



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 24, 2021

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Carolina Hurricanes' have sixth player added to the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes now have a sixth player on the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list.

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The Canes have had the past three games postponed by the NHL and their training facility closed as they dealt with their COVID issues. Carolina was to have hosted the Florida Panthers in their first two home games this week, on Thursday and Saturday.

Team president and general manager Don Waddell said Thursday he was hopeful the Canes could return to their practice facility by the weekend and be able to play games next week. The Canes are scheduled to host the Tampa Bay Lightning, the 2020 Stanley Cup champion, on Tuesday and Thursday, then have a back-to-back set against the Dallas Stars at home on Saturday and Sunday.

The Canes' practice facility at Wake Competition Center remained closed Saturday. The NHL has made no announcement on next week's games.

"So much is unknown," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Thursday on a media call. "We always want to err on side of caution. We've done all the protocols, done a great job. Obviously it didn't matter. It got into our room."

The coronavirus, that is. Neither the league nor the team is allowed to give out specific information on the players who are listed as absent -- who tested positive COVID-19, who was involved because of contact tracing -- other than to provide the names.

Staal was first Hurricanes player to be put on the list on Jan 15. Teravainen, Slavin, Martinook and Foegele were added Jan. 19, the day the Canes' road game against the Nashville Predators was postponed by the league. Brind'Amour said Thursday there were players being quarantined in Nashville.

On Saturday, the Detroit Red Wings had five players on the COVID protocol list and the Washington Capitals had four.

Fast was signed to a free-agent contract in the offseason, coming to the Canes from the New York Rangers.



Hurricanes' Jesper Fast: Added to protocol list

By RotoWire Staff

Fast was added to the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list Saturday, Michael Smith of the Hurricanes' official site reports.

The Hurricanes now have six players on the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list. Carolina's game against Tampa Bay on Tuesday is currently still scheduled to take place, but it wouldn't be surprising to see the NHL announce a postponement in the coming days.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article248723815.html>
<https://www.cbssports.com/fantasy/hockey/news/hurricanes-jesper-fast-added-to-protocol-list/>



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SportScan

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

1200215 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes' have sixth player added to the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

JANUARY 23, 2021 06:35 PM,

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News Observer LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200216 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Season Put on Pause Due to COVID-19 Protocol

BY SOLOMON EWING

JANUARY 23RD, 2021

The Carolina Hurricanes have been stopped in their tracks due to COVID-19. Five players have been placed under COVID-19 protocol on the Hurricanes' roster. The affected players are Jordan Staal, Teuvo Teravainen, Jordan Martinook, Warren Foegele, and Jaccob Slavin. Their next game is scheduled to take place on Jan. 26 against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Jordan Staal Carolina Hurricanes

Captain Jordan Staal, Carolina Hurricanes (Amy Irvin / The Hockey Writers)

Each of these five players is an important piece of the Hurricanes squad and it's disappointing to see them being affected by COVID-19. The virus has adversely affected other teams and now the adversity has reached the Hurricanes' camp.

COVID-19 Protocol Inconvenience

The Hurricanes have dutifully followed the NHL's COVID-19 protocol and even took steps with the league to go above and beyond. Practice facilities have been closed, affected players are isolating in road hotel rooms, and the Hurricanes have even installed COVID-19 testing machines inside the PNC Arena. Even with all these precautions and guidelines being followed, the Hurricanes as well as other teams, have still fell victim to the threatening virus.

A notable issue with this interruption is how postponed games affect scheduling. Don Waddell has mentioned that there are places to put missed games into the schedule. So the scheduling situation hasn't become dire and the NHL has shown diligence in rescheduling games thus far.

Don Waddell Hurricanes

Don Waddell, Carolina Hurricanes (Amy Irvin / The Hockey Writers)

There aren't any concrete plans for failed rescheduling of missed games over the course of the season. But so far, the worst-case scenario would call for the league to extend the season's timeline to accommodate any missed games. There is no intention for any teams to be denied their games to be played.



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Player conditioning and maintaining the team's competitive edge has also been affected. Head coach Rod Brind'Amour has facilitated practices via Zoom that include at-home physical training for the players, discussions on strategy, scouting reports of other teams, and reviewing game film. But knowing Rod Brind'Amour and his passion for fitness, these practices are probably mostly physical training!

Matchup Insights Missed with Interruption

This interruption will slow the momentum the Canes were carrying from their last victory at the Nashville Predators. Carolina rebounded after a loss to the Detroit Red Wings with their exciting win in Nashville. The victory made for an anticipated second matchup that ended up being postponed, along with two other games against the Florida Panthers.

Detroit Red Wings' Nick Jensen and Jonathan Bernier and Carolina Hurricanes' Warren Foegele

The postponed matchups could have revealed some insights into how the Hurricanes stack up against their divisional foes. It stands to reason that the Predators would have come out roaring in a second game seeking a win against the Hurricanes team that just defeated them and it would have been interesting to see how Carolina handled any pressure from the Predators.

Two games against the Panthers could have also revealed some important traits about the Hurricanes. The Panthers are hungry and look to be playing some good hockey. There is already some simmering contention between the teams and it has yet to be seen where each team stands in relation to the other this season.

Hurricanes Just Getting Rolling

A bright point for Carolina has been Andrei Svechnikov's success so far. He has three goals in as many games. The Hurricanes have drawn up a set play for Svechnikov on powerplays that allows him to utilize his laser shot.

