



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

The News & Observer

Carolina Hurricanes take commanding 3-2 series lead after Game 5 win over Vegas

By: Chip Alexander, Justin Pelletier

It wasn't Game 7, but it almost felt like it.

The Carolina Hurricanes (Shopping Cart IconShop Canes Fan Gear) and Vegas Golden Knights went at it Thursday in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final, and it was 60 minutes of hard checks and fights for pucks and a bruising battle to find open ice and any kind of scoring chance.

The Canes emerged with 4-2 victory after a game of big-boy hockey at the Lenovo Center, grabbing a 3-2 lead in the series and putting them on the brink of the franchise's second Stanley Cup.

The Canes go back to Las Vegas for Game 6 on Sunday. The Cup will be in T-Mobile Arena. Only the Canes can win it that night.

"Their backs are against the wall, so it's going to take everything we have," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "That's the bottom line, and we're going to need everybody to give everything they have, and we'll have to find a way."

Neither team had won two straight games in a Cup Final filled with funky plays and blown leads and unpredictable and sudden momentum swings.

And, in the Canes' case, a goalie change.

Brandon Bussi quickly became a fast trending story after relieving Frederik Anderson in the third period of Game 3, winning Game 4 in the rookie's first career playoff start and then starting again Thursday before a Lenovo Center crowd shouting his name.

Coming off the huge road win in Game 4 that tied the series, the Canes returned home to a rollicking arena. One of the heroes from the 2006 Cup champions, former defenseman Mike Commodore, had on his signature bathrobe as he furiously cranked the warning siren before the game and the puck went down.

And Vegas scored on its first shot of the game for a 1-0 lead. Pavel Dorofeyev, who had two goals in the game, converted on a power play, his first goal in the Cup Final.

The response?

Staal scored, again -- and historically, again.

Andrei Svechnikov had two power-play goals.

And Sebastian Aho, who has been more of a playmaker than goal-scorer in the playoffs, went top shelf after a Sean Walker pass for a 3-1 lead in the second period, unleashing an upper-cut in celebration.

Staal has six goals in the Stanley Cup Final and became the first player to score in five straight games to start a Cup Final since Jean Beliveau in 1956. The other two: Maurice Richard (1951) and Cyclone Taylor (1918).

Staal's sprawling backhander while flat on the ice was the winning goal in Game 4, not the most nimble of shots, but in the net. He scored on a redirect of an Ehlers pass for a 1-1 tie Thursday -- the first of Ehlers' three assists -- and other good looks as he powered his way around the crease.

The Canes continued to surge on the power play. Svechnikov saw to that, tying the score in the second period with a blast from the top of the right circle, and adding his second in the third period off a slick Ehlers pass for a 4-1 lead.

Vegas captain Mark Stone was called for a double-minor high-sticking penalty in the third after getting his stick under the shield of defenseman Jalen Chatfield and almost yanking off his helmet. Chatfield was nicked over his right eye but returned to the game.

The Canes, after struggling though the playoffs, have power-play goals in four straight games.

The Canes' third delay-of-game penalty, for flipping the puck over the glass, resulted in a 6-on-4 power play for Vegas after pulling goalie Carter Hart.

Bussi's two stops on Tomas Hertl, with 1:20 left in regulation, essentially sealed the win. Bussi finished with 23 saves for his second straight win.

"We were able to manage their pushes tonight. That was really big," Bussi said. "And when we got going we were able to score on our chances."

"It's been fun. We're playing hockey at the highest level. It's been fun to be a part of it."

There were some blemishes in the win. Ehlers twice was called for penalties for delay of game for flipping the puck over the glass from the defensive zone, and defenseman K'Andre Miller was called for a third.

Ehlers called it his worst game of the playoffs, and noted he would hear about his mistakes from his father, a European hockey coach. To which Brind'Amour quipped: "I hope so."

"Everyone is going to have nights where you have mistakes, but you can have a positive impact on the game," Brind'Amour said. "He found a way to contribute."

The Knights lost center William Karlsson to an upper body injury after a big hit from Walker in the game, and Vegas coach John Tortorella said he likely would not return in the series.

After the game, Tortorella was defiant, promising a Game 7.

"We'll be back here," he said. "I'm going to leave my clothes here. They'll be in the hotel. We'll be back here."

But first, the return to Last Vegas. Again, the Cup will be in Las Vegas.

A new goalie wrinkle for the Hurricanes?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Bussi started Game 5 for the Carolina Hurricanes, of course.

But before the game, that was still officially in doubt. Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour answered the question Thursday morning almost before it was finished.

No, he said, he had nothing to say about the Canes' lineup for Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights at Lenovo Center.

"Everybody's available," he said.

That theoretically meant goalie Frederik Andersen, who missed Game 4 in Las Vegas on Tuesday and was not at Thursday's morning skate. He did skate earlier Thursday morning, Brind'Amour said.

But he was not on the ice or on the bench for Game 5.

Pyotr Kochetkov was the backup for Game 5, as he had been in Game 4. Andersen, 36, had started the first 16 games of the playoffs.

And in another twist, the AHL transaction wire on Thursday noted that another goalie is on his way to Raleigh: Carolina recalled Amir Miftakhov from Chicago. Miftakhov stepped in for the Wolves in Games 6 and 7 of their conference championship series when regular starter Cayden Primeau was unable to play. The Wolves won the series and start the Calder Cup Final on Friday.

Brind'Amour said again Thursday, as he has many times, that he leans on goaltender coach Paul Schonfelder in reaching a final decision on the starter and getting feedback on their play from practice. Brind'Amour said a minute-long conversation with Schonfelder about Andersen on Tuesday resulted in Bussi being the starter.

"He knows those guys. That's his job," Brind'Amour said. "Paulie, when it comes to the goaltending, is 100 percent the guy in charge. I would say our views always seem to line up."

Carter Hart was again the Vegas starter. Hart had allowed four goals in each of the Stanley Cup Final games, and has

not looked overly comfortable in net during a wild series. Through Game 5, Hart has an .861 save percentage in the series.

Brind'Amour '06 vs Staal 2026?

One question posed to Hurricanes coach Brind'Amour before Game 5, bringing a grin from the coach, is how Brind'Amour in 2006 would have fared against Staal in 2026, center vs. center.

"Well ..." Brind'Amour said. "I can tell you, and I forget the years, but I did line up against Jordan Staal in 2009 maybe, and that didn't go very well.

"I guess that answers that question. I'll leave it at that."

Staal was with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2009, winning the Cup that year as the third center behind Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. Brind'Amour was nearing the end of his career.

Torts takes in Knicks' comeback

Vegas coach John Tortorella said he was watching Wednesday as the New York Knicks made their incredible comeback to beat the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA Finals.

"I wanted to go to bed but when it got down to 15, you knew something stupid was going to happen," he said Thursday. "And I'm just saying the same stupid stuff is happening in our series."

The Cup Final has made for some tight games and stupid bounces. Staal scored the winner in Game 4 after he fell over his own feet, swatting at the puck. Shea Theodore's winner for Vegas in double overtime came after a bounce off the end boards that hit Bussi's left skate.

"There have been a lot of emotional swings, exciting games, and tough games for a player with the ups and downs," Staal said Thursday.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

The Athletic

When the Carolina Hurricanes needed a star, Andrei Svechnikov finally looked like one

By: Michael Russo

RALEIGH, N.C. — Back in October, Andrei Svechnikov looked like a player searching for himself.

The explosive winger who can dominate games with his speed, strength and shot spent long stretches looking strangely invisible. The goals didn't come. The hits weren't there. The confidence seemed to ebb.

Coincidentally, when the Hurricanes got to Las Vegas during a long early road trip, Svechnikov was demoted to the fourth line. Coach Rod Brind'Amour said he was disappearing too much and they'd need him, especially come playoff time.

As Svechnikov went the first eight games of the season without a goal on only 15 shots, chatter started throughout the NHL. What the heck was going on? GMs around the league were paying attention, wondering if things could get messier and Svechnikov could be on the move.

But one person who was not worried — well, besides Svechnikov — was Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsky. During a sitdown with The Athletic at the team hotel in Las Vegas in late October, Tulsky wasn't bothered one iota about his top-line winger skating a dozen minutes a night in a bottom-six role: "He has been a difference-maker in the lineup and will be a difference-maker in the lineup again."

Thursday night, when the Hurricanes most needed him, Svechnikov scored two power-play goals to help the Hurricanes to a 4-2 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights to drag Carolina to the precipice of its second Stanley Cup title in franchise history.

Top Plays from Golden Knights @ Hurricanes

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In a jubilant locker room after the game, the soft-spoken Canes GM was reminded of that October interview.

"Look, he's a great player, he's extremely skilled, he's big and strong and physical," Tulsky told The Athletic. "He's the kind of player you need in the playoffs, and whether the puck's going in the net or not, he can make a difference on any shift. And tonight he showed that.

"His skills have always been there, and sometimes it's clicking and sometimes it isn't. But I was never worried that he wouldn't come around."

What was so impressive about Svechnikov at the start of the season was that as he started getting scrutiny from fans and media, he remained largely positive. After a six-game road trip, Svechnikov returned to Carolina and faced the music of a group of reporters on the morning of a game against, you guessed it, Vegas. He didn't whine about his role. He didn't

complain about Brind'Amour's early-season tough love. He made clear he wasn't about to march into Tulsky's office and say it was time to move on.

He simply said he wasn't good enough and he needed to find his game. But he was not frustrated by his role. He was positive.

"If you see me break a stick, then there is frustration," Svechnikov kidded at the time. "You stay positive. If you go negative, then it's going to get worse and worse. So I try to stay positive. It's fine. Maybe for some (on the outside) it's a bigger deal. I'm on the fourth line, but for me, it's not that big of a deal. I've been there — maybe not in the start of the year, but I've been there many times, so it's fine, totally fine."

Later that night, Svechnikov scored his first goal of the season and had four shots on goal. He scored the next game, and three games after that, and the next game after that. He finished the regular season with a career-high 31 goals and 70 points.

"He's an incredibly professional athlete, who from his conditioning to his handling of the media to his handling of game situations, he is extremely mature," Tulsky said Thursday night. "He plays with an edge and a lot of emotion, but he still manages to keep his mindset in the right place and make sure that he's pushing the team forward whenever he can."

Svechnikov said after Thursday's game that those first 10 games of the season were tough.

But he was proudest of the fact, "I tried to always fight through it, and it doesn't matter what's happening (on the outside). And I always try to stay positive, and that's what kind of happened, and I think I had my best season of my career, and right now as a team we got the best playoffs so far."

Svechnikov already has 84 playoff games under his belt, and that's with missing the 2023 playoffs with a torn ACL. Last year, during Carolina's run to the conference final, he scored eight goals and 12 points in 15 games. But this postseason, he's been a little quiet, entering Thursday's game with four goals.

"He got it going (in the regular season), and in the playoffs here tonight, I hope this kick-starts him because we need him scoring goals like he did tonight," Brind'Amour said.

Nikolaj Ehlers assisted on two of Svechnikov's goals, the second one being a back-door slam dunk where Svechnikov said he knew Ehlers would find him.

"To be honest, you know what kind of passes Fly can make, but I just worked kind of back door and I knew he was going to make that pass because he just sees everything on the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

ice, and I just kind of had to stick out my stick there and he's going to hit it and he did," Svechnikov said.

But Svechnikov's reaction showed how much he was waiting for this breakout, and in such a huge game.

"He's the hardest worker of this group, he wants it more than anything, and he continues to try to make himself better and find ways to contribute," said captain Jordan Staal, who has six goals in five games this series. "There's ups and downs in everyone's careers, and it was a slow start for him, but he continued to build his game this year, and tonight was a big one for us."

At his best, the 26-year-old Svechnikov is one of the most physically gifted forwards in hockey, capable of taking over a game almost by himself. At his worst, he can disappear for stretches that leave everyone wondering where Carolina's most dangerous winger went.

But on Thursday night, with Carolina unwilling to return to Vegas with a 3-2 series deficit, Svechnikov delivered the first multi-power-play-goal game of his postseason career and the second by a Hurricanes player in a Stanley Cup Final, joining Eric Staal in the 2006 final.

Every shift seemed to carry purpose. Every puck battle mattered. Every touch felt dangerous.

For one night at least, Svechnikov authored the kind of June performance Carolina has been waiting for and one Tulskey almost expected way back in October.

"This is the biggest thing in my life, personally, but thank God we won that game and obviously our focus right now ... in our mind, we've got one more win to do here and we're all focused for the next game," Svechnikov said.

The Hurricanes needed Brandon Bussi to avoid disaster. He's given them much more

By: Sean Gentille

RALEIGH, N.C. — Here's one reason the Carolina Hurricanes find themselves one win away from taking a lap with the Stanley Cup: their coach, after the 60 minutes that put them in that position, was still combing for nits.

"I didn't think we had a great first period, that's for sure," Rod Brind'Amour said on Thursday night. His team had just beaten the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2 in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final — a game that, after 20 minutes, was tied 1-1. "(In the second period) we kind of got our game going, I think. Poise, I'm not sure, I didn't like a lot of the stuff we were doing at times."

Here's another reason the Hurricanes, for the first time in the series, have full control over their championship destiny: Their goalie, thrown into the deep end after two months on bench-door duty, filled in the gaps.

Brind'Amour's team might not have had poise in its first 20 minutes of hockey. Brandon Bussi, the coach said, certainly did. And now, the 27-year-old goalie has taken what could've been a disaster for Carolina — what should've been, perhaps — and shaped it into a blessing.

We don't know why Frederik Andersen hasn't skated with his team since Saturday, and we're not going to guess. Brind'Amour said earlier in the week that Andersen, remarkable enough in the first half of the postseason to seemingly turn Bussi into the perma-backup, needed rest, and he's gotten two full games' worth.

We know now, though, that as it relates to his return (and with all due respect), Andersen shouldn't get to call his shot. Bussi looks rested. More often than not, he's looked ready. And on Thursday night, with Vegas' Carter Hart nearly completing his own pivot from Conn Smythe Trophy candidate to Guy On The Bench In A Baseball Cap, Bussi certainly looked like the best goalie in the series.

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He stopped 23 of the 25 shots he faced, saved nearly two goals more than expected and was at his best when Carolina

needed him the most — early, to help keep the game even at the first intermission, then late, with a multi-goal lead in a series where those have largely been a harbinger of doom.

Bussi isn't the most fundamentally sound goaltender you'll see. Ahead of the second round, an NHL scout compared his on-ice comportment to that of an "unmade bed," and it wasn't meant as a compliment. That aesthetic is a point of differentiation between Bussi and Andersen, a goalie who, when operating at 100 percent, plays a manual-perfect version of the position.

The similarities between the two, though, are crucial. Ask a Hurricane why they appreciate Andersen, and they'll say he has a knack for making the right save at the right moment. Carolina's all-pressure, all-the-time style means they almost always win the quantity battle. When they do allow chances, though, they can be prime. When Andersen is right, the Hurricanes believe in him to make them. When Bussi is right — which is right now — they say they believe in him, too.

"We have the confidence in (Bussi)," Carolina defenseman Sean Walker said. "He makes a ton of big saves. Even when there's breakdowns, we trust him back there — gives us tons of confidence to play our game and just be aggressive all night. Outstanding performance by him, and happy to see him get the win."

When asked about a flurry of saves he made in the third period, especially a handful as Carolina killed a penalty that began with a bit more than two minutes remaining in the game and the score 4-2, Bussi threw it back to one of his two quantifiable mistakes: a goal by Pavel Dorofeyev with 6:11 remaining. Dorofeyev pounced on a point-blank rebound like the (nearly) elite scorer he is, and the thermostat at Lenovo Center dialed up a bit.

"I think (if) I don't give up the second one, we don't really get to that point of hecticness," Bussi said, "but no give-up in our team, right? It's a battle. It's not always going to be pretty. We found a way to get that (penalty kill) and not give up a third one to really keep their push going."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Now, did he fight the puck at other times on Thursday night? Sure. He also won.

"He grinds, man," captain Jordan Staal — the other person Brind'Amour credited for helping Carolina survive the first period — said of Bussi. "He's a big boy that finds ways to stop pucks and give us a chance."

At the time, Staal was speaking at his locker. A few minutes before, he was speaking on ESPN, and he closed his interview with Emily Kaplan thusly: "(Bussi) played great these last two games, and we're going to need him to continue that."

They certainly do. And he should get the chance, even if he doesn't quite live out the fantasy version he played out as a kid in Long Island, imagining the kind of saves he'd make in a Cup-clinching win.

"Sliding cross-crease, two-pad stack, glove windmill, all the extra stuff that you probably won't see me do," Bussi said. "Yeah, I think it's cool to think back to that, and some of those thoughts are true, (by) being a part of it. It's cool to think about it, but it's one thing to actually do it. We got a lot to still do here, but it's nice to be one step closer."

One step closer, and 60 minutes away.

'Hurricane hockey' took over the Stanley Cup Final amid the Golden Knights' worst effort

By: Pierre LeBrun, Chris Johnston

RALEIGH, N.C. — John Tortorella all but guaranteed his Vegas Golden Knights will be back here for a seventh and deciding game of the Stanley Cup Final.

"We've got to find a way," Tortorella said. "I'm going to leave my clothes here, that's for sure. They'll be in the hotel."

For that to happen, Vegas will need to reverse what's apparent to anyone else. The Carolina Hurricanes continue to improve in this NHL championship series, while the Golden Knights look stuck in neutral.

In a series that was so even early on, with both teams struggling to wrestle enough control during wild back-and-forth games, unable to dictate with their brand of game for 60 minutes, what we saw on Thursday night was the Hurricanes playing the closest version of their best game that helped them romp through the opening three rounds.

"It's starting to look more and more like Hurricane hockey," captain Jordan Staal said after his team's 4-2 win Thursday night in Game 5.

Almost every Stanley Cup championship team in history has talked about its game improving as the series reached an end. It's exactly what we're seeing from Carolina, now one win away from its first Stanley Cup championship in 20 years.

"I honestly don't know if we've still gotten to our best hockey, but that's as close as it's been in this series," Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker said. "Earlier in the playoffs, you saw us really dominate and take over games. It didn't feel like the other teams were getting any chances at all. Tonight was pretty close to that. We'll look to do that in Vegas (in Game 6)."

With Carolina's shot suppression and its suffocation of the Vegas attack, Thursday night felt like a turning point in the series, the moment the Hurricanes finally got to the essence of their game.

"Yeah, I would say so," said winger Nikolaj Ehlers, who had three assists. "It's the closest to a full 60 that we've played in the last five games. And that's obviously a positive. But we also have to realize how we played, how we did those things, and how we need to play to give ourselves a chance. Because we're playing against a very good team. But yeah, definitely."

The contrast from both head coaches after the game Thursday night gave an indication of where their head space will be going into Sunday night. While Tortorella talked about leaving clothes behind for Game 7, Carolina's Rod Brind'Amour tried to downplay the return of Hurricanes hockey. He's making sure his team doesn't get ahead of itself with a Stanley Cup championship one win away.

Brind'Amour complained that his team wasn't very good in the first period Thursday night, before finally acknowledging that yes, that's finally a closer version of their game that came through in the final 40 minutes.

"I liked our effort for sure. I hope we're getting better," Brind'Amour said. "I think there's certain areas of our game that are starting to look like we need it to look. But I do think there's still another level that we're going to need to get to to find that next one."

If he feels Carolina still needs to find another level, what does that mean for Vegas? The Golden Knights had their worst game of the series on Thursday night, by any measure.

When the Golden Knights were last at the Lenovo Center, they were 10 minutes away from grabbing a 2-0 series lead on the road. How quickly fortunes can be reversed.

The biggest momentum swing in that Game 2, which has since echoed through the entire series, came when Tortorella made the questionable decision to challenge a no-goal call after Ivan Barbashev shoved the puck across the line in a goal-mouth scramble.

That ignited a dormant Hurricanes power play, with Staal (who else?) scoring on the ensuing delay-of-game penalty and Seth Jarvis adding the winner in overtime on another power play.

Carolina is 6-for-12 with the man advantage since Tortorella's failed challenge, with two more power-play goals in a Game 5 that pushed Vegas to the brink while raising serious questions about its ability to find answers.

As is his way, Tortorella only had limited interest in fielding questions afterward, but he made a point of promising that the Golden Knights were going to find a way to push this series to a Game 7.

"We'll be back here," he said. "We're just going to do it in a different order."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Vegas is likely going to have to do it without center William Karlsson, who left Game 5 during the second period with an upper-body injury after he took a hit from Sean Walker. Karlsson went to a local hospital during the game, according to a league source.

That's a significant loss. The Golden Knights' lineup found another gear when Karlsson returned from a lengthy injury layoff during the second round against Anaheim.

Tortorella at least has an extra day of preparation to sort out his lineup before his team faces elimination for the first time in these playoffs back home on Sunday night.

Tortorella started juggling his forward lines early in Thursday's game, moving leading scorer Mitch Marner alongside Jack Eichel and Mark Stone in an effort to spark his offense. It didn't work. They were outchanced and outshot in almost eight minutes together at even strength.

The snakebitten Eichel did pick up assists on Pavel Dorofeyev's two goals, one on a lovely cross-ice pass on the power play, but he didn't shy away from the need for more.

"Mitch, he's been phenomenal all playoffs and I thought we were able to generate some chances," Eichel said. "I would have liked to have capitalized on a few of 'em. But when you lose (Karlsson), obviously we're moving things around and guys are playing different situations and more minutes, this and that.

"Everyone else, as a whole, I think we all need to step up."

That would include goaltender Carter Hart, who surrendered four goals for a fifth straight game in this series. He's the first goalie in NHL history to do that. Still, Tortorella's conviction in his starter remains so strong that he dismissed a question about whether he considered sending in Adin Hill by saying "that could be the stupidest question I've heard."

Their backs against a wall, the Golden Knights are digging in.

They were in danger of missing the playoffs entirely when Tortorella was hired to replace Bruce Cassidy on March 30 with eight games remaining in the regular season. They've put together a dizzying run since. In order to lift the Cup again, they'll have to hand Carolina two straight losses – something that hasn't happened since Carolina's back-to-back set on Jan. 12 and Jan. 13.

"We've done it the hard way all year," Vegas defenseman Brayden McNabb said. "It's been that way. So, why not do it again, right?"

In the meantime, we are getting closer to a Conn Smythe Trophy decision. After Game 3, it sure looked like Mitch Marner's to lose, with the former Toronto Maple Leafs star lapping the playoff scoring field after his natural hat trick that night.

That feels like a long time ago. If the Hurricanes win one more game, it's tough to envision anything other than Staal lifting that trophy for the playoff MVP. The Hurricanes' captain scored yet again Thursday night, becoming the first player to score in each of the five opening games of a Stanley Cup Final since the great Jean Béliveau in 1956.

The surprising offensive outburst is a special feeling for the long-standing defensive wizard.

"It feels great," said the native of Thunder Bay, Ontario. "It's a good time to get hot. I'm trying to contribute any way I can. The puck's been going in and I'll continue to do all the things I have to do to help our team win games."

As Staal continues to help shut down Eichel in his defensive matchup, the goals keep pouring in. It's an incredible story by any measure.

"It's massive. Massive," Brind'Amour said. "You're not necessarily expecting him to put up those numbers, but when he does, it's like an added bonus. He deserves it. He's playing great. We got to get one more still. He knows it. He'll have our group ready."

Staal was already in Game 6 mode late Thursday night, because the former Cup champion — with Pittsburgh in 2009 — understands how hard the last victory will be.

"They have their back against the wall. It's going to be everything we have, bottom line," Staal said. "We need everybody. We've got to find a way."

Looks like they've found the Hurricanes way, just in time to tip this series in their favor.

"Last win's the toughest, but we're in a good position," Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsy told The Athletic. "The team's playing so well right now. So well. Up and down the lineup, we are playing to our potential in every spot, and that's special."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



Svechnikov scores twice, Hurricanes within win of Stanley Cup after 4-2 victory in Game 5

By: Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes have been patiently waiting for Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov to break through in the playoffs.

Game 5 might have been the moment.

Svechnikov scored twice on the power play, Aho added a highlight-reel goal and Brandon Bussi won the goaltending battle again to propel the Hurricanes to a 4-2 victory Thursday in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup final at Lenovo Center. Carolina, with a 3-2 series lead, is one win away from the franchise's second championship. Game 6 is Sunday at 5 p.m. EST in Las Vegas.

"We need to be hungry," said goaltender Bussi, who made 21 stops to earn his second straight win. "We're going there for Game 6, and we're probably going to see the best version of them."

The Hurricanes took control in the second period.

On a second consecutive power play, Svechnikov slid a shot through defenseman Jeremy Lauzon's legs and through the five-hole of Carter Hart (20 saves) to give Carolina a 2-1 lead it wouldn't relinquish at 11:58 of the middle frame.

"That was the kind of shooting mentality," Svechnikov said of the power play, which is 6 for 16 in the series. "I tried to get as quick a shot as possible, and, obviously, it worked out."

Aho doubled the lead at 17:51, slashing to the left circle and kicking a Sean Walker pass to his stick before roofing a shot over Hart to make it 3-1.

"All playoffs he's done, I think, really well," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Aho. "But man, if we can get that out of him, that's just a big bonus for our team."

Then with Brayden McNabb, Vegas' top penalty-killing defenseman, in the penalty box for a high-sticking double minor on Jalen Chatfield in the third period, Svechnikov got his second power play goal of the night and third of the series.

Shayne Gostisbehere made a seam pass to Nikolaj Ehlers in the left circle. Ehlers stopped it on his backhand and spun, firing a pass to Svechnikov for a back door tap-in and a 4-1 lead.

"I think we got the chemistry going on," Svechnikov said of the power play.

After four games of unpredictability and madness, Game 5 looked more like a scripted Carolina win.

The Hurricanes limited Vegas to 23 shots, and Brandon Bussi — making his second career playoff start — made the stops when needed, with Pavel Dorofeyev's pair of goals the only blemish on his night.

"I think the goalie, Bus, had a lot of poise," Brind'Amour said. "I think he looked pretty calm in there and obviously played a great game for us."

The only fault in the Hurricanes' game was their inability to keep the puck inside the playing surface. Carolina committed three delay-of-game penalties for shooting the puck over the glass, two by Ehlers, and the first gave the Golden Knights a 1-0 lead.

Vegas' power play, which entered the game 1 for 12 in the series, converted when a zone entry by Jack Eichel created a quick play that ended up on Dorofeyev's stick for his first goal of the series at 6:52 of the first period.

Ehlers redeemed himself by helping even the score just under five minutes later.

Chatfield pinched at the right point to keep Vegas from getting a clear, and Seth Jarvis won a race to the loose puck to pop it to Ehlers at the left point.

Ehlers saw Staal crashing the net, and he fired a pass that Staal redirected past Hart for his sixth goal of the series and eighth of the playoffs. He became the first player since 1956 to score in the first five games of the Cup final and first since 1973 to score in five consecutive games in the championship series.

"It's a good time to get hot," Staal said. "I want to contribute any way I can. The puck's been going in for me lately, and it's good timing."

Brind'Amour praised his captain's play and said he expects Staal to have his teammates prepared for a chance to bring the Stanley Cup back to Raleigh.

"He deserves it," Brind'Amour said. "He's playing great, but we've got to get that one more still, and he knows it. He'll have our group ready."

Notes: Staal was 14 of 19 on faceoffs. ... Vegas had a 15-6 high-danger scoring chance advantage at 5-on-5, according to NaturalStatTrick.com. ... Hart is the first goalie in NHL history to allow four or more goals in the first five games of a Stanley Cup final. ... Vegas center William Karlsson left the game after a hit by Walker in the second period and did not return. ... Forwards Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Nicolas Deslauriers, and defenseman Mike Reilly were healthy scratches for Carolina, as were goalies Frederik Andersen and Amir Miftakov.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



Big night from scoring stars, Bussi lead Hurricanes to Game 5 win, one victory from Stanley Cup

By: Brian Murphy, WRAL News

The Carolina Hurricanes lead the Vegas Golden Knights 3-2 in their best-of-seven Stanley Cup Final after a 4-2 win in Game 5 in Raleigh.

