitalizing on the other's mistakes. The teams have

combined to score 25 goals, the highest total through three games in the final since the New York Islanders and Minnesota North Stars had 30 in 1981.

There have been blown leads of at least two goals in each game. Vegas rallied from such a deficit in Game 1 and Carolina did it in Game 2.

Then came the real doozy in Saturday night's Game 3 when the Golden Knights led 4-0 well into the third period before the Hurricanes scored three goals in a record 39 seconds. Carolina eventually forced overtime, but the Golden Knights won in double OT when Shea Theodore bounced a puck off the boards that caromed off goalie Brandon Bussi's skate.

Because of course it did.

Bussi, who hadn't played in two months, entered in the third period after coach Rod Brind'Amour had seen enough of Frederik Andersen. The Golden Knights couldn't figure out Bussi until that final wacky shot, so he might start Tuesday. Brind'Amour said he knows who will start, but isn't letting on.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## 'Only suspenseful thing': Hurricanes keep Game 4 goalie a secret for now

By: Luke Fox

Never drafted.

Just livin' the dream.

And he has no clue who's starting in goal for the Carolina Hurricanes in Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final, either.

"You know Roddy's our coach, right? That's all I can say," Bussi smiled Monday inside T-Mobile Arena. "Let's see if you guys have better luck."

A well-rested Bussi was stellar in relief of No. 1 Frederik Andersen Saturday, backstopping his club to a character comeback that fell one fluke goal shy of an all-time, double-overtime stunner.

Since getting pulled in the loss and having his head knocked by an Ivan Barbashev flyby, Andersen stayed off the ice Sunday and Monday.

Rod Brind'Amour assured that Andersen's head is fine and that his skipping an otherwise fully attended practice was simply maintenance for a goalie who has started all 17 games in these playoffs.

The coach knows who's starting Tuesday. He's just not telling anyone.

"I'll keep it quiet. It's the only suspenseful thing around here that I have to hold onto. It seems to have taken on a life of its own, so I kind of enjoy it," smiled Brind'Amour, who credits Bussi's patience and preparation.

"He's grateful for the moment, you know? Every day, he's just happy to be here, grateful for any opportunity that he can get. And to be honest, pretty much every time we give him any type of opportunity, he seizes the moment.

"He came in, clearly was solid."

Taylor Hall downplays the suspense.

Four goaltenders started games for the Canes this season, and none of them hit 40 starts.

"We shuffled goalies so much all season long that it was kind of like show up to the game and you kinda forget who's really starting, right?" said Hall. He considers Bussi's wild journeyman ride, from going undrafted to getting waived by Florida, to making an emergency Cup Final debut.

"The season for him overall was probably a lot to take in, becoming a full-fledged NHLer, and then playing a ton of games in a row. So, hopefully he's gotten some rest, and he's fresh mentally. He looked like it the last game."

Which is why we believe Bussi should start.

It's a fresh look to throw at the enemy. A right-catching goaltender who takes away shooters' targets with his long torso and arms.

"He doesn't have to really travel a lot, but he makes desperation saves really well. He never gives up on plays, and he's more vocal out there, more talkative," Hall says of the righty who fooled Mitch Marner on a penalty shot.

"It's different. I shot on him today, and it's like: OK, I gotta try and go high glove on him, where I wouldn't try that as much on a normal goalie. It does throw you off a bit."

Bussi plays a more aggressive style than Andersen, who likes to stand deeper in the crease. That's helpful for plays like Barbashev's Game 2 wraparound, backdoor looks, and possibly the Theodore bank shot.

"Tough last goal," laments Bussi, who assures he has turned the page and is ready if called upon. "Some wild things have happened, so nothing really surprises me anymore."

Well, one thing will remain a surprise: Which Hurricanes goalie leads the group out for warmups in what feels very much like a must-win Game 4 on the road.

"I kind of chuckle about the goalie thing. Because as a player, wherever they throw in, I'm not worrying about who's in net," says Brind'Amour, in gamesmanship mode.

"I'm gonna try to do my job, and somebody in there going is good. It's really not that big a deal, so it doesn't affect how we play."

But it darn well could affect the outcome of this series.

Hurricanes practice lines on Monday ahead of Game 4:

Svechnikov – Aho – Martinook

Hall – Stankoven – Blake

Ehlers – Staal – Jarvis

Carrier – Jankowski – Robinson

Slavin – Chatfield

Miller – Walker

Gostisbehere – Nikishin

Bussi

Kochetkov



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Hurricanes vs. Golden Knights Stanley Cup Final Game 4 parlay: Carolina could see a goalie change Tuesday

By: Matt Severance

The Golden Knights host the Hurricanes in Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final Tuesday

Jun 9, 2026 at 9:11 am ET • 5 min read

Have we just witnessed the most compelling opening three games of a Stanley Cup Final in NHL annals? I'm not a hockey historian, but I can't remember a better one in terms of goals galore, comebacks and one-goal games than so far in the 2026 Final between the Hurricanes and Golden Knights. Vegas looks for a commanding 3-1 series lead tonight in what could be its final home game of the season with a victory.

Use the latest DraftKings promo code to get benefits when you place your NHL bets.

Hurricanes vs. Golden Knights same-game parlay

Vegas +1.5

Carolina Over 2.5 goals scored

BetRivers SGP price: +175

While these aren't exactly two large-market teams with a ton of hockey history, the NHL has to be giddy with the product on the ice thus far, with at least seven goals in each game and the past two going past regulation. The 25 goals scored are the fifth most through the first three games of any championship series in league history.

Every game has seen a tying goal in the final 10 minutes of regulation – a first in a Stanley Cup. It's only the fourth Final to see any team erase a multi-goal deficit three times in the series overall. It's the first Final with the first three each decided by a goal since 2016. That either team wins by a goal tonight is +260. Only three Finals have started with four straight one-goal games and it hasn't happened since 2015 (Blackhawks-Lightning).

Carolina had been 6-0 on the road in these playoffs and 6-0 in overtime before losing 5-4 in double OT on Saturday night in Game 3. Good thing there was an extra day off for both clubs after that amazing hockey game. That there is OT in Game 4 is +275.

Vegas scored four times in the second period to seemingly lock the game down, only to allow four goals to Carolina in the third, with the tying coming via Andrei Svechnikov on the power play at 18:17. But Shea Theodore won it at 5:38 of the second OT off Hurricanes backup goalie Brandon Bussi. It was Theodore's second OT winner in these playoffs as he became only the seventh defenseman in history with multiple overtime goals in a single postseason.

Carolina was looking to become the fifth team in NHL history to begin a postseason with a road winning streak of seven or more games. Now the Canes are 3-12 all-time in playoff games that require two or more overtime periods. The Knights are 4-2.

The latest FanDuel promo code offers benefits for new NHL bettors.