In the last game, we saw the deadly Hurricane counter-attack with Vincent Trocheck and Sebastian Aho both netting tallies in transition. Another bright point has been above average goaltending from Petr Mrazek and James Reimer.

Mrazek had a shutout in the team's first game against the Red Wings and Reimer played a great game against the Predators shutting the door on many of Nashville's quality scoring chances.

True to form, COVID-19 has interfered with a good thing. Carolina was showing some promise after their third game. Brind'Amour also describes the team as "just getting rolling" once the pause occurred. The resilient Hurricanes squad will journey on and welcome their comrades back once they're available to play. We will anticipate a positive outcome and look forward to when we're able to enjoy more Hurricanes hockey.

Hockey Writers LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200302 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning fall in Columbus for first loss of season

Eduardo A. Encina

The Lightning weren't going to win every game this season. They knew that, but it was the way they lost their first game of the year that didn't sit well.

Tampa Bay's 5-2 loss to the Blue Jackets on Saturday in Columbus was its worst game in a long time, coach Jon Cooper said.

"I haven't seen us play that poorly since before the (coronavirus) pause (last season)," Cooper said. "We weren't in sync at all. Egregious turnovers, something that was not a trademark of ours anywhere in our playoff run. Goals three, four and five are off just egregious turnovers. And if you're not managing the puck, it's going to be a problem for you. We couldn't score our way out of it (Saturday)."

Each game means more this season because of the abbreviated 56-game schedule, and each one is against a division opponent in the coronavirus-forced division realignment. The Lightning (3-1-0) had not allowed more than two goals in any of their first three games, outscoring opponents 13-5.

But Saturday, the Lightning struggled to maintain possession, they couldn't get many open looks offensively, and they spent a good part of the afternoon chasing the Blue Jackets on defense.

"It's on us, for sure," said defenseman Mikhail Sergachev, who said he "probably had the worst game" of his career. "Too many turnovers. We were not focused, and we were sloppy at times. But obviously we're going to learn from that, and next game, we're going to play better. We have some time to practice now, so we'll be better. ... They capitalized on our sloppy plays and turnovers."

The Blue Jackets seemed energized and inspired hours after disgruntled forward Pierre-Luc Dubois was traded to the Jets, ending a situation that had clearly become a distraction. But for the Lightning, the loss was difficult to digest because they felt like they beat themselves.

"Give (the Blue Jackets) credit," Cooper said. "I guess they're probably happy over on their side. But we're not too pleased on our side, and it's when you shoot yourself in the foot, that's when things at times don't go well for you. That's what happened (Saturday)."

Tampa Bay was unable to become the first defending Stanley Cup champion to start the season 4-0 since the 1997-98 Detroit Red Wings.

Columbus scored three times in a five-goal first period, an early indication that the game could get ugly for Tampa Bay.

The first period also saw an injury to Lightning defenseman Erik Cernak, who left the game after absorbing a hard hit against the boards. Cernak didn't return, and his absence meant more ice time for defenseman Ryan McDonagh (28:53), Victor Hedman (26:37) and Sergachev (23:58).

Hedman put the Lightning ahead four minutes into the game, skating through the slot with his back to the net and shooting between his legs, the puck getting past Columbus goaltender Elvis Merzlikins. The Blue Jackets responded 17 seconds later on captain Nick Foligno's goal.

Midway through the period, Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped forward Kevin Stenland's one-timer from the left circle, but the puck leaked behind Vasilevskiy and forward Mikhail Grigorenko swept into the crease to clean it up.

With 59 seconds left in the period, defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov beat Vasilevskiy from the high slot after Lightning forward Pat Maroon gave the puck away in the neutral zone, giving Columbus a 3-1 lead.

Forward Ondrej Palat scored 45 seconds later on a power play for the Lightning, finishing a pinpoint cross-crease feed from Brayden Point.

The Blue Jackets went up 4-2 after Sergachev lost the puck in the offensive zone. Columbus raced ahead for a rush on Vasilevskiy, who stopped one shot but couldn't halt defenseman Zach Werenski's wrist shot about six minutes into the third period. The Blue Jackets later added an empty-net goal following another turnover.

"I think (the Blue Jackets) did a good job putting us in situations where we were kind of in a tough spot and where we ended up turning it over," forward Alex Killorn said. "But I think we have to do a better job at the blue lines, making sure those turnovers don't happen."

Blue Jackets 3-0-2—5

Lightning 2-0-0—2



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First Period—1, Tampa Bay, Hedman 1 (Stephens, Volkov), 4:10. 2, Columbus, Foligno 3 (Del Zotto, Atkinson), 4:27. 3, Columbus, Grigorenko 1 (Stenlund, Gerbe), 10:03. 4, Columbus, Gavrikov 1 (Robinson, Foudy), 19:01. 5, Tampa Bay, Palat 3 (Hedman, Point), 19:46 (pp).

Second Period—None.

Third Period—6, Columbus, Werenski 1 (Jenner, Texier), 6:34. 7, Columbus, Robinson 1 (Jones, Nash), 18:12 (en). Shots on Goal—Tampa Bay 14-10-8_32. Columbus 9-8-11_28. Power-play opportunities—Tampa Bay 1 of 3; Columbus 0 of 2. Goalies—Tampa Bay, Vasilevskiy 3-0-0 (26 shots-22 saves). Columbus, Merzlikins 0-1-1 (32-30). T—2:27. Referees—Dean Morton, Kyle Rehman. Linesmen—Tyson Baker, Devin Berg.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200303 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning left in limbo by schedule uncertainty

Eduardo A. Encina

Unsure when and where their next game will be, the Lightning returned to Tampa after Saturday's 5-2 loss at Columbus.