RALEIGH — The Carolina Hurricanes are just one win away from their second Stanley Cup, thanks to a trio of veteran goal scorers who have been with the franchise for the entirety of coach Rod Brind'Amour's tenure.

Carolina defeated the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2 in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday night at Lenovo Center in Raleigh to take a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series. Game 6 is Sunday in Las Vegas, where the Hurricanes can claim their first Cup since 2006 when Brind'Amour was team captain.

Other WRAL Top Stories

"This is the biggest win in my life personally. Thank God we won that game," said Hurricanes' forward Andrei Svechnikov, who scored two power-play goals. "Obviously, all focus right now. In our mind, we got one more win to do here."

Jordan Staal, the Hurricanes' current captain, scored for the fifth consecutive game to tie the game after a Vegas goal opened the scoring. Then it was veteran top-line forwards Andrei Svechnikov (two) and Sebastian Aho (one) with three goals in the final periods to give the Hurricanes the lead for good.

Staal joined the team in 2012 as part of a draft-day trade. Aho came aboard in 2016, two years before Svechnikov. The latter have never played for another franchise. Along with forward Jordan Martinook and defenseman Jaccob Slavin, the trio has been with Brind'Amour since he was promoted to head coach in 2018.

Now they may all get to hoist the Stanley Cup.

Perhaps as soon as Sunday night in the desert.

"It's going to be really hard," forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. It's going to be a really tough game, but we're excited for it. We're ready for it. This team has been working all year for moments like these and, especially, this moment."

Vegas coach John Tortorella promised his team would be back in Raleigh for a potential Game 7.

"We'll be back here," Tortorella said. He added: "I'm going to leave my clothes here. That's for sure. They'll be in the hotel."

On a night for the veterans and stars, it was one of Carolina's least experienced players that also delivered.

Rookie goaltender Brandon Bussi, a waiver wire pickup before the season who won 31 games for Carolina, secured his second straight win in the series. The Lenovo Center crowd gave Bussi the loudest cheer during pre-game introductions and chanted his name throughout the night as he made several key stops in his second postseason start.

"Bus had a lot of poise," Brind'Amour said. "I think he looked pretty calm in there and, obviously, played a great game for us."

Frederik Andersen started the first 16 games of the playoffs for Carolina, but the series is now in Bussi's hands. Andersen didn't dress for the second straight game.

Vegas forward Pavel Dorofeyev, who had been held pointless in the first four games of the Stanley Cup Final, opened the scoring in Game 5.

Dorofeyev scored on a power-play goal on an assist from Jack Eichel in front of the net. Eichel's pass went under the stick of Carolina defenseman Jalen Chatfield and found a streaking Dorofeyev alone on the right side of the net. He shoveled it past Bussi.

But the Hurricanes scored the next four goals to take command in a series that has now featured 39 goals.

And it just feels like Carolina captain Jordan Staal has all of them. He scored for the fifth straight game, tying the game at 1 in the first period. It was his sixth goal of the Final.

Staal has six goals in five games after he redirected a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers past Vegas goaltender Carter Hart with 8:14 left in the first period. His five goals in the first four games of a Final tied him with hockey immortals Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux.

Staal was once again in front of the net, a spot from which Tortorella said Staal is "killing us" after he had two goals in Game 4.

"Who got us back into it? Jordo," Brind'Amour said of the first period that he didn't like. "So we could take a breath and be like, 'No damage done.' I can't say enough about him."

In the second period, which had been a sore spot for Carolina in the series, the scoring stars got on the board. The Hurricanes had been outscored 9-1 in the second period in the series before Game 5.

Svechnikov's first goal was Carolina's fifth power-play goal of the series. He circled with the man advantage and fired a shot through Vegas goaltender Carter Hart's legs with 8:02 remaining in the second period.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

"We got the shooting mentality and looking for rebounds and I think we got the chemistry going," Svechnikov said of the power play.

Later, Aho took a pass from defenseman Sean Walker, stopped it with his skate, moved it to his stick and flipped a shot over Hart for his first goal of the series.

"He's played really well," Brind'Amour said. "Getting on the scoresheet, he knows he needs to do that. He's playing all the power plays, getting a lot of time to cash in. It doesn't mean you're not playing well. All playoffs, he's played really well, but, man, if we can get that out of him, that's just a big bonus for our team."

Svechnikov added a second power-play goal in the third period to extend the lead. Carolina has scored at least four goals in every game of the series. Hart has allowed exactly four goals in all five games, the first goalie to do that in Stanley Cup Final history.

"Big players showing up at a big time," Walker said of Svechnikov and Aho. "Those were huge goals for us. If they're scoring for us, we're definitely doing things right, and we're going to have success."

Tortorella was asked if he considered pulling Hart for the third period.

"That could be the stupidest question I've heard," he said.

In a series that has featured multi-goal comebacks in the first four games, Bussi made the lead hold up. Dorofeyev added

a second power-play goal in the third with 6:11 left, but Vegas got no closer despite some 6-on-4 time with the goalie pulled late in the game.

"I liked our game a lot," Bussi said. "I would have liked to have kept the second one out, so we could keep everybody calmer. But it happens. Our sacrifice there, those last six minutes, it was great to see. We never give up."

And now the Hurricanes are just a win away from the Cup. One win from the franchise's second title. One win from the 2026 team joining the 2006 team as champions. One win from Brind'Amour putting his name on the Cup a second time with the franchise — then as captain, now as coach.

"It's probably good to have a couple days in between, to be honest, because there's a lot going on now and it's not ideal," Brind'Amour said. "We got to get that all figured out and then get ready to play a game because we know how hard it's going to be."

The Carolina Hurricanes have reclaimed home-ice advantage in the Stanley Cup Final, though it hasn't mattered much in the series with the Vegas Golden Knights. The Hurricanes host Thursday's Game 5 with the best-of-seven series level at 2-2.

The Stanley Cup Final between the Vegas Golden Knights and Carolina Hurricanes has been must-see entertainment every night. One big reason is that no lead is safe.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



Recap: Canes One Win From The Cup After Game 5 Victory

By: Peter Dewar & Walt Ruff

Staal extends historic goal streak; Bussi stops 23 for second win in as many starts

RALEIGH, N.C. - Highlighted by a pair of goals from Andrei Svechnikov and a three-assist showing from Nikolaj Ehlers, the Carolina Hurricanes toppled the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2 on Thursday to take a 3-2 series lead in the 2026 Stanley Cup Final.

[GAME SUMMARY](#) | [BOX SCORE](#) | [BUY PLAYOFF TICKETS](#) | [PLAYOFF HUB](#)

An early delay-of-game penalty cost the Canes as Vegas took the first lead at 6:52, but the hosts remained unfazed. Just under five minutes later, Jordan Staal found twine for the fifth straight game, deflecting Ehlers' feed from the blue line to send the teams to intermission deadlocked at one.

Second periods had been a struggle for the Canes in recent games, but with the game hanging in the balance as it rounded the midway mark, two of their top dogs stepped up to flip the script.

First, it was Svechnikov electrifying the Raleigh faithful with a power-play snipe through the legs of Carter Hart at 11:58. Six minutes later, it was Sebastian Aho's turn. Taking a Sean Walker seam pass off his skate, Aho quickly worked the puck to his stick for a top-shelf finish at the side of the net.

Svechnikov's man-advantage magic came through again in the third period, after a scintillating setup from Ehlers in the high slot left him all alone for a tap-in and Carolina's largest lead of the night.

Vegas' Pavel Dorofeyev tucked home his second of the contest to cut that advantage back to two shortly after Svechnikov's double, but Brandon Bussi and Co. kept their opponent off the scoreboard the rest of the way. Notching his second career playoff win in as many starts, Bussi finished with 23 saves on 25 shots.

Stats & Standouts

Jordan Staal became the first player in more than 50 years to score in five straight Stanley Cup Final games, joining Yvan Cournoyer (5 GP in 1973 w/ MTL), Jean Beliveau (5 GP in 1956 w/ MTL), Maurice Richard (5 GP in 1951 w/ MTL) and Cyclone Taylor (5 GP in 1918 w/ VMI). No player has ever scored in six straight Cup Final contests.

Staal tied Brad Marchand (6 goals in 2025 w/ FLA at age 37) for the most goals in a Stanley Cup Final by a player age 37 or older.

Andrei Svechnikov scored his seventh and eighth career playoff power-play goals to tie Rod Brind'Amour and Seth Jarvis for the third-most in franchise history.

Svechnikov is also the second player in Hurricanes history to score two power-play goals in one game in the Stanley Cup Final, joining Eric Staal (Game 5 of 2006 Final).

Posting his fifth career multi-goal playoff game, Svechnikov surpassed Kevin Dineen (4) for sole possession of second-most in franchise history. The list is led by Sebastian Aho (7).

Nikolaj Ehlers became the 12th player in Stanley Cup Final history to record consecutive three-point games (10th in the past 103 years). Since 1923, only Wayne Gretzky (EDM, 1988) and Paul Coffey (EDM, 1985) have put up three straight games of three or more points.

Ehlers (3-5—8) now leads all players with eight points this series, tying the franchise record for points in a single Stanley Cup Final – Eric Staal also had eight in 2006.

Shayne Gostisbehere logged two assists and now boasts 12 points this postseason, surpassing Bret Hedican (2006) and Jaccob Slavin (2019) for the second-most by a Hurricanes/Whalers defenseman in a single playoff run. Only Frantisek Kaberle (13 - 2006) has more.

Brandon Bussi posted 23 saves to become the first goaltender in NHL history to make his first two career playoff starts in the Stanley Cup Final and win both games.

The Hurricanes became the second team in Stanley Cup Final history to score at least four goals in each of the first five games, joining the 1973 Canadiens (6 GP).

They Said It...

Rod Brind'Amour on the victory...

"I didn't think we had a great first period, that's for sure. But then we kind of got our game going. I didn't like a lot of the stuff we were doing at times, but I think Bus had a lot of poise. He looked pretty calm in there and obviously played a great game for us."

Nikolaj Ehlers discussing the two-goal second period, after Vegas had dominated second periods thus far this series...

"Our second periods up until today have been not good. Obviously, there were some things that we needed to change. I think today we were able to play a little more simple, making sure pucks were getting deep, and making sure we don't just change without looking behind you. I think that worked out pretty well."

Andrei Svechnikov after scoring two power play goals...



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

"I think we got to the simple things. The shooting mentality. Staalsy, the big horse just tipping pucks. We had a shooting mentality, looking for rebounds. I think we've got the chemistry going on."

Jordan Staal when asked about another goal-scoring performance...

"It feels great. It's a good time to get hot. I'm trying to contribute any way I can and just win games. The puck's been going in, and I'll continue doing all the things I have to do to help win games."

Brandon Bussi following a second win in as many starts...

"We like our game right now. It's fun to be a part of. We work hard, we sacrifice, we care about the guy next to each other. [It was] a good win tonight for us. We'll enjoy tonight, and tomorrow we move on to Game 6."

Sean Walker on being one win away from the Stanley Cup...

"It's pretty crazy. But, it's one win away. We'll just go into Vegas with the same mindset that we've had all playoffs, play our game, and hopefully get the result we want."

What's Next?

The Canes are scheduled to travel on Saturday ahead of Sunday's Game 6 in Vegas.

Next Game: Sunday, June 14 | SCF, Game 6 at Vegas | 8:00 p.m. ET | [How To Watch](#) | [Watch Parties](#)

Next Home Game (if necessary): Wednesday, June 17 | SCF, Game 7 vs. Vegas | 8:00 p.m. ET | [How To Watch](#) | [Tickets](#) | [Parking](#)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



Hurricanes hold off Golden Knights in Game 5, move within 1 win of Stanley Cup

By: Dan Rosen

Svechnikov scores 2 on power play, Staal extends goal streak for Carolina

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The big boys showed up in the biggest game of the year to date, and the Carolina Hurricanes are one win away from their first Stanley Cup championship in 20 years.

Jordan Staal scored for the fifth consecutive game, Andrei Svechnikov added two on the power play, Sebastian Aho scored his first of the series, Nikolaj Ehlers had three assists for his second straight three-point game, and Brandon Bussi made 23 saves in his second straight start.

Put it all together and the Hurricanes stormed to a 4-2 win against the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final at Lenovo Center on Thursday to take a 3-2 lead in the best-of-7 series.

Game 6 is at T-Mobile Arena (8 p.m. ET; ABC, SN, TVAS, CBC) on Sunday.

"This is the biggest win in my life, personally," Svechnikov said. "Thank God we won that game and obviously all focus right now in our mind is we've got one more win to (get) here."

Pavel Dorofeyev scored twice for Vegas and Carter Hart (20 saves) allowed four goals for the fifth consecutive game, the last two resulting in losses.

"We'll be back here," Vegas coach John Tortorella said. "We're just going to do it in a different order."

It's the first time the Golden Knights have lost consecutive games since Games 2 and 3 of the Western Conference First Round against the Utah Mammoth.

"I'm going to leave my clothes here, that's for sure," Tortorella later said. "They'll be in the hotel."

Vegas center William Karlsson left with what appeared to be an injury to his left arm stemming from a hit he took from Carolina defenseman Sean Walker at 8:19 of the second period. Karlsson went to the locker room during a stoppage at 8:35.

Tortorella said he didn't have an update, but he intimated that Karlsson, a center who plays in all situations for the Golden Knights, would not be available for Game 6 at least, saying "he's not going to be with us, probably."

"It's tough," Vegas center Jack Eichel said. "You lose somebody like 'Karl', who's so valuable to our team, has

been playing so well -- just means everybody else has to step up. He's a world-class player, he plays in all situations, he's extremely reliable in our own zone, and he creates a lot of offense. So, yeah, I mean, he's a huge part of our group."

Staal joined Yvan Cournoyer (1973, Montreal Canadiens), Jean Beliveau (1956, Canadiens), Maurice Richard (1951, Canadiens) and Cydnone Taylor (1918, Vancouver Millionaires) as the only players to score in five consecutive games in the Stanley Cup Final.

No one has ever scored in six straight games.

"Good company," Staal said, "but I'm looking for wins."

Now 37, Staal is also the first player in NHL history to have a five-game goal streak at age 18 or younger and 35 or older. His only other five-game goal streak came when he was 18 years old (Feb. 3-10, 2007).

"Doing it at his age just says a lot about him," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "He's our guy and he's our warrior, and I'm really happy for him."

Bussi is the first goalie in NHL history to make his first two career playoff starts in the Stanley Cup Final and win both. He has allowed six goals on 65 shots (.908 save percentage) since replacing Frederik Andersen in the third period of Game 3.

"Just stay focused, stay to myself, enjoy it," Bussi said. "I don't know how I'm able to keep my composure, just that I am."

Dorofeyev gave the Golden Knights a 1-0 lead with a power-play goal at 6:52 of the first period. Vegas also outshot the Hurricanes 7-5 in the first period.

"We did have a good start," Eichel said. "Obviously, we get the first goal. I thought we were playing well in the first, put some pressure on them, but they get the equalizer, and then it seems like maybe it became a little bit of a special teams battle."

Staal got the equalizer at 11:46, making it 1-1 with a high-slot redirection over Hart's left pad off a pass from Ehlers.

"So, you can take a breath and be like, 'All right, no damage done,'" Brind'Amour said. "Can't say enough about him (Staal)."

The Golden Knights were called for back-to-back penalties midway through the second period; roughing on Jeremy Lauzon at 8:56 and cross checking on Brayden McNabb at 10:57.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Svechnikov made them pay at 11:58, scoring a power-play goal with a shot from the top of the left circle to give Carolina a 2-1 lead.

"That was the kind of shooting mentality," Svechnikov said. "Try to get the quick shot as possible and obviously it worked out."

Aho extended the lead to 3-1 at 17:51, when he took a pass from Walker and went skate to stick to the back of the net over Hart's blocker and into the far side.

It was Aho's first goal in six games and second in 14.

"Getting on the scoresheet, he knows he needs to do that," Brind'Amour said. "He's playing all the power play, he's getting all that time to cash in. It doesn't mean you're not playing well. All playoffs he's, I think, played really well. But, man, if we can get that out of him, you know, that's just a big bonus for our team."

Mark Stone was called for a high-sticking double-minor at 8:38 of the third period, and Svechnikov scored his second power-play goal to make it 4-1 at 11:08.

"It certainly makes it a lot smoother if they're scoring," Brind'Amour said of Aho and Svechnikov.

Dorofeyev answered at 13:49, putting it in from in front of the net to make it 4-2, but Carolina killed a delay of game penalty on Ehlers at 17:47, with Hart pulled for the extra attacker, to preserve the victory and earn the chance to win the Stanley Cup as soon as Sunday.

"We're ready for it," Ehlers said. "This team has been working all year for moments like these, and especially this moment."

NOTES: The Hurricanes are the second team in Stanley Cup Final history to score at least four goals in each of the first five games, joining the 1973 Canadiens. ... Ehlers is the 12th player in Stanley Cup Final history to have consecutive three-point games.

Hurricanes stay sharp in 2nd period, pull away in Game 5 of Cup Final

By: Kurt Dusterberg

Carolina scores twice after not 'looking great' in middle frame earlier in series against Golden Knights

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Through the first four games of the Stanley Cup Final, the Carolina Hurricanes had reason to second-guess their second periods, having been outscored 9-1 by the Vegas Golden Knights.

"I get it. It doesn't look great," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "(But) it's how it's gone."

That trend, though, changed on Thursday, when the Hurricanes outscored the Golden Knights 2-0 in the second period en route to a 4-2 win in Game 5 of the Cup Final at Lenovo Center.

Carolina leads the best-of-7 series 3-2 and can win the Stanley Cup for the second time in its history with another victory in Game 6 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas on Sunday (8 p.m. ET; ABC, SN, TVAS, CBC).

With Game 5 tied 1-1 after the first period, the Hurricanes began to gain in confidence even before they found the back of the net. With Vegas defenseman Jeremy Lauzon in the penalty box for roughing, Carolina began to push. A shot by Seth Jarvis was followed by two attempts in succession by Jackson Blake and Jordan Staal.

Just one second after Lauzon's penalty expired, Golden Knights defenseman Brayden McNabb was assessed a cross-checking minor at 10:57. On the ensuing power play, Svechnikov was able to sneak a shot five-hole on Carter Hart to give the Hurricanes a 2-1 lead at 11:58.

Sebastian Aho then followed that up by scoring his first goal of the Final to make it 3-1 at 17:51.

"We were able to get a power-play goal there, and that gives us some momentum," Aho said. "But even the first (power

play), we didn't score, (but) I thought that we built some momentum there and it went from there.

"Not every period is going to be the same way. It's hockey, there's a lot of random stuff."

Brandon Bussi and Jordan Staal lead the way in the Hurricanes' Game 5 win

The two power plays contributed to the Hurricanes' reversal of fortune in the second period, particularly because they stayed out of the penalty box themselves.

Carolina finished the period with a 10-5 advantage in shots.

"Our second periods, up until today, have been ... not good," forward Nikolaj Ehlers said. "So, obviously there are some things we needed to change. I think today we were able to play a little more simple and make sure pucks were getting deep, making sure you don't just change without looking behind you. I think that worked pretty well."

Carolina's woes in the second period were particularly noticeable in Games 3 and 4. The Golden Knights lit up the Hurricanes for four goals in the second period in Game 3 before surviving Carolina's four-goal comeback in the third period for a 5-4 double-overtime win. In Game 4, the Hurricanes started the period with a 3-1 lead, only to allow goals to William Karlsson and Brett Howden before recovering in the third for a 5-3 victory.

"There are certain segments of the game that you've got to be better at," Brind'Amour said. "I think we needed to improve that during the second period, but the game itself, we've got to keep playing the same way. I think we did that tonight in the second period and the third period."

And because of that, the Hurricanes are one win away from their first Stanley Cup championship since 2006.

"I don't think anyone can really put their thumb on it, what's been going on in the seconds," Carolina defenseman Sean



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Walker said. "Tonight we had a good second and that was key for winning the game tonight. Again, we've been good in the thirds (outscored Vegas 11-4 in the series). If we continue to do that, we should have success."

Brind'Amour agrees.

"I liked our effort and I hope we're getting better," he said. "There are certain areas of our game that are starting to look like we need it to look. But I do think there's still another level we're going to need to get to to find that next one."

Bussi among top performers for Hurricanes in Game 5 of Stanley Cup Final

By: Shawn P. Roarke

Honor roll, stock watch from Carolina's win against Vegas

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Who played well in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final? Sometimes it's easy to tell, sometimes it isn't. NHL.com graded the players in the fifth game of the best-of-7 Stanley Cup Final at Lenovo Center, a 4-2 win by the Carolina Hurricanes against the Vegas Golden Knights for a 3-2 lead in the series. In the Final, when a series is tied 2-2, the Game 5 victor goes on to win the series nearly 75 percent of the time (20-7; .741).

Here are the things that stood out the most.

Honor roll

Brandon Bussi (Carolina Hurricanes): Coach Rod Brind'Amour was asked early in the series if the backup goalie would be ready if called upon after sitting for the entire postseason. Brind'Amour said yes, but also intimated that things would not be good if they had to go away from Frederik Andersen and rely on the first-year goaltender they picked up on waivers in October. Well, Brind'Amour was wrong. Bussi has won each of his first two starts and stopped 18 straight shots in relief in Game 3 before losing on a fluke goal in double overtime. In Game 5, Bussi turned in the best performance by any goalie in this series, making 23 saves. He is the first goaltender in NHL history to make his first two career playoff starts in the Final and win each game.

Jordan Staal (Carolina Hurricanes): The captain is killing the Golden Knights. That was the assessment of Vegas coach John Tortorella after Staal scored two goals in Game 4, including the game-winner in a 5-3 win. In Game 5, Staal scored Carolina's first goal, tying the game at 11:46 of the first period. He slammed Brayden McNabb into the corner, weakening the defenseman's clearing attempt. Then he went straight to the front, a few steps ahead of McNabb, and put his stick on the ice, deflecting a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers past Carter Hart for his sixth goal of the Final. He joined Jean Beliveau and Maurice Richard of the Montreal Canadiens and Cyclone Taylor of the Vancouver Millionaires as the only players to open the Final with a five-game goal streak. The 37-year-old hadn't had a five-game goal streak in the regular season or playoffs since he was 18.

Pavel Dorofeyev (Vegas Golden Knights): The high-scoring forward was in a bit of funk but broke out of it with a power-play goal at 6:52 of the first to open the scoring, snapping a pass past Bussi. It ended his seven-game goal drought and six-game point drought. It was his 11th goal of the postseason and his League-leading fifth on the power play, which established a single-postseason mark for the Golden Knights. Dorofeyev also scored the other goal by Vegas, at 13:49 of the third period. He has 12 goals this postseason.

Sebastian Aho (Carolina Hurricanes): The Finnish forward has not found it easy going in the 2026 postseason. He had four goals and 11 points in the first 17 postseason games, but picked the perfect time to break out, scoring one of the biggest goals of his career at 17:51 of the second period to make it 3-1. Sean Walker's pass from the point hit Aho in the skates as he drove the net, but he was able to fish it out and get off a shot before he ran out of real estate.

Andrei Svechnikov (Carolina Hurricanes): The Russian forward was looking to make an impact in the Final and he did in the biggest game, scoring two power-play goals. Svechnikov has eight career playoff power-play goals, passing franchise icon Ron Francis and moving into fourth place on the franchise list for postseason power-play goals.

Stock watch

Mike Commodore: **T** The retired defenseman won the Cup with the Hurricanes in 2006, partying after the game in a white bath robe embroidered with the Hurricanes logo and his No. 22. He was in the building for Game 5 and broke out the robe for his turn to sound the siren for the game. He made the most of it, spinning the storm siren around as he cranked the handle.

Stormy: **T** The Hurricanes mascot had a bit in the first intermission where he held up a sign reading "Stormy hearts Hurricane Witch," referring to the protagonist in the pregame show by the Golden Knights at T-Mobile Arena for the past two games. She tries to blow The Fortress down but is foiled by the Golden Knight. Once he has the attention of the crowd, he tears up the sign, eliciting a huge ovation. A classic bit.

Nikolaj Ehlers: **T** The Danish forward has six points in his past two games. He had beautiful assists on each of Carolina's first two goals in Game 5, by Staal and a power-play tally by Svechnikov at 11:58 of the second period, and then a third assist on Svechnikov's second goal at 11:08 of the third period. He also drew a third-period penalty against Jack Eichel that blunted Vegas' momentum. This after a one-goal, two-assist showing in Game 4.

Mark Stone: **I** The Vegas captain took a double minor for high-sticking defenseman Jalen Chatfield in the attacking zone at 8:38 of the third period with Vegas down two goals. Svechnikov scored on the back end of the two penalties and made it 4-1 with 8:52 remaining.

Vegas penalty kill: **I** So vaunted coming into the Final, it has lost its way in the past two games, allowing two power-play goals on five chances in Game 5 after allowing a power-play goal to Staal in Game 3 on one of three man-advantages Carolina had.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

What we learned

Golden Knights need a save

On Wednesday, Vegas coach John Tortorella said he had no concerns about goalie Carter Hart, who had allowed four goals in each of the four games. He unequivocally said no. Well, Hart let up four goals again, on 24 shots, and Vegas is on the brink of elimination. It may be time to rethink the faith.

Hurricanes aren't allergic to the second period

The Hurricanes had been outscored 9-1 in the second period through the first four games of the series but scored the only two goals in Game 5's second period to take a 3-1 lead that would not be relinquished.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov stepped up for the Carolina Hurricanes in Game 5 against Vegas | AP News

By: Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour spent weeks answering the same question about needing more goal-scoring pop from top-line forwards Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho.

"We need them to get going," Brind'Amour said early in the Stanley Cup Final.

Maybe now, with a maximum of two games left to determine who will hoist the Cup, they've found a breakthrough.

Svechnikov scored twice on power plays and Aho had just his second goal since April as the Hurricanes beat the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2 on Thursday night, moving within a victory of hoisting the Stanley Cup.

"It is the biggest game. It was for me," Svechnikov said. "The mentality was great. I couldn't sleep for the night (before)."

Game 6 is Sunday night in Las Vegas, with Carolina having a chance to win the Stanley Cup for the first time since Brind'Amour captained the Hurricanes to it the title in 2006. The goal now is for Svechnikov and Aho to carry the momentum forward from Game 5.

Svechnikov had the first two-goal performance of the playoffs and the fifth multi-goal playoff game of his career. He had wanted to be a bigger part of the production this spring, though that hadn't mattered as much with the Logan Stankoven-centered second line featuring Jackson Blake and Taylor Hall cooking throughout the playoffs.

Brind'Amour kept saying the two mainstays of the current eight-year playoff run were doing enough to contribute, it was just a matter of time before they'd score more. But as the Hurricanes pushed to the Stanley Cup Final, time was running out for Aho as the team's highest-paid player (\$9.75

million this year) and Svechnikov as the team's third-highest (\$7.75 million this year).

"Quite a decent (amount) of pressure, to be honest this playoffs," Svechnikov said. "It's just a new day was today."

Aho and Svechnikov each had four goals through 17 postseason games entering Thursday. Five teammates had more goals. So having them beat Carter Hart three times for goals was like a long-awaited bonus.

"That hasn't really happened, and we're still here," Brind'Amour said. "So it doesn't necessarily have to be that way, but they have to have an impact in the game, whether it's on the scoresheet or doing other things. It certainly makes it a lot smoother if they're scoring. It takes a lot of pressure off other guys to do that, and I guess that's what happened tonight."