When I previewed Game 1 in this space, I mentioned that for whatever reason goalies rarely win the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP these days, and that run now seems safe to continue. Neither of the guys who have started in this series has played that well.

There is no shot that Vegas coach John Tortorella benches Carter Hart, because Hart has been the guy since Torts took over for the fired Bruce Cassidy late in the regular season. Hart is +30000 to win the Conn Smythe.

Frederik Andersen (+4000) was not the main Carolina guy during the regular season, but the veteran had played every minute of these playoffs until getting pulled following two periods of Game 3 after allowing those four goals (two more were disallowed). Bussi stopped the first 18 shots he faced to help the Canes rally before Theodore's shot off the end boards in the second OT bounced off Bussi's skate and into the net for a fluke goal in the goalie's first action since April 14.

Clearly, coach Rod Brind'Amour now has a decision to make but seemed to hint after the loss that no big changes are coming. Then he changed his tune a bit and said he had made a decision on Monday but wasn't ready to share it with anyone.

"We'll keep it quiet," Brind'Amour said. "It's the only suspenseful thing around here. Hold onto it. It seems to have taken on a life of its own, so I kind of enjoy it."

Would he really go to a rookie with no playoff starting experience this late? Bussi was claimed off waivers in early October but was terrific at 31-6-2 with a 2.47 goals-against average, .895 save percentage and two shutouts in the regular season. Andersen is 13-2-0 with a 1.72 GAA and .917 SV in 15 playoff starts and gave up two goals or fewer in 12 of his first 13, but he hasn't looked the same lately. His GAA climbed each series, from 1.10 to 1.14 to 1.91 to 4.44 in the Final. It seems likely to be Bussi's turn.

"His games have been kind of those practices we've had, and he's been sharp," forward Seth Jarvis said of the rookie. "He keeps the same mentality going into a game as he does in practice. That's what made coming in so easy for him. He treats everything like it's a game and just stayed really dialed in throughout the time he wasn't playing."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Conn Smythe is now clearly Mitchell Marner's to lose, to the point that FanDuel offers the Vegas forward at -230 vs. the entire field at +168. Marner had a hat trick in just 6:10 of ice time in the second period of Game 2, the fastest hatty in Stanley Cup Final history.

Marner also had an assist in the second to become the first NHL player with four points in a period during a Stanley Cup Final. He leads the playoffs by a mile with 28 points. That's a

league record by a player in his first season with a franchise. Marner is set at +220 to score a goal and -310 to earn a point.

Teams that take a 3-1 series lead in a best-of-seven Stanley Cup Final own an all-time record of 38-1, while teams that win Game 4 after trailing 2-1 own an overall series record of 11-16. Vegas is now -188 on the series line, with Carolina +155.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Fred Andersen or Brandon Bussi: Who Should Start Game 4?

By: Bob Wage

The primary discussion around the hockey water cooler today is, who should start in net for the Carolina Hurricanes in game four of the Stanley Cup Final.

After allowing four goals on 16 shots, (and two more that were not counted), in the first two periods of game 3, Head Coach Rod Brind'Amour did something extremely rare for him. He pulled his starting goaltender.

After the game, he was quick not to place any blame on his goaltender.

"There was no reason to leave Freddie in there the way that game was going... (Bussi) gave us a chance. (The overtime winner) is a tough break. I hate it for him, because he was playing great."

It seemed like more of a mercy change, rather than a change to relieve a tired Frederik Andersen. And let's be frank, Andersen did look tired, to the eye test anyway if not strictly by the poor stats. (.750 save percentage for the game).

Andersen has a SV% of .815 in this series.

Bussi came in and did not allow anything until the goofy game-winner in the second OT. He allowed one goal on 19 shots.

In the first two series of the playoffs, Andersen was outstanding and was rated the best goalie in the playoffs.

He also played very well in the Montreal series, though not as sparkling as in the first two.

But now in the Stanley Cup Final, he seems slower than in the previous series.

During the past three regular seasons, Brind'Amour has rotated his goalies, seemingly with the idea to keep them fresh. Especially Andersen, who has a history of wearing down if over-played.

Then when the playoffs start, Brind'Amour throws out that strategy and plays Andersen exclusively. While the goalie has played well, after the first two rounds his performance drops below what it was during the earlier playoff series.

Brind'Amour has done the same thing this postseason, even though Brandon Bussi carried the load during most of the regular season. Bussi posted a 31-6-2 record with a GAA of 2.47 and SV% .895.

In contrast, Andersen was 16-14-5 with a GAA of 3.05 and SV% of .874.

To be fair, Andersen was the better goalie down the stretch although he was played more often than Bussi. After the Olympic break, where Bussi saw no action, they gave Andersen more starts even though he played during the Olympics.

The coaching staff had made their minds up at this time who the Carolina goalie would be during the playoffs. Up until now it has looked like a good decision, but does Andersen have anything left in the tank?

If you were the head coach, who would you go with?



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## The Hockey News

### Offense Has Been No Issue For Carolina; Defense A Different Story

By: Ryan Henkel

Despite a scoring surge and balanced production across four lines, the Hurricanes are reeling from defensive lapses and high-danger chances that threaten their Stanley Cup championship ambitions.

For once, offensive production isn't the issue for the Carolina Hurricanes in the playoffs.

While the team was perhaps on the lower end of the scoring rate through the first three rounds, the Stanley Cup Final has been a different story.

In three games, the Canes have found the back of the net 12 times, scoring four goals in each game.

The team has had nine different goal scorers, production from all four lines and the power play has even converted three times.

However, for as good as they've been offensively, they've been just plain bad defensively.

It isn't like the team has been horrendous for entire games, but for periods here and there, especially second periods, they've been downright atrocious at times.

The Hurricanes have had the edge in chances (197-137) and possession overall, but what they're giving up has been massive.

Carolina has also surrendered 12 goals against so far this series and of Vegas' 68 total 5v5 scoring chances, 31 of them have been classified as high-danger, with multiple breakaways being allowed each game.

The Canes can score goals, but this series is going to come down to whether or not they can figure out how to prevent them.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1393471 Carolina Hurricanes

Who will the Hurricanes start in goal in Stanley Cup Final Game 4? What we know

Justin Pelletier6-7 minutes 08/06/2026

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi was a wanted man after the team's practice at T-Mobile Arena on Monday. As soon as the team's locker room opened for post-practice availability, a flood of media engulfed Bussi at his locker stall.

Everyone, of course, wanted to know: Does he know if he is starting Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights on Tuesday after finishing Game 3 in relief of Frederik Andersen on Saturday?

"You all know Roddy is our coach, right?" Bussi quipped, eliciting laughter from the gaggle. "Maybe you'll have better luck with him."

Indeed, Rod Brind'Amour is the Canes' head coach, and he typically plays things pretty close to the vest, particularly in a high-visibility situation like the Stanley Cup Final.

So, when asked if he knew who was starting Tuesday during his availability, Brind'Amour briefly silenced any murmurs in the interview room when he answered: "Yes."