As of Saturday night, they were still scheduled to play at the Hurricanes on Tuesday and Thursday, the second leg of a two-city, four-game road trip. But instead of flying to Raleigh, N.C., the Lightning came home with the expectation that Tuesday's game, at the least, would be postponed because of the Hurricanes' coronavirus issues.

After five Carolina players landed on the COVID-19 protocol list last week, the Hurricanes' two-game series against the Panthers was postponed. On Saturday, a sixth player was added to the list, forward Jesper Fast, and the team's facility remained closed.

The Lightning were awaiting further information from the league Saturday night. Coach Jon Cooper said his team was preparing to play Thursday in Carolina.

"The league's been pretty good at giving us probabilities of what's going to go on," Cooper said. "As of now, we're going, but ask me that question (today) and I don't know if I'll give you the same answer."

The Lightning have had two of their first four opponents shut down because of virus issues. They had five days off between their second and third games of the season after two games against Dallas were postponed because of a Stars outbreak.

"We'll have some more time to work out, get stronger and get faster, and make sure that we're playing our system," defenseman Mikhail Sergachev said. "Obviously it's bad that we can't play, like, a normal schedule, but it is what it is, and that's part of our job now."

The Lightning's next scheduled game after the Hurricanes series is Saturday at home against the Predators.

Coleman late scratch

Wing Blake Coleman was a late scratch Saturday, replaced by Mathieu Joseph on the third line.

Cooper said Coleman didn't play because he was late for a meeting, a violation of a strict team rule.

"Blake is an A-plus kid, and I don't know if he had alarm clock issues or what happened," Cooper said. "We have some pretty steadfast rules that

we've had in place ever since I've been here. Nobody feels worse than that poor kid because he's given everything he's had for us, and that's not his style, but he completely understood, and we'll be back at practice on Monday."

Coleman spent two days on the COVID-19 protocol list last week, missing two days of practice but no games. He returned to the team Wednesday and scored in a 3-2 overtime win Thursday at Columbus.

His absence Saturday also meant playing time for Alex Volkov, who filled Joseph's spot on the fourth line.

Stephens injury update

The initial prognosis of Saturday's injury to center Mitchell Stephens wasn't promising. Cooper said the fourth-line player could miss significant time. Stephens fell awkwardly while getting tangled with Columbus defenseman David Savard during the third period. He skated off the ice, unable to put weight on his right leg, and needed assistance to the trainers room.

#GoBolts helped off the ice after this play - tangled up with Savard. #CBJ pic.twitter.com/TLxt1IFO2l

— Alison (@AlisonL) January 23, 2021

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200232 Dallas Stars

Jamie Benn (lower body) misses Saturday's practice, listed day-to-day as Stars keep quiet on further details

By Matthew DeFranks

5:08 PM on Jan 23, 2021 CST

Stars captain Jamie Benn missed practice Saturday afternoon, a day after exiting the season opener against Nashville during the second period with a lower-body injury.

That's about all that is certain — publicly, at least — about Benn's absence and how long it could impact a Stars team already without its top center (Tyler Seguin) and No. 1 goaltender (Ben Bishop).

Is there any more clarity on Benn, short-term or long-term? Is he getting more testing done today?

"Jamie's lower-body, day to day," Stars coach Rick Bowness replied during Saturday's Zoom call with reporters.

Is there concern still that it is longer-term or are you guys pretty sure that he'll be back soon? Will he be back on the home stand at all?

"Good try," Bowness said. "Lower-body, day to day. Good try."

Benn suffered the injury about six minutes into the second period Friday, when Predators forward Viktor Arvidsson fell on his right knee. Benn was helped by two Stars staff members down the tunnel to the dressing room but returned for four shifts in the second period.

Benn left the bench again towards the end of the period, when Alexander Radulov took his spot on the top power-play unit. During the second intermission, the Stars announced that Benn would not return to the game, and Bowness did not provide an update after the game.

Bowness did not rule out Benn returning during the Stars' home stand — which opened Friday night with a 7-0 win over Nashville — which would provide a boost to a suddenly bruised squad.



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Forward Joel Kiviranta exited Saturday's practice with a lower-body injury that Bowness also classified as day to day. Forward Blake Comeau is unavailable because of the NHL's COVID-19 protocols and hasn't practiced with the team since Jan. 16.

It's premature to assume that Benn will miss significant time, but he is a player the Stars can ill afford to lose, especially with Seguin out until early April following offseason hip surgery. Benn played Friday night on the top line with Roope Hintz and Denis Gurianov, a combination that Bowness raved about during training camp.

The line was filled with the team's three leading goal-scorers from last season and formed a potentially potent top six with Joe Pavelski, Alexander Radulov and Kiviranta on the line below. With Benn out, Jason Dickinson skated with Hintz and Gurianov on Saturday.

"He can skate with them for starters," Bowness said. "If you want to play with those two, you better be able to skate. He can fly with them, so he can keep up."

Dickinson added: "I think it's pretty simple with them. Give them the puck and let them skate. You give them the puck in the right space, the right areas, they're going to be able to beat guys 1 on 1. I've got to play off of that and let them play their game. I'll play my game of coming in later and being the, not more responsible, but being the more defensive-minded aspect of that line."