The game was tied 1-1 before second-period goals from Svechnikov and Aho in a six-minute stretch. First there was Svechnikov whipping the puck past Hart on the power play, followed by Aho scoring for the first time in this series and for only the second time in the last 14 games.

"Getting on the score sheet, he knows he needs to do that," Brind'Amour said of Aho. "He's playing all the power plays, getting all that time to cash in. It doesn't mean you're not playing well. And he was doing, all playoffs, he's done, I think, really well. But man, if we can get that out of him, that's just a big bonus for our team."

Svechnikov followed with a second goal for a 4-1 lead, a putaway at the right post off a sharp feed from Nikolaj Ehlers for one of his three assists.

"We know it's going to be hard," Svechnikov said about closing out the series. "That's the hardest trophy to win, and we just kind of got to play our game and keep the pressure on and hopefully we're going to keep the momentum."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



Hurricanes-Golden Knights Game 5 takeaways, grades, questions - ESPN

By: Kristen Shilton

We are about to enter the first elimination game of the Stanley Cup Final on the heels of Game 5, which put the Carolina Hurricanes in position to win their first championship since 2006.

It's not as if Carolina was in control from the start -- the Vegas Golden Knights scored early in the first period to take a 1-0 lead -- but it was all Hurricanes from there as Carolina scored the next four goals and held on for a 4-2 win.

It's wild to think that in this series we had already seen multigoal leads disappear in each of the first four games. That wasn't the case Thursday as Carolina punched in one puck after another past Carter Hart to put Vegas on the brink of a failed Cup run in its own building Sunday.

And the fact that William Karlsson, one of the Golden Knights' most important forwards, didn't return for the third period after leaving in the second because of an apparent injury will only make the task ahead more difficult for Vegas. The Golden Knights had their chances at a comeback but couldn't make good. Now the Hurricanes are a win away from their ultimate goal.

Carolina Hurricanes

Grade: A-

Carolina looked skittish in the opening moments of Game 5, and that led to a Nikolaj Ehlers penalty that turned into Pavel Dorofeyev's opening score less than seven minutes into the first period. Tough.

Jordan Staal, though, was ready to respond and continued turning back the clock with a sensational tying score. Carolina went into the second period fully poised and looked like a veteran team used to winning. Though it didn't capitalize on Vegas' first power-play offering in the middle frame, Andrei Svechnikov (with his first of two goals) didn't miss on the second try of the period to give Carolina an advantage it could feel good about. It was the Hurricanes' fifth power-play goal in as many games -- matching their total from the team's eight prior postseason tilts. And then Sebastian Aho grabbed another goal for the Hurricanes to give them a 3-1 lead going into the third.

That was just the second goal Aho has scored in the postseason (through 14 games), and perhaps that's what makes the Canes so unique. It was clear coach Rod Brind'Amour's decision to swap Jordan Martinook for Seth Jarvis on the Canes' top line has had an impact. Sometimes, change is a good thing. It has worked in net and up front for Carolina so far.

Vegas Golden Knights

Grade: C

Vegas gets some boost from actually outshooting Carolina in the first period for the first time in this series. (It held an 8-5 advantage in Game 5 after being outshot by a combined 41-14 in the previous four first periods.) But even though the Golden Knights took advantage of the Hurricanes' disciplinary issues with an opening power-play goal, they let that lead slip when Staal got on the board to tie things up through 20 minutes.

The Golden Knights' depth was compromised midway through the second period when Karlsson left the game because of an apparent left arm injury from a hit by Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker. And Vegas didn't help itself from there with back-to-back -- and supremely undisciplined -- penalties against Jeremy Lauzon and Brayden McNabb. The Golden Knights killed off Lauzon's infraction, but Svechnikov didn't miss on the next opportunity. And then Vegas ceded another score to Aho and was facing a two-goal hole going into the final 20 minutes of a game it was previously leading. By the time veterans such as Mark Stone were taking penalties in the third -- for a brutal double minor that led to a power-play goal -- it seemed like all was lost.

This has been a back-and-forth series to date. Vegas still has a chance, but it will have to show much more than what it put on display in Game 5. Winning two games in a row at this stage will take everything the Golden Knights have in them.

Players to watch in Game 6

Pavel Dorofeyev

RW, Golden Knights

Historically speaking, it's not a team's most "elite" players who carry the day through a tough championship. It's the ones who contribute when it matters most -- and that has been Dorofeyev's calling card throughout Vegas' postseason run. He looked to have a stellar setup to Jack Eichel in the first period -- that ended up being credited as Dorofeyev's own goal -- and then he scored again in the third period of Game 5 to give the Golden Knights life. That put his totals at 12 goals and 16 points in the playoffs to date.

What Dorofeyev is delivering in this series is timely contributions that elevate his teammates. He's like a bloodhound on the ice, sniffing out opportunities and making them count. Vegas is fortunate to have several skaters who can do that but not necessarily with the consistency Dorofeyev is bringing to the ice. It would be easy to say "Keep an eye on Mitch Marner" or "Eichel will have the puck on a string in Game 6," but it's the "secondary" performers such as Dorofeyev who allow those stars to shine. If he can



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

keep producing those moments of real pop for the group, then Vegas will be a tough customer for Carolina on Sunday.

Jordan Staal

C, Hurricanes

It was 1956 the last time a player had at least one goal in each of the first five games of a Cup Final. Staal matched that feat Thursday with his sixth goal of the series, and he will be looking to set a new record (with tallies in six straight Cup outings) in Game 6.

play

0:47

Jordan Staal scores to tie it for the Hurricanes

The Hurricanes' captain knows how difficult it is to climb this particular mountain, having won it all with Pittsburgh in 2009. That was practically a lifetime ago, though, and Staal has been achingly close to this precipice on multiple occasions with Carolina, losing in three prior Eastern Conference finals. He has shown up repeatedly against Vegas like a veteran who understands this could be his last, best chance to hoist a Cup for the second time. That's the energy Staal must bring with him to Vegas. It's not just that he's the Hurricanes' captain; he's their heartbeat.

There's no question Staal will strive to be at his best in Game 6. Every single one of his teammates should be driven to follow in his footsteps.

Big questions for Game 6

Is Vegas ready to rise?

The Golden Knights were not the strongest version of themselves in Game 5. We've seen better from them, in these playoffs and in this series. Vegas has overcome deficits along the way and should never be counted out. But

as Carolina looked more convincing with each passing period Thursday, Vegas looked increasingly deflated.

Now facing adversity with a capital "A," what will the Golden Knights do about it? They took bad penalties, had suboptimal goaltending and weren't buoyed by star performances. Will that change in Game 6 to give them a one-way ticket back to Raleigh? How will they adjust if Karlsson isn't available? And will their top contributors -- Marner, Eichel and Hart -- be on top of their games so this isn't the end of their team's run?

The Golden Knights have responded under coach John Tortorella, and this is the ultimate test of their resiliency after a disappointing showing in a critical game.

Can Carolina truly trust its goaltending?

The Hurricanes didn't exactly make a bold decision in going from Frederik Andersen to Brandon Bussi in Game 3 of the Cup Final after Andersen had given up three markers in the second period and Bussi was tapped with cleanup duty in the third. Carolina stuck with the first-year NHLer from there, and it has been ... good. But that also feels precarious. Bussi's strength appears to be in making the save when Carolina needs it most. His save on Brett Howden in the third period of Game 5 was huge, as was the stop on Shea Theodore in the night's final moments. That's a valuable asset going into the Hurricanes' most important tilt of the season, but given that Andersen isn't even dressing now -- and it's Pyotr Kochetkov and AHL call-up Amir Miftakhov providing insurance behind Bussi -- it just all seems very unstable.

Hart hasn't been perfect in this series either, but he's a reliable, known presence to his team in the postseason. Brind'Amour isn't likely to shed light on what the deal is with Andersen, and we shouldn't expect Andersen to suddenly be prepared to step back into any sort of role here. Goaltending is just such a critical piece of championship-winning teams, and the Hurricanes are rolling the dice -- pardon the pun -- with some untested postseason newbies.

Why goalie tandems have taken over the NHL -- even in the playoffs - ESPN

By: Ryan S. Clark

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour's decision to pull Frederik Andersen in favor of Brandon Bussi in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final was initially seen as a move to rest Andersen after he allowed four unanswered goals in the second period against the Vegas Golden Knights.

But, it was just the latest example of why it's becoming more difficult for NHL teams to get through an entire postseason with just one goaltender.

Traditionally, teams had a clear-cut starter and a backup. The starters often played 60 to 70 games in the regular season, while playing every minute in the playoffs barring a lopsided score line, with the backups taking on the rest.

Fewer clear-cut starters now exist. The Utah Mammoth's Karel Vejmelka was the only one who reached the 60-start threshold this season, while 18 other goaltenders played 50 or more. The backups used to play 10 to 20 games, but are now typically playing more than 30.

Carolina initially went into the season with Andersen and Pyotr Kochetkov as its tandem before Kochetkov underwent lower-body surgery in December that ended his regular season, and led to Bussi being promoted from the AHL. Bussi played a team-high 39 games, while Andersen played 35.

Andersen never started more than two consecutive games in the regular season, but made 15 straight starts in the playoffs before Brind'Amour turned to Bussi for Game 4. Brind'Amour made Kochetkov the backup, with the intent of giving Andersen a night off. Bussi made 18 saves in Game 4 to help the Hurricanes even the series at 2-2, and another 23 in Game 5 to give the Canes a 3-2 edge.

Inconsistent performances and injuries led to Vegas needing four goaltenders to get through the regular season. Akira Schmid led the team in starts (34) and wins (16), yet he's been a healthy scratch this postseason. Adin Hill, who helped them win a Stanley Cup in 2023, has been on the bench backing up Carter Hart.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

The 27-year-old Hart began playing in December once he was reinstated by the NHL after he was one of the five 2018 Canadian world junior hockey players who were acquitted of sexual assault in July 2025. Hart started 18 times in the regular season, but has now started 22 consecutive games through Game 5.

After Bussi replaced Andersen, nine of 16 teams used multiple goalies this postseason, including six that advanced to the second round.

Those six teams used their goalies differently. The Buffalo Sabres had both of their goalies playing heavy minutes at various points. The Colorado Avalanche and Minnesota Wild made changes to find a spark. Meanwhile, the Anaheim Ducks and Montreal Canadiens turned to their backups so their starters could reset after a difficult game.

"I think when you get to the playoffs and you add up the number of games that you are going to play over the course of the year, the number grows," Golden Knights general manager Kelly McCrimmon said. "I think that's what you're seeing a little bit around the league right now is some teams are used to it all year, so, you don't see a reason not to continue."

DALLAS STARS COACH Glen Gulutzan told ESPN in April that his time as an Edmonton Oilers assistant allowed him to learn quite a bit on how to manage a tandem.

That knowledge base increased with the relationship he developed with goaltender Mike Smith, who was part of three playoff runs in Edmonton.

"There are times when an extra practice day or one reset with the goalie coach and a good work day on some video can do wonders for a goalie," Gulutzan said. "So if you're going through a series and you think your goalie needs a little bit of a reset, it's a privilege to have another goalie that can win you a hockey game."

During Gulutzan's last two seasons with the Oilers, he worked under Kris Knoblauch and attained a greater appreciation for all the moving parts that came with managing two goalies on a Stanley Cup Final run.

During the Oilers' first Stanley Cup Final run in 2024, they largely relied on Stuart Skinner but were forced to make a change by Game 4 of the second round, going to Calvin Pickard for two games before Skinner returned to win the final two of the series. Skinner played in 23 games that postseason, while Pickard played in three.

In the 2025 playoffs, Knoblauch used more of a true two-goalie approach. Skinner lost the first two games in the first round, then Pickard won the next four straight. Pickard played the first two games of the second round, but his injury in Game 2 brought Skinner brought in as a replacement. Skinner started 11 straight games, until he was replaced by Pickard in Game 4 of the Cup Final. Pickard had two more starts, before the Oilers returned to Skinner for Game 6.

Gulutzan learned from Knoblauch how important it was to remain in communication with their goalies. Those conversations were even more vital when it came to letting Skinner know that there was a way back for him, despite the fact that Pickard was starting.

"It's such a long run that sometimes, it's hard to ride one [goaltender] the whole time," Gulutzan said. "What I learned through that whole process is that if you are going to go on a two-and-a-half-month run, you might have to use somebody else just from fatigue and a little momentum and maybe even if there are injuries."

Under Jared Bednar, the Avalanche have alternated between the more traditional approach and tandems. During the 2024-25 season, they traded for Mackenzie Blackwood and Scott Wedgewood to create arguably the NHL's premier tandem. In 2025-26, the "Lumber Yard" helped the Avs finish with the best regular-season record in the league.

Bednar said there has been more adoption of tandems, due in part to the fact there are not many goalies like Tampa Bay Lightning star Andrei Vasilevskiy who are capable of handling more than 60 starts per season.

Vasilevskiy, who won the Vezina Trophy this year as the NHL's best goalie, has made more than 50 starts in nine of the past 10 seasons. His lone non-50 start season was in 2020-21, when the NHL played a truncated 56-game schedule; he started 42 of them for Tampa Bay. Only three-time Vezina winner Connor Hellebuyck has started more games since the 2017-18 season than Vasilevskiy.

"It's the comfort of sort of repeating what you've done in the regular season," Bednar said. "If you've got into the playoffs, you've been a good team. If you've advanced in the playoffs, you've been a good team. And if you have used both guys the whole way in order to get you there, then, I think to a certain extent, you might need both guys to keep advancing."

Wedgewood started 43 games this season, while Blackwood made 36 starts. Bednar used Wedgewood to start the playoffs, backstopping a first-round sweep against the Los Angeles Kings, but was pulled in Game 3 of their second-round series, and Blackwood started Game 4. Blackwood won that game, but was pulled after the first period of Game 5 with the Avalanche coming back to win the game and take the series with Wedgewood back in net.

Bednar stuck with Wedgewood in the conference finals against the Golden Knights only to turn to Blackwood when they faced an 0-3 series hole. Blackwood stopped 24 of the 26 shots he faced, but the Avs were swept.

"The playoffs is a different animal," Bednar said before the start of the conference finals. "It's the mental fatigue and the stress of playing, the travel, back and forth on a regular basis. You're not getting a weeklong, a 10-day-long homestand or things like that either. Fatigue is a factor -- both mental and physical -- and it's hard to play your best if you're fatigued in either one of those."

"I think that's why you're seeing more teams use two guys even if it's for a game or two."

Tortorella said that coaches are honest about the trust they have in using a two-goalie system.

"We have a guy, Carter, who's playing well," Tortorella said ahead of the conference finals. "But Hilly, he's a Stanley Cup winner, right? We have trust in him. We haven't gone there. We felt Carter has played that well and we've stayed with him. It's not like you're trying to fix something that isn't broken. But you also have the opportunity to go there. I don't



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

think coaches and teams are afraid to because they just have that type of trust."

GULUTZAN WAS HIRED by the Stars for several reasons. Among them was how he was part of an Oilers staff that coached the team to consecutive Stanley Cup Finals, with both of them coming at the expense of the Stars in the conference finals.

Those experiences with Smith -- along with how he watched Knoblauch navigate the Skinner-Pickard tandem -- gave him a foundation.

"I think with any relationship -- anyone, goalies, players, whoever it is -- you gotta talk," Gulutzan explained. "You gotta tell them, 'This is what I am thinking. I just want to be truthful. Here's what I am thinking.' Then the player feels comfortable enough to tell you what they are thinking."

Gulutzan said that the relationship among head coach, goalie coach and the goalies themselves is foundational. That way, there's already an established dynamic in place in the event there needs to be a difficult conversation.

Such as if Gulutzan needed to pull one goalie in favor of the other if it meant winning a playoff game.

His arrival came months after the Stars fired Peter DeBoer, who guided them to three straight Western Conference finals. DeBoer's firing came in the aftermath of the Stars being eliminated by the Oilers in Game 5, in which goaltender Jake Oettinger was pulled after allowing two goals on the first two shots.

Following the loss, DeBoer's relationship with Oettinger was under the microscope. The coach had a year left on his contract at the time of his firing, while Oettinger was about to enter the first year of an eight-year contract worth \$8.25 million annually.

Oettinger, who has made more than 54 starts for four straight regular seasons, told ESPN in April that being a goaltender

in today's NHL means learning how to be comfortable with not being perfect.

"I think after my first year, I think got pulled in the playoffs and I didn't really realize how every game is kind of its own entity," Oettinger said. "It's not like I could let in 10 goals in Game 1 and it's all about Game 2. What I really like about the playoffs is that it's good and bad because you can play your ass off and 10 minutes into the next game, you get the hook. That's the blessing and the curse with the position."

Wedgewood said the need for multiple goalies has increased because the game has become more east-to-west. There are sequences when an opponent will have quite a bit of time in the offensive zone, which makes it more challenging to defend. He cited that there are different body movements that can add up, along with how the NHL schedule has changed with international tournaments returning to the calendar.

"I think just the torque on the body and the way the game is played now, it's not just four guys because now it's a 20-man roster," Wedgewood said. "Even if you give me those games where you get less than 25 shots, you're still up and down, probably close to 100 times shuffling constantly."

So often, the world at large believes a goalie's workload can be measured in shots and shots alone. It's not. There are other items that serve as a barometer, with their movements being among them.

Up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right. The first few steps of the famed Konami Code is also a likely movement pattern that a goalie could follow even if they don't face a shot. Wedgewood said that a goalie could have 60 up-and-down movements along with turns and reads that begin to add up.

"The mechanical side is also in play," Wedgewood said. "I think that obviously contributes to the fact that micro movements that are actually exertion would also be a big separator nowadays."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



'Find that next one': Hurricanes' best deliver with Stanley Cup within reach

Luke Fox

7–8 minutes

RALEIGH, N.C. — Eleven days ago, before this electrifying circus of a Stanley Cup Final began, Jordan Staal sat calmly in his.

He shared a slice of wisdom that is proving poignant if not downright prescient, now that the captain's Carolina Hurricanes have systematically clawed their way within one win of a championship.

"Who does it better and who stays patient long enough in their game, I think, is the biggest thing," Staal said.

The 37-year-old already understood that momentum swings and costly mistakes and bad penalties and tough injuries and questionable coaching calls would attempt to derail both powerhouses, to distract them from the task, to plant a morsel of doubt.

"It's a matter of imposing your will until they crack and call uncle," Staal continued, before the puck dropped once. "The team that holds strong as long as they can and stays true to what they're trying to do is going to have a better chance of winning."

Well, with just two games or half that left in the NHL season, and leaving the city of Raleigh rocking with Thursday's pivotal Game 5 comeback, the Canes look more able.

For the first time all post-season, the Vegas Golden Knights are showing hints they might crack — but they certainly aren't crying quit.

"I'm gonna leave my clothes here, that's for sure," Vegas coach John Tortorella proclaimed, the Laundry Guarantee. "They'll be in the hotel."

How much does it cost to FedEx a bundle of quarter-zips from North Carolina to the Strip?

Because if Game 6 looks anything like Game 5 — the most convincing 60 minutes by either side in a series decided by slivers — Game 7 will not be necessary.

"Lookin' more and more like Hurricane hockey. And yet, we got to keep ridin'," Staal said, following a 4-2 game win that he hopes leads into a 4-2 series win.

The well-conditioned home team was just a notch faster and a little more disciplined. They've suffered one less injury and are now dressing the better goalie. And their relentless pressure has led to at least four goals per night. Who cares if the production is by committee?

"We want to be aggressive and tight. And when you're tight like that, it doesn't really give opponents a lot of time and space to make those plays, and you can... I don't want to say catch them by surprise, but sometimes guys aren't

expecting players to be so tight," defenceman Sean Walker said.

"Earlier in the playoffs, you saw us really dominate, take over games, and it really didn't feel like the other teams were getting any chances at all. And tonight was pretty close to that. So, we'll look to do that in Vegas."

Coach Rod Brind'Amour has made a couple subtle but key adjustments — the right-wing flip of Jordan Martinook and Seth Jarvis sticks out — and formerly weak spots in the Canes' game are gaining strength.

The power play, which struck twice Thursday, is humming. The second-period woes morphed into second-period encores of Petey Pablo. And don't look now, but the previously chilly Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho are only getting hotter as the series deepens.

First star Svechnikov admitted that he's been putting a whack of pressure on himself lately. He'd mustered just two points through Games 1 and 4 and went shotless in two of those. He couldn't even sleep the night before Game 5's two-goal performance.

"This is biggest win in my life," the streaky sniper said. "But thank God we won that game."

"We've got one more in us."

If Svechnikov's double-five-hole snipe — through the wickets of both defender Jeremy Lauzon, then Carter Hart — was sweet, Aho's blade-to-tape-to-roof conversion was the cherry on top.

Hand-eye of the Storm.

"That's the reason why Aho is one of the best players in the league, and why he's been so successful for so long and in the playoffs," Walker said. "And when he's playing his game and doing things like that, it's special to watch."

Yes, the potholes in Carolina's path to a parade are getting filled in, one by one. While new ones are popping up for the Golden Knights.

We'd be foolish to write either team off here, but Tortorella's methodical bunch now has questions in net, up the middle, and on the penalty kill it used too often in Game 5.

The Knights will be better, rest assured.

The thing that might crack them at the Fortress, though, is that the Hurricanes can taste it now. And they believe they, too, can improve.

"There's still another level that we're gonna need to get to," Brind'Amour said, "to find that next one."

If the Canes reach that gear, some five-star hotel in downtown Raleigh will get stuck with a bunch of metal-grey Golden Knights tracksuits in its lost and found.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Fox's Fast Five

- Hart's Stanley Cup Final save percentage: .856.

He's the only goalie to give up at least four goals in each of the Final's first five games.

Did Tortorella consider making a switch for the third period?

"Oh, for Christ," the coach snapped. "That could be the stupidest question I've heard."

Don't expect Tortorella to tap to an ice-cold backup Adin Hill now; the Cup champ hasn't played a hockey game since April 9. Hasn't won a game since March.

But Hart doesn't frighten the Canes, and at 24 consecutive starts — with OTs added — his workload may be catching up with him.

- William Karlsson suffered an apparent left wrist/forearm injury when getting crunched into the board by Walker in the second period. He didn't take another shift, and no update on his health was provided postgame.

First significant injury on either side. The score was 1-1 before Karlsson left, and Vegas's centre depth couldn't hang.

"Any time you can lay a hit on somebody, it's going to take its toll and wear them down," Walker said. "I'm just trying to do my part. We have a lot of guys that are really physical, and it's a key to our success."

The captain became the first player since 1956 (Jean Beliveau) to score goals in each of the first five games of a Cup Final.

Maurice Richard (1951) and Cyclone Taylor (1918) are the only others to accomplish the feat. Throwback stat for a throwback performer.

"Yeah, it's good company," Staal allowed. "But I'm looking for wins."

- A resplendently berobed Mike Commodore revving the siren and flailing his Sideshow Bob hairdo as nemesis Mike Babcock makes news during the Cup Final is something else:

• Frederik Andersen hasn't spoken publicly nor practised with his teammates since getting pulled midway through Game 3. He has hit the ice a couple times alone and is said to be healthy.

So necessary is the goalie's break, AHLer Amir Miftakhov was recalled from the Chicago Wolves for this one — even though Carolina's farm team is prepping to face the Toronto Marlies in the Calder Cup Finals, which begins Friday in Chicago.

Miftakhov, not Andersen, was reportedly Carolina's Game 5 EBUG. Not to be forgotten here is Andersen's grief over friend and agent Claude Lemieux's sudden death.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Carolina Hurricanes roll past Vegas Golden Knights, 4-2, to come within one game of Stanley Cup

By: briandaguanno

The Carolina Hurricanes dominated the Vegas Golden Knights on Thursday night, 4-2, to take a 3-2 series lead and come within one game of lifting the Stanley Cup.

After struggling for the majority of the postseason, both the power play and two of Carolina's top three regular season scorers — Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho — carried the Canes to a big win on Thursday night. Svechnikov scored two power play goals while Aho found the back of the net for the first time in the Stanley Cup.

Nikolaj Ehlers gave the Knights a power play a little less than seven minutes into the first period on a delay of game penalty.

The Knights, after being just 1-for-12 on the power play in the first four games, capitalized courtesy of Pavel Dorofeyev, who found the back of the net on a cross ice pass from Jack Eichel.

It didn't take long for Carolina to respond, though. And who else but Jordan Staal. After getting the penalty, Ehlers redeemed himself with a great shot-pass to the front of the net that was tipped in by Staal for his sixth goal of the Stanley Cup so far.

After the first, the score was knotted at 1-1.

Uncharacteristically, the Canes were outshot, 8-5, by the Knights.

There wasn't much offensive action for either side in the first 10 minutes of the second period, but two straight Vegas penalties changed that.

The Golden Knights killed the first, but it was Svechnikov who went five-hole on the second power play, giving the Canes a 2-1 lead in the second period. In the first four games, Carolina was outscored 9-1 in the second, but it was a different story tonight.

That was all that was needed to get the top line for the Canes going it seemed. With a little over two minutes in the second, a great forecheck from Jordan Martinook led to a goal from Aho, who went high over Carter Hart. It marked Aho's first goal of the series, giving the Hurricanes a 3-1 lead in the second.

For the first time in the Stanley Cup, Carolina outplayed Vegas in the second period, entering the third with a 3-1 advantage and just 20 minutes away from their first series lead.

Carolina picked up right where they left off in the third period. After Mark Stone was called for a double minor for high sticking Jalen Chatfield, Svechnikov scored his second power play goal of the night on a great pass from Ehlers.

Dorofeyev added his second of the game with a little over six minutes left in the game to cut Carolina's lead to two goals.

The Canes were able to hold the Knights off and secure the big win, with Bussi saving 22 of 24 shots.

The Stanley Cup will be in the building as the Hurricanes have a chance to lift it for the first time since 2006 on the road Sunday at 8 PM.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

The Hockey News

'It's Big Players Showing Up At Big Times': Andrei Svechnikov, Nikolaj Ehlers, Sean Walker, Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal, Brandon Bussi On Game 5 Win

By: Ryan Henkel

Carolina stands one victory away from Stanley Cup glory after Andrei Svechnikov's two-goal surge and Brandon Bussi's poised goaltending stifled Vegas to secure a pivotal Game 5 win.

The Carolina Hurricanes are one win away from lifting the second Stanley Cup in franchise history after a 4-2 win over the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 5.

Brandon Bussi stopped 23 shots in the win, while Andrei Svechnikov had a pair of goals.

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

Rod Brind'Amour

On the team's poise: To be honest, I didn't think we had a great first period, that's for sure. But then we kind of got our game going, I think, I don't know... poise, I'm not sure. I didn't like a lot of the stuff we were doing, at times, but I think the goalie, Bus, had a lot of poise. I think he looked pretty calm in there, and obviously played a great game for us.

On keeping his team focused with one more win to get: It's probably good to have a couple days in between, to be honest, because there's a lot going on now and it's not ideal. So we've got to get that all figured out and then get ready to play a game because we know how hard it's going to be and refocus. But I don't think it'll be too hard to focus this group.

On if this game was more akin to Hurricanes Hockey: After the first. You forgot to mention that. Even then, you look at that first period, who got us back into it? Jordo. So we could take a breath and be like, 'All right, no damage done.' I can't say enough about him.

On Jordan Staal scoring again: Massive, right? It's not necessarily that you're expecting him to put up those kind of numbers, but when he does, that's an added bonus. And, I mean, he deserves it. He's playing great, but we've got to get that one more still, and he knows it. He'll have our group ready.

On playing a better second period: I get it. It doesn't look great, but that's how it's gone, that's for sure. But we don't really talk about it. I don't know how to really explain it. There's certain segments of the game that you've got to be better at. I think we needed to improve that during the second period, but the game itself, we've just got to keep playing the right way. I think we did that tonight in the second period and the third period.