"But we'll keep it quiet," Brind'Amour continued with a grin and soft laugh. "It's the only suspenseful thing around here that we have to hold on to. It seems to have taken on a life of its own, so I kind of enjoy it."

Brind'Amour enjoys it, and the players likely already know the planned scenario, but the general public is left to guess what will happen Tuesday, in what is now an unofficial, not-quite-but-really-is must-win for the Hurricanes.

What about the players? Do they care?

"The beginning of the season, we had three goalies on rotation," forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. "We have a lot of confidence in our goalies. Freddie has been unbelievable, Bussi's been unbelievable this year, and (Kochetkov), before he got injured, he was incredible, so we've got a ton of confidence. We want to play the same hockey that we play, and in the end it doesn't matter who's in the net, we're going to do our best to limit their chances, give them less hard work to do during games."

Brind'Amour also said he never cared as a player, either.

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour fields questions about his starting goalie for Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against Vegas, during a press briefing on Monday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour fields questions about his starting goalie for Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against Vegas, during a press briefing on Monday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

"All year, as a player, you don't worry about who's in net," Brind'Amour said. "You've got your own job to do, to worry about. That's why I chuckle a little bit about the goalie thing because as a player, whoever they throw in net, I'm not worried about who's in net. I'm going to do my job."

Andersen gave up four goals in the second period of Game 3, after previously allowing two goals earlier in the period that were called back on coach's challenge reviews.

On the second overturned goal, it appeared that Andersen was kneed in the head by a Vegas forward, and he lay prone on the ice for several seconds after the play was whistled dead.

Was Andersen OK after that?

"Yep," Brind'Amour said, though he cut himself off there.

Bussi, meanwhile, made saves on the first 18 shots he saw, in his first live game action in nearly two months. The 19th, a wacky carom off the back wall, off his leg and into the cage, was the game-winner in the second overtime.

"(Bussi)'s another guy, he's grateful for the moment, every day," Brind'Amour said. "He's just happy to be here and grateful for any opportunity he can get, and pretty much every time we've given him any opportunity, he's seized the moment."

Bussi was in what is normally the "starter's crease" at Monday's practice. Pyotr Kochetkov manned the other net. Andersen was not there.

"It was a maintenance day for (Andersen)," Brind'Amour said.

The mystery remains.

News Observer LOADED: 06.09.2026

1393472 Carolina Hurricanes

Faced with Stanley Cup Final deficit, Canes must now embody Southern resilience

Justin Pelletier8-11 minutes 08/06/2026

There's more Southern charm in Las Vegas than ever these days. There's a new Bojangles on the Strip, offering all the same biscuits and sandwiches and chicken we're used to in North Carolina.

Around the corner, a Chick-Fil-A.

One more block down, country music star Blake Shelton's bar, Ol' Red, sat dormant at 9:30 a.m., but remnants of the previous night's festivities



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 9, 2026

skittered across the sidewalk in the warm morning breeze. Fellow country star Jason Aldean has a place, too, across the street in front of the Aria hotel.

As the desert oasis known for its decadence and gambling greeted the morning — the sun climbing above the various casino towers stretching up and down Las Vegas Blvd. — Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal emerged from the Hurricanes' hotel, his body still operating on Eastern time fewer than 24 hours after flying from Raleigh.

"Obviously we're stuck on the East Coast a little but here, we were up pretty early," Staal said. "Going for a little walk, getting some sunlight."

Staal and his teammates got in a morning stretch — no skating with a 5 p.m. local puck drop — and he and his teammates were "out and ready to rock."

Head Coach Rod Brind'Amour, asked whether there are added distractions, playing in Las Vegas, was quick with a quip:

"I don't leave my hotel, so I don't know," he said. "Obviously, yeah, there's stuff out there, but we're so focused, and we've got a five-minute walk to the rink and back, and that's it."

Following Game 3, that five-minute walk felt a whole lot longer.

After a strong first period in the pivotal game against the Vegas Golden Knights, the Hurricanes gave up four goals in the second period, rallied with remarkable efficiency to tie the game in the third, only to lose in soul-crushing fashion on a wacky bounce about five minutes into the second overtime.

"Proud of the group, we gave it a chance," Staal said. "It was a heck of an effort from everyone, contributing and grinding and finding the ways and giving us a shot."

But, Staal continued, "it was just not our game. Too many turnovers, just grinding in our own end."

Beyond the Canes' obvious missteps in the second period, Game 3 also felt more physical than the previous two games. The toll it took on the Hurricanes' players was visible.

William Carrier didn't return to the game after the second period with an upper body injury. Among those who finished the game, K'Andre Miller, Jalen Chatfield and Taylor Hall all limped or skated hunched over back to the bench at various times during the game. And of course goalie Frederik Andersen, before giving up four goals, got kneed in the head by Ivan Barbashev on a disallowed goal and lay prone on the ice for an extended time.

It's hockey. Injuries, some more severe than bumps and bruises, happen. In the postseason, players and teams often mask injuries, but that doesn't make them go away. Ottawa was heavy on the hitting and physical play to start the playoffs, but the Canes only dealt with the Senators for four games, and had recovery time.

Vegas is giving Carolina a dose of its own gritty medicine, and while the city is exhibiting signs of the South, apparently the hockey team has a lot to learn about Southern hospitality — on the ice, anyway.

Carolina Hurricanes fans Thomas Kriston and John Kriston, from New York and San Francisco, cheer on the team, during pre-game warm ups ahead of Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final against Vegas Golden Knights, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes fans Thomas Kriston and John Kriston, from New York and San Francisco, cheer on the team, during pre-game warm ups ahead of Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final against Vegas Golden Knights, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

That didn't stop a larger-than-expected — and vocal — contingent of Canes-jersey-wearing fans from invading Las Vegas, and the Knights' T-Mobile "fortress."

On the strip, red and white jerseys dotted the sidewalks as morning turned to afternoon.

During warmups, hundreds of Hurricanes partisans crowded the glass when the Canes took the ice, and during the anthem, a chorus of "Red!" rang out from around the arena in a tradition familiar to fans attending games at Lenovo Center — more signs of the South in the desert.

Resilience and persistence also define North Carolinians. When the Hurricanes staff worked on a hype video for the Stanley Cup Final, it channeled perhaps the greatest example of those qualities possible in its inclusion of N.C. State legend Jim Valvano's inspirational speech: "Don't give up, don't ever give up."

During N.C. State's miraculous 1983 NCAA title run, the predominant lingering image is the chaotic scene after the victory in the final. But, two weeks earlier, the boys from Raleigh nearly bowed out of the tournament in Game 2 against ... University of Nevada - Las Vegas. Down 12 in the second half, the Wolfpack never gave up, edged UNLV by one, and went on to make history.

Forty-three years later, another group from Raleigh is faced with a tough series deficit against a team from Vegas.