Dickinson has been the most versatile forward on the Stars roster in the last three seasons, owning the ability to center a checking line or play wing on a scoring trio. During the 2019 playoffs, he ascended to the top six to play with Seguin and Mats Zuccarello. During last season's playoff run, he filled in on the shutdown line when Radek Faksa got hurt.

Dickinson is a natural center who prefers to play there, but he has gotten used to playing wing.

"I think it's been a process over the years of just keeping myself ready for anything," Dickinson said. "I pride myself on being able to play anywhere at any time in any situation. My game doesn't need to change a whole lot."

If Benn is out, it would be the third player in the Stars leadership group to miss a game in the young season. Comeau (who wears an "A" on the road) and Seguin (who does so at home) missed the opener against Nashville.

"He is the guy," Dickinson said of Benn. "Everybody leans on him. He takes a lot of that pressure and a lot of the heat, but we're fortunate that we have veteran guys that have been in that situation before."

Briefly: During practice Saturday, the Stars broke in the helmets, gloves and pants used in their Blackout third jerseys. The differences are slight, with neon green outlines replacing the normal white lettering. Dallas will wear the jerseys 15 times this season, first on Thursday against Detroit.

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200233 Dallas Stars

What's it like to be a fan at a Dallas Stars game right now?

By Sean Shapiro

Jan 23, 2021

DALLAS — A little more than 12 months ago, the Dallas Stars and Nashville Predators played in front of 85,630 fans at the Cotton Bowl in the 2020 Winter Classic. It was the second-largest crowd in NHL history, a remarkable undertaking for hockey's most southern outdoor game.

Perhaps it was even more remarkable when the Predators and Stars played in front of 81,416 fewer fans indoors Friday at American Airlines Center.

For a quick reset, there's a pandemic. Vaccines have started to roll out, but on Friday there were 1,978 additional positive cases in Dallas County, and the COVID-19 risk zone is still classified in the red — "Stay Home, Stay Safe," according to the county.

This was the Stars' first game. It was supposed to be their fifth. The first four were rescheduled after 17 Stars players tested positive during training camp.

Dallas was the third NHL market to host fans at a game this season; the Arizona Coyotes have averaged 2,329 in two games. The Florida Panthers have welcomed an average of 3,907. The Predators have announced plans to host fans at Bridgestone Arena later this month, while the Tampa Bay Lightning are getting close to being the fifth team to have in-person attendance.

The Stars and Predators drew an NHL season-high attendance when 4,214 fans entered the building in Dallas on Friday. The NBA's Dallas Mavericks, who play in the same building, have yet to play in front of any fans this season.

These are all facts.

Also facts: The building was set up with the hope of maintaining social distancing, tickets had to be purchased in pods, fans had to fill out a COVID-19 questionnaire before entering the building, and there were constant reminders from game operations to wear masks and maintain at least six feet of distance from other patrons.

Fans were permitted to remove their masks only while eating or drinking in their seats, a policy that some fans abused more than others, and one that was seemingly better enforced the closer you got to the ice. The lower bowl, which ends up on television the most, had a higher consistency of masks, and ushers, intentionally or not, spent more time making sure those sections were masked up.

The upper bowl and the suite level featured a higher concentration of mask-wearing on chins, rather than the mouth and nose.

Once fans were in the building, there was a general feeling of safety, according to many who spoke with The Athletic via social distanced Twitter messaging, but there were some concerns about the bottlenecks and close contact with other patrons while trying to enter the building. To limit time in the building, the doors opened at 6:30 p.m. for a 7:30 (well, 7:43) start, which led to more condensed lines. Several patrons who spoke with The Athletic said it took them close to an hour to get into the building, and several missed the puck drop despite being in line before 7 p.m.

Leaving the building was a smoother experience, which was expected with more exits available.

It was a distinctive atmosphere, certainly different from the games played in empty buildings in Edmonton or across the NHL this season, and not nearly the fan fervor of the full building that was last seen in the NHL on March 12, in a game between the Los Angeles Kings and Ottawa Senators at Staples Center.

There was more clapping than at a typical game, a testament that many of the fans were being responsible about mask usage, while the temperament was higher than a preseason game, particularly when the Stars unfurled the 2020 Western Conference Champions banner or scored five goals in the second period of a 7-0 victory.

The Stars spent more time in the Edmonton bubble than any other team, taking up residence for 65 days in Alberta before falling in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup final to the Tampa Bay Lightning. It was a playoff run with fanfare, but without fans, and finally having supporters in the building brought extra meaning for the Stars players on Friday.



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"You know what was great tonight? Seeing some fans in the seats," Stars coach Rick Bowness said. "For a small crowd, they were very enthusiastic and you could hear them on the bench. You could really feel the excitement tonight. They gave us a big boost as well."

Joel Kiviranta, who became a Stars cult hero with his Game 7 heroics against the Colorado Avalanche, was given a hero's welcome he never got in person during the playoff run. Stars captain Jamie Benn, who swayed some skeptics during the playoff run, got the loudest ovation during introductions, and Anton Khudobin, one of the most loved people in the hockey world now, was serenaded with chants of "Dobby, Dobby" as he completed his 100th career victory with a shutout.

Alexander Radulov said it felt like the building was more than 25 percent filled, and he smiled when discussing the chants for Khudobin, one of his closest friends. The goalie matter of factually said he heard the chants. "Trust me," he said, "I had goosebumps."