On if his team is getting better as the series has gone on: I don't know. I liked our effort for sure and I hope we're getting better. I think there's certain areas of our game that are starting to look a lot like we need it to look. But I do think there's still another level that we're gonna need to get to to find that next one.

On Andrei Svechnikov bouncing back after a tough start to his season: We have conversations all the time, and Jeff (Daniels) works with him daily. We also had other pieces that were new, and we were fixing things around. I knew that he was not going to stay with that group for an extended period of time, but he got it going. And then the playoffs, here tonight, I hope this kickstarts him because we need him scoring goals, and that's what he did tonight.

On Nikolaj Ehlers finding ways to contribute even though he said it was "his worst game of the playoffs": So that's the key, right? Everyone's going to have nights where you make some mistakes, but then he still had an impact on the game on a positive note. He causes the first [goal against] when he tosses it over the glass, but then who made the pass for Jordo's goal. That was Fly. And then another great play on the power play. So he always seems to find a way to contribute, and that's a good mark on him. And yeah, I'm glad his dad's a hockey coach, so I can trust that he'll take care of the other stuff for me.

On if he felt he needed his "top guys" to be on the scoresheet: Kind of? But that hasn't really happened, and we're still here. So it doesn't necessarily have to be that way, but they have to have an impact in the game, whether it's on the scoresheet or doing other things. It certainly makes it a lot smoother if they're scoring. It takes a lot of pressure off other guys to do that, and I guess that's what happened tonight.

On what it's like to be in your late 30s and play as Jordan Staal has: It's a great question because the playoffs, until you've done it and actually lived it and been through, it's a massive grind, mentally and physically. You guys have to travel, you know how hard that is, and now, well now add doing this every night. So to do it at his age just says a lot about him. He's our guy, and he's our warrior. I'm really happy for him. You guys are getting to see it. I got to see this for I don't know how many years. Fourteen. Every day. So I'm very fortunate.

On seeing Sebastian Aho finally pot one this series: I thought he's played really well. And again, to your point about getting on the score sheet, he knows he needs to do that. He's playing all the power plays, getting all that time to cash in. It doesn't mean you're not playing well. And he was doing, all playoffs, he's done, I think, played really well. But man, if we can get that out of him, that's just a big bonus for our team.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Andrei Svechnikov

On the key to the power play's success: I think we've got the little simple things, the shooting mentality and obviously Staalsy out there, a big horse, just tipping the pucks. We've just got the shooting mentality and looking for rebounds. I think we've got the chemistry going on and looking forward for the next game.

On this being one of the biggest games of his career: This is the biggest win in my life, personally, but thank God we won that game. Obviously our focus right now, it's in our mind. We've got one more win to do here and we're all focused for the next game.

On staying positive when things didn't go his way to start the year: Obviously, I think that was the toughest 10 games, on the start of the season, but I tried to always fight through it and it doesn't matter what's happening. I always try to stay positive and that's what kind of happened and I think I had my best season of career and right now as a team we've got the best playoffs so far.

On Nikolaj Ehlers' pass to him for his second goal: To be honest, we know what kind of passes Fly can make, but I mean, I was kind of back door and I knew he was going to make that pass because he just sees everything on the ice and I just kind of had to stick out my stick there and, obviously he hit it. So unbelievable play by him.

On if he was thinking of shot right away for his first goal: Yeah. That's it. That was the kind of shooting mentality. I try to get as quick a shot as possible, and, obviously, it work out.

Nikolaj Ehlers

On being one win away from the Stanley Cup: It's huge, obviously. It's going to be really hard, a really tough game, but we're excited for it, ready for it. This team has been working all year for moments like these and especially these moments. We're excited.

On the team having a better second period: Our second periods up until today have been... not good. So obviously there were some things we needed to change and I think today, we were able to play a little more simple and make sure pucks were getting deep and make sure you don't just change without looking behind you. I think that worked pretty well.

On if tonight was closer to playing Hurricanes hockey: I would say so. It's the closest to a full-60 that we've played in the last five games. And that's obviously a positive, but we also have to realize how we play and how we did those things and how we need to play to give ourselves a chance, because we're playing against a really good team.

On what was going through his mind after his penalty leads to the first goal against/the relief he felt assisting on the equalizer: That one felt pretty good. Personally, that was probably my worst game of the whole playoffs. I'm not excited to... I'm excited, but not excited to see my dad after the game tonight. For those who know, he's been a hockey coach for the last 25 years. But yeah, you want to get one back. To do that twice in a game [Puck over glass penalties] is not something I'm proud of, but you have to try and stick with it and try to make up for it, but not try to do too much, which I also did tonight. I got a little better than I had tonight.

On Brandon Bussi: He's been like this the whole season. Even the last few months where he hasn't played. Our goalies, like I mentioned the other day, we're a very confident group in our goalies. The way they've been playing the whole year and to be able to come in like Bussi did, not having played for two months and then play two games in the Final and be as calm as he is and make the saves that he has is incredible. Of course that gives a team confidence. That's exciting for us. We're happy for him as well.

Sean Walker

On if it felt more like Hurricanes hockey: Yeah. I mean, it was definitely nicer than going to double overtime, but, I mean, we still find a way to make it interesting, but we battled hard all night and got the job done.

On having a better second period: Obviously I don't think anybody can really put their thumb on it, what's been going on in the seconds, but tonight we had a good second and that was key for us winning the game tonight. And again, we've been good in the thirds, so if we continue to do that, we should have success.

On being one win away from the Stanley Cup: Yeah, it's pretty crazy, but like you said, it's one win away, right? So we'll just go into Vegas with the same mindset that we've had all playoffs, play our game, and hopefully get the result we want.

On Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho getting on the board: Yeah, it's big players showing up at big times. You know, those were huge goals for us tonight. I think if they're scoring for us, we're definitely doing things right, and we're gonna have success.

On Brandon Bussi: We have the confidence in Bus. He makes a ton of big saves, even when there's breakdowns. We trust him back there and he gives us tons of confidence to play our game and just be aggressive all night, so again, outstanding performance by him, and happy to see him get the win.

On Sebastian Aho's goal: That's the reason why Aho is one of the best players in the league and why he's been so successful for so long and in the playoffs. Just an unbelievable talent, skill and one of our leaders on the team. And when he's playing his game and doing things like that, it's special to watch. He's a big reason tonight why we won that game.

On the team's aggressive style of play: That's the style of play that our team wants to play. We want to be aggressive and tight. And when you're tight like that, it doesn't really give opponents a lot of time and space to make those plays, and you can... I don't want to say catch them by surprise, but sometimes guys aren't expecting players to be so tight. You know, it's been a long year and long playoffs. I think any time you can lay a hit on somebody, it's going to take its toll and wear them down. So I'm just trying to do my part. We have a lot of guys that are really physical, and I think it's a key to our success.

On if tonight was the best example of their style so far: I honestly don't know if we've still gotten to our best hockey, to be honest. I think that's as close as it's been in this series, but I think earlier in the playoffs you saw us really dominate, take over games, and it really didn't feel like the other teams



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

were getting any chances at all, and tonight was pretty close to that. So we'll look to do that in Vegas.

Sebastian Aho

On finally scoring a goal in the series: It feels good obviously, but we play for the win here and the win feels a lot better.

On if he had a sense for how big his goal was: Yeah. The power play got us going in the second. We made good plays there and then obviously a big goal by Svechy. Then following it up with that 5v5 goal, I feel like the game really shifted in our favor at that point. It was big.

On playing their best game of the series: I hope we still have another level to get to. I mean, I didn't think the first was our best. Obviously they made nice plays there on their power play and stuff like that, but we can be better.

On Andrei Svechnikov's first goal: It was big obviously. Tie game at the moment and obviously him finding the back of the net gave us the lead. Really big.

On being one win away from the Stanley Cup: Obviously tonight was a big win, but the job is not finished. We're gonna rest and recover here and we'll be ready for whenever the next game is.

On if he's felt the team's gotten more to their game as the series has gone on: Yeah. I mean, sure. I didn't like our first, to be honest, but I think we built the game from there. After that, it was solid.

On his goal: Jordo finished his shift and put the puck in deep and then Marty went to work. Not sure exactly what happened behind the net, but he wins the puck battle, it goes to the point and I came straight from the bench and obviously a heads up play by Walker. A good pass and I was able to pick it up with the skate and get a quick shot.

On if he felt the team was winning a lot of puck battles: Yeah. I mean, sure. I thought so. I thought maybe not so much in the first, but after that, I think we were pretty solid.

On what's been going right for the power play: I think we work hard for each other, we're giving outs, executing the passes and shots. It usually comes down to that.

Jordan Staal

On Brandon Bussi: Bus, I mean, what more can you say. Just stepped in and played unbelievable tonight, last game. He just grinds, man. He's a big boy that finds ways to stop pucks and gives us a chance to win.

On Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho: Big nights for a lot of guys obviously. Fish had a big goal and Svechy, we needed him to get going and he had a huge impact tonight. We're going to need everybody and those guys had a big night for us. Hopefully they can continue that.

On Svechnikov having the season he has had after a tough start to the year: He's the hardest worker in this group. He wants it more than anything. He continues to try and make himself better and find ways to contribute. There's ups and downs in everyone's careers and it was a slow start for him, but he continued to build his game this year and tonight was a big one for us.

On scoring in five straight Stanley Cup Final games: Good company, but I'm looking for wins and finding ways to help get the lead.

On Brandon Bussi (again): There's not much more to say. The guy's been unbelievable, great all year long. He battles and finds ways to make big saves and gives us a chance. He was unbelievable tonight and had a big game for us.

On what he's thinking when he saw the puck go in for another goal: I'm thinking it's 1-1 and we need to get going. We didn't have a good start and so we needed to get going. It's 1-1 and let's go. That was it.

On the power play success: We have an extra guy out there and we have talented players. We've done a better job at finding that open guy and executing. I think the original plan kind of got them off their game plan and got them thinking and now the guys have really started making some good plays and finding ways to open it up and create some pretty goals.

On the team starting to roll in the second and third periods: I think we got to our game more and more, especially with hounding their D and finishing hits. We've been trying to invest in that as much as we can. It could take five, six games and then you get that little bounce and that little break and then you make them pay. I think Marty epitomizes what we do here and that was an unbelievable play there and a big goal.

On getting one more win: Nothing changes. It's just going to need to be everybody executing and finding ways to get that win. There can't be any rust, there can't be any off shifts. It's gotta be everybody and everyone at their best.

Brandon Bussi

On willing the team to one win away from the Stanley Cup: I don't know if I'm willing the team. We like our game right now. It's fun to be a part of. We work hard, we sacrifice. We care about the guy next to us. So, good win tonight for us. Enjoy tonight. Tomorrow we move on to Game 6.

On playing Hurricanes hockey: I think when we're able to roll four lines, six D, we're successful. I liked their game a lot. Would have liked to have kept the second one out so we could kind of keep everybody calmer, but it happens, and our sacrifice there those last, what, six minutes, it was great to see. We never give up. The crowd was getting loud, right? We were able to manage their pushes very well tonight. I think that was big. When we got going, we were able to score on our chances.

On if he's getting more comfortable as he gets more games here: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun. You know, I think that's just about it. You know you work hard, you enjoy the moment, and you put your head down and grind.

On what the games have been like: It's been fun. We're playing hockey at the highest level. I feel like I give you guys the same answer, so I'm sorry, it might be boring in that sense, but that's just who I am, right? It's been, it has been fun to be a part of it.

On the defense saying they needed to play better in front of him: I think we're all our worst critics in a way, you know? I think our D-corps battles a lot every night. We battle hard. Mistakes happen because that's the nature of the game and



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

they're a good team. I loved our effort tonight, our sacrifice, the blocked shots, the pick-up sticks. You need those things to win games.

On if it's difficult to keep composure: No. I don't know, just stay focused, stay to myself, enjoy it. I don't know how I'm able to keep my composure, just that I am.

On if he thinks at all of being one win away from the Stanley Cup: No. This series, we've been trailing a lot, and honestly I think we need to keep that mindset. We need to be hungry. We're going there for Game 6, and we're probably going to see the best version of them. And we're going to probably see the best version of them for whatever happens, so I think that only means that we need continue to step it up.

On if this win feels better than Game 4: Come on guys, you should know the answers already. Yeah, it feels good right now, but the next one's always the best one.

On the Bussi chants: Yeah, it's cool. The energy they give us, the support they give as a team is special, you know? It's fun to play here and the fan base has been amazing.

On how he winds down after these games: Probably get on the couch and try and find something on Netflix or Peacock

or Hulu. Just decompress. I'm a pretty boring guy. We're between shows right now. We're kind of in a gray area right now, so hopefully I can make a decision quick tonight. Hopefully that doesn't keep me up.

On how he'd imagined this moment would be: Sliding cross-crease, two-pad stack, glove windmill, all the extra stuff that you probably won't see me do. Yeah, I think it's cool to think back to that, and some of those thoughts are true, as being a part of it. It's cool to think about it, but it's one thing to actually do it. We got a lot to still do here but it's nice to be one step closer.

On the third period: I think if I don't give up the second one, we don't really get to that point of hecticness, but no give-up in our team, right? It's battle. It's not always going to be pretty. We found a way to get that kill and not give up a third one to really keep their push going

On if these games are starting to feel any different: Honestly, they've all been the same. I felt good the entire time. I can't say it's been getting better, but it feels good and I like where my game's at.

Hurricanes Flip The Script In Game 5; Move One Win Away From Stanley Cup

By: Ryan Henkel

Brandon Bussi's brilliance and a resurgent power play silenced the doubters, as Carolina stifled Vegas to overcome their second-period demons and move within striking distance of glory.

In a win that was an almost perfect encapsulation of irony, the Carolina Hurricanes guffawed at the naysayers to move one win away from enshrining their name in history.

In many ways, the 4-2, Game 5 win felt like the ultimate middle finger to a lot of the outside noise that had been surrounding the team all series.

After what had been a wide-open series, Carolina flipped the script on Thursday, shutting down Vegas with some classic Hurricanes hockey.

The Hurricanes conceded only two goals in the entire contest, the lowest allowed goals total of the series, and Brandon Bussi played a big part in that.

The 27-year-old rookie netminder stopped 23 shots in the win and turned aside 2.29 goals above expected for his second career playoff win in his second career playoff start.

"He's been like this the whole season," said Nikolaj Ehlers. "To be able to come in like Bussi did, not having played for two months and then play two games in the Final, and be as calm as he is and make the saves that he has is incredible."

On the other side, Carter Hart conceded four goals for the fifth straight game, the worst stretch of play in Stanley Cup Final history.

Carolina also had their best second period of the series, outscoring Vegas 2-0 to set themselves up for the victory.

The second period had long been the Hurricanes' kryptonite in the four games heading into Thursday, as they had been outscored 9-1 in the middle frame during that span, but they finally found a way to make the second period theirs.

"There's certain segments of the game that you've got to be better at," Brind'Amour said. "I think we needed to improve that during the second period, but the game itself, we've just got to keep playing the right way. I think we did that tonight in the second period and the third period."

The team rode to victory though on the back of big showings from the power play, which went 2-for-5, and the top guys they had been waiting on all series to finally show up.

Andrei Svechnikov found the back of the net twice on the power play and Sebastian Aho scored the eventual game-winner with his first of the series.

"It's big players showing up at big times," said Sean Walker. "You know, those were huge goals for us tonight. I think if they're scoring for us, we're definitely doing things right, and we're gonna have success."

In addition, Jordan Staal scored for the fifth straight game, becoming the first player to score in the first five games of a Stanley Cup Final since 1956, Nikolaj Ehlers had three apples while Shayne Gostisbehere had a pair.

The Hurricanes have a chance at history now, but it's going to take their best effort in Game 6 to pull it off.

"It's probably good to have a couple days in between, to be honest, because there's a lot going on now and it's not ideal," Brind'Amour said. "So we've got to get that all figured out and then get ready to play a game because we know how hard it's going to be and refocus. But I don't think it'll be too hard to focus this group."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

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1393734 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes take commanding 3-2 series lead after Game 5 win over Vegas

Chip Alexander, Justin Pelletier 10-13 minutes 11/06/2026

It wasn't Game 7, but it almost felt like it.

The Carolina Hurricanes and Vegas Golden Knights went at it Thursday in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final, and it was 60 minutes of hard checks and fights for pucks and a bruising battle to find open ice and any kind of scoring chance.

The Canes emerged with 4-2 victory after a game of big-boy hockey at the Lenovo Center, grabbing a 3-2 lead in the series and putting them on the brink of the franchise's second Stanley Cup.

The Canes go back to Las Vegas for Game 6 on Sunday. The Cup will be in T-Mobile Arena. Only the Canes can win it that night.

"Their backs are against the wall, so it's going to take everything we have," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "That's the bottom line, and we're going to need everybody to give everything they have, and we'll have to find a way."

Neither team had won two straight games in a Cup Final filled with funky plays and blown leads and unpredictable and sudden momentum swings.

And, in the Canes' case, a goalie change.

Brandon Bussi quickly became a fast trending story after relieving Frederik Anderson in the third period of Game 3, winning Game 4 in the rookie's first career playoff start and then starting again Thursday.

Vegas scored on its first shot of the game as Pavel Dorofeyev, who had two goals in the game, converted on a power play, his first goal in the Cup Final.

But Staal scored, again -- and historically, again.

Andrei Svechnikov had two power-play goals.

And Sebastian Aho, who has been more of a playmaker than goal-scorer in the playoffs, went top shelf after a Sean Walker pass for a 3-1 lead in the second period.

Staal has six goals in the Stanley Cup Final and became the first player to score in five straight games to start a Cup Final since Jean Beliveau in 1956. The other two: Maurice Richard (1951) and Cyclone Taylor (1918).

Staal's sprawling backhand while flat on the ice was the winning goal in Game 4, not the most nimble of shots, but in the net. He scored on a redirect of an Ehlers pass for a 1-1 tie Thursday -- the first of Ehlers' three assists -- and other good looks as he powered his way around the crease.

The Canes continued to surge on the power play. Svechnikov saw to that, tying the score in the second period with a blast and adding his second in the third period off a slick Ehlers pass for a 4-1 lead.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Vegas captain Mark Stone was called for a double-minor high-sticking penalty in the third after getting his stick under the shield of defenseman Jalen Chatfield and almost yanking off his helmet. Chatfield was nicked over his right eye but returned to the game.

The Canes, after struggling through the playoffs, have power-play goals in four straight games.

The Canes' third delay-of-game penalty, for flipping the puck over the glass, resulted in a 6-on-4 power play for Vegas after pulling goalie Carter Hart.

Bussi's two stops on Tomas Hertl, with 1:20 left in regulation, essentially sealed the win. Bussi finished with 23 saves for his second straight win.

"We were able to manage their pushes tonight. That was really big," Bussi said. "And when we got going we were able to score on our chances.

"It's been fun. We're playing hockey at the highest level. It's been fun to be a part of it."

There were some blemishes in the win. Ehlers twice was called for penalties for delay of game for flipping the puck over the glass from the defensive zone, and defenseman K'Andre Miller was called for a third.

Ehlers called it his worst game of the playoffs, and noted he would hear about his mistakes from his father, a European hockey coach. To which Brind'Amour quipped: "I hope so."

"Everyone is going to have nights where you have mistakes, but you can have a positive impact on the game," Brind'Amour said. "He found a way to contribute."

The Knights lost center William Karlsson to an apparent upper body injury after a big hit from Walker in the game, and Vegas coach John Tortorella said he would not return in the series. After the game, Vegas coach John Tortorella was defiant, promising a Game 7.

"We'll be back," he said. "I'll leave my clothes here because we'll be back."

But first, the return to Last Vegas. Again, the Cup will be in Las Vegas.

A new goalie wrinkle for the Hurricanes?

Bussi started Game 5 for the Carolina Hurricanes, of course.

But before the game, that was still officially in doubt. Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour answered the question Thursday morning almost before it was finished.

No, he said, he had nothing to say about the Canes' lineup for Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights at Lenovo Center.

"Everybody's available," he said.

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Brind'Amour '06 vs Staal 2026?

One question posed to Hurricanes coach Brind'Amour before Game 5, bringing a grin from the coach, is how Brind'Amour in 2006 would have fared against Staal in 2026, center vs. center.

"Well ..." Brind'Amour said. "I can tell you, and I forget the years, but I did line up against Jordan Staal in 2009 maybe, and that didn't go very well.

"I guess that answers that question. I'll leave it at that."

Staal was with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2009, winning the Cup that year as the third center behind Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. Brind'Amour was nearing the end of his career.

Torts takes in Knicks' comeback

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The Cup Final has made for some tight games and stupid bounces. Staal scored the winner in Game 4 after he fell over his own feet, swatting at the puck. Shea Theodore's winner for Vegas in double overtime came after a bounce off the end boards that hit Bussi's left skate.

"There have been a lot of emotional swings, exciting games, and tough games for a player with the ups and downs," Staal said Thursday.

This story was originally

Published June 11, 2026 at 1:03 PM.

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393735 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes tailgaters battle heat wave ahead of Game 5 of the Stanley Cup

Alli Pardue, Ben Pennington 9-12 minutes 12/06/2026

Inside the Lenovo Center Thursday afternoon, the Carolina Hurricanes and the Vegas Golden Knights were preparing to battle it out for the series lead in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final.

Outside the arena, fans were facing a battle of their own — against the heat.

Thursday marked the start of an early summer heat wave for the Triangle, with forecasted highs expected to hit triple digits through the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

weekend. It hit 100 degrees in Raleigh Thursdy, and the humidity made it feel even hotter.

Aside from enjoying the usual assortment of cold drinks and pop-up canopy tents, Canes tailgaters were spotted bobbing for cold apples, drinking off an ice sculpture, dunking in pools, driving a robotic cooler on wheels, spraying mist and running electronic fans galore to help stay cool.

Notably fewer fans populated the Thursday tailgate, as compared to Games 1 and 2 of the series, likely due to in part to the high temperatures. It's possible the lack of a pre-game concert with famous musicians kept the Caniacs from the outdoor festivities. Brothers Osborne performed outside Lenovo Center for Game 1, and Dan + Shay took the stage for Game 2.

Still, Canes fans spread out across the parking lots to party, play miniature hockey, sing and enjoy their usual pregame rituals.

Evidently, the storm can handle the heat.

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393736 Carolina Hurricanes

The 'tarps off' craze arrives in NC: Shirtless Canes fans have skin in the game

Faith Wardwell5-6 minutes 12/06/2026

With 10 minutes left in Game 2 of the Stanley Cup Final, the mood in Lenovo Center had soured.

The electric energy of the first two periods had fizzled as Carolina remained scoreless, and trailed Vegas 2-0.

Then, the shirts came off.

"Tarps off for the boys?" read a prompt on the Jumbotron.

The answer to that question was a no-brainer to hundreds of men across the stadium. In seconds, bare-skinned fans waving their shirts like rally towels were almost as easy to spot as the thousands of red Hurricanes jerseys in the stands.

Everything inside the arena noticeably shifted.

First came a goal by Logan Stankoven, bringing the score to 2-1. Then, Mark Jankowski and Jordan Staal scored to erase the Vegas Golden Knights' lead before Vegas' Mark Stone tied the game again at 3.

And after two shirtless fans sounded the siren to ring in the overtime period, a power-play goal from Seth Jarvis brought the Hurricanes their first victory of the series and catapulted them one step closer to a championship win.

To a superstitious fan, those 10 minutes could only be explained by magic. But to the Hurricanes, that's just the power of their fan base.

"That's the best thing about them — they're crazy," Jarvis said Friday after Game 2. "It's an amazing atmosphere to play in. It's not warm in there, so to take your tarps off and get the crowd going and get the energy going — that's what kick-started our whole little press there."

As the Hurricanes flew to Las Vegas for Game 3, the "tarps off" trend continued to take off in Raleigh, with photos of shirtless fans going viral, and the Hurricanes even launching official Tarps Off merchandise.

Origin of 'Tarps off' craze

But the trend isn't unique to the Canes, or to the NHL. For decades, fans across the sports world have gone shirtless as a rallying cry in their team's most critical moments.

It gained even more virality in college football in 2025 after an Oklahoma State fan accepted a bet from his sister to stand shirtless alone in an empty section of the stadium, waving his shirt above his head, per USA Today. And it's since spread to the MLB this season, largely embraced by St. Louis Cardinals fans.

But the Hurricanes' "tarps off" invitation wasn't pre-planned, said Jason Danby, the Hurricanes' Vice President of Entertainment and Production Head of Entertainment. The viral moment was a spur-of-the-moment decision in the middle of the second period to renew the crowd's energy, Danby told The News & Observer.

And because of the notorious boldness of Hurricanes fans, it worked.

"Our fans are just a little bit more active, engaged and willing to put themselves out there," he said. "Courage encourages courage."

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Jason Danby

Carolina Hurricanes Vice President of Entertainment and Production Head of Entertainment

And while Danby was reluctant to name the shirtless crowd as the sole cause of the Hurricanes' comeback, he said it was an effort to encourage fans to have more skin in the game — literally — as the team put their necks on the line in the critical match-up.

"It takes more courage to play hockey, being a very dangerous sport," Danby said. "So if we can encourage our fans to show a little bit of courage themselves and go tarps off for the boys in support of what they're doing, then I think it fits the environment here in a way that's pretty special."

Ahead of a critical Game 5 in the Lenovo Center on Thursday, Danby predicted the team wouldn't be using the "tarps off" prompt at all. That's because, he said, the Canes would be so far ahead that they wouldn't need the rallying cry in the first place.

"My gut feeling is telling me our team isn't going to be down," he said. "But if they are, it's our job and our privilege to help encourage our crowd."

This story was originally

Published June 11, 2026 at 8:57 PM.

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393737 Carolina Hurricanes

How to get Carolina Hurricanes tickets for Lenovo's Game 6 watch party

Anna Roman4-5 minutes 11/06/2026

The Carolina Hurricanes are going back to Las Vegas for Game 6 of the Stanley Cup, where they could potentially win the whole thing.

The Canes are 3-2 against the Golden Knights following Thursday's 4-2 victory in Game 5 in Raleigh.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

For fans at home in Raleigh who want to be part of the moment, minus the plane trip, the "loudest house" in the NHL will once again open its doors for a ticketed watch party.

Tickets for the Sunday's watch party at the Lenovo Center will go on sale Friday, June 12, at 3 p.m.

Season Ticket Members will have access to a pre-sale first, said Mike Sundheim, vice president of communications for the Canes.

"The watch parties for Games 3 and 4 were tremendous success, as capacity crowds took in both road games – an amazing atmosphere thousands of miles from where the game was actually being played," Sundheim said.

How much are watch party tickets?

Tickets are \$10, with proceeds going to the Carolina Hurricanes Foundation. Parking is free, and attendees will also receive a free rally towel. Some concession items will be discounted during the watch party.

Free watch parties have been held outside the Lenovo Center during home games against the Vegas Golden Knights, but the Raleigh arena opens up its door for fans to watch the Canes on the video screens during away games.

Fans have expressed disappointment with the difficulties in purchasing tickets to the games themselves and to the Lenovo Center's watch parties, The News & Observer previously reported.

When do Game 6 watch party tickets go on sale?

Season ticket members can buy tickets at 10 a.m. through Account Manager.

Tickets for the public will be available at 3 p.m. online.

Can the Canes tickets be resold?

No, the tickets may not be to be resold, according to the Carolina Hurricanes.

How to watch the Canes on TV

Games will be shown live on ABC and online at ABC.com, though you will need to share your TV provider and login. You can also stream on ESPN+.

All games are scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. EST.

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393738 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes take commanding 3-2 series lead after Game 5 win over Vegas

Chip Alexander, Justin Pelletier 10-13 minutes 11/06/2026

It wasn't Game 7, but it almost felt like it.

The Carolina Hurricanes and Vegas Golden Knights went at it Thursday in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final, and it was 60 minutes of hard checks and fights for pucks and a bruising battle to find open ice and any kind of scoring chance.