Its attitude?

"We don't give up," goalie Brandon Bussi echoed in the wake of Game 3. "A lot of times in the regular season we've showcased that, and in the playoffs. I think with this group, we never have any doubt."

How ... Southern.

News Observer LOADED: 06.09.2026

1393473 Carolina Hurricanes

Bussi or Andersen? Carolina Hurricanes face multiple questions ahead of Game 4

Chip Alexander9-12 minutes 08/06/2026

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour was mum Sunday when asked about his starting goalie for Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Brandon Bussi replaced starter Frederik Andersen after the second period of Game 3 on Saturday after the Golden Knights had grabbed a 4-0 lead. Bussi, in his first career playoff game, made several sparkling saves before a bad bounce on a Shea Theodore shot got past him for the winning goal in the second overtime as Vegas pulled out a 5-4 win.

Brind'Amour, on a media call Sunday, first said he did not anticipate any lineup changes Tuesday in Game 4 at T-Mobile Arena. That seemed to indicate Andersen would make his 17th consecutive start of the playoffs and Bussi again would be the backup as the Canes seek to even the best-of-seven series.

But Brind'Amour later in the call said final decisions on the lineup would not be made until after a team practice Monday. On Andersen, he said, "We'll see how he's feeling."

Forward William Carrier left Game 3 with an upper-body injury, but Brind'Amour said he was "hopeful" the physical winger would be able to play Tuesday. In a game filled with contact and hard checks, several players showed discomfort and some briefly left Saturday's game —



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defenseman Jalen Chatfield once was knocked into an open door at the Vegas bench.

Having witnessed a flurry of offensive brilliance from the Knights' Mitch Marner, who had a natural hat trick in the second period, the Canes responded with a stunning four-goal comeback in the third to force overtime.

Losing a game on a Marner goal — which would have been the winger's fourth — or have Vegas captain Mark Stone punch in the winner would have been one thing. Tough to handle, for sure, but more manageable moving forward.

But to have Theodore wing a long shot toward the net, the defenseman badly missing it, only to have the puck ricochet off the end boards and off Bussi's leg was one of the worst ways for a team to lose.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (32) and left wing Jordan Martinook (48) react after a 5-4 double overtime loss to Vegas in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi (32) and left wing Jordan Martinook (48) react after a 5-4 double overtime loss to Vegas in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

"It's hockey," Brind'Amour said after the game.

'You just have to deal with it

In reviewing Game 3 on Sunday, Brind'Amour said the Canes had a "good road game going" midway through the second period.

"The first period, they had one scoring chance," he said. "We were doing what we needed to do and then the penalty that we took kind of flipped the game a little bit because they scored on it."

The Canes were called for too many men on the ice in the second period and the Golden Knights scored on the power play for a 1-0 lead. Marner took it from there with his natural hat trick that included one goal when his cross-ice pass went off the stick of Canes defenseman Sean Walker in front of the crease and past Andersen.

Vegas right wing Mitch Marner (93) shoots and scores to take 4-0 over the Carolina Hurricanes in the second period in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Vegas right wing Mitch Marner (93) shoots and scores to take 4-0 over the Carolina Hurricanes in the second period in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

"They get the momentum, then they get a break," Brind'Amour said. "Then you're starting to chase the game a little bit.

"We let Marner get behind us a couple of times and that's been a common theme. We have to know when he's on the ice because that's kind of the way he likes to play. If we eliminate those 'freebies' and take them out it would definitely help."

It's hard to say what kind of effect such a loss will have. They can linger, eat at a team.

"Probably the toughest game I've ever lost," said forward Andrei Svechnikov, whose late power-play goal tied the score, 4-4.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) celebrates with teammates after scoring on Vegas goalie Carter Hart (79) to tie the score 4-4 and force overtime in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) celebrates with teammates after scoring on Vegas goalie Carter Hart (79) to tie the score 4-4 and force overtime in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

Taking the game into double overtime meant that Canes defensemen K'Andre Miller and Sean Walker each played more than 33 minutes in Game 3 — Walker with a team-high 34:20. Jaccob Slavin was on the ice for almost 30 minutes and Chatfield more than 28.

Among the forwards, Seth Jarvis had more than 27 minutes in ice time and absorbed several hard hits. Svechnikov had almost 26 minutes and Sebastian Aho 25.

"It's tough in a game like that where you have that many extra minutes and not have the full group," Brind'Amour said after the game. "But that's part of it and you just have to deal with it."

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) scores on Vegas goalie Carter Hart (79) to tie the score 4-4 and force overtime in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) scores on Vegas goalie Carter Hart (79) to tie the score 4-4 and force overtime in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

'It's never going to be easy'

The Golden Knights were all smiles after winning their first home game in the Cup Final — dodging what could have been a killer loss — and their energy level shouldn't dip.

Vegas coach John Tortorella, on a media call Sunday, said his team would be off the ice Sunday and practice Monday to "move the blood," noting the extra day should help them mentally after a "crazy" first three games.

"It's a very experienced team that understands the level they need to be at," he said.

Tortorella mentioned the "wild momentum swings" in the first three games and the increased physicality the Knights had in Game 3.

"Playoffs, I think all teams try to add a physical element to their games," Tortorella said. "Both teams are doing it. It's just part of the game

"Does it give you a major help? It depends on the momentum of the games, depends on certain situations in the game. But that's the greatest thing about playoff hockey, that type of play. Both teams bring it, and I'm sure will continue doing it as the series goes on."

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) is checked into the boards by Vegas Mark Stone (61) right wing Mark Stone (61) in the first period in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV.

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) is checked into the boards by Vegas Mark Stone (61) right wing Mark Stone (61) in the first period in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV. Robert Willett [rwillett@newsobserver.com](mailto:rwillett@newsobserver.com)

The Canes followed a Game 1 loss to Vegas by winning the second game at home. They'll look to do the same in Game 4 for a 2-2 tie before going back to Raleigh for Game 5 at Lenovo Center.

"It's playoff hockey," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "It's part of the gig and it's never easy. It's never going to be easy, and we know that and understand that."



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Added Brind'Amour on Sunday: "The games are tight, and we've got to keep pushing through. Both teams understand how they have to play and you've got to stick with it."

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Hurricanes, Golden Knights are rewriting NHL record book. Here's what to know

The Stanley Cup Final between the Carolina Hurricanes and Vegas Golden Knights has produced a stunning collision of history, heartbreak and overtime drama through just three games. Records that stood for decades have already fallen, and Game 4 is set for Tuesday in Las Vegas.

Here are key takeaways:

The Hurricanes scored three goals in 39 seconds in Game 3, breaking a 72-year-old NHL record of 56 seconds for the fastest three consecutive goals in a Stanley Cup Final game set in 1954.

Vegas forward Mitch Marner scored a natural hat trick in 6:10, the fastest three goals by a single player in Stanley Cup Final history, helping the Golden Knights build a 4-0 lead in Game 3.