"It was awesome. I think that's one of the things we were looking forward to the most," Joe Pavelski said. "It was pretty cool, when they started chanting for Dobby. And it was pretty cool for the limited fans that were, it was something, anything was gonna help us. ... We were just excited to get back out and play in front of them. It's been a while."

The Athletic LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200234 Dallas Stars

Stars 20/20: Dallas rides Anton Khudobin shutout & fireworks to 7-0 opener win

Staff

After a COVID-19 outbreak delayed the Stars' 2021 season, Dallas came out of the gate with a dominating 7-0 win over the Nashville Predators on Friday night.

1. Whenever people mention Alexander Radulov, the first thing that comes to my mind is a quote from Tyler Seguin last season on Oct. 29, 2019, when Radulov rescued the Stars' season against the Minnesota Wild.

"He's one of the catalysts of this team, even when he's got — I don't know, I don't want to say confidence — that swag and that drive and passion, maybe mildly psychotic on the ice," Tyler Seguin said at the time.

"Mildly psychotic." When Radulov is on, that's about the best way to describe his game, particularly on Friday night. He finished with two goals and an assist, bringing the emotional energy he's known to add to the team.

Dallas should have been trailing after the first period. The game was played mostly in front of Anton Khudobin in the Stars' zone, and the Predators had their chances. Dallas could barely get into Nashville's zone, let alone threaten with quality shots. The power play looked flat. To be fair, it was their first period of the season, whereas it was Nashville's fourth game. Even with that being the case, thanks to some luck and Khudobin's strong play, the Stars managed to keep the score 0-0. In the second period though, the Stars got a five-on-three opportunity. That's all they needed to kick-start the offense.

2. Joe Pavelski has built a reputation for being one of the most effective net-front presences in the NHL. That remains true but it shouldn't be necessary for Pavelski to set up shop in front of the net every time on the power play, and Friday was a good example of why. The unit is better when there is more of a rotation and flexibility, as there was on the first two goals of the game.

On the first goal, Pavelski set up on the left circle for a one-timer while Jamie Benn occupied the front of the net. Radulov saw the opening, delivered the pass on time and Pavelski didn't hesitate to pull the trigger:

"I think it always enhances the power play when you have moving parts and you aren't glued to one spot," Pavelski said. "We have a lot of guys that can play numerous spots. You try to get in your spots when you can, and your sets, but there are going to be times when it's broke. Tonight, there were a lot of power plays so there were times when you need to slide in and out of certain ones. It was good to have the puck a little bit."

3. On the second goal, Pavelski moved out to the blue line. With the power play winding down, he put a shot on net and Radulov cleaned it up by tipping it home.

"It was a good battle in the corner there and a good stop by Pavs on the blue line," Radulov said. "I tried to get in front of the net and I (saw) the lane and Pavs saw me and he kind of shot it. The guy was on my back so I tried to redirect it into the net and it went upstairs. It's good, it was a little bit of luck, but I'll take it."

4. This was obviously a best-case scenario game for the Stars' power play. The unit had eight opportunities and scored goals on five of them. Everybody knows what Pavelski can do in front of the net, but if there's a rotation with Benn and Radulov being effective, the unit won't stagnate. Along with John Klingberg running the show and the offensive firepower of Roope Hintz, that unit can do some damage on a regular basis.

5. Speaking of Jamie Benn, he got hurt in the second period. Initially, Benn went to the tunnel and was being tended to there. He then walked down the tunnel, visibly hobbled. A short time later, he returned to the front of the tunnel and watched from there before joining the team on the bench. He went back into the game and looked to be moving well but did not return to the game after the second intermission for the third period. Context is important. The Stars were up 5-0 at the break and in full control, so there's really no reason for Benn to risk anything in that situation. After the game, Stars coach Rick Bowness said that he did not have an update on Benn's status, but the team practices on Saturday so there should be a little more clarity then. With Blake Comeau out for now and Seguin sidelined for a while, losing another veteran forward would not be ideal for the Stars, let alone their captain.

6. It's a travesty that I've gone long without expanding on Anton Khudobin. The Russian goaltender turned in a 34-save shutout and was critical to the defense and offense. There's no doubt that this game would not have gone the way it did if he wasn't in net, but there's also a chance that the Stars might have lost this game if not for his first period.

"I think our legs were fine in the first period. It was more about momentum," Radulov said. "We tried to do something too hard. ... Obviously, Dobby was making unbelievable (saves) in the first and throughout the whole game. He gave us a good chance in the beginning. That's basically why we were 0-0 in the first period. They came out pretty hard and we could feel that they had some games already. That was the difference. Dobby did his job and he deserved the shutout. He was there for us tonight."

Without Khudobin making those saves, the momentum and morale would have been very different during the first intermission. Radulov wasn't the only player after the game to go out of his way to credit Khudobin. Pavelski talked about the importance of special teams, but he wasn't referencing any of the goals Dallas scored.

"The best thing on the special teams tonight was probably Dobby," Pavelski said. "He was huge. I fully understand how nice that is when they get a couple of dangerous chances and he fights off those shots, makes the saves, allows us to get going, get on the power play and get the lead. It's always nice when you don't have to chase a game. Those saves he made early were huge for that."

Since the day the Stars found out that they would open the season against the Predators, Bowness was raising caution that the Predators would have NHL games under their belt while the Stars would be going in



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cold. He expected the skaters to take some time to find their rhythm and he was right about that, but the team was lucky that Khudobin came out in midseason form.