The Canes emerged with 4-2 victory after a game of big-boy hockey at the Lenovo Center, grabbing a 3-2 lead in the series and putting them on the brink of the franchise's second Stanley Cup.

The Canes go back to Las Vegas for Game 6 on Sunday. The Cup will be in T-Mobile Arena. Only the Canes can win it that night.

"Their backs are against the wall, so it's going to take everything we have," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "That's the bottom line, and we're going to need everybody to give everything they have, and we'll have to find a way."

Neither team had won two straight games in a Cup Final filled with funky plays and blown leads and unpredictable and sudden momentum swings.

And, in the Canes' case, a goalie change.

Brandon Bussi quickly became a fast trending story after relieving Frederik Anderson in the third period of Game 3, winning Game 4 in the rookie's first career playoff start and then starting again Thursday.

Vegas scored on its first shot of the game as Pavel Dorofeyev, who had two goals in the game, converted on a power play, his first goal in the Cup Final.

But Staal scored, again -- and historically, again.

Andrei Svechnikov had two power-play goals.

And Sebastian Aho, who has been more of a playmaker than goal-scorer in the playoffs, went top shelf after a Sean Walker pass for a 3-1 lead in the second period.

Staal has six goals in the Stanley Cup Final and became the first player to score in five straight games to start a Cup Final since Jean Beliveau in 1956. The other two: Maurice Richard (1951) and Cyclone Taylor (1918).

Staal's sprawling backhand while flat on the ice was the winning goal in Game 4, not the most nimble of shots, but in the net. He scored on a redirect of an Ehlers pass for a 1-1 tie Thursday -- the first of Ehlers' three assists -- and other good looks as he powered his way around the crease.

The Canes continued to surge on the power play. Svechnikov saw to that, tying the score in the second period with a blast and adding his second in the third period off a slick Ehlers pass for a 4-1 lead.

Vegas captain Mark Stone was called for a double-minor high-sticking penalty in the third after getting his stick under the shield of defenseman Jalen Chatfield and almost yanking off his helmet. Chatfield was nicked over his right eye but returned to the game.

The Canes, after struggling though the playoffs, have power-play goals in four straight games.

The Canes' third delay-of-game penalty, for flipping the puck over the glass, resulted in a 6-on-4 power play for Vegas after pulling goalie Carter Hart.

Bussi's two stops on Tomas Hertl, with 1:20 left in regulation, essentially sealed the win. Bussi finished with 23 saves for his second straight win.

"We were able to manage their pushes tonight. That was really big," Bussi said. "And when we got going we were able to score on our chances."

"It's been fun. We're playing hockey at the highest level. It's been fun to be a part of it."

There were some blemishes in the win. Ehlers twice was called for penalties for delay of game for flipping the puck over the glass from the defensive zone, and defenseman K'Andre Miller was called for a third.

Ehlers called it his worst game of the playoffs, and noted he would hear about his mistakes from his father, a European hockey coach. To which Brind'Amour quipped: "I hope so."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

"Everyone is going to have nights where you have mistakes, but you can have a positive impact on the game," Brind'Amour said. "He found a way to contribute."

The Knights lost center William Karlsson to an apparent upper body injury after a big hit from Walker in the game, and Vegas coach John Tortorella said he would not return in the series. After the game, Vegas coach John Tortorella was defiant, promising a Game 7.

"We'll be back," he said. "I'll leave my clothes here because we'll be back."

But first, the return to Last Vegas. Again, the Cup will be in Las Vegas.

A new goalie wrinkle for the Hurricanes?

Bussi started Game 5 for the Carolina Hurricanes, of course.

But before the game, that was still officially in doubt. Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour answered the question Thursday morning almost before it was finished.

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Published June 11, 2026 at 1:03 PM.

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393739 Carolina Hurricanes

The voice of the Canes pulls back the curtain. Why he's never missed a home game

Faith Wardwell5-7 minutes 11/06/2026

Hours before the puck drops on Carolina Hurricanes game days, Wade Minter starts getting into character.

After 11 years as the Hurricanes' public announcer, it's a ritual he knows by heart.

First, he puts on his red Hurricanes jersey — his name across his back — picks up a hot coffee at Starbucks and drives to the Lenovo Center while listening to a pregame playlist melding old-school hip-hop with Boygenius and Indigo Girls.

He eats a pregame meal of barbecue with Eastern sauce, coleslaw and sweet tea while reviewing the pronunciations of the night's players before walking in a clockwise loop around the arena — pausing to say hi to fans and take pictures — and making his way back to the press box.

Then, it's time for Minter to take his seat as the voice of the Carolina Hurricanes.

"The script has been fairly consistent over the past 11 years," Minter said. "There's certain rhythms I just know how to get into. When I'm up here with just the microphone, and no one knows what I look like, I'm in that mode, and I can hopefully put on a good show."

How did Wade Minter become Canes' PA man?

Minter has narrated the wins and losses of the Hurricanes since 2015, from announcing the team's starting lineup at every game to ringing in its Eastern Conference Final win to a crowd of screaming fans.

To him that personality is almost fictitious — a part he says he's been playing since his early days as an improv comedian — ironically, playing a sports announcer. But after more than a decade in the PA seat, Minter's trademark growling shouts have become a mainstay for the Hurricanes fan base — with fans singing along with his musical yells during games and mimicking him off the ice.

"There's a lot of that character still in what I do," he said. "My training in improv has really allowed me to do some really cool moments where I



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

see an opportunity to make things fun or funny or heighten them, and I can go for it."

By day, the Wake Forest resident works as a tech executive for Suggestion Ox, an anonymous HR feedback platform he founded in 2015. But by night, he's back in the press box, delivering his rallying cries between each period — a side of his life that he says many of his co-workers don't know much about.

"The circles intersect to some degree, but a lot of people who know me from the tech or business world don't know anything about the hockey, and vice versa," Minter said.

But despite his role as a centerpiece of Hurricanes culture, Minter isn't a native North Carolinian. And he said he only started watching hockey after moving to the Raleigh area in 1999, a few years after graduating from college at William & Mary.

The Canes moved to the Lenovo Center just months after Minter came to town — both he and the team newcomers to the Triangle. It didn't take long for him to become enamored, he said.

"I didn't know a lot about hockey, but there was a team coming, and my friends were excited about it," he said. "So I fell in love with the sport very quickly, because it's an easy sport to love."

Comedian, hockey player, announcer

In the years that followed, Minter started playing adult recreational hockey and tried on handfuls of roles adjacent to athletics, like becoming a ring announcer for the Raleigh-based comedic wrestling group GOUGE Wrestling and working as the PA for the N.C. State club hockey team for more than 10 years.

He tried out to become the Canes' announcer in 2015 and got the job shortly thereafter.

Since then, Minter said he hasn't missed a single home game. He's sat behind a microphone for the past 505 matchups, forgoing sick days and personal engagements to carry fans through the highs and lows of the past 11 seasons.

"I've always thought that if I miss a game, they're gonna find somebody better," he said. "So the way I don't let that happen is I don't miss a game."

In recent years, Minter has started to pull back the curtain, filming videos of himself announcing the game from the press box to allow fans to put a face to the famous, booming voice and let them in on the performance. And he's made a tradition of handing out pages from his scripts to fans as a keepsake from the game.

But there's one script that Minter couldn't help but keep for himself.

It's the page he gripped while announcing the Hurricanes as the Eastern Conference champions last month — something he'd read twice before, but always for the opposing team. That page now hangs in his office, he said.

"We've been so close, so many times and come away with nothing," he said. "This team has been so good, and they've gotten so close and have not been able to make it over that hump. You wonder if a curse has been put on you, like what's going on?"

"But being able to say the Carolina Hurricanes are the Eastern Conference champions for the first time since it happened in 2006 — that meant a lot to me," he added.

Now, Minter is crossing his fingers for one more goal — announcing the team as the Stanley Cup champion.

"If I get the opportunity to say that, I'll shut off the part of my brain that's probably freaking out and I'll do my job," he said. "And when the

microphone is off and the talking is done, I'll probably sob because it doesn't get better than that."

Profile Image of Faith Wardwell

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393740 Carolina Hurricanes

The biggest Canes watch parties in the Triangle for Game 5 of the Stanley Cup

Anna Roman6-7 minutes 11/06/2026

The Carolina Hurricanes are back in Raleigh for Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final.

Around 8 p.m. Thursday, June 11, the Canes will take on the Golden Vegas Knights at the Lenovo Center in Raleigh.

Major watch parties are taking place outside the Lenovo Center, at Red Hat Amphitheater in Downtown Raleigh and at the Cary location of the Carolina Ale House, an official Canes bar. The town of Cary is launching its first watch party in its downtown.

Thursday is the start of heat wave expected to continue through the weekend, and temperatures forecasted to reach 99 degrees on Thursday, 101 degrees Friday, and 98 degrees on Saturday and Sunday.

Thursday also marks the start of three days that have a "major" heat risk, a level three out of four risk, said National Weather Service meteorologist Aaron Swiggert.

"Most people are starting to get acclimated to this warmer weather, but this will be the first time where we're starting to get close to some dangerous heat," he said. "So take extra precautions, have sufficient amounts of water if you're out and about, bring some shade with you."

Find watch party attendance details below.

If you want to check out other local bars and restaurants in your Canes red, visit our story (which is being continually updated): List: Watch parties for the 2026 Stanley Cup around the Triangle for Canes fans.

Lenovo Center

For home games, the Canes will set up screens on the South Plaza of the Lenovo Center for fans without tickets. Pregame concerts begin at 5:30 p.m.

The Watch Party for Game 1 will include a free pregame concert from country music duo Brothers Osborne.

Ahead of Game 2, Dan + Shay will headline the free pregame concert.

The watch party doesn't require a ticket. Food and beverages will be available for purchase, and fans will have to pay for on-site parking. Outside food and drinks and chairs are not allowed, and restrooms will be available.

Carolina Hurricanes fans react during a Stanley Cup Final watch party in Raleigh's Smoky Hollow district on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, as the Hurricanes play the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Red Hat Amphitheater

The official Carolina Hurricanes Stanley Cup Final free watch party, previously held at Moore Square in downtown Raleigh, is moving to the Red Hat Amphitheater (500 S. McDowell St.). The doors open at 6:30 p.m. before 8 p.m. puck drop.

The event is rain or shine, and people are asked to not bring chairs. There will be seating in sections 1 through 7, or people can bring a small blanket to sit on the lawn. The amphitheater's clear bag policy is in effect.

Outside food and beverages are not allowed, except for an empty reusable water bottle or a sealed water bottle. Canes-themed food and drinks will be available for purchase at bars and food trucks, including Hollywood Taco Shop and Two Roosters.

Carolina Ale House

The Carolina Ale House hosts official viewing parties at its Cary location (2240 Walnut St., Cary), and the parties include appearances from Stormy, the Canes mascot, and the Canes Crew, along with eating contests, prizes, giveaways and drink specials.

Past playoff parties have included indoor viewings and outdoor viewings with large TVs and yard games. The games will also be shown in other Triangle Carolina Ale House locations. Details will be shared online: carolinaalehouse.com/canes.

Downtown Cary Park

The town of Cary is organizing a free watch party on the Great Lawn Pavilion at the Downtown Cary Park (327 S. Academy St., Cary) for Games 5 and 6, and Game 7 if needed.

Guests are asked to bring lawn chairs or blankets, and outside food and non-alcoholic beverages are allowed. Beer, wine and other drinks will be available for purchase at The Bark Bar.

How to watch the Canes on TV

Games will be shown live on ABC and online at ABC.com, though you will need to share your TV provider and login. You can also stream on ESPN+.

All games are scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. EST.

News Observer LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393741 Carolina Hurricanes

Svechnikov scores twice, Hurricanes within win of Stanley Cup after 4-2 victory in Game 5

June 12, 2026 Cory Lavalette Article, NFL, Sports

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes have been patiently waiting for Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov to break through in the playoffs.

Game 5 might have been the moment.

Svechnikov scored twice on the power play, Aho added a highlight-reel goal and Brandon Bussi won the goaltending battle again to propel the Hurricanes to a 4-2 victory Thursday in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup final at Lenovo Center. Carolina, with a 3-2 series lead, is one win away from the franchise's second championship. Game 6 is Sunday at 5 p.m. EST in Las Vegas.

"We need to be hungry," said goaltender Bussi, who made 21 stops to earn his second straight win. "We're going there for Game 6, and we're probably going to see the best version of them."

The Hurricanes took control in the second period.

On a second consecutive power play, Svechnikov slid a shot through defenseman Jeremy Lauzon's legs and through the five-hole of Carter Hart (20 saves) to give Carolina a 2-1 lead it wouldn't relinquish at 11:58 of the middle frame.

"That was the kind of shooting mentality," Svechnikov said of the power play, which is 6 for 16 in the series. "I tried to get as quick a shot as possible, and, obviously, it worked out."

Aho doubled the lead at 17:51, slashing to the left circle and kicking a Sean Walker pass to his stick before roofing a shot over Hart to make it 3-1.

"All playoffs he's done, I think, really well," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Aho. "But man, if we can get that out of him, that's just a big bonus for our team."

Then with Brayden McNabb, Vegas' top penalty-killing defenseman, in the penalty box for a high-sticking double minor on Jalen Chatfield in the third period, Svechnikov got his second power play goal of the night and third of the series.

Shayne Gostisbehere made a seam pass to Nikolaj Ehlers in the left circle. Ehlers stopped it on his backhand and spun, firing a pass to Svechnikov for a back door tap-in and a 4-1 lead.

"I think we got the chemistry going on," Svechnikov said of the power play.

After four games of unpredictability and madness, Game 5 looked more like a scripted Carolina win.

The Hurricanes limited Vegas to 23 shots, and Brandon Bussi — making his second career playoff start — made the stops when needed, with Pavel Dorofeyev's pair of goals the only blemish on his night.

"I think the goalie, Bus, had a lot of poise," Brind'Amour said. "I think he looked pretty calm in there and obviously played a great game for us."

The only fault in the Hurricanes' game was their inability to keep the puck inside the playing surface. Carolina committed three delay-of-game penalties for shooting the puck over the glass, two by Ehlers, and the first gave the Golden Knights a 1-0 lead.

Vegas' power play, which entered the game 1 for 12 in the series, converted when a zone entry by Jack Eichel created a quick play that ended up on Dorofeyev's stick for his first goal of the series at 6:52 of the first period.

Ehlers redeemed himself by helping even the score just under five minutes later.

Chatfield pinched at the right point to keep Vegas from getting a clear, and Seth Jarvis won a race to the loose puck to pop it to Ehlers at the left point.

Ehlers saw Staal crashing the net, and he fired a pass that Staal redirected past Hart for his sixth goal of the series and eighth of the playoffs. He became the first player since 1956 to score in the first five games of the Cup final and first since 1973 to score in five consecutive games in the championship series.

"It's a good time to get hot," Staal said. "I want to contribute any way I can. The puck's been going in for me lately, and it's good timing."

Brind'Amour praised his captain's play and said he expects Staal to have his teammates prepared for a chance to bring the Stanley Cup back to Raleigh.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

"He deserves it," Brind'Amour said. "He's playing great, but we've got to get that one more still, and he knows it. He'll have our group ready."

Notes: Staal was 14 of 19 on faceoffs. ... Vegas had a 15-6 high-danger scoring chance advantage at 5-on-5, according to NaturalStatTrick.com. ... Hart is the first goalie in NHL history to allow four or more goals in the first five games of a Stanley Cup final. ... Vegas center William Karlsson left the game after a hit by Walker in the second period and did not return. ... Forwards Jesperi Kotkanen and Nicolas Deslauriers, and defenseman Mike Reilly were healthy scratches for Carolina, as were goalies Frederik Andersen and Amir Miftakov.

North State Journal LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393742 Carolina Hurricanes

One More Game: Canes try not to tempt fate

June 12, 2026 Shawn Krest Article, NHL, Sports

It takes a lot to make Rod Brind'Amour wince, but the second question of his post-game press conference following Game Five of the Stanley Cup finals did the trick.

The question began with the phrase, "Being one game away from the Stanley Cup ..."

And Brind'Amour looked like he'd just taken a puck to the face, visibly pulling away from the question.

It's apparently one of those unwritten rules of perhaps the most superstitious of all sports. Don't touch the Cup until you've won it. Don't touch the other trophies you may earn leading up to the Cup—after winning the Prince of Wales Trophy by taking the Eastern Conference Championship, Brind'Amour told his players, "You do what you want. but don't touch it"—and, apparently, when you're one game away from winning the top prize in hockey, you don't mention it.

"It's probably good to have a couple days in between, to be honest," Brind'Amour said, treading carefully as he answered the question. "There's a lot going on now, and, you know, it's not ideal for what you're kind of alluding to."

Being one game away from the Stanley Cup is apparently a lot like Fight Club. For the next three days, at least, OMG will not be a text message expression of excitement, it will be Brind'Amour's own personal Voldemort—that which must not be named—One More Game.

Goalie Brandon Bussi, playing again after a long period of inactivity, certainly doesn't want to risk doing anything to rile up the hockey gods—or his coach.

When asked the OMG question on TV after the game, he said, "It's a good feeling, right? It's hard ... what we're doing right now. ... "Whoever can do it on the ice longer is going to be successful."

Later, he was asked directly if he thinks about it—one win away, one more game.

"No," Bussi said. "This series, we've been trailing a lot, and honestly, I think we need to keep that mindset. We need to be hungry. We're going there for Game 6, and we're probably going to see the best version of them. And we're going to probably see the best version of them for whatever happens, so I think that only means that we need continue to step it up."

The series has already had a side storyline of a curse, from pro wrestler Danhausen, who placed one on the Canes after Vegas paid him for a

Cameo video, then lifted the curse after Canes supporters paid up for a Cameo of their own. There's no reason to tempt fate by mentioning OMG.

Sebastian Aho was also sure to tread carefully. "Obviously, the job's not finished," he said. "We've got to rest and recover and then it's on to the next one."

Apparently, not everyone got the message, though, or refuses to believe spooks and curses.

"Yeah, it's pretty crazy," Sean Walker said, "but like you said, it's one win away, right? So we'll just go into Vegas with the same mindset that we've had all playoffs, play our game, and hopefully get the result we want."

Andrei Svechnikov, who scored twice in the Game Five win, also seemed to think he could tempt fate.

"It is the biggest game," he said. "Stanley Cup Final, and thank God, we won this game. We're going to roll, and we've got one more in us. ... We know it's going to be hard. That's the hardest trophy to win, and we just kind of got to play our game and keep the pressure on and hopefully we're going to keep the momentum."

Even the old, grizzled coach couldn't fight the temptation to think about what might be just around the corner.

"I liked our effort for sure," Brind'Amour said, "and I hope we're getting better. I think there's certain areas of our game that are starting to look a lot like we need it to look. But I do think there's still another level that we're gonna need to get to find that next one."

One more game, and potentially two chances to get it.

"It's our biggest game that's going to happen" Svechnikov said of game six. "The biggest game in our lives and in my career personally."

Knock on wood.

North State Journal LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393743 Carolina Hurricanes

Category 5: Hurricanes, Golden Knights prepare for pivotal Game 5

June 11, 2026 Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports

RALEIGH — After Thursday's Game 5, one team will be a win away from lifting the Stanley Cup. Needless to say, this is a big one. With just one day — and a long travel day at that — between games, the fifth game in the series could come down to which team was best able to rest physically and mentally to try to recover from what can only be described as a wild, unpredictable Stanley Cup final.

1. Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour is seemingly done discussing his lineup before games for the rest of the season.

After Thursday's morning skate, which Frederik Andersen did not attend, Brind'Amour said "everybody's available" and deflected any other questions about Andersen's availability or his lineup in general.

All signs, however, point to Brandon Bussi getting his second straight start.

That's unsurprising after Bussi stood his ground in Game 4, outplaying Carter Hart and picking up his first career playoff win to even the series.

Vegas was one of seven teams — eight, if you count Carolina — that Bussi didn't play against during his 31-6-2 regular season. In 105:26



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

against the Golden Knights in the last two games, he's stopped 36 of 40 — a .900 save percentage and 2.28 goals-against average.

2. Brind'Amour has leaned on goalie coach Paul Schonfelder all season to help him make decisions on who will start in net. In the aftermath of Game 4, Brind'Amour said the decision to start Bussi before the win came after a minute-long conversation with Schonfelder, during which the goalie coach said Andersen was in need of some time off.

Whether that's the case or Andersen suffered an injury in Game 3 — plenty have pointed to the blow to the head Andersen suffered from Ivan Barbashev before a disallowed goal in the second period of that game — will emerge eventually.

Still, Brind'Amour relies on Schonfelder, and his other assistants, to help him make key decisions.

"Obviously I have to make the final decision," Brind'Amour said after Thursday's morning skate, "but I value what they think. And so Paul, when it comes to the goaltending, is 100% the guy in charge.

"And I would say our views always seem to line up, (are) right along the same line. But he knows those guys. That's his job. He's got to worry about three guys, and he's done a great job with that."

3. Sebastian Aho, Seth Jarvis and Andrei Svechnikov were three of the Hurricanes' top four point producers during the regular season, and based on points per game, they were 1-2-3.

They are, respectively, tied for fifth, tied for seventh and tied for ninth in the postseason so far. Understandably, there have been questions about their production and if any are suffering from an unknown injury — or in Jarvis' case, the status of a shoulder ailment that has lingered for two seasons.

That doesn't mean the trio isn't contributing. Aho has elevated his play in the final, registering four assists in the first four games of the series against Vegas. Svechnikov has been quieter, but he does have 13 hits in the last three games and scored the late goal that capped Carolina's furious comeback and forced overtime in Game 3.

Jarvis had the winning power play goal in Game 2, but his biggest play of the series came on a sequence where he wasn't awarded a point.

After being stopped by Hart all alone with the score tied in Game 4, Jarvis hunted down the puck in the corner, fended off four Golden Knights and got the puck to Nikolaj Ehlers, who slid it across to Jordan Staal for the go-ahead tally.

"That's what (Jarvis) does every night," Jordan Martinook said. "He's tenacious on the puck and just goes after it. You ask everybody in this room, I don't think they would care if it was them or the guy next to him (scoring). We just want to have W's at the end of the night."

Corey Sznajder of AllThreeZones.com showed Jarvis' impact goes beyond the scoresheet. Sznajder's data shows that Jarvis has contributed the most scoring chances per 60 of any Hurricanes player, trailing only Brett Howden and Mitch Marner through four games.

If Carolina can keep Marner's line from killing them for two of the next three games, they can pull this off. It's been a different line going for them every night with Aho/Eichel canceling each other out in that matchup. pic.twitter.com/xkDerbNIRA

— Corey Sznajder (@ShutdownLine) June 10, 2026

4. All three deserve credit for helping get Carolina's power play back on track as well.

After stumbling through most of the postseason, the Hurricanes' power play is 4 for 11 in the series, and Jackson Blake's Game 4 goal came four seconds after a Vegas penalty expired — it was essentially a power play goal, though not officially.

Conversely, Vegas is 1 of 12 in the series. Carolina is convincingly winning the special teams battle.

"I think that's what we've needed throughout (the previous) seven years, whatever we've been playing," Svechnikov said of the power play showing signs of life. "It (was) kind of always struggling on the power play in the playoffs a bit, but hopefully it's going to be this way."

5. The experience at T-Mobile Arena is unique. The warm-up music pumped through the stadium is best described as organ-rattling given all the bass — I looked at my water at one point, and it was like the scene in "Jurassic Park" when the T-rex was approaching.

There's also the pregame theatrics, featuring actors attached to wires that lift them into the air and spin them over the ice. Think Frozen Medieval Times.

But the atmosphere doesn't match Lenovo Center, which, in my opinion, is only rivaled by Bell Centre as the most raucous crowd in hockey.

It could be a factor in Game 5 ... or Game 7.

"Stanley Cup final, Game 5 — probably the biggest game I've played so far in my career," Svechnikov said Thursday morning. "The atmosphere is going to be amazing. Probably the building is going to be shaking a bit. I'm excited, can't wait."

North State Journal LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393744 Carolina Hurricanes

KREST: Get to 209 ... I'm in

June 11, 2026 Shawn Krest Article, NHL, Sports

Like many sexual assault cases, the Team Canada junior hockey trial involving Carter Hart came down to "he said/she said." So, it's worth remembering what she said.

She said she'd had 12 drinks that night—two hard lemonades, a vodka soda, a beer and eight shots. Then she decided to go back to the hotel with a member of the team. After their consensual sex, she was laying on the bed when two teammates came into the room. Uncomfortable, she retreated to the bathroom. When she returned, there were five.

It's he-said-she-said, and we know some of what he said, too. When the group text promising group sex went out to members of the team, telling them to get to room 209, Hart replied, "I'm in." That's in the court record.

He also said "get to 209" in a text to teammate Dante Fabbro at 3:27 A.M. That's in the court record too. Two minutes earlier, while teammates' attempts to record her giving consent are interrupted by her crying, he can be heard repeating, "I'll get Fabs."

They made her get on the floor. When she refused to lay on the grubby hotel carpet, they put down a bedsheet. They brandished golf clubs, joking among themselves about how they could use them on her. At 4:26 in the morning, five hours after she arrived and mere minutes before she left, while holding a sheet before her naked body, prompted by a male voice telling her, "say it," she said on a cell phone video that everything was consensual. In an earlier, much shorter video, she started to say she'd given consent but started crying and recording was stopped.

That's what they chanted about at Lenovo Center.

Carter Hart and his teammates were found not guilty. The court wasn't sure how drunk she really was or how badly she tried to leave. While Hurricanes fans chanted, "No means no," to taunt Hart during the Stanley



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Cup Finals, it's not clear whether she ever truly said, "No." With a half-dozen elite athletes holding golf clubs and telling her what to do, she may have decided "No" wasn't an option. That decision may have cost her justice in court. It also may have saved her a great deal of pain.

Regardless of the reason, the junior hockey players were cleared of any wrongdoing and many have resumed their hockey careers. Hart is playing for the Stanley Cup. One of his teammates, Brett Howden, who has goals in three of the first four games of the series, was also in the room. He was a witness, not a defendant, who said he left the room while she was crying, because he was "uncomfortable with the whole situation."

He recalls a teammate taking her into the bathroom to have sex, then stopping to ask Howden, "Will I get in trouble for this? Like, am I okay to do this?" He answered, "I don't know. If she wants to have sex with you, like I guess it's okay....if she consents and she wants to, then sure."

In each of the games in Raleigh, fans serenaded Hart with chants of, "No means no." That was wrong. Not because the players were found not guilty. Not because Hart deserves better. Because the victim does.

That night in the hotel was life-changing for her. If the court was right, it was merely an event that led to a brutal invasion of her privacy and attack on her reputation in open court. If the court was wrong, then it was a catastrophic trauma.

It wasn't an airball. It wasn't a shoplifting arrest, or an overly thirsty text that accidentally went private. To chant an anti-rape slogan at someone who may have actually participated in a gang rape reduces it to the level of everything else fans chant about. It becomes a tactic. "If we chant this, he might get rattled, and then we might win."

Ask yourself: If the victim were in the arena while that was being chanted, would she be appreciative of the crowd for supporting her? Would she think they had her back?

"I just see the consequences of what happens to these victims down the road, and a lot of times, it's not good," said Karen Tremmer, former executive director of Chances & Changes, a women's shelter based in New York. "A lot of times the trauma these victims experience, and maybe they didn't even recognize the level of trauma at the time, but as they go on with their lives—who knows what kind of issues has she had because of what happened to her."

"It's important to remember that sexual violence affects an estimated one in four women," said Monika Johnson Hostler, the executive director of NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault, "which means survivors are present throughout our communities, including among the fans in the stands on both sides of this conversation. They are watching, listening, and taking cues from how we respond."