Backup goaltender Brandon Bussi made his first career playoff appearance after Frederik Andersen was pulled following two periods, facing 19 shots and stopping a penalty shot against Marner before Vegas won 5-4 in double overtime.

Nikolaj Ehlers scored just 25 seconds into Game 1, the third-fastest goal to start an NHL championship series, and added a second goal in the first period to become the first player to score twice in an opening period since 1989.

Ivan Barbashev scored 30 seconds into the second period of Game 1, marking the first time in Stanley Cup Final history that goals were scored within the first 30 seconds of both the first and second periods of the same game.

Seth Jarvis' power-play goal at 3:56 of overtime gave Carolina a 4-3 Game 2 victory, the team's fourth overtime win in a Game 2 this postseason after similar wins against Ottawa, Philadelphia and Montreal.

Shayne Gostisbehere took blame for the Game 1 loss after scoring a tying goal with 11:19 left, then losing Tomas Hertl in the slot on the game-winner with 3:24 remaining.

Shea Theodore's shot in double overtime of Game 3 missed the net, caromed hard off the end boards and bounced off Bussi's skate into the net at 5:38 of the second OT, making it the 19th-longest game in Stanley Cup Final history.

Carolina is appearing in the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since 2006, when the franchise won its only championship, facing a Vegas team that captured the Cup in 2023.

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1393475 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Daniels constant as Brind'Amour's right-hand man

June 8, 2026 Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports

RALEIGH — Jeff Daniels starts each practice the same way. The Hurricanes assistant coach comes down the tunnel from the locker room, plucks a stick of gum from a bin near the bench door and steps onto the ice. He takes a stride toward the red line and flips the wrapper into the area between the benches.

It's a noticeable ritual for a longtime member of the Hurricanes family who is often in the background but is now on hockey's biggest stage.

Much is made of Brind'Amour's ties to the franchise. Acquired in a trade by Carolina nearly 26½ years ago, Brind'Amour has become synonymous with the Hurricanes and Raleigh. He captained Carolina's lone Stanley Cup team in 2006, married the daughter of an NC State icon and has reaffirmed his legendary status over the last eight seasons by revitalizing the franchise and leading it to the Stanley Cup final.

Daniels has even longer ties to the franchise.

He was with the Whalers in 1996-97 and played two games for the Hurricanes the following year in their first season in North Carolina. He returned to the franchise in 1999 and has been part of it since: as an assistant coach on the '06 Cup team, an AHL head coach and general manager in two cities, and a scout.

When Brind'Amour was hired in 2018, one of his first moves was to bring Daniels back to the Hurricanes' bench.

"I was scouting the game in Charlotte, and he was down to watch it, and we talked a little bit up the stands," Daniels said. "And I think we both were on the same page on how he wanted to do things, and I completely agree with it. I jumped at the opportunity to get back here and work with Roddy."

Like it was for Brind'Amour, it was more than a job for Daniels to get the Hurricanes back to relevance.

"We've been through some good times," Daniels said. "We won a Cup, we saw the team struggle a bit. We both call Raleigh home, so it was personal for us to get it back on track."

During Brind'Amour's eight seasons, all playoff berths, the one constant at his side on the bench has been "Killer."

The story behind the nickname for the genial, soft-spoken Daniels — he also goes by JD — goes back to COVID-19.

"A couple guys had it, so they had to get skated, and I think it was (Brett Pesce) and Nino (Niederreiter)," Daniels said. "Great players, great people — they didn't want to get skated. So I had to skate them. ... So I don't know if it was Pesh or Nino who started calling me Killer, and the guys just stuck with it."

Jeff Daniels played briefly with the Whalers and then the Hurricanes before becoming a fixture in the organization in 1999. (Stan Gilliland for North State Journal)

It's an ironic nickname for a coach who seems to be universally adored by the Carolina players.

"I love dealing with him every day," Seth Jarvis said. "He puts up with me a lot, which is amazing. But the work he does with the forwards, the



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video, the stuff you guys don't see behind the scenes, the after-practice work, he's awesome."

Svechnikov, who has worked with Daniels since being the second overall draft pick in 2018, echoed that sentiment, calling him "an unbelievable person, just fun to be around."

Jarvis and Svechnikov are among several of the Hurricanes' players who have benefited from working with Daniels, who Brind'Amour says is responsible for molding young players into polished NHLers — contributors who have helped lead the team back to a Cup final.

"He's the guy that's really brought along all these young players," Brind'Amour said. "He sits with them every day, goes over everything. Svechnikov, since he's been here eight years, every day. Every game sitting with him and Jarvis and (Jackson) Blake. He takes all the guys and works with him."

It's a role Daniels has embraced.

"That's the most enjoyment for me is just working with those young guys," Daniels said.

Daniels, a few weeks shy of his 58th birthday, spent seven seasons as a head coach with Carolina's AHL affiliates in Albany and Charlotte teaching younger players, but the role of an NHL assistant is often also about being a positive sounding board.

"As an assistant coach, you've just got to follow up," Daniels said. "When the head coach has those conversations, whether it's one on one or calls a guy out in a group setting, just follow up and just be that good cop or just that positive mindset. 'Hey, it happens, over and done with. Let's move on, and let's be great the next day.'"

Jordan Martinook said Daniels "is always there," be it on the bench, at practice or in the film room.

"I feel like him and Roddy really bounce a lot of stuff off each other, and he's just dialed in on the bench," Martinook said.

Daniels was there when Brind'Amour the player lifted the Stanley Cup in 2006. Two decades later, he's again with Brind'Amour trying to do it again.

"He bleeds Carolina Hurricanes because he's been here for so long," Eric Robinson said, "and I think that passion shines through."

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1393476 Carolina Hurricanes

Brandon Bussi's debut, containing Mitch Marner and embracing the chaos: Hurricanes notebook

Michael Russo, Sean Gentile 7-9 minutes 08/06/2026

LAS VEGAS — Brandon Bussi's phone blew up with text messages after making his Stanley Cup playoff debut in the third period and two overtimes in Saturday's Game 3.

He did his best to get back to everybody, "but if I didn't answer anybody that's seeing this right now, I'm sorry," Bussi said after practicing in the Carolina Hurricanes starter's net Monday in advance of Tuesday's Game 4.

Whether he's starting or not remains to be seen. Frederik Andersen didn't practice due to a maintenance day.

Asked if he knew if he was starting, Bussi smiled. "You know Roddy's our coach, right? That's all I can say. Let's see if you guys have better luck."

Well, no such luck.

Rod Brind'Amour wasn't about to tip his hand during his availability, not risking giving the Vegas Golden Knights any information whatsoever.

"I think we'll keep it quiet," Brind'Amour said. "That's the only suspenseful thing around here that I have to hold on to. It seems to have taken on a life of its own, so I kind of enjoy it. But yes, it was a maintenance day for (Andersen)."