"When your team is off a little bit as we were in the first, you're going to need your goaltender. And Dobby was great," Bowness said. "He made the big saves. The power play gave us confidence but Dobby's play gave us confidence as well. ... We certainly needed Dobby in that first period."

7. Khudobin was one of the biggest beneficiaries of fans being allowed in the building. Before the game, the entire Stars roster was introduced and Khudobin drew the loudest cheer. Throughout the game, including multiple times in the final minute, the American Airlines Center broke into "Dobby, Dobby" chants.

"It was unbelievable, to be honest," Khudobin said. "I really appreciate that they are cheering for me. That was a special moment, to be honest ... I heard them, and trust me, I had goosebumps about it."

This was Khudobin's 100th-career win, a feat that he said afterward wasn't even on his radar coming into the game. That checks out with Khudobin's general approach, on and off of the ice. When asked after morning skate on Friday if there was anything different about entering the season as a starting goalie, Khudobin shrugged it off.

"No. Just get ready and try to stop the pucks," Khudobin said.

Thirty-four pucks came his way, and he stopped all 34 of them.

8. The Stars officially became the third NHL team to allow fans at games. The official attendance was 4,214, the most at a hockey game in the NHL this season, edging out Florida's 4,147 at their opener. The Athletic's Sean Shapiro wrote a full story on the fan experience. Here's a sampling of what the players had to say about it.

"Our fans are unbelievable," Khudobin said. "We wish that it could be a full house but it is what it is with this pandemic. They were loud and they kept us going, which was very good."

"It was awesome. That was something we were looking forward to the most, having people in the building," Pavelski said. "It was pretty cool when they started chanting for Dobby and we definitely heard them. They showed up and there was a lot of excitement in the building. We were excited to get out and play in front of them."

"I can tell you, it seems like it wasn't around 5,000 (fans)," Radulov said. "It was like more than 5,000 (fans), I can tell you that. Obviously, it's great. It's a whole different story when you play in front of your fans."

Bowness went out of his way to bring up the advantage the team felt with fans in the stands

"You know what was great tonight? To see some fans in the seats," Bowness said. "It shows you the difference it makes when you have fans. For a small crowd, they were very enthusiastic. You can hear them on the bench and feel their excitement. That really helped us as well tonight."

9. Back to the goals because, you know, there were seven of those. The third goal also came on the power play and was an absolute beauty. Denis Gurianov scored the goal by tipping in a shot, but it was Klingberg's magic along the blue line that made it happen.

Klingberg is among the NHL's elite players at the blue line. His biggest issue is that he doesn't do this kind of thing enough. Good things usually happen when Klingberg lets it rip. That's something that he's been told by his teammates and coaches, and he's worked in the offseason to do that.

"That's something I've always heard from coaches and certain players, that they want me to shoot more," Klingberg said during training camp. "It's just me, as a player, I think I'm always going to look for that extra play. But the last couple of years I told myself as well, I need to shoot the puck more. ... I keep telling myself every practice, every game that I need to shoot more but also be smart when I take the shots as well."

Klingberg tends to commit some head-scratching turnovers sometimes, but his importance to the Stars can't be overstated, especially right now, in this championship window and in this system that asks defensemen to activate in the rush and be a part of the offense. With all of the fireworks that went off Friday night, Klingberg's three-assist game flew slightly under the radar.

10. Radulov's second goal made it 4-0. It was the only goal of the game that came at even strength.

"I got in on the forecheck and I think the goalie tried to play the puck," Radulov said. "I was just there and tried to just whack it and it went in."

11. The fifth goal was also a unique one, for a few reasons. First, it was the Stars' first shorthanded goal of the season. Secondly, it was Esa Lindell, a defensive defenseman who scored on the rush. Third, it came at the expense of the 2020 Norris Trophy winner, Roman Josi.

It was a 1-minute, 38-second shift for Josi, but Lindell was still able to take advantage.

12. That was the final straw for Predators goaltender Juuse Saros. Once the period ended, he was pulled in favor of Pekka Rinne. Even with the goalie change, the Stars kept pouring it on, scoring two more goals in the final frame. The sixth goal of the game was classic Pavelski fighting for positioning in front of the net and tipping home a shot from Roope Hintz. That capped a four-point (two goals, two assists) night for Pavelski.

There was some confusion about who should be credited for the seventh, and final, goal of the night. Initially, it went to Joel Kiviranta and then to Klingberg before going down in the books as a goal for Kiviranta and assists for Jason Dickinson and Klingberg

It might be obvious, but I will try to incorporate videos of scoring plays in the 20/20s, especially for those who might not be able to watch the games due to streaming wars.

13. When it comes to big games for the Stars in recent history, somehow the Nashville Predators always end up on the other side. In 2019, after the Stars made the playoffs following a two-year absence, their first-round opponent was the Predators. Nashville took a 2-1 series lead before Dallas won three straight, dispatching the Predators in Game 6 at the American Airlines Center on a John Klingberg goal in overtime. A little over eight months later, the two teams faced off in arguably the biggest regular-season game in Stars history when Dallas hosted Nashville at the Cotton Bowl on Jan. 1, 2020, for the Winter Classic. The Stars won that game 4-2.

Bowness said playing the same opponent, who is also a division opponent before and during the 2021 realignment, does factor in.

"Yes, it helps," Bowness said. "You felt that rivalry last year when we played them from the playoffs the year before. The outdoor game adds to that. Now it's strictly divisional games and that magnifies it as well."