If fans want to chant something about how Hart should be in jail, or that he has no business being on the ice, have at it. He did something gross, if it technically wasn't found to be illegal, and he got away with it because of the system. "No means no," isn't chanting about that. It's joking about how you need to get consent.

Jerry Seinfeld said that being a sports fan amounts to rooting for laundry. That leads to a moral hypocrisy for all of us. Our city and the guys that represent it are good. The other guys live in a dump and are cheaters. A player changes teams and we now love him because he's in our guys' jersey or hate him because he's not. That's weird, in the big picture, but it's fine. It's part of being a fan. We love our guy, regardless of how much of a jerk he is. He's our jerk. We hate their guy, even if he's actually not all that bad, because he's one of them. That shouldn't extend to alleged sexual assault.

"Framing these conversations as 'us versus them' can shift attention away from those most impacted: survivors," said Johnson Hostler.

"These discussions become centered on defending or condemning, and the survivors can become invisible in the process. The broader issues of consent, accountability, prevention, and support are often lost amid the noise—in this case, quite literally."

The Hurricanes considered signing Hart after the trial was finished. His reception in Raleigh and in Vegas would have both been very different if they had. And it shouldn't be.

Hart was cheered wildly in Vegas, both because he's a good goalie and because the hometown fans had to support their guy, after the adversity he'd faced from crowds in the other building.

Of course, facing adversity from a crowd might be a fitting punishment for the offense.

"I don't think we'd have seen a crowd doing that even 10 years ago," said Tremmer. "Actions have consequences. What you did, you did, and you can't erase that. It's about time we started holding guys accountable."

So an accused rapist hears "no means no" in half his games and gets cheered at the other half, because other people booed him. Neither response is okay. "Us vs. them" shouldn't extend to sexual assault. We're all "us" in that situation. The "them" are the group of guys holding golf clubs in a hotel room.

North State Journal LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393745 Carolina Hurricanes

William Karlsson probably 'not going to be with' Golden Knights after Game 5 injury, Tortorella says

Rich Hammond, Jesse Granger2-3 minutes 12/06/2026

William Karlsson, whose return from injury has been a compelling storyline for the Vegas Golden Knights in these playoffs, left Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday with an injury and his status for the rest of the series appears to be in doubt.

Karlsson was injured in the second period when hit hard by Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker. Karlsson's left arm was in clear discomfort on the bench. Not long after, Karlsson went to the locker room and Vegas' athletic trainer whispered in coach John Tortorella's ear, and the coach looked displeased. Karlsson did not return to the game, and a league source told The Athletic that Karlsson went to a local hospital during the game.

Asked about Karlsson after the game, Tortorella first said, "No update," but then spoke more about Karlsson.

"He's an important piece for us," Tortorella said. "Up the middle of the ice, penalty killer, power-play guy, and he's a winner. But having said that, it's all good stuff. He's not going to be with us, probably, so we gotta find a way to fill that void, not just with one guy, but as a team."

Karlsson was limited to 14 regular-season games because of a lower-body injury and didn't play after Nov. 8. He was able to return for the start of the second round against Anaheim and had three goals and six assists in 15 playoff games.

If Karlsson can't play Game 6, the Golden Knights could move Tomáš Hertl to center and insert Reilly Smith or Brandon Saad into the lineup.

"He means so much," Vegas' Jack Eichel said of Karlsson. "He's a world-class player. He plays in all situations. He's extremely reliable in our own zone, and he creates a lot of offense. So, yeah, he's a huge part of our group."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Teammate Brayden McNabb said: "It's tough. He's done a great job coming back. He's an awesome player, big leader in this room."

Jun 12, 2026

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393746 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes take control in Game 5, push Golden Knights to brink in Stanley Cup Final: Takeaways

Sean Gentile, Michael Russo, Jesse Granger, Pierre LeBrun9-11 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — In the first four games of the Stanley Cup Final, plenty of things clicked for the Carolina Hurricanes. Not on the list: strong play in the second period or high-end production from its leading scorers.

In Game 5 on Thursday night, the Hurricanes found both. Now, they find themselves within one win of their first Stanley Cup title in two decades.

Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho scored second-period goals to turn a 1-1 tie into a 3-1 Carolina advantage, Brandon Bussi made 23 saves and the Hurricanes beat the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2. Game 6 is in Las Vegas on Sunday night.

The Golden Knights, meanwhile, will try to force a Game 7 in a series they're trailing for the first time.

"We'll be back here," Golden Knights coach John Tortorella said defiantly. "We're just going to do it in a different order. ... We've got to find a way. I'm going to leave my clothes here, that's for sure. They'll be in the hotel."

Svechnikov added a third-period power-play goal on a wide-open net, courtesy of a spinning feed from winger Nikolaj Ehlers, and Bussi made several key stops down the stretch that allowed Carolina to maintain a multi-goal lead.

The second period, though, was the key. With Vegas defenseman Brayden McNabb in the box for boarding, Svechnikov put Carolina up 2-1 with a power-play goal at 11:58, sending a feed from Shayne Gostisbehere through traffic and between the pads of Vegas goaltender Carter Hart. Less than six minutes later, Aho kicked a pass from defenseman Sean Walker to his own stick and beat Hart again, giving the Hurricanes a two-goal lead at the second intermission. Vegas had previously outscored Carolina 9-1 in the second period, including 4-0 in Game 3.

"Our second period up until today had been ... not good," Ehlers said after a three-second pause. "I think today we were able to play a little more simple and (were) making sure pucks were getting deep, making sure you don't just (change lines) without looking behind you. And I think that worked pretty well."

Svechnikov and Aho entered the game with only four goals in 17 playoff games. Neither had been bad, but neither had produced the sort of offense a team typically requires from first-liners who also get top power-play minutes.

"That hasn't really happened, and we're still here," Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It doesn't necessarily have to be that way, but they have to have an impact in the game, whether it's on the scoresheet or doing other things. It certainly makes it a lot smoother if they're scoring. It takes a lot of pressure off other guys if they do that, and I guess that's what happened tonight."

The game was tied 1-1 after 20 minutes, with goals by Vegas' Pavel Dorofeyev, a 37-goal scorer in the regular season who'd gone cold in the Final, and Carolina's Jordan Staal, whose historic run of production has pushed him to the top of the Conn Smythe Trophy race.

That's not the piece of hardware Staal is primarily chasing. The Cup will be in T-Mobile Arena on Sunday, and Carolina will have the chance to hoist it.

"There can't be a single breath when you're on the ice. It's every little play. It's what we've been doing this whole playoff run, and the guys understand that and we're going to reinforce that again and again and again," Staal said on ESPN after the game.

"And as we play the game, we've got to keep reinforcing that ... everything has to be done well and executed. The fourth one's always the toughest, and we've got to find a way."

Staal makes history

Staal scored his sixth goal of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday — two more goals than he had in 24 playoff games during the Pittsburgh Penguins' run to the 2009 Stanley Cup title.

Staal tied the NHL record for longest goal streak in the Stanley Cup Final at five games. The others were Yvan Cournoyer in 1973, Jean Béliveau in 1956, Maurice "Rocket" Richard in 1951 and Cyclone Taylor in 1918.

After finishing his check on McNabb, Staal was able to skate alone to the front of the net and chip Ehler's pass past Hart. Staal is the first player in 70 years to score in the first five games of a Stanley Cup Final.

"You look at that first period, who got us back into it," Brind'Amour said. "(Staal). So we could take a breath and be like, 'All right, no damage done.' I can't say enough about him."

Staal is just the second captain to record six or more goals in a single Stanley Cup Final in the last 100 years, joining Edmonton Oilers legend Wayne Gretzky, who had seven in 1985.

"It's not necessarily (that) you're expecting him to put up those kind of numbers, and when he does, that's an added bonus," Brind'Amour said. "And he deserves it. He's playing great, but we've got to get that one more still, and he knows it. He'll have our group ready." — Michael Russo, NHL writer

Karlsson injured

One of the biggest reasons for Vegas' turnaround under Tortorella was the return of William Karlsson from injury.

But on Thursday, Karlsson was hurt in the second period when hit hard by Walker. Karlsson's left arm was in clear discomfort on the bench. Not long after, the athletic trainer whispered in Tortorella's ear, and the coach was clearly not happy.

Tortorella said he did not expect Karlsson to be available going forward.

"It's tough," center Jack Eichel said. "You lose someone like Karl, who's so valuable to our team and playing so well. But it just means everyone else has to step up."

"He means so much. He's a world-class player. He plays in all situations. He's extremely reliable in our own zone, and he creates a lot of offense. So, yeah, he's a huge part of our group."

If Karlsson can't play Game 6, the Golden Knights can move Tomas Hertl to center and insert Reilly Smith or Brandon Saad. — Russo

Bussi wins again, Andersen doesn't dress again

Bussi became the first goaltender in NHL history to make his first two career playoff starts in the Stanley Cup Final and win both games.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Bussi made 23 saves, getting his second straight start over Frederik Andersen, who skated on his own Thursday morning but didn't dress for the second game in a row after being pulled after two periods in Game 3.

Brind'Amour and GM Eric Tulsy claimed that Andersen was at least available to play Thursday, yet they recalled Amir Miftakhov from AHL Chicago despite the Wolves beginning the Calder Cup Final on Friday. — Russo

Slavin/Staal vs. Eichel

Eichel's offensive struggles in the Cup Final have been well chronicled, although he came out with more jump in Game 5 Thursday night and had two assists. Still, it was another quiet night offensively at five-on-five for Eichel, who took accountability Thursday morning by saying he needed to be better. Tortorella tried to help Eichel out Thursday night, loading up his top line by moving leading Vegas scorer Mitch Marner to Eichel's line with Mark Stone. But it still didn't lead to an offensive breakthrough for Eichel.

And to his defense, there are some top offensive players in Montreal, Philadelphia and Ottawa who know what it feels like to line up against Staal and top defenseman Jaccob Slavin.

"Jordan's a huge part of that," Slavin said Thursday morning when asked to break down the matchup against Eichel. "He could be up for the Selke every single year. Jordan helps out big time and I think he frustrates other teams' centers. We need him to continue to do that.

"But when Eichel is out there, you got to take away that time and space," added Slavin on his own part in it. "You have to know where he is on the ice and know that he doesn't need much to make a lot of it. He's a dangerous player and he's obviously a big part of their team." — Pierre LeBrun, NHL columnist

Carolina power play

The Hurricanes entered the Stanley Cup Final with a mediocre power play, but the unit has found its stride, scoring six goals between Games 2 and 5, with the latest being Svechnikov's pair of power-play goals Thursday night.

What's changed with the power play?

"I think just simplifying," said power-play quarterback Gostisbehere on Thursday morning. "We started maybe taking a little bit of what they're giving us. And simplifying. You see a lot of our goals are just shots to the net and the big man's (Staal) in front putting them away." — LeBrun

Dorofeyev on the board

Vegas' leading scorer from the regular season scored his first and second goals of the series on Thursday. Dorofeyev buried a cross-crease feed by Eichel on the power play to deliver an early lead for the Golden Knights. It was his league-leading fifth power-play goal of the playoffs and it broke the Vegas franchise record for the most in a single postseason.

The 25-year-old winger scored 10 goals in the first 13 playoff games and stood atop the postseason scoring race at one point. But he went seven games without a goal, stretching back to the Western Conference final against the Colorado Avalanche. He had been quiet through the first four games of the Cup Final, with only 18 shot attempts and seven shots on goal.

Following his early goal, Dorofeyev was playing with noticeably more confidence and assertiveness with the puck. He had three shots on goal in the first period alone and finished with a series-high seven shot attempts. Late in the third period, he pounced on a rebound in front of the Carolina net and lifted it over Bussi's glove to cut the deficit to two. — Jesse Granger, Golden Knights writer

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393747 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Jordan Staal makes history by scoring in fifth straight Stanley Cup Final game

Chris Johnston 2-2 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal became the first player in 70 years to open a Stanley Cup Final with goals in five consecutive games when he tipped home his sixth goal of the series on Thursday night.

Staal drove hard to the net and redirected a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers to tie Game 5 at 1-1 at the 11:46 mark of the first period, which gave him a goal in every game of this championship series against the Vegas Golden Knights so far.

Montreal Canadiens legend Jean Béliveau was the last to achieve the feat in 1956. The only other players to do it? Montreal's Maurice "Rocket" Richard in 1951 and Cyclone Taylor of the Vancouver Millionaires in 1918.

Yvan Cournoyer also scored in five straight Stanley Cup Final games for the Canadiens in 1973, but not the first five games.

Staal is a surprising player to join that exclusive company. The 37-year-old is prized for his shutdown abilities as a defensive-minded center rather than for his offensive prowess, and he entered the Cup Final with two goals in 13 playoff games this spring.

But he got hot as soon as the series with Vegas began, with one goal in each of the first three games and two in Tuesday's Game 4 victory.

Staal is just the second captain to record six or more goals in a single Stanley Cup Final in the last 100 years, joining Edmonton Oilers legend Wayne Gretzky, who had seven in 1985.

Jun 12, 2026

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393748 Carolina Hurricanes

Frederik Andersen's status still a mystery, signs point to Brandon Bussi as Canes Game 5 starter

Michael Russo, Sean Gentile 4-5 minutes 11/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — All signs point to Brandon Bussi making his second straight start for the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday night in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Frederik Andersen, the Hurricanes' No. 1 throughout the postseason until not dressing in Game 4, didn't take part in Carolina's morning skate on Thursday. Bussi was tending his position in what's deemed to be the starter's crease.

Coach Rod Brind'Amour said Andersen skated on his own before the team on Thursday and that "everybody's available." He wouldn't discuss the lineup, what's going on with Andersen or if he'd be backing up on Thursday any further.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

If Andersen was going to start or back up, not taking part in the morning skate was extremely abnormal.

Andersen, who has allowed 12 goals in the series, was pulled after giving up four in the second period of Game 3 on Saturday. Bussi came in and stopped 18 of 19 shots before losing in double overtime. He started Game 4 and backstopped Carolina to a 5-3 victory.

Andersen gave up those four goals after getting hit in the head by Ivan Barbashev on an eventual overturned goal by Jack Eichel, so it's unclear if he's hurt or continues to need a break, as Brind'Amour said he did after Andersen didn't dress for Tuesday's game in Las Vegas.

"It was about a minute conversation with (goalie coach Paul Schonfelder). He said Freddie needs a little break. OK. So we went with the other guy," Brind'Amour explained after the game. "And if you're going to give (Andersen) a break, you need to give him a break. So to me, him dressing and going through all that, that's not really giving him a night off."

Andersen hasn't skated with the team since Game 3.

This has been a difficult couple of weeks for Andersen. His friend, mentor and agent, former NHLer Claude Lemieux, died by suicide on May 28. Andersen, in an emotional start, closed out the Montreal Canadiens in the conference finals a day after finding out about Lemieux. Lemieux's funeral was this past Monday in North Carolina, but Andersen was unable to attend because he was in Las Vegas.

Bussi became the third goaltender in NHL history to make his first career playoff start in a Stanley Cup Final and pick up a win in the contest. The others were Hank Bassen in 1961 for the Detroit Red Wings and Alfie Moore in 1938 with the Chicago Black Hawks.

Bussi won 25 of his first 29 NHL starts, putting up a .901 save percentage in that span, but Andersen regained the starting job by the start of the postseason. Game 3 was the first game action Bussi had seen since April 14.

"He's been rolling with punches. He's prepared for this moment for almost two months," Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere said of Bussi on Thursday. "He's a pretty easy guy to talk to — calm, cool and collected. I think that (trickles) down from Freddie, too. Freddie's a lead-by-example guy. You never know his emotions. He's a calm, cool, collected guy, as well. So it's good to see Bussi getting the opportunity."

Bussi's first opportunity of the season came on Oct. 10, when he stopped 16 of 17 shots in a 5-1 win over the San Jose Sharks. With that performance, Brind'Amour said, Bussi earned an early bit of confidence.

"(He) made some big saves at real big moments of the game," Brind'Amour said. "We were pretty much in control. But all of a sudden there was a couple Grade-A chances, and he shut the door. And then we went on to win. And then he did the next start, and the next start."

"So obviously there's a guy that was given an opportunity. Everyone always talks about opportunity, but you gotta do something with it. And he's done nothing but earn every start that he's had."

Jun 12, 2026

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393749 Carolina Hurricanes

Is this the worst Stanley Cup Final goaltending of the NHL cap era?

Jesse Granger9-12 minutes 11/06/2026

The Athletic has live coverage of the Hurricanes vs. Golden Knights in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final.

The Stanley Cup Final has served as the stage for epic goaltending duels over the years.

Colossal showdowns between Patrick Roy and Martin Brodeur in 2001 or Dominik Hasek and Ed Belfour in 1999 immediately spring to mind. More recently, in the salary-cap era, we've seen Tim Thomas versus Roberto Luongo in 2011, Jonathan Quick versus Henrik Lundqvist in 2014, and Andrei Vasilevskiy versus Carey Price in 2021.

This year's Cup final will not be joining the list.

The Vegas Golden Knights and Carolina Hurricanes have thrilled us for four straight games to open the series, breaking records for comebacks and lead changes nightly. They've combined for the second-most goals ever through four games of a Cup final.

It's fair to say the goalies are not having a good time.

On Tuesday night, Vegas' Carter Hart became the first goalie in NHL history to allow four or more goals in each of the first four games of a Cup final. Carolina's netminders haven't fared much better. Frederik Andersen took the night off in Game 4 after allowing 12 goals through the first eight periods of the series, and Brandon Bussi won the first start of his playoff career despite posting an .857 save percentage.

Through four games, this is statistically the worst goaltended Stanley Cup Final in the salary-cap era.

Since 2006, no final has had a combined save percentage lower than .877, but this year's is well below that at an almost unfathomable .855. To find a combined save percentage lower than that, you have to go back to 1973, before the last maskless goalie had retired from the NHL.

In this era of hockey, we've never seen pucks find the net at this high a rate with the Stanley Cup on the line.

Lowest combined Cup final save % (cap era)

Year	Winning Goalie	Losing Goalie	Combined Save %
2010			
	Antti Niemi		
	Michael Leighton		
			.877
2007			
	J.S. Giguère		
	Ray Emery		
			.880
2023			
	Adin Hill		
	Sergei Bobrovsky		
			.882
2018			
	Braden Holtby		
	Marc-André Fleury		
			.887
2025			
	Sergei Bobrovsky		



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Stuart Skinner

.894

It's one of the biggest reasons the games have felt so chaotic, unpredictable and stressful.

"The lead changes and everything has been stressful, to say the least," Carolina forward Nikolaj Ehlers said Tuesday. "It shows how good both teams are, and when you let up just a little bit, teams are going to take advantage. So it's stressful, but a lot of fun to be a part of."

Few feelings test the nerves of a hockey player or coach like the feeling that any shot can go in. Late in games, as both teams have desperately clung to leads, that feeling has been unshakable — for everyone inside the building and watching at home.

The Hurricanes and Golden Knights have been defensive powerhouses — not just for this season, but also for years. In the regular season, they ranked first and third in shots allowed. In the playoffs, they're both among the league leaders in nearly every defensive metric.

And yet, neither can hold on to a lead for the life of them.

It certainly doesn't all fall on the goaltenders. Both teams have struggled to limit the other's biggest offensive strengths. Vegas has regularly found players streaking behind the Carolina defense for breakaways and odd-man rushes. On the other end, the Golden Knights haven't been able to corral Jordan Staal and others in front of their net.

"He's killing us in front of the net, Staal," Vegas coach John Tortorella said. "So we have got to do a better job around the blue (paint)."

Neither coach seems to have the answer to the defensive woes on both ends of the ice.

"I know in this final, during these games here, I have zero answers as far as the lead changes, going back and forth," Tortorella said Monday. "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 some of the bounces that have gone to each team."

There's been no lack of defensive lapses or brilliant offensive plays. That being said, both teams have been shaky in the crease for most of this season.

The Hurricanes are trapped in what has felt like a decadelong search for consistent playoff goaltending. Andersen has often been injured over the last few regular seasons, and 2025-26 was the worst of his career. For the first time in 13 seasons, he finished with more losses than wins and a save percentage below .880.

Bussi, a waiver claim from Florida in October, was sensational early in the season. He won 25 of his first 29 starts but struggled down the stretch with an .865 save percentage and minus-6.85 GSAX in 12 starts after the Olympic break. That opened the door for Andersen to claim the starting role for the playoffs.

In Vegas, Adin Hill battled through an injury-plagued season in the first year of his six-year, \$37.5 million contract and eventually lost the starting job to Hart when Tortorella took over behind the bench.

The Hurricanes ranked 26th in team save percentage in the regular season, and the Golden Knights finished directly behind them in 27th. The goaltending was much better through the first three rounds of the playoffs, but it shouldn't be a massive surprise it hasn't been a strength in the final.

There's an argument they haven't been as bad as the statistics suggest. Goaltending metrics can be tricky; they often reveal more about a goalie's environment than the netminder himself. For example, the goalies in the last final with a save percentage worse than this one, back in 1973, were Ken Dryden and Tony Esposito.

In defense of this year's goaltenders, they've faced a barrage of rush chances and point-blank looks. They've each made a handful of timely saves. Hart's windmill glove save on Seth Jarvis just before Tomas Hertl's game winner in Game 1 comes to mind. Bussi robbed Jack Eichel's backdoor redirect before Staal's winner in Game 4.

But there have also been plenty of key moments in which they've fallen short. Hertl's goal in Game 1 was a backbreaker for Carolina after tying the score late. It wasn't an easy save by any stretch, but it was a makeable save, the type that wins games in the Cup final, but Andersen couldn't get his blocker on it. And in games 3 and 4, Hart became the first goalie in NHL history to allow goals on three consecutive shots in back-to-back Stanley Cup Final games. If he found a way to make just one of those stops, and stop the bleeding, we could be talking about a commanding series lead for Vegas.

For all of the excuses that can be made for the goalies, it's tough to look past just how bad the numbers have been.

It's part of a much larger trend. This season's league-average save percentage of .896 is the lowest in 32 years. The NHL's newer, more accurate process for tracking shots on goal has no doubt played a factor, but it's not the only one. The average save percentage has declined for 10 straight seasons, as the league has continued to get younger, faster and more offensive.

Accounting for era is always key when comparing historical goalie statistics, as the standard for good goaltending varies drastically depending on the decade. But even within that context, comparing a given Stanley Cup Final save percentage with the league average of that regular season, this year's is still the worst in 53 years.

It also stacks up similarly when using goals saved above expected metrics, which are designed to account for the quality of shots faced. Hart, Andersen and Bussi have combined to save 7.64 goals below expected, according to HockeyStats.com. That is the worst combined GSAX figure in a Cup final in 16 years, and the second worst since the stat was tracked in 2008.

Lowest combined Cup final GSAX

Year	Winning Goalie	Losing Goalie	Combined GSAX
2010	Antti Niemi	Michael Leighton	-8.87
2018	Braden Holtby	Marc-André Fleury	-6.06
2025	Sergei Bobrovsky	Stuart Skinner	-3.61
2019	Jordan Binnington	Tuukka Rask	-2.14
2024			



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Sergei Bobrovsky

Stuart Skinner

-0.6

Expected goals weren't tracked for the first two seasons of the salary-cap era, but they're still the best barometer for goaltending excellence over that span. Over the last 18 years, we've seen some spectacularly goaltended finals.

The duel between Quick and Lundqvist in 2014 stands alone at the top. The two combined for a .926 save percentage and 8.52 GSx over six epic games that featured five overtime periods. The 2008 duel between Chris Osgood and Marc-André Fleury was equally memorable, highlighted by a triple-overtime marathon with 83 combined saves.

Highest combined Cup final GSx

Year	Winning goalie	Losing goalie	Combined GSx
2014			
	Jonathan Quick	Henrik Lundqvist	8.52
2008			
	Chris Osgood	Marc-André Fleury	6.61
2020			
	Andrei Vasilevskiy	Anton Khudobin	6.58
2011			
	Tim Thomas	Roberto Luongo	5.32
2016			
	Matt Murray	Martin Jones	4.45

We've also had some recent Stanley Cup Finals dominated by the goal scorers. The last three finals all rank in the bottom five in combined GSx, suggesting the league's shift toward speed and skill has outpaced adjustments to expected goal models by a bit.

Still, through only four games, this year's final is on pace to be the worst in terms of GSx, with only the 2010 barn burner between Chicago and Philadelphia below it. That year, Antti Niemi, Michael Leighton and Brian Boucher combined to stop 8.87 goals below expected over six games.

As this series has shown, things can change quickly in hockey. Perhaps Hart or Andersen can find the form that helped them backstop their teams through the first three rounds. Maybe Bussi can get hot and join Cam Ward in Hurricanes lore.

At this stage, if any of the goalies turn things around, it would almost certainly win their team a championship. To this point, they've only set the wrong types of records.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393804 Vegas Golden Knights

'We'll be back here': Tortorella guarantees Game 7 with Knights on the brink

Danny Webster, L.E. Baskow5-6 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — Let's just say John Tortorella better hope he's not leaving his favorite clothes behind in North Carolina.

For the first time during this unthinkable playoff run, the Vegas Golden Knights are on the brink of elimination.

Their season hangs in the balance after losing 4-2 in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final to the Carolina Hurricanes at Lenovo Center on Thursday. Carolina leads the best-of-seven series 3-2 and will look to capture their second Stanley Cup championship at T-Mobile Arena with Game 6 on Sunday.

Game 7 would be in Raleigh on Wednesday if the Knights find a way. Should they make that happen, Tortorella is packing light.

"I'm going to leave my clothes here, that's for sure," Tortorella said. "They'll be in the hotel."

Never before has this franchise thrown down the Game 7 guarantee gauntlet. No surprise it would come from the coach who, since the day he was hired, has beaten the drum on how much he believes in this team.

Losing Karlsson

But even Tortorella — in his heart of hearts — knows an uphill climb lies ahead. The Knights might have to move forward without center William Karlsson after he suffered an apparent arm injury midway through the second period and didn't return.

Karlsson left the arena, according to ESPN, to undergo further testing.

Tortorella didn't have an update on Karlsson but indicated the team "probably" won't have one of its best two-way players available the rest of the way.

"It's tough. You lose someone like (Karlsson) who's so valuable to our team and playing so well. But it just means everyone else has to step up," center Jack Eichel said. "He means so much. He's a world-class player. He plays in all situations."

This series already has been a struggle defensively for the Knights. Goaltender Carter Hart allowed four goals for the fifth consecutive game, the first time it's been done in Stanley Cup Final history.

Carolina goaltender Brandon Bussi, meanwhile, made 23 saves and became the first NHL goalie to make his first two playoff starts in the Stanley Cup Final and win both of them.

Hart has played in all but two games since Tortorella took over as coach March 29. Adin Hill, who backstopped the Knights to their Stanley Cup championship in 2023, has not played since April 9.

When asked if there was any thought to going to Hill in the third period, Tortorella shut it down immediately.

"Oh, Christ," he said. "That could be the stupidest question I've ever heard."

Special teams swing



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

The Knights got off to the kind of start they wanted. Pavel Dorofeyev scored his first of two goals on a power play 6:52 into the game for the 1-0 lead. It was Dorofeyev's first goal since Game 1 of the Western Conference Final on May 20.

But Carolina captain Jordan Staal continued his series dominance with his sixth goal of the round on a deflection at 11:46 of the first, becoming the first player since Jean Beliveau in 1956 to score in five straight games to begin the Cup Final.

The game turned because the usually disciplined Knights were anything but in the second period.

Back-to-back penalties on defensemen Jeremy Lauzon (roughing) and Brayden McNabb (cross-checking) gave Carolina four minutes of power play time. Hurricanes forward Andrei Svechnikov scored the first of his two power-play goals 59 seconds into McNabb's penalty to give Carolina a lead it didn't surrender.

"When you play short a couple guys, a couple guys sitting and waiting for their shifts, it's never ideal, especially if it's their role," center Tomas Hertl said. "But, definitely, both special teams have to be better."