Brind'Amour did say Andersen is fine after getting plunked in the head early in the second period by Vegas' Ivan Barbashev. That incidental contact led to Jack Eichel's goal quickly being taken off the board by referees Chris Rooney and Wes McCauley following a coach's challenge. Andersen did give up four goals in the second period after that head contact and didn't sit on the bench the rest of the game after being pulled.

Bussi, playing for the first time since April 14, came on and stopped 18 of 19 shots before Shea Theodore's fluky double overtime winner ricocheted off the yellow dasher, off Bussi's skate and in.

The puck just skipped over Jordan Martinook's stick after it hit the end boards. Martinook said he watched the replay in the last few days "about a hundred times" and wished so badly he was able to intercept that bouncing puck.

"I thought he was incredible," Martinook said of Bussi. "I think the first shot he took was a penalty shot, and then comes in, and he was just so calm for the whole time, and just gave us a chance to come back. So that's what you want from your goalie. Let's be honest, he's been great for us all year. He hasn't got a chance to get in there (in the playoffs), and he did. He played really, really well."

Bussi, 27, won 31 of his 39 games during his first NHL season.

"I think he's just grateful for the moment," Brind'Amour said. "Every day, he's just happy to be here, grateful for any opportunity that he can get. And to be honest, pretty much every time we've given him any type of opportunity, he seizes the moment. That's what he did the other night, too. He came in, clearly was solid."

The Marner approach

One of the stories of the series and the playoffs at large has been the play of Mitch Marner, who had himself a four-point night with a natural hat trick in Game 3. He's now the leading contender for the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP without any particularly obvious competitors.

Marner, of course, is a player the Hurricanes came close to acquiring last season and someone they'd seen plenty of thanks to his time in Toronto. He had 20 points in 20 games against Carolina while with the Maple Leafs. Now he's got seven in the final, and Vegas is winning his five-on-five minutes 8-3 with a 14-6 edge in high-danger chances.

"I don't really see any difference, unfortunately," Brind'Amour said. "It's one of the more elite players of the game. We've got to find a way to not give him the free ones. He's going to find ways to make (other plays), but those ones where he's all alone, those are the ones we can definitely do a better job of."

A chunk of his minutes have come against Carolina's second line of Logan Stankoven, Jackson Blake and Taylor Hall. William Carrier's injury scrambled the Hurricanes' lines in Game 3, but one constant was that with Hall on the ice, Carolina has largely played Marner to a draw; Vegas holds a 2-1 edge in goals but scoring chance totals have largely been even.

Hall's approach to slowing Marner down: "Just stay near him. You don't shadow him, but when he gets the puck and he moves it, they're looking to get it right back to him all over on the ice, and I don't blame him. He's a fantastic hockey player."



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"He's very hard to get a lick on. He's hard to hit. He's slippery, and he's more sturdy than he looks. So, yeah, there's a few things we can do, but if he's playing like that and scoring goals like that, it gives them an advantage, and we have to figure that out."

Cool with chaos

There was a moment, Hall said, when the chaos of Game 3 — featuring a pair of disallowed Vegas goals, Carolina's second-period short-circuit, Marner's hat trick and the Golden Knights' blown four-goal lead — registered with him on the bench.

"I looked at (Shayne Gostisbehere), I think it was like two minutes left in the third period, and we were both like, 'What the eff is going on,'" Hall said.

Both he and Brind'Amour, though, said they're comfortable with the overall style of play.

"Whatever the way the game goes, we seem to be able to play it," Brind'Amour said. "If it's a 0-0 game, no problem. If it's a high-scoring game, we seem to find a way to fit in that too. And maybe that wasn't necessarily the case in past years. But this year, certainly, it's been very evident."

Part of the reason that's the case, of course, is because of the added impact of players like Hall and Stankoven, who played less front-and-center roles in the 2025 postseason, and the addition of Nikolaj Ehlers, a potentially game-breaking talent. The result has been a fireworks factory of a series, which seems to have caught some people by surprise.

Not Hall.

"I know the discourse was a little weird before and people weren't as excited about this finals," he said, "but I think it's pretty obvious it's the two best teams in the league going at it. It's been so tight-checking and physical, and they're big guys over there. The games have been crazy. So no lead is safe. If we get up at some point, we know what's coming. We know that there's the possibility that anything can happen. So it's been fun to play in. We'd love to be up 2-1 or up 3-0."

Memorable day off for Canes

Most NHL players and coaches would love to play the next game immediately in the playoffs. As tough as Saturday's ending was for Carolina, it probably was beneficial for the Hurricanes to have these two days between Games 3 and 4 to reset physically and mentally.

After watching video Sunday morning, the Canes had a team event at the 130,000-square-foot UFC Apex.

Not to fight Conor McGregor or somebody like that, to be clear.

"We got to use all of their cold tubs and hot tubs and their treatment rooms," Martinook said. "We got a stretch in, we played some soccer. Had a good day.

"Once you're in a series, you just get in such a rhythm. Yesterday it's a great day to be able to take your mind away from it. Like you don't even think about hockey. Obviously, the time change here, we have some time after the games out here that you can kind of decompress and watch how that unfolded the other night. This is a destination for a lot of people, people got family here, and you can kind of go spend some time with them, get away from it, and then get dialed in once today hits."

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1393477 Carolina Hurricanes

Who can catch Mitch Marner? The Conn Smythe field is running out of time

Michael Russo, Chris Johnston8-9 minutes 08/06/2026

LAS VEGAS — At this point, the Conn Smythe Trophy race isn't really a race anymore.

Barring an astonishing twist over the remainder of the Stanley Cup Final, if the Vegas Golden Knights win, Mitch Marner has separated himself from the field to such a degree that it's difficult to construct a realistic alternative case. He's leading the playoffs in scoring, has delivered in virtually every big moment (like scoring the fastest hat trick in Stanley Cup Final history Saturday night) and now sits at the center of a Vegas team that is two wins away from its second championship in four years.

The challenge isn't finding reasons Marner should win. It's finding reasons somebody else might become the playoff MVP even if Carolina comes back and wins its second Stanley Cup in 20 years.

If Vegas wins, it's hard at this point to even consider a way one of his teammates can overtake the first-year Golden Knights star.

Brett Howden leads all playoff performers with 13 goals. Logan Stankoven leads the Canes with 10. Before the series, it looked like Golden Knights goalie Carter Hart and Hurricanes goalie Freddie Andersen were going to be formidable competition for Marner. But they have each allowed 12 goals in the Stanley Cup Final with Andersen getting pulled in an epic Game 3 and Hart giving away a four-goal lead in the third period before Shea Theodore's double-overtime winner saved him and the Golden Knights.

The favorite

Mitch Marner

Where do we start?