Friday night's game against the Predators was always scheduled to be a big one. This was going to be the home opener when the banner would be raised. Due to the Stars' COVID-19 outbreak a couple of weeks ago, it also became the season-opener for the Stars. Just like the ones in the past, Friday night was a victory for the Stars.

14. The Stars were without Blake Comeau, who was ruled out earlier in the week. Klingberg missed practice on Thursday but participated in morning skate and was in his usual spot in the lineup. Here's the lineup Bowness went with:

Jamie Benn — Roope Hintz — Denis Gurianov

Joel Kiviranta — Joe Pavelski — Alexander Radulov

Andrew Cogliano — Radek Faksa — Ty Dellandrea

Jason Robertson — Jason Dickinson — Nicholas Caamano

Esa Lindell — John Klingberg



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Jamie Oleksiak — Miro Heiskanen

Andrej Sekera — Mark Pysyk

Anton Khudobin

Mikael Granlund made his season debut for the Predators. Here is how Nashville countered:

Filip Forsberg — Ryan Johansen — Viktor Arvidsson

Mikael Granlund — Matt Duchene — Luke Kunin

Nick Cousins — Erik Haula — Colton Sissons

Yakov Trenin — Brad Richardson — Mathieu Olivier

Roman Josi — Ryan Ellis

Mattias Ekholm — Dante Fabbro

Mark Borowicki — Matt Benning

Juuse Saros

15. Jamie Benn is an enigma, but the more time you spend listening to him, the better you understand how to decipher his words. He'll provide some insight into his teammates and coaches, but he's not interested in talking about himself. However, there's often plenty you can pick up from reading between the lines and listening to what others say about Benn.

Friday morning was a good example of that. Benn met with the media following morning skate for a total of 4 minutes, 13 seconds. He answered seven questions, averaging about 16 seconds per answer, including all of the opening-night clichés in the book. His two longest answers were 28 seconds long and 26 seconds long. The first one was a question about Miro Heiskanen and the second was a question about Denis Gurianov and Hintz.

One answer that stood out, in terms of reading body language and reading between the lines, is when Benn was asked about what it would be like to see the Western Conference champions banner raised before the game. He paused, gave a little shrug and said, "Haven't even thought about it. We're just focused on this game here. Like I said, we're excited to get this thing going again and looking forward to tonight."

The sting of losing in the Stanley Cup Final was evident in the shot of Benn sitting alone in the locker room after the Game 6 loss to the Lightning. Raising a conference championship banner was a celebratory moment for the team, but it also wasn't the banner that Benn and the team hoped to raise in September. When the banner was raised before the game, he looked pretty unimpressed.

Though Benn mostly downplayed any extraordinary hype about Friday night, Bowness provided a glimpse of how Benn really feels. When asked Friday morning if the players were tired of facing each other and ready to take on the opposition, Bowness recounted an exchange with Benn on Thursday.

"That's what Jamie Benn said yesterday," Bowness said. "I said, '(Jamie), we ready to go?' He said, 'Yeah, I need to hit somebody,' so yeah."

16. The Stars did unveil the 2020 Western Conference championship banner before the game:

17. Thursday night, Benn, Joe Pavelski and John Klingberg posted hype videos on their respective Instagram pages. The "K" watermark on the bottom left of the videos is for Kompany39, a branding and marketing company started by Pavelski. The company represents men and women hockey players, including Pavelski, former Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard, Olympic gold medalist Kacey Bellamy and others.

Benn's video was interesting. The first 22 seconds were dedicated to the disappointment of losing in the Stanley Cup Final. Then came the highlight package, but it wasn't all Benn. There were goals from his linemates, Hintz and Gurianov, and a save from Khudobin. There were

also reactions from Pavelski, Tyler Seguin, Alexander Radulov and others.

When asked Friday morning if there was a backstory to the video or if it was just provided to him, Benn provided his shortest answer of the session, "nope, no story," and then broke out a smile before fielding the next question.

18. The Stars' schedule was released on Dec. 23. For the American Airlines Center crew, led by chief operating officer Dave Brown, the big date to circle was the home opener. The last time the Stars played at the AAC was March 10, 2020, so the AAC crew would need to build the ice back up.

Sharing the building with the Dallas Mavericks adds an element to that process. Brown had to find a window when the Mavericks wouldn't need the basketball court so they could work on the ice. Building the ice takes a couple of days, but to really get it right, in all aspects, they like to have five days. After the Mavericks played at home on Jan. 1, they wouldn't play at the AAC again for eight days until Jan. 9. That gave the AAC crew the seven days in between to build up the ice completely to their satisfaction.

The Stars practiced on that ice on Wednesday and Thursday. While Bowness and the players wanted to do that for their own comfort anyways leading into Friday's game, the AAC folks also wanted it to test the ice before an actual NHL game was played on it.

19. Earlier on Friday, the AHL released full schedules for teams participating in this season. Here's what it looks like for the Texas Stars

With the structure of things this season, the AHL is going to be even more interesting to follow than in years past. Right now, a player such as Thomas Harley is on the taxi squad. But come Feb. 5, he will either be on the NHL roster or playing in the AHL. Ty Dellandrea, who played his first NHL game Friday night, could be in a similar position, depending on how things pan out with the forwards. Without Comeau, and potentially Benn, his spot in the NHL is relatively safe. But if the Stars do get to full strength, there will be some interesting decisions being made.