Power play has lost power

The Knights' penalty kill entered the series killing 87.5 percent of power plays in the playoffs. Carolina, after going 2-for-5 on Thursday, is 6-for-16 with the man advantage.

The Knights' top-ranked power play is 2-for-15 in the series. All three of their power plays Thursday came on unforced delay-of-game penalties from Carolina.

The last gave the Knights a 6-on-4 chance with 2:13 remaining, but they failed to convert.

"At times, I thought we were good (on the penalty kill)," Tortorella said. "There are some situations I think we can push them and be more aggressive. At times, I thought we did a good job, but we have to complete it. It's tough with the back-to-back (penalties)."

Eichel pointed to the back-against-the-wall mentality the Knights have faced all season. It's been a while since they've faced this kind of adversity.

You have to go back to the first round against the Utah Mammoth to find the last time the Knights trailed in a series, and lost back-to-back games.

They'll have to avoid a third straight loss if they want one more game. And if Tortorella wants to get his clothes back.

"We're just going to be ready for our next game," Tortorella said. "We'll be back here. We're just going to do it in a different order."

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LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393805 Vegas Golden Knights

Golden Knights center leaves Game 5 of Stanley Cup Final with injury

Danny Webster2-3 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Vegas Golden Knights may have to play the rest of the Stanley Cup Final without center William Karlsson.

One of the team's best two-way players, Karlsson left Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final with an upper-body injury and did not return for the third period against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Karlsson took a check from Carolina defenseman Sean Walker and appeared to injure his left arm. He was being checked out by the training staff before skating down the tunnel.

ESPN reported Karlsson left the arena to undergo further testing.

William Karlsson went to the dressing room following this hit

He has yet to return at the start of the third period of Game 5
pic.twitter.com/B99AmbfgqH

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) June 12, 2026

Coach John Tortorella did not have an update following the Knights' 4-2 loss, but said "he's not going to be with us probably," as the Knights try to stave off elimination Sunday in Game 6.

"He's an important piece to us," Tortorella said. "Up the middle of the ice, penalty killer, power play guy. We've got to find a way. Not with just one guy, but as a team."

It's been a year to forget health-wise for the 33-year-old center.

Karlsson missed 68 games during the regular season with a lower-body injury and didn't return until the start of the second round against the Anaheim Ducks.

Karlsson has been a difference maker since returning with nine points in 14 playoff games and had four points during the Stanley Cup Final.

It's expected that either Brett Howden or Mitch Marner would move back to center in Karlsson's absence. That would also bring a winger back into the lineup — either Brandon Saad or Reilly Smith.

"It's always tough when you're losing one of your best players. A centerman, a two-way (player)," center Tomas Hertl said. "It's never easy to see somebody go down. Hopefully, we'll have him back, but we still have enough good players to handle it."

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LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393806 Vegas Golden Knights

Knights notebook: Stanley Cup Final, NBA Finals provide epic viewing

Danny Webster4-5 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — Not many of the Vegas Golden Knights stayed up past midnight EST to watch the New York Knicks pull off the greatest comeback in NBA Finals history.

Coach John Tortorella did watch. He almost didn't make it.

"I wanted to go to bed," Tortorella said. "But when they got it down to 15, you knew something stupid was going to happen."

The Knicks pulled off an all-time stunner Wednesday in Madison Square Garden, rallying from 29 points down in the second half to knock off the San Antonio Spurs 107-106 in Game 4 to take a 3-1 series lead.

Forward OG Anunoby immortalized himself in New York lore with the game-winning put-back with 1.2 seconds remaining.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

The Knicks are one win away from their first NBA title since 1973. That alone is reason for it being the most viewed NBA Finals since Michael Jordan won his sixth championship with the Chicago Bulls in 1998.

But the games have provided immaculate drama. The Knicks rallied from double digits down in the second half to win Game 1. San Antonio almost pulled off a 14-point rally with six minutes remaining, but lost 105-104.

The Knicks' comeback in Game 3 fell short in a 115-111 loss. San Antonio was 17 minutes away from bringing a tied series back to San Antonio for Game 5 on Saturday.

Sound familiar?

"I'm basically saying, the same stupid stuff is happening in our series," Tortorella said.

The Stanley Cup Final has produced an all-time great series with multi-goal comebacks in every game. Two games have been decided in overtime. Each team has split one game at home and one on the road.

Game 3 of the NBA Finals drew 23.8 million viewers, the highest-rated Game 3 since Jordan's Bulls played the Utah Jazz 28 years ago.

Meanwhile, Game 3 of the Cup Final peaked — the thrilling 5-4 double overtime win at T-Mobile Arena that saw Carolina rally from four goals down in the third — at 6.1 million viewers.

It's the highest-rated Game 3 in the NHL's championship series since Detroit and Carolina played in 2002.

The numbers are vastly different, but ESPN is reaping the benefits of both series providing immaculate theater.

The ending between the Spurs and Knicks will be remembered for Spurs point guard De'Aaron Fox going for a layup in the final seconds, rather than running the clock out and forcing New York to foul.

Anunoby blocked Fox's layup attempt, which set the stage for his thrilling game-winner.

Tortorella was asked as he sees that happening as a coach, what goes through his mind when a player makes a decision like that.

"I think the intensity, just the moment that's going on in the finals now, they're human beings. It just overcomes you sometimes to do some stupid things," Tortorella said.

"I don't have an answer. Who can explain some of the things that's gone on in this series? One thing as a coach you look for: As long as they care, as long as they're trying, that's all you can ask. And there will be some crazy things that go along with it."

Did the players watch the game?

"No," center Jack Eichel said.

"No, I was asleep," defenseman Shea Theodore said.

"I turned it off when it was, like, 80-30 or something," defenseman Dylan Coghlan said.

Ratings keep climbing

The 5-3 win for Carolina in Game 4 continued the ratings boom in this series.

ESPN announced Thursday that Tuesday drew an average of 5.3 million viewers. It was the most-viewed Game 4 in the Cup Final since 2017 when the Nashville Predators defeated the Pittsburgh Penguins 4-1 to tie the series 2-2.

Viewership saw a 104 percent increase compared to last year's Game 4 between Edmonton and Florida.

The night peaked at 6.4 million viewers by the third period (from 7:30-7:45 p.m.).

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LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393807 Vegas Golden Knights

UPDATES: Golden Knights drop Game 5, have back against the wall in Stanley Cup Final

David Schoen 7-9 minutes 11/06/2026

The Stanley Cup Final is essentially down to a best-of-three between the Vegas Golden Knights facing the Carolina Hurricanes.

The teams meet in a pivotal Game 5 on Thursday at Lenovo Center in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Hurricanes take Game 5

The Golden Knights couldn't build on a solid first period and took too many penalties in a 4-2 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes.

The Knights trail 3-2 in the series with Game 6 set for Sunday in Las Vegas.

Golden Knights pushing late

The Golden Knights are trying to make it a one-goal game late with Carter Hart off for an extra attacker.

Shea Theodore hit the post and Tomas Hertl hacked at the rebound but couldn't get it past Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi.

Dorofeyev adds 2nd goal

It might be a consolation, but Pavel Dorofeyev nets his second goal of the game.

Hurricanes goalie Brandon Bussi can't control the shot by Shea Theodore, and Dorofeyev is there on the doorstep to dig it out and flip it into the open net.

Hurricanes 4, Golden Knights 2, 6:11 remaining 3rd period

Hurricanes extend lead

Andrei Svechnikov parks himself at the backdoor and slams home the pass from Nikolaj Ehlers for his second goal of the game.

It's another power-play goal for the Hurricanes, who are 2-for-5 with the man advantage.

That's three assists for Ehlers, as well.

Hurricanes 4, Golden Knights 1, 8:52 remaining 3rd period

Knights offense disappears

The Golden Knights had seven shots in the first period and they have seven since. Part of the problem is too many penalties. Part of the problem is Carolina's controlling play.

3rd period underway

The Golden Knights and Hurricanes are playing hockey. It's 3-1 in favor of the hosts.

William Karlsson is not on the bench for the Knights.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

End of 2nd period

The Golden Knights owned the second period during this series, but not tonight.

The Hurricanes got goals from front-line players Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho to gain control.

Shots are 15-12 in favor of Carolina (10-5 in the second period).

Hurricanes 3, Golden Knights 1

Golden Knights in 2-goal hole

Hurricanes center Sebastian Aho has been quiet this series, but he showed up at a key moment for Carolina.

Aho found room on the weak side and was able to play the puck off his skates, onto his stick and lift it over Knights goalie Carter Hart.

It's the fifth of the playoffs for Aho, the team's leading scorer during the regular season.

Carolina's top line is showing up at 5-on-5, while the Knights' is quiet so far.

Hurricanes 3, Golden Knights 1, 2:09 remaining 2nd period

Hurricanes regain lead

The Golden Knights penalty kill was asked to do too much after back-to-back penalties against defensemen Jeremy Lauzon and Brayden McNabb.

It's the one against McNabb that the Hurricanes cashed in, with Andrei Svechnikov firing a wrist shot that beat Knights goalie Carter Hart through the five-hole.

That's the fifth goal of the playoffs for Svechnikov.

Hurricanes 2, Golden Knights 1, 8:02 remaining 2nd period

Karlsson heads to locker room

Golden Knights center William Karlsson was being looked at on the bench by the trainer and then skated across to the locker room.

It appeared to be a wrist or maybe a hand that was bothering Karlsson.

Coach John Tortorella will have to juggle the forward lines if Karlsson remains out.

Golden Knights 1, Hurricanes 1, 11:25 remaining 2nd period

Getting physical

Brayden McNabb and Taylor Hall exchange cross-checks, and that was a 10-9 round for McNabb, who knocked down the Hurricanes winger in the corner.

Hall stayed down and was shaken up.

Neither player is penalized, though, and it's no harm no foul with referee Wes McCauley on the ice.

Golden Knights 1, Hurricanes 1, 13:45 remaining 2nd period

2nd period underway

The Golden Knights and Hurricanes are playing hockey.

End of the 1st period

The Golden Knights started slowly but started to build throughout the first 20 minutes of action.

Pavel Dorofeyev converted on the power play to give the Knights the lead, but Hurricanes center Jordan Staal continued to cause problems in front of the net and was able to find the tying goal.

Shots are 8-5 in favor of the Knights, who will open the second period on the power play.

Golden Knights 1, Hurricanes 1

Golden Knights get late PP

The Hurricanes are penalized for delay of game for the second time this period. K'Andre Miller is the guilty party and heads to the penalty box with 5.8 seconds left.

Hurricanes answer

Jordan Staal camps out in his office in front of the Golden Knights' net, and he's able to get a piece of the Nikolaj Ehlers shot/pass for the tying goal.

It's the sixth goal of the series for Staal, who has scored in every game so far, and his eighth of the postseason.

Golden Knights 1, Hurricanes 1, 8:14 remaining 1st period

Knights take early lead

Pavel Dorofeyev ends his slump with a power-play goal.

The Knights entered the zone with speed, and Jack Eichel found Dorofeyev for a one-timer from the left wing that left Hurricanes goaltender Brandon Bussi stranded.

It's the first in eight games for Dorofeyev and 11th in the playoffs as the Knights take advantage of the delay of game penalty to Carolina's Nikolaj Ehlers.

Golden Knights 1, Hurricanes 0, 13:08 remaining 1st period

OH WHAT A PASS!!

Eichel sets up Dorofeyev for a beauty!

📺: ABC, @Sportsnet & @TVASports pic.twitter.com/4uXrFX3FfB

— NHL (@NHL) June 12, 2026

Hurricanes controlling early tempo

The Golden Knights are absorbing some early pressure and don't have a shot on goal yet. So, typical first period of this series so far.

Golden Knights 0, Hurricanes 0, 14:05 remaining 1st period

Game 5 is underway

The Golden Knights and Hurricanes are playing hockey in North Carolina.

Golden Knights lines and pairs for Game 5 in Carolina:

Forwards

Barbashev-Eichel-Stone

Howden-Karlsson-Marner

Hertl-Sissons-Dorofeyev

C. Smith-Dowd-Kolesar

Defense

McNabb-Theodore

Hanifin-Andersson

Lauzon-Coghlan

Goalie

Hart



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Business trip for the @GoldenKnights 🏠 #StanleyCup

us: ABC

ca: @Sportsnet & @TVASports pic.twitter.com/gzxc4ZCRF

— NHL (@NHL) June 12, 2026

Hurricanes lineup

Forwards

Svechnikov-Aho-Martinook

Hall-Stankoven-Blake

Ehlers-Staal-Jarvis

Carrier-Jankowski-Robinson

Defense

Slavin-Chatfield

Miller-Walker

Gostisbehere-Nikishin

Goalie

Bussi

Familiar position

For the third time this postseason, the Vegas Golden Knights are going into a Game 5 where the series hangs in the balance.

The biggest difference this time is the venue.

The Knights had the luxury of playing at home the first two times, winning both critical games against the Utah Mammoth and Anaheim Ducks in overtime.

This time, they'll have to do it in one of the loudest buildings in the NHL.

How to watch

The Vegas Golden Knights head back to North Carolina with the Stanley Cup Final tied at two games apiece.

Fans looking to watch Thursday's game have several viewing options, including over-the-air television, streaming services and radio broadcasts.

Stanley Cup Final schedule

Game 1: Golden Knights 5, Hurricanes 4

Game 2: Hurricanes 4, Golden Knights 3, OT

Game 3: Golden Knights 5, Hurricanes 4, 2OT

Game 4: Hurricanes 5, Golden Knights 3

Game 5: Thursday, 5 p.m. at Lenovo Center, KTNV-TV (Channel 13)

Game 6: Sunday, 5 p.m. at T-Mobile Arena, KTNV-TV (Channel 13)

*Game 7: Wednesday, 5 p.m. at Lenovo Center, KTNV-TV (Channel 13)

*if necessary

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LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL LOADED: 06.12.2026

What channel is Golden Knights vs. Hurricanes today for Game 5? TV, streaming, radio info

Review-Journal3-3 minutes 11/06/2026

The Vegas Golden Knights head back to North Carolina with the Stanley Cup Final tied at two games apiece.

After splitting the first two games in Raleigh and the next two at T-Mobile Arena, the Golden Knights and Carolina Hurricanes will meet Thursday in a crucial Game 5. The winner will take a 3-2 series lead and move within one victory of claiming the Stanley Cup.

Vegas is seeking its second championship in four seasons, while Carolina is chasing its first Stanley Cup since 2006.

How to watch Golden Knights vs. Hurricanes Game 5

When: 5 p.m. PT Thursday

Where: Lenovo Center, Raleigh, North Carolina

TV: ABC (KTNV-13 in Las Vegas)

Can I live stream Knights vs Hurricanes Game 5?

Live stream: ESPN App, ESPN Unlimited, Fubo, DirecTV MySports and other streaming providers that carry ABC and ESPN programming.

What if I'm blacked out on DirecTV?

Some Las Vegas viewers may encounter local channel carriage issues depending on their package or location. If ABC programming is unavailable through your DirecTV service, you can still watch Game 5 through:

An over-the-air antenna receiving local ABC affiliate KTNV-13.

ESPN App with a qualifying ESPN Unlimited subscription.

Fubo.

DirecTV MySports streaming package.

Other live-TV streaming services that carry local ABC stations in your area.

Golden Knights vs. Hurricanes Stanley Cup Final schedule

Game 1: Golden Knights 5, Hurricanes 4

Game 2: Hurricanes 4, Golden Knights 3 (OT)

Game 3: Golden Knights 5, Hurricanes 4 (2OT)

Game 4: Hurricanes 5, Golden Knights 3

Game 5: Thursday, June 11, at Carolina, 5 p.m. PT (ABC)

Game 6: Sunday, June 14, at Vegas, 5 p.m. PT (ABC)

Game 7: Wednesday, June 17, at Carolina, 5 p.m. PT (ABC)*

*If necessary.

Golden Knights-Hurricanes radio information

Fans can listen to the game on the Golden Knights Radio Network, including FOX Sports Las Vegas 98.9 FM/1340 AM and affiliate stations throughout Nevada.

Odds for Game 5

Carolina enters Game 5 as a slight home favorite after tying the series in Las Vegas. The Hurricanes will have home-ice advantage for the pivotal contest as the series returns to Raleigh.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

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LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393809 Vegas Golden Knights

Been here before: Golden Knights face another pivotal Game 5 in Cup Final

Danny Webster4-5 minutes 11/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — For the third time this postseason, the Vegas Golden Knights are going into a Game 5 where the series hangs in the balance.

The Stanley Cup Final shifts back to Lenovo Center on Thursday against the Carolina Hurricanes in a series that has more than lived up to every expectation imaginable.

Four games of comebacks. Four games of heart-stopping finishes. Both teams have split one game at home and one on the road to set the stage for the most important game of the series.

This is the third Cup Final in the expansion era (since 1968) to see the first four games tied at any point in the third period, and the first since the Chicago Blackhawks/Tampa Bay Lightning final in 2015.

"I don't think anybody expected this," coach John Tortorella. "But that's playoffs. You expect the unexpected, I guess."

It would be par for the course if this series had a close finish in Game 5. The Knights were comfortable in both of their swing-game situations earlier in the postseason.

The biggest difference this time is the venue. The Knights had the luxury of playing at home the first two times, winning both critical games against the Utah Mammoth and Anaheim Ducks in overtime.

The Knights went on to win Game 6 both times, in convincing fashion, on the road.

They're going to have to do it one more time — this time in one of the loudest buildings in the NHL, knowing what awaits them on the other side of this game.

Because there will be a Game 6, one more game inside T-Mobile Arena this year. The Stanley Cup will also be in the building.

Whether or not that requires another trip to North Carolina isn't concerning to Tortorella.

"Like I said earlier on — I'm not sure if it was this round, or other rounds — I don't care where we play," Tortorella said. "I think we have a really good team, and it doesn't matter where we play. We're trying to get better every game, and it doesn't matter which building we're in."

Rare territory

There haven't been many situations where the Knights are in uncharted playoff territory as a franchise. A Game 5 in the Stanley Cup Final that doesn't result in the winner hoisting the Cup is among them.

The winner of Game 5 goes on to win the Cup Final 74.1 percent of the time (20-7). The home team is 15-3 in those situations, while the road team is 5-4.

The road team has gone on to win the last three situations when the series is tied, even as recently as last year when the Florida Panthers won in Edmonton and went on to win their second straight title in Game 6.

Home-ice advantage meant something in the earlier rounds. It didn't mean as much when the Knights won the first two of the Western Conference Final in Colorado and went on to sweep the series.

The same can be said in this series. The Knights stole home ice in Game 1 and were 10 minutes away from taking the first two in Carolina.

Such can be said about the Hurricanes nearly pulling off a four-goal comeback in Game 3, but found a way to break a tie in the third period to win on Tuesday.

"I think it's totally different from back in the day," said Tortorella, a coach of nearly three decades. "Back in the day when the game was played differently, I think players policed the game back then. The game is policed by the league basically now, and I think it changes a lot of things as far as the buildings."

Changing momentum

Carolina built on its finish in Game 3 with a quick start in Game 4. The Hurricanes jumped out to a 3-1 lead after the first period.

The Knights, as has been constant with them all series, rallied back to tie it with two goals on only five shots in the second period.

A defensive breakdown starting with a turnover from defenseman Shea Theodore, leading to Carolina captain Jordan Staal's game-winning goal, was the difference in a 5-3 victory.

The Knights feel they're still in a good spot despite letting Game 4 get away from them. They felt that way in the earlier rounds. They'll try to lean on that experience one more time.

"I just feel like we're a very comfortable in whatever situation we're in," defenseman Rasmus Andersson said.

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LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393810 Vegas Golden Knights

Theodore, McNabb are the guiding forces of the Golden Knights' Stanley Cup hopes

Case Keefer6-7 minutes 11/06/2026

Thursday, June 11, 2026 | 2 a.m.

Vegas' top defensive pair collaborated to end the first Stanley Cup Final game at T-Mobile Arena in three years, on Sunday, in Game 3 of the Golden Knights' showdown against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Brayden McNabb shuffled the puck from one side of the blue line to the other to partner Shea Theodore, who fired a shot that hit off the end boards and multiple Hurricanes before finding the net.

The goal gave the Golden Knights one of the biggest wins in franchise history, a 5-4 double-overtime victory to go up 2-1 in the best-of-seven series, though the Hurricanes would tie it at two games each on Tuesday.

"I didn't even have much energy to celebrate," McNabb admitted in the locker room afterwards. "I was just happy it was over and (Theodore) probably felt the same way."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Theodore later confirmed that was exactly how he felt, and the exhaustion was understandable considering the two "Original Misfits" played a total of 74 minutes and 56 seconds. They were the two leading skaters in the game by ice time, with Theodore logging more than 39 minutes and McNabb finishing just short of 36 minutes.

That's part of the reason why there couldn't have been a more appropriate ending to what immediately went down as one of the best games in Stanley Cup Final history.

The Golden Knights' third run to the championship series in the franchise's nine-year history has mostly featured different headliners.

Mitch Marner is virtually guaranteed to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as the Stanley Cup playoffs' most valuable player if Vegas ultimately beats Carolina. The first-year Golden Knight, previously panned for his playoff failings with the Toronto Maple Leafs, set a single-season franchise record by reaching 28 points a couple hours before Theodore's game-winner.

First-year goalie Carter Hart has thrived during stretches of the postseason to unseat 2023 Cup-winning netminder Adin Hill as the Golden Knights' primary stopper going forward.

But the Golden Knights don't get to where they currently stand without Theodore and McNabb manning the largest share of the defensive responsibility.

"They've been a shutdown pair," Vegas coach John Tortorella said. "I thought there was some inconsistency in Shea's game in the regular season in the games that I coached. He's just brought it to a different level come playoff time. Him and Nabber are very important as we play a team like (the Hurricanes), how deep they are."

The pairing has posted elite statistics across the board in the playoffs, including a 57.2% expected goal percentage in nearly 272 minutes of ice time through three games of the Final. Theodore leads the entire postseason with a +6.1 defensive rating.

The 35-year-old, 11th-year professional is providing, if not surpassing, the type of play many expected the Golden Knights to lack this season. The biggest concern coming into the year was the loss of stalwart alternate-captain defenseman Alex Pietrangelo to semi-retirement from hip injuries.

Pietrangelo had held down the role as Vegas' top blue-liner ever since coming to Las Vegas in 2020. Theodore had complemented him as a standout offensive defenseman, but he's elevated his game on his own side of the ice when it matters most during these playoffs.

"He's really taken off," McNabb said. "When he gets his legs moving, he has some of the best feet, best skater in the league. It's fun to watch. I'm very fortunate to be out there with him."

Theodore may have lifted the Golden Knights more on the ice, but arguably no one on the team has provided more of an emotional spark than McNabb in Game 3. The 35-year-old, 14th-year professional played less than six minutes in Game 2 before taking an 87 mile per hour slapshot squarely to the nose.

He immediately fled the ice and was transported to the hospital, where he got more than 25 stitches from the bridge of his nose down to his nostril. McNabb was not cleared to fly back to Las Vegas from Raleigh, North Carolina, with the team but came later and stunned many by being able to play in Game 3—wearing a full-cage facemask.

"The stuff he went through from (Game 2) and everything, it's incredible for him to bounce back like that and be able to come in today, get ready to play," Theodore said. "I thought he played unbelievable given all the circumstances. It's never easy, especially to wear a cage like he did. That's a change in the vision and all that, but he's just so impressive out there."

McNabb matter-of-factly stated the situation was, "not ideal," and admitted breathing hurt "a little bit," but shrugged that the injury was "part of hockey."

He had the primary assist in Game 3, not only on Theodore's game-winner but also on the second of Marner's three goals during a stretch that saw the forward bank the fastest natural hat trick (six minutes, 10 seconds) in Cup Final history.

Marner praised McNabb after the game and said everyone on the ice always seems to be on the same page when the top defensive pair is out there. Theodore and McNabb credit each other for fostering that comfort.

"It's a treat playing with him for sure," Theodore said of McNabb.

This story originally appeared in Las Vegas Weekly.

LAS VEGAS SUN LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393811 Vegas Golden Knights

William Karlsson probably 'not going to be with' Golden Knights after Game 5 injury, Tortorella says

Rich Hammond, Jesse Granger 2-3 minutes 12/06/2026

William Karlsson, whose return from injury has been a compelling storyline for the Vegas Golden Knights in these playoffs, left Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday with an injury and his status for the rest of the series appears to be in doubt.

Karlsson was injured in the second period when hit hard by Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Sean Walker. Karlsson's left arm was in clear discomfort on the bench. Not long after, Karlsson went to the locker room and Vegas' athletic trainer whispered in coach John Tortorella's ear, and the coach looked displeased. Karlsson did not return to the game, and a league source told The Athletic that Karlsson went to a local hospital during the game.

Asked about Karlsson after the game, Tortorella first said, "No update," but then spoke more about Karlsson.

"He's an important piece for us," Tortorella said. "Up the middle of the ice, penalty killer, power-play guy, and he's a winner. But having said that, it's all good stuff. He's not going to be with us, probably, so we gotta find a way to fill that void, not just with one guy, but as a team."

Karlsson was limited to 14 regular-season games because of a lower-body injury and didn't play after Nov. 8. He was able to return for the start of the second round against Anaheim and had three goals and six assists in 15 playoff games.

If Karlsson can't play Game 6, the Golden Knights could move Tomaš Hertl to center and insert Reilly Smith or Brandon Saad into the lineup.

"He means so much," Vegas' Jack Eichel said of Karlsson. "He's a world-class player. He plays in all situations. He's extremely reliable in our own zone, and he creates a lot of offense. So, yeah, he's a huge part of our group."

Teammate Brayden McNabb said: "It's tough. He's done a great job coming back. He's an awesome player, big leader in this room."

Jun 12, 2026

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393812 Vegas Golden Knights



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Hurricanes take control in Game 5, push Golden Knights to brink in Stanley Cup Final: Takeaways

Sean Gentile, Michael Russo, Jesse Granger, Pierre LeBrun9-11 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — In the first four games of the Stanley Cup Final, plenty of things clicked for the Carolina Hurricanes. Not on the list: strong play in the second period or high-end production from its leading scorers.

In Game 5 on Thursday night, the Hurricanes found both. Now, they find themselves within one win of their first Stanley Cup title in two decades.

Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho scored second-period goals to turn a 1-1 tie into a 3-1 Carolina advantage, Brandon Bussi made 23 saves and the Hurricanes beat the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2. Game 6 is in Las Vegas on Sunday night.

The Golden Knights, meanwhile, will try to force a Game 7 in a series they're trailing for the first time.

"We'll be back here," Golden Knights coach John Tortorella said defiantly. "We're just going to do it in a different order. ... We've got to find a way. I'm going to leave my clothes here, that's for sure. They'll be in the hotel."

Svechnikov added a third-period power-play goal on a wide-open net, courtesy of a spinning feed from winger Nikolaj Ehlers, and Bussi made several key stops down the stretch that allowed Carolina to maintain a multi-goal lead.

The second period, though, was the key. With Vegas defenseman Brayden McNabb in the box for boarding, Svechnikov put Carolina up 2-1 with a power-play goal at 11:58, sending a feed from Shayne Gostisbehere through traffic and between the pads of Vegas goaltender Carter Hart. Less than six minutes later, Aho kicked a pass from defenseman Sean Walker to his own stick and beat Hart again, giving the Hurricanes a two-goal lead at the second intermission. Vegas had previously outscored Carolina 9-1 in the second period, including 4-0 in Game 3.

"Our second period up until today had been ... not good," Ehlers said after a three-second pause. "I think today we were able to play a little more simple and (were) making sure pucks were getting deep, making sure you don't just (change lines) without looking behind you. And I think that worked pretty well."