Marner has been a driver of the Golden Knights' success all spring, picking up at least a point in 16 of 19 playoff games. He scored the series-clinching goal when they eliminated the Utah Mammoth in Round 1 and produced the highlight of the entire playoffs the night they eliminated the Anaheim Ducks in Round 2, shaking off a defender and pulling the puck through his legs before scoring just a minute into that game. He's registered a point in all three games of the Stanley Cup Final so far and delivered a career-defining performance in Game 3, scoring a natural hat trick while adding an assist in a span of 6:26.

Not only does Marner sit at 28 points for the playoffs, eight ahead of his next best teammate in Jack Eichel, he's also a league-best plus-16. He's been an all-situations superstar.

It's fair to say he left any questions about his ability to deliver in the biggest moments back in Toronto.

If the Canes rally

In the history of Conn Smythe voting, only six players from losing teams won the trophy, including Connor McDavid two years ago. But so many Canes offset each other that we could see a scenario where Marner becomes the seventh if Carolina comes back and wins the Cup.

Just look at it this way: The strongest evidence Marner has effectively clinched the Conn Smythe may be that Carolina doesn't have a consensus challenger. Stankoven, Taylor Hall, Nikolaj Ehlers, Jackson Blake and Andersen each have pathways to the trophy. Carolina's case is divided among several candidates while Vegas' case is concentrated almost entirely in one.

Taylor Hall



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Carolina's leading point-producer in these playoffs and the left winger on the most dominant individual forward line in these playoffs. The Hall-Stankoven-Blake trio sits at 72 percent expected goals in 180 even-strength minutes together this spring. Part of the challenge, at least when it comes to identifying Conn Smythe candidates, is deciphering who deserves the most credit for that. While Stankoven has shot it in the net more often, Hall has been a zone-entry machine who plays with speed and heaviness. He's been a difference-maker who could still build a playoff MVP case if he plays a central role in a championship comeback.

Logan Stankoven

Tied for second in the NHL with Marner and Pavel Dorofeyev with 10 goals, the 5-foot-8 forward has been a ball of energy for the efficient second line from the start of the postseason.

He has scored big goals on the line with Hall and Blake, the biggest coming in Game 2 of the final when the Canes needed somebody to step up in the middle of the third period with absolutely nothing going on. Out of nowhere, off a faceoff, Stankoven won a puck battle against the bigger Rasmus Andersson and scored a huge goal to spark the Canes comeback en route to an overtime victory on Seth Jarvis' power-play goal.

As coach Rod Brind'Amour said after the game, Stankoven may be undersized, but you can't measure how big this kid's heart is.

Jackson Blake

One third of the proficient Stankoven line, Blake is shifty as can be and has had a postseason full of big plays.

While he has had a somewhat quiet Stanley Cup Final, former NHL forward Jason Blake's son scored the series-clinching goal against Philadelphia and exemplifies the heart and grit of this relentless Carolina team.

Nikolaj Ehlers

Ehlers scored the first two goals of this Stanley Cup Final by demonstrating the kind of panache no other Hurricanes skater is capable of. He's the master of the quick strike and would need to build a Conn Smythe case based more on narrative than sheer numbers. Basically, it would take a monster individual performance in the business end of this series, but given Ehlers' skill set it can't be ruled out entirely.

Frederik Andersen

Andersen ran through the first three rounds with a 12-1 record, but after allowing 12 goals in the first three games of this series, he was pulled after a four-goal second period by the Golden Knights in Game 3 and now there's discussion on whether or not he'll actually start Game 4.

Andersen has allowed three or more goals in nine straight games against Vegas, so there's definite reasoning to come back with Brandon Bussi after he allowed one goal on 19 shots in Game 3 in relief of Andersen.

Andersen had a terrific postseason before this series, giving up two or fewer goals in 12 starts and playing tremendously in the close-out game of the conference final against Montreal despite finding out about the tragic loss of his mentor and agent Claude Lemieux the day before.

If Vegas wins and it's not Marner

Marner is such a favorite to win if Vegas wins that five Carolina players have better odds to win the Conn Smythe than the next-best Golden Knight. Here's a look at the contenders, though they would need to have monster games the rest of the series to overtake Marner.

Brett Howden

Howden leads the Golden Knights with 13 goals — tied with Jonathan Marchessault's franchise record when he won the Conn Smythe in 2023.

He scored in Game 1 as Vegas rallied from an early deficit. He scored twice in Game 2 before the Canes rallied. His 13 goals is one more than he had in the entire regular season.

Jack Eichel

Three years ago, inside the Golden Knights organization, it was clear they felt the wrong guy won the Conn Smythe. Eichel led them with 26 points — the team record for a postseason before Marner's current 28.

Eichel has been good this go-around too but not as dominant, with 20 points in 21 games.

Shea Theodore

Theodore has been sensational, scoring six times and tied for the league lead amongst defensemen with 16 points. He has two overtime winners, is plus-14 and had three points in Vegas' Game 1 comeback.

"Shea's a hell of a player," Golden Knights coach John Tortorella said Sunday. "I think he's done this before. He's been a big part of the success of this organization. Quite honestly, when I got here during the regular season part of it, we were asking for more. I thought there were some struggles in certain parts of his game. But he's taken off since playoffs started. He gets it."

Carter Hart

Hart was arguably Marner's biggest competition heading into the Final, but 12 goals allowed in three games likely changed that. He's still 14-5 with a .915 save percentage and 2.44 goals-against average, but that's not overtaking Marner.

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1393478 Carolina Hurricanes

What should NHL teams try to copy from the final four Stanley Cup contenders?

Shayna Goldman 10-12 minutes 08/06/2026

Teams that miss the playoffs, or get eliminated early, have extra time to strategize for next season — and a chance to narrow in on and study the best contenders in the league.

But there's a difference between trying to replicate another team's success and learning from it. No one can become a carbon copy of a past champion, no matter how hard many try.

Just look at how some teams jump at the chance to buy a contender's loose change or cap casualties instead of looking for their own version of that player. Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow are prime examples of it: The Tampa Bay Lightning let both walk as free agents, the New York Rangers and Calgary Flames overpaid for both, and Tampa looked for the next version of that type of utility player. That's bound to happen again this summer, when the Vegas Golden Knights are forced to make tough salary cap decisions.

The lessons don't have to be that literal. And they don't only come from the finalists or eventual Stanley Cup champ, either. There are big concepts and ideas worth applying from all four conference finalists that can help the other 28 teams understand what it takes to contend.

It's hard to win in this league

The Colorado Avalanche, in theory, did everything right.

When the Avs looked too top-heavy in 2023-24, management went on a spending spree last season to bolster the supporting cast around Cale



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Makar and Nathan MacKinnon. When it seemed like there was maybe too much roster turnover ahead of the postseason and too little time to build chemistry, the team went into 2025-26 with an incredibly deep roster.

And yet it wasn't enough.

Colorado had an ideal path — first through the weakest playoff team in the West in the Los Angeles Kings, and by the time they faced another contender, the Minnesota Wild were already pretty beaten up. The Avalanche were set up for success heading into Round 3 ... until they ran into the Golden Knights. It's a reminder that regular-season success only carries so far. Even when a team does everything right to be on the best possible track in this system, it still may not be enough.

It's not just that the Avs lost in the Western Conference final, it's how they lost. In a momentum-crushing sweep, Makar couldn't be replaced by committee, the power play was neutralized again and depth scoring couldn't make up for a quiet top six.

Some teams just need to get to the playoffs to really cook. Look how much the Edmonton Oilers struggled in 2024 and 2025, before crushing the Western Conference and reaching the Stanley Cup Final in back-to-back years. Look at how the Florida Panthers leveled up when it mattered most last spring. And to an extent, look at how Vegas built up steam in the playoffs after an up-and-down regular season.

Star power matters. Depth matters. Chemistry matters. Adversity matters. Injuries matter. So do a ton of other factors, and striking that balance in the playoffs is a different animal than the regular season.

It's a lesson in just how hard it is to build a contender with longevity in this league, one that doesn't just compete all year but can win multiple championships.

Even more telling could be what comes next. It could be a defining moment in this window, because the weight of contending comes for every team eventually.

The blueprint for a quick but measured rebuild

The Montreal Canadiens finished last in the standings in 2021-22 with a 22-49-11 record and 55 points. Just four years later, they reached the Eastern Conference final.

Montreal was the first team to pull that off since the 2011 Lightning. It's a rare turnaround in today's NHL; only five teams have followed a similar path in the last 38 years, as James Mirtle wrote last month.

What worked in Montreal's favor was that their previous general manager, Marc Bergevin, found foundational players like Cole Caufield and Nick Suzuki and extended the latter to an eight-year deal a month before getting fired in November 2021. Jakub Dobeš was drafted under Bergevin, too.

The key is what team president Jeff Gorton and new GM Kent Hughes did to move the needle around them. Montreal drafted rising core players like Juraj Slafkovský and Ivan Demidov in the top five, along with Lane Hutson late in Round 2. More importantly, the team built a strong system to foster their development and help them reach their star ceilings.

Management bet on reclamation projects like Alex Newhook, Kirby Dach and Alexandre Texier. The team knew when to (sparingly) add veterans, including Mike Matheson and Phillip Danault, and when to leverage draft picks and prospects for players in the right age range for this process, like Noah Dobson and Zack Bolduc.

It's bigger than just player acquisitions — it's the top-down organizational buy-in to the process that has trickled into all levels of decision-making, including the decision to hire Martin St. Louis despite his lack of coaching experience and trusting him to help this team turn the corner after some tough stretches. It's the fact that the team maintained this measured

approach after last year's surprise playoff berth. And it's all built towards the start of what should be a long window of contention.

It creates a blueprint that shows how to execute a rebuild quickly and efficiently, when some teams fall into a long, grueling process. Any team starting the process could learn how to fully buy in. The San Jose Sharks and Philadelphia Flyers, who are ready to take the next steps, could learn something. So could the Toronto Maple Leafs, who may be trying to follow the St. Louis model in considering an elite former player and hockey mind like Joe Pavelski as their head coach.

Write your own narratives

No matter how much Mitch Marner thrived in the regular season, he was never thought of as a playoff player. In nine years and 70 playoff games in Toronto, he put up 63 points, and left his team wanting more — more scoring, more clutch moments and overall more "dang in him."

In just 19 games with the Golden Knights this spring, he has 28 points and a 2.11 Game Score, and may be on his way to winning the Conn Smythe Trophy.

Vegas didn't buy into all of the narratives that have swirled around Marner throughout his career. They went all-in on his skill and trusted him to write his own. And it's not the first time the Golden Knights have operated this way.

Go back a few months to when John Tortorella was hired and questions arose around whether he would crush a player like Marner's creativity, or back to when Jack Eichel was acquired despite not having a postseason track record. Eichel quickly showed what a winner he could be in Vegas, all the way to the Stanley Cup (and the Conn Smythe conversation), in just his first NHL playoff experience.

The Golden Knights have been willing to give players clean slates throughout their existence. It's a mentality that goes back to the expansion draft, when management gave players like William Karlsson a chance to break out. And that's important in a league that sometimes gets too into the habit of groupthink.

It's become a defining characteristic of their team history that has clearly paid off, and not just with a Stanley Cup in 2023. Vegas has become a destination for players because of management's willingness to give players a chance to prove themselves — impressive for a team that's gained a reputation for being absolutely ruthless in their commitment to winning. That is another important lesson from the Golden Knights over the years, along with their willingness to make a coaching change at a unique point in the season, and how to build a contender without the draft.

But when the Golden Knights make big cuts again this summer to fit under the salary cap and find a new batch of misfits, this will be a core strategy that helps this team extend its window.

Know your identity and how to build on it

The Carolina Hurricanes' system is bigger than just the X's and O's of the game. It's outright become their identity over the years.

It's easy to think of it, on the most basic level, as an aggressive forecheck that's supported by stingy defense. And for years, it was that above all else. But it's actually become broader than that, as GM Eric Tulsky explained on "The Athletic Hockey Show" earlier this postseason.

"Our core philosophy isn't really about dump and chase or forecheck, it's really about putting the other team under pressure," Tulsky said.

Swarming off the forecheck is one way to do it, but so is beating opponents in transition. With additions like Sean Walker, Taylor Hall and Logan Stankoven in 2024-25, along with K'Andre Miller and Nikolaj Ehlers last summer, this team now has the players to execute that.



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"The more talent we have and the more ability we have to beat them through the neutral zone and put the pressure on them in the D-zone and off the rush, the more we're going to do that," Tulskey said. "Adding that kind of skill and creativity to keep layering that on our game has always been a part of the plan."

It's been a multi-step process for the Hurricanes over the years. Carolina had to 1) identify its own strengths, 2) pinpoint ways to expand on them, 3) scout (and acquire) players to fill those voids, and then 4) get the best out of them. This year, the team's front office and coaching staff have unquestionably done that.

As easy as it may seem to add rush threats, not every player necessarily fits into the Canes' system seamlessly. A contender can't over-rely on one-dimensional players, either. Someone like Stankoven can play the Canes' way and add more versatility. Miller can help facilitate the breakout and defend well.

Emphasizing more transition play may have helped the Canes' wear and tear, too, which has been a problem in postseasons past. Instead of always battling along the boards, on some shifts, the team just never loses the puck. Ehlers' dynamic play has done that alongside Jordan Staal, turning a pure forechecking line into a multi-dimensional threat and potentially helping manage energy levels along the way.

So the lesson isn't necessarily to copy the Hurricanes' tactics. It's to learn from how a team turned X's and O's into an identity, mastered it and then figured out how to integrate more styles to expand the system.

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