Svechnikov and Aho entered the game with only four goals in 17 playoff games. Neither had been bad, but neither had produced the sort of offense a team typically requires from first-liners who also get top power-play minutes.

"That hasn't really happened, and we're still here," Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It doesn't necessarily have to be that way, but they have to have an impact in the game, whether it's on the scoresheet or doing other things. It certainly makes it a lot smoother if they're scoring. It takes a lot of pressure off other guys if they do that, and I guess that's what happened tonight."

The game was tied 1-1 after 20 minutes, with goals by Vegas' Pavel Dorofeyev, a 37-goal scorer in the regular season who'd gone cold in the Final, and Carolina's Jordan Staal, whose historic run of production has pushed him to the top of the Conn Smythe Trophy race.

That's not the piece of hardware Staal is primarily chasing. The Cup will be in T-Mobile Arena on Sunday, and Carolina will have the chance to hoist it.

"There can't be a single breath when you're on the ice. It's every little play. It's what we've been doing this whole playoff run, and the guys

understand that and we're going to reinforce that again and again and again," Staal said on ESPN after the game.

"And as we play the game, we've got to keep reinforcing that ... everything has to be done well and executed. The fourth one's always the toughest, and we've got to find a way."

Staal makes history

Staal scored his sixth goal of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday — two more goals than he had in 24 playoff games during the Pittsburgh Penguins' run to the 2009 Stanley Cup title.

Staal tied the NHL record for longest goal streak in the Stanley Cup Final at five games. The others were Yvan Cournoyer in 1973, Jean Béliveau in 1956, Maurice "Rocket" Richard in 1951 and Cyclone Taylor in 1918.

After finishing his check on McNabb, Staal was able to skate alone to the front of the net and chip Ehler's pass past Hart. Staal is the first player in 70 years to score in the first five games of a Stanley Cup Final.

"You look at that first period, who got us back into it," Brind'Amour said. "(Staal). So we could take a breath and be like, 'All right, no damage done.' I can't say enough about him."

Staal is just the second captain to record six or more goals in a single Stanley Cup Final in the last 100 years, joining Edmonton Oilers legend Wayne Gretzky, who had seven in 1985.

"It's not necessarily (that) you're expecting him to put up those kind of numbers, and when he does, that's an added bonus," Brind'Amour said. "And he deserves it. He's playing great, but we've got to get that one more still, and he knows it. He'll have our group ready." — Michael Russo, NHL writer

Karlsson injured

One of the biggest reasons for Vegas' turnaround under Tortorella was the return of William Karlsson from injury.

But on Thursday, Karlsson was hurt in the second period when hit hard by Walker. Karlsson's left arm was in clear discomfort on the bench. Not long after, the athletic trainer whispered in Tortorella's ear, and the coach was clearly not happy.

Tortorella said he did not expect Karlsson to be available going forward.

"It's tough," center Jack Eichel said. "You lose someone like Karl, who's so valuable to our team and playing so well. But it just means everyone else has to step up."

"He means so much. He's a world-class player. He plays in all situations. He's extremely reliable in our own zone, and he creates a lot of offense. So, yeah, he's a huge part of our group."

If Karlsson can't play Game 6, the Golden Knights can move Tomas Hertl to center and insert Reilly Smith or Brandon Saad. — Russo

Bussi wins again, Andersen doesn't dress again

Bussi became the first goaltender in NHL history to make his first two career playoff starts in the Stanley Cup Final and win both games.

Bussi made 23 saves, getting his second straight start over Frederik Andersen, who skated on his own Thursday morning but didn't dress for the second game in a row after being pulled after two periods in Game 3.

Brind'Amour and GM Eric Tulsy claimed that Andersen was at least available to play Thursday, yet they recalled Amir Miftakhov from AHL Chicago despite the Wolves beginning the Calder Cup Final on Friday. — Russo

Slavin/Staal vs. Eichel



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Eichel's offensive struggles in the Cup Final have been well chronicled, although he came out with more jump in Game 5 Thursday night and had two assists. Still, it was another quiet night offensively at five-on-five for Eichel, who took accountability Thursday morning by saying he needed to be better. Tortorella tried to help Eichel out Thursday night, loading up his top line by moving leading Vegas scorer Mitch Marner to Eichel's line with Mark Stone. But it still didn't lead to an offensive breakthrough for Eichel.

And to his defense, there are some top offensive players in Montreal, Philadelphia and Ottawa who know what it feels like to line up against Staal and top defenseman Jaccob Slavin.

"Jordan's a huge part of that," Slavin said Thursday morning when asked to break down the matchup against Eichel. "He could be up for the Selke every single year. Jordan helps out big time and I think he frustrates other teams' centers. We need him to continue to do that.

"But when Eichel is out there, you got to take away that time and space," added Slavin on his own part in it. "You have to know where he is on the ice and know that he doesn't need much to make a lot of it. He's a dangerous player and he's obviously a big part of their team." — Pierre LeBrun, NHL columnist

Carolina power play

The Hurricanes entered the Stanley Cup Final with a mediocre power play, but the unit has found its stride, scoring six goals between Games 2 and 5, with the latest being Svechnikov's pair of power-play goals Thursday night.

What's changed with the power play?

"I think just simplifying," said power-play quarterback Gostisbehere on Thursday morning. "We started maybe taking a little bit of what they're giving us. And simplifying. You see a lot of our goals are just shots to the net and the big man's (Staal) in front putting them away." — LeBrun

Dorofeyev on the board

Vegas' leading scorer from the regular season scored his first and second goals of the series on Thursday. Dorofeyev buried a cross-crease feed by Eichel on the power play to deliver an early lead for the Golden Knights. It was his league-leading fifth power-play goal of the playoffs and it broke the Vegas franchise record for the most in a single postseason.

The 25-year-old winger scored 10 goals in the first 13 playoff games and stood atop the postseason scoring race at one point. But he went seven games without a goal, stretching back to the Western Conference final against the Colorado Avalanche. He had been quiet through the first four games of the Cup Final, with only 18 shot attempts and seven shots on goal.

Following his early goal, Dorofeyev was playing with noticeably more confidence and assertiveness with the puck. He had three shots on goal in the first period alone and finished with a series-high seven shot attempts. Late in the third period, he pounced on a rebound in front of the Carolina net and lifted it over Bussi's glove to cut the deficit to two. — Jesse Granger, Golden Knights writer

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393813 Vegas Golden Knights

Hurricanes' Jordan Staal makes history by scoring in fifth straight Stanley Cup Final game

Chris Johnston2-2 minutes 12/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal became the first player in 70 years to open a Stanley Cup Final with goals in five consecutive games when he tipped home his sixth goal of the series on Thursday night.

Staal drove hard to the net and redirected a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers to tie Game 5 at 1-1 at the 11:46 mark of the first period, which gave him a goal in every game of this championship series against the Vegas Golden Knights so far.

Montreal Canadiens legend Jean Béliveau was the last to achieve the feat in 1956. The only other players to do it? Montreal's Maurice "Rocket" Richard in 1951 and Cyclone Taylor of the Vancouver Millionaires in 1918.

Yvan Cournoyer also scored in five straight Stanley Cup Final games for the Canadiens in 1973, but not the first five games.

Staal is a surprising player to join that exclusive company. The 37-year-old is prized for his shutdown abilities as a defensive-minded center rather than for his offensive prowess, and he entered the Cup Final with two goals in 13 playoff games this spring.

But he got hot as soon as the series with Vegas began, with one goal in each of the first three games and two in Tuesday's Game 4 victory.

Staal is just the second captain to record six or more goals in a single Stanley Cup Final in the last 100 years, joining Edmonton Oilers legend Wayne Gretzky, who had seven in 1985.

Jun 12, 2026

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393814 Vegas Golden Knights

Frederik Andersen's status still a mystery, signs point to Brandon Bussi as Canes Game 5 starter

Michael Russo, Sean Gentile4-5 minutes 11/06/2026

RALEIGH, N.C. — All signs point to Brandon Bussi making his second straight start for the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday night in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Frederik Andersen, the Hurricanes' No. 1 throughout the postseason until not dressing in Game 4, didn't take part in Carolina's morning skate on Thursday. Bussi was tending his position in what's deemed to be the starter's crease.

Coach Rod Brind'Amour said Andersen skated on his own before the team on Thursday and that "everybody's available." He wouldn't discuss the lineup, what's going on with Andersen or if he'd be backing up on Thursday any further.

If Andersen was going to start or back up, not taking part in the morning skate was extremely abnormal.

Andersen, who has allowed 12 goals in the series, was pulled after giving up four in the second period of Game 3 on Saturday. Bussi came in and stopped 18 of 19 shots before losing in double overtime. He started Game 4 and backstopped Carolina to a 5-3 victory.

Andersen gave up those four goals after getting hit in the head by Ivan Barbashev on an eventual overturned goal by Jack Eichel, so it's unclear if he's hurt or continues to need a break, as Brind'Amour said he did after Andersen didn't dress for Tuesday's game in Las Vegas.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

"It was about a minute conversation with (goalie coach Paul Schonfelder). He said Freddie needs a little break. OK. So we went with the other guy," Brind'Amour explained after the game. "And if you're going to give (Andersen) a break, you need to give him a break. So to me, him dressing and going through all that, that's not really giving him a night off."

Andersen hasn't skated with the team since Game 3.

This has been a difficult couple of weeks for Andersen. His friend, mentor and agent, former NHLer Claude Lemieux, died by suicide on May 28. Andersen, in an emotional start, closed out the Montreal Canadiens in the conference finals a day after finding out about Lemieux. Lemieux's funeral was this past Monday in North Carolina, but Andersen was unable to attend because he was in Las Vegas.

Bussi became the third goaltender in NHL history to make his first career playoff start in a Stanley Cup Final and pick up a win in the contest. The others were Hank Bassen in 1961 for the Detroit Red Wings and Alfie Moore in 1938 with the Chicago Black Hawks.

Bussi won 25 of his first 29 NHL starts, putting up a .901 save percentage in that span, but Andersen regained the starting job by the start of the postseason. Game 3 was the first game action Bussi had seen since April 14.

"He's been rolling with punches. He's prepared for this moment for almost two months," Hurricanes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere said of Bussi on Thursday. "He's a pretty easy guy to talk to — calm, cool and collected. I think that (trickles) down from Freddie, too. Freddie's a lead-by-example guy. You never know his emotions. He's a calm, cool, collected guy, as well. So it's good to see Bussi getting the opportunity."

Bussi's first opportunity of the season came on Oct. 10, when he stopped 16 of 17 shots in a 5-1 win over the San Jose Sharks. With that performance, Brind'Amour said, Bussi earned an early bit of confidence.

"(He) made some big saves at real big moments of the game," Brind'Amour said. "We were pretty much in control. But all of a sudden there was a couple Grade-A chances, and he shut the door. And then we went on to win. And then he did the next start, and the next start."

"So obviously there's a guy that was given an opportunity. Everyone always talks about opportunity, but you gotta do something with it. And he's done nothing but earn every start that he's had."

Jun 12, 2026

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393815 Vegas Golden Knights

Rasmus Andersson's inconsistent play makes his next contract risky

Shayna Goldman 7-9 minutes 11/06/2026

Rasmus Andersson is only two wins away from becoming a Stanley Cup champion and weeks away from hitting unrestricted free agency. Forget a buyer's or seller's market: It's a signers' market. The free agent class is thin, and teams have extra money to spend. It sets up the perfect storm for Andersson to cash in.

What he's worth depends on what version of Andersson a team is getting. But what he could get offered this summer may be a completely different figure altogether.

Andersson doesn't have one standout skill or trademark. His value has always stemmed from his ability to contribute a little bit of everything.

He's seasoned, hard-nosed, can absorb big minutes, limit chances against, skate well, move the puck, and chip in offensively.

And there's one more very important detail: He's right-handed.

Right-handed defensemen aren't just a commodity; they're outright coveted. And this year, there aren't too many true top-four options available. Besides Andersson, there is a really fascinating free agent in Darren Raddysh, who had a breakout year at 30 years old. Otherwise, the list of available players includes names like Jacob Trouba, Connor Murphy, Andrew Peeke, Connor Clifton, Zach Metsa, and Dylan Coghlan. Plus, there's a handful of 35-plus veterans.

That should benefit Andersson and Raddysh.

So does the current cap environment. The NHL salary cap is set to jump from \$95.5 million to \$104 million. That is going to give some teams a lot of money to spend, with few options to invest in.

Just look at what happened last summer when the cap rose from \$88 million. Since there were few stars to break the bank for, the middle class benefited the most. Vladislav Gavrikov signed a seven-year deal with the Rangers. The Blue Jackets gave Ivan Provorov an eight-year deal with an \$8.5 million AAV to stay in Columbus.

That context is going to be an important part of the puzzle here, especially if Andersson hits the market on July 1.

AFP Analytics projects a six-year extension worth \$8.70 million a year, on average. Evolving-Hockey comes in higher, whether he stays in Vegas (\$9.65 million AAV over eight years) or signs elsewhere (seven years, \$9.01 million AAV).

That \$8.70 million cap hit would be worth 8.40 percent of the \$104 million cap, which falls between the Gavrikov and Provorov contracts, and passes the vibe check in terms of recent market trends. But Andersson's actual level of play and worth should matter, too. He isn't even projected to be worth \$8 million at any point in a seven-year deal, even when accounting for salary cap increases; his average market value over the next seven years, instead, is \$6.8 million.

No projection is complete without some level of uncertainty. Aging curves offer a glimpse at how most players trend at certain points in their careers, but every player is unique. A player's surroundings and durability can impact that long-range outlook, too. The path for Andersson isn't predetermined; there is a range of outcomes for how his next deal could age. So there's a chance that he could be worth \$8 million at some point, in the right surroundings.

What makes that especially tricky here is how inconsistent Andersson has been over the years and throughout this season.

To Andersson's credit, he rebounded to open this past season despite his environment on a rebuilding team in Calgary. He defended the rush and set up chances in transition on the other end of the ice, while shouldering matchup minutes. Then everything started to unravel in December and January.

The expectation was that he could bounce back outside Calgary — on a playoff-caliber team, with more stability, a lighter workload, and a familiar partner in Noah Hanifin.

But those first couple of months in Vegas were rough. Poor goaltending obviously left him (and a lot of his new teammates) exposed, but Andersson also fell below break-even in his first 20 games. Then the switch flipped down the stretch, and he finally looked like the top-four defenseman he was acquired to be on both ends of the ice. Andersson shut down play in his own zone and was more active offensively with his puck-moving; that two-way play added up to a 66 percent xG rate.

So is that the level Vegas, or any other contenders, should expect from Andersson in the long run?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

It would be easier to buy if that level of play carried into the playoffs. It would be easy to say that he just needed some playoff-level support to play his best hockey, similar to Seth Jones' glow-up after leaving the rebuilding Blackhawks for the Panthers, or how a trade from Anaheim to Boston revitalized Hampus Lindholm.

With the right fit, maybe Andersson can still reach that level. With a full offseason to prepare for the pace of a playoff team, whether it's Vegas or elsewhere, maybe he can raise his game and find consistency to get on a Mark Giordano-esque path. If that level isn't attainable, maybe Mattias Ekholm's path is more reasonable. Even the Brent Seabrook path could be feasible if he can provide solid play in the first half of his next deal before tapering off.

Instead, Andersson's postseason is flashing a bigger "buyer beware" sign. Falling below break-even in xG in a short series against a contender like the Avalanche isn't earth-shattering. But having shaky rounds against favorable opponents like Utah and Anaheim is concerning. It makes that James Wisniewski or Dennis Wideman track seem all the more plausible, because even as a No. 4, with the support of a contender, he's had his struggles.

Andersson's Stanley Cup Final performance isn't exactly doing him any favors, either. His play has been really risky; he's botched some puck retrievals, lost puck battles, and committed costly turnovers through four games. In theory, that should lose him some money this summer.

And maybe it will, if Vegas is the signing team. The Golden Knights have seen the good and the bad firsthand, and as always, have to work on a tight budget. Pair that with the fact that this was one of Andersson's preferred destinations, and he could take less than projected to stay. Jack Eichel signed below market value just last summer. Vegas could end up the best-case scenario for Andersson, because he showed potential there at times, and won't be needed to play a position above his depth. Shea Theodore is The Guy in Vegas; Andersson just has to play a supporting role on the second pair. So that could be his best chance to deliver positive value on his next contract.

But until he extends, there is always the chance that he tests free agency.

Andersson isn't necessarily destined to sign a bad contract if he makes it to July 1. It's just a lot harder to forecast a stable and strong path forward when he has been so inconsistent, considering the range of buyers who could be interested. A playoff team could sign him to be the missing piece in its top four and actually help maximize his game. Maybe he'll be willing to take a little less to sign with that caliber of team, now that he's got a taste of contention.

But past precedent and trends point toward his reputation and handedness spiking the price, despite his postseason. That's even more likely if he ends up with a Stanley Cup ring. There is bound to be a desperate team ready to break the bank with a salary and role that sets impossible expectations on Day 1. And that's what makes Andersson one of the riskiest free agents this summer.

Data via NaturalStatTrick, Evolving-Hockey, CapWages, and AFP Analytics.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393816 Vegas Golden Knights

Is this the worst Stanley Cup Final goaltending of the NHL cap era?

Jesse Granger9-12 minutes 11/06/2026

The Athletic has live coverage of the Hurricanes vs. Golden Knights in Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final.

The Stanley Cup Final has served as the stage for epic goaltending duels over the years.

Colossal showdowns between Patrick Roy and Martin Brodeur in 2001 or Dominik Hasek and Ed Belfour in 1999 immediately spring to mind. More recently, in the salary-cap era, we've seen Tim Thomas versus Roberto Luongo in 2011, Jonathan Quick versus Henrik Lundqvist in 2014, and Andrei Vasilevskiy versus Carey Price in 2021.

This year's Cup final will not be joining the list.

The Vegas Golden Knights and Carolina Hurricanes have thrilled us for four straight games to open the series, breaking records for comebacks and lead changes nightly. They've combined for the second-most goals ever through four games of a Cup final.

It's fair to say the goalies are not having a good time.

On Tuesday night, Vegas' Carter Hart became the first goalie in NHL history to allow four or more goals in each of the first four games of a Cup final. Carolina's netminders haven't fared much better. Frederik Andersen took the night off in Game 4 after allowing 12 goals through the first eight periods of the series, and Brandon Bussi won the first start of his playoff career despite posting an .857 save percentage.

Through four games, this is statistically the worst goaltended Stanley Cup Final in the salary-cap era.

Since 2006, no final has had a combined save percentage lower than .877, but this year's is well below that at an almost unfathomable .855. To find a combined save percentage lower than that, you have to go back to 1973, before the last maskless goalie had retired from the NHL.

In this era of hockey, we've never seen pucks find the net at this high a rate with the Stanley Cup on the line.

Lowest combined Cup final save % (cap era)

Year	Winning Goalie	Losing Goalie	Combined Save %
2010			
	Antti Niemi		
	Michael Leighton		
	.877		
2007			
	J.S. Giguère		
	Ray Emery		
	.880		
2023			
	Adin Hill		
	Sergei Bobrovsky		
	.882		
2018			
	Braden Holtby		
	Marc-André Fleury		
	.887		
2025			
	Sergei Bobrovsky		



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Stuart Skinner

.894

It's one of the biggest reasons the games have felt so chaotic, unpredictable and stressful.

"The lead changes and everything has been stressful, to say the least," Carolina forward Nikolaj Ehlers said Tuesday. "It shows how good both teams are, and when you let up just a little bit, teams are going to take advantage. So it's stressful, but a lot of fun to be a part of."

Few feelings test the nerves of a hockey player or coach like the feeling that any shot can go in. Late in games, as both teams have desperately clung to leads, that feeling has been unshakable — for everyone inside the building and watching at home.

The Hurricanes and Golden Knights have been defensive powerhouses — not just for this season, but also for years. In the regular season, they ranked first and third in shots allowed. In the playoffs, they're both among the league leaders in nearly every defensive metric.

And yet, neither can hold on to a lead for the life of them.

It certainly doesn't all fall on the goaltenders. Both teams have struggled to limit the other's biggest offensive strengths. Vegas has regularly found players streaking behind the Carolina defense for breakaways and odd-man rushes. On the other end, the Golden Knights haven't been able to corral Jordan Staal and others in front of their net.

"He's killing us in front of the net, Staal," Vegas coach John Tortorella said. "So we have got to do a better job around the blue (paint)."

Neither coach seems to have the answer to the defensive woes on both ends of the ice.

"I know in this final, during these games here, I have zero answers as far as the lead changes, going back and forth," Tortorella said Monday. "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 some of the bounces that have gone to each team."

There's been no lack of defensive lapses or brilliant offensive plays. That being said, both teams have been shaky in the crease for most of this season.

The Hurricanes are trapped in what has felt like a decadelong search for consistent playoff goaltending. Andersen has often been injured over the last few regular seasons, and 2025-26 was the worst of his career. For the first time in 13 seasons, he finished with more losses than wins and a save percentage below .880.

Bussi, a waiver claim from Florida in October, was sensational early in the season. He won 25 of his first 29 starts but struggled down the stretch with an .865 save percentage and minus-6.85 GSAX in 12 starts after the Olympic break. That opened the door for Andersen to claim the starting role for the playoffs.

In Vegas, Adin Hill battled through an injury-plagued season in the first year of his six-year, \$37.5 million contract and eventually lost the starting job to Hart when Tortorella took over behind the bench.

The Hurricanes ranked 26th in team save percentage in the regular season, and the Golden Knights finished directly behind them in 27th. The goaltending was much better through the first three rounds of the playoffs, but it shouldn't be a massive surprise it hasn't been a strength in the final.

There's an argument they haven't been as bad as the statistics suggest. Goaltending metrics can be tricky; they often reveal more about a goalie's environment than the netminder himself. For example, the goalies in the last final with a save percentage worse than this one, back in 1973, were Ken Dryden and Tony Esposito.

In defense of this year's goaltenders, they've faced a barrage of rush chances and point-blank looks. They've each made a handful of timely saves. Hart's windmill glove save on Seth Jarvis just before Tomas Hertl's game winner in Game 1 comes to mind. Bussi robbed Jack Eichel's backdoor redirect before Staal's winner in Game 4.

But there have also been plenty of key moments in which they've fallen short. Hertl's goal in Game 1 was a backbreaker for Carolina after tying the score late. It wasn't an easy save by any stretch, but it was a makeable save, the type that wins games in the Cup final, but Andersen couldn't get his blocker on it. And in games 3 and 4, Hart became the first goalie in NHL history to allow goals on three consecutive shots in back-to-back Stanley Cup Final games. If he found a way to make just one of those stops, and stop the bleeding, we could be talking about a commanding series lead for Vegas.

For all of the excuses that can be made for the goalies, it's tough to look past just how bad the numbers have been.

It's part of a much larger trend. This season's league-average save percentage of .896 is the lowest in 32 years. The NHL's newer, more accurate process for tracking shots on goal has no doubt played a factor, but it's not the only one. The average save percentage has declined for 10 straight seasons, as the league has continued to get younger, faster and more offensive.

Accounting for era is always key when comparing historical goalie statistics, as the standard for good goaltending varies drastically depending on the decade. But even within that context, comparing a given Stanley Cup Final save percentage with the league average of that regular season, this year's is still the worst in 53 years.

It also stacks up similarly when using goals saved above expected metrics, which are designed to account for the quality of shots faced. Hart, Andersen and Bussi have combined to save 7.64 goals below expected, according to HockeyStats.com. That is the worst combined GSAX figure in a Cup final in 16 years, and the second worst since the stat was tracked in 2008.

Lowest combined Cup final GSAX

Year	Winning Goalie	Losing Goalie	Combined GSAX
2010	Antti Niemi	Michael Leighton	-8.87
2018	Braden Holtby	Marc-André Fleury	-6.06
2025	Sergei Bobrovsky	Stuart Skinner	-3.61
2019	Jordan Binnington	Tuukka Rask	-2.14
2024			



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026

Sergei Bobrovsky

Stuart Skinner

-0.6

Expected goals weren't tracked for the first two seasons of the salary-cap era, but they're still the best barometer for goaltending excellence over that span. Over the last 18 years, we've seen some spectacularly goaltended finals.

The duel between Quick and Lundqvist in 2014 stands alone at the top. The two combined for a .926 save percentage and 8.52 GSAX over six epic games that featured five overtime periods. The 2008 duel between Chris Osgood and Marc-André Fleury was equally memorable, highlighted by a triple-overtime marathon with 83 combined saves.

Highest combined Cup final GSAX

Year	Winning goalie	Losing goalie	Combined GSAX
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2014

Jonathan Quick

Henrik Lundqvist

8.52

2008

Chris Osgood

Marc-André Fleury

6.61

2020

Andrei Vasilevskiy

Anton Khudobin

6.58

2011

Tim Thomas

Roberto Luongo

5.32

2016

Matt Murray

Martin Jones

4.45

We've also had some recent Stanley Cup Finals dominated by the goal scorers. The last three finals all rank in the bottom five in combined GSAX, suggesting the league's shift toward speed and skill has outpaced adjustments to expected goal models by a bit.

Still, through only four games, this year's final is on pace to be the worst in terms of GSAX, with only the 2010 barn burner between Chicago and Philadelphia below it. That year, Antti Niemi, Michael Leighton and Brian Boucher combined to stop 8.87 goals below expected over six games.

As this series has shown, things can change quickly in hockey. Perhaps Hart or Andersen can find the form that helped them backstop their teams through the first three rounds. Maybe Bussi can get hot and join Cam Ward in Hurricanes lore.

At this stage, if any of the goalies turn things around, it would almost certainly win their team a championship. To this point, they've only set the wrong types of records.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.12.2026

1393817 Vegas Golden Knights

No VGK Comeback In Game 5: Carolina Can Celebrate Stanley Cup Title In Game 6 In Las Vegas Sunday After Canes' 4-2 Win In Game 5 Tonight

By Alan Snel, LVSportsBiz.com Publisher-Writer

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — The next time the Vegas Golden Knights take to the ice at T-Mobile Arena Sunday, they face the reality that the Carolina Hurricanes might celebrate winning the NHL championship in the building on the Strip that night.

Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final is a lose-or-go-home for the VGK after the Hurricanes seized Game 5 in front of their fans in Raleigh, North Carolina Thursday.

There was no theater on ice tonight when Carolina secured a 4-2 win behind two Andrei Svechnikov power play goals and a second straight win by Hurricanes netminder Brandon Bussi.

source: Hurricanes

"It was the biggest game of my life for me," Svechnikov said after the game.

Bussi, an undrafted goalie who spent years in the minors, relieved Carolina netminder Frederik Andersen in Game 3 in a VGK 5-4 double OT win in Las Vegas before winning Games 4 and 5.

source: NHL

VGK forward Pavel Dorofeyev scored a power play goal to give the Knights a 1-0 lead in period one.

But Jordan Staal redirected the puck past VGK goalie Carter Hart to tie the game after the first period. And Carolina added second period goals by Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho for a 3-1 lead after the middle stanza.

Svechnikov added his second power play goal in the third period before Dorofeyev scored his second of the game for the 4-2 final. Dorofeyev was Vegas' leading regular season scorer with 37 tallies.

source: VGK

Hart has given up at least four goals in each of the Final's five games so far.

A reporter asked VGK coach John Tortorella if he considered replacing Hart with goalie Adin Hill, who backstopped Vegas' 2023 Stanley Cup championship.

"Oh for Christ, that could be the stupidest question I've heard," Tortorella said.

The Knights lost more than just the game. William Karlsson was injured in the second period and will probably not return to the Stanley Cup Final.

Karlsson

Game 6 is slated for a 5 PM start in Las Vegas in three days Sunday. It was the VGK's second straight loss — the first time the Knights have lost consecutive games this postseason.

"We'll be back here," Tortorella said. "We have to find a way. I'm going to leave my clothes here. They will be in the hotel."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 12, 2026