20. The Stars have to make sure they don't have a hangover following this resounding opening night victory. With teams playing two-game sets this season, we've already seen some wonky things happen around the league. The Blues beat the Colorado Avalanche 4-1 on opening night before losing 8-0 just two days later.

The Athletic LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200217 Chicago Blackhawks

3 Chicago Blackhawks players step into the spotlight, taking on new roles and responsibilities in a transition year

By PHIL THOMPSON

JAN 23, 2021 AT 6:49 PM

The Chicago Blackhawks likely will see more contributions from young players and imports as the season progresses, such as Mattias Janmark and Ian Mitchell.

Meanwhile, the veterans have the dual task of doing much of the heavy lifting while also guiding the next generation.

With five games in the books, including three since Sunday, three Hawks take their turn in the spotlight.

Goalie Kevin Lankinen is confident he can take on the net.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Chicago Blackhawks goaltender Kevin Lankinen deflects a shot on goal in the second period against the Detroit Red Wings at United Center Friday, Jan. 22, 2021, in Chicago.

Key stats: A win and an overtime loss; .902 save percentage and 2.94 goals-against average in two starts.

If there's an operative word to describe the goaltending situation, it's "confidence."

Would the coaching staff have confidence to put any of the three contenders between the pipes in a situation with high stakes and not just for a rebuilding team?

Do the skaters have confidence the man behind them can keep them in a game?

Heck, does the goaltender have confidence in himself?

The early results, particularly with Collin Delia and Malcolm Subban, have been mixed. Kevin Lankinen, who started the last two games, has found himself on more solid footing.

At least, he certainly doesn't lack for confidence.

"Oh, yeah, way more comfortable," Lankinen said after Friday's 4-1 victory over the Detroit Red Wings, a career first for him and the Hawks' first win of the season.

"I was lucky I got the start today. I was so happy about that. I've been really feeling good the last few weeks here. I feel confident. I feel calm. I feel like my game is right there where it needs to be. Obviously we're going to work on some things with (goalie coach) Jimmy (Waite). All in all, I feel confident, I feel great."

He has been solid, coach Jeremy Colliton said.

"He was under control. He never looked out of position," Colliton said. "I thought there was less scrambles around the net, certainly on the penalty kill he stabilized things for us.

"It's a good performance for him and hopefully he can build confidence from it."

Forward Brandon Hagel is hoping to develop into an everyday player.

Chicago Blackhawks left wing Brandon Hagel and Detroit Red Wings defenseman Alex Biega shove each other in the second period at United Center Friday, Jan. 22, 2021, in Chicago.

Key stats: Has averaged 10:25 ice time in two games.

Brandon Hagel hasn't been used much yet as he's a developmental player finding his spots to contribute.

He has taken a total of six shots in two games, and the winger has blocked shots on defense. Still, he might see plenty of days when he floats between the active roster and the taxi squad.

"It's been good," Hagel said. "Being able to get in the first one, obviously the second one is nice. "Getting into a little bit of a rhythm and a feeling a little bit more comfortable, especially around the guys."

Hagel played one game last season on the eve of the COVID-19 pause, robbing him of a potential audition to finish out the schedule.

"Definitely frustrating, but there's not much I could've done or anyone could've done," he said. "I just had to wait it out and finally got my opportunity. And I've just got to run with it."

He's far from the only young face among the forwards group but he welcomes the competition.

"I've just got to stick to my game and what makes me really good," he said. "It's not too much pressure. For myself, it's just consistency, keep playing and working hard every single night and I think I'll be rewarded for it."

Coach Jeremy Colliton has liked Hagel's skating, energy and play away from the puck.

"His forechecking game, his back pressure has been outstanding," Colliton said. "He's shown up on clips we've shown to the team. He's shown up multiple times as a guy doing really good things and creating turnovers and offensive chances and zone time."

Though, as Colliton noted, it's only two games.

"The challenge typically for young guys is to sustain it over a longer period of time," he said. "We're going to try to help him through that."

Defenseman Connor Murphy is learning to lead with his voice.

Minnesota Wild left wing Jason Zucker and Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Connor Murphy battle in the second period Sunday, Dec. 15, 2019 at the United Center.

Key stats: A goal and two assists; averaging 22:28 ice time and no penalty minutes.

The Hawks have made just five even-strength goals through five games, and the defenseman Connor Murphy has one of them. But he's trying to become more of a facilitator in that department.

"In the offseason I did work a lot the last couple of years we've had (consultant) Brian Keane here, (and) we do what we call 'skills on the ice,'" Murphy said. "It covers a lot of different things based on your position. My goal is to work on passing, to have cleaner exits, whether it's something as simple as passing the puck flat and putting it on your forward's tape up the middle of the ice or skate and draw guys to you to make a play to absorb pressure."

Murphy said it makes a big difference in his game.

For teams that forecheck well, "you have to make sure you're able to read pressure, use your partner and center and then wing options to be able to exit and make clean plays," he said.

Part of that development with a partner is ensuring you're making common reads. And sometimes if you're paired with a young defenseman, that's not going to happen consistently.

Murphy was named one of the team's alternate captains this season but he prefers leading through example.

"However, maybe there are times when you try to read the day or read the room in some ways, if certain guys are maybe feeling like you need to communicate a little more," he said. "Maybe there's more day-to-day, just trying to hold yourself to being aware of situations on the team.

"But I wouldn't say that there's much that you try to change. That's when it can start affecting your game, too, when you're worried so much about how you're behaving differently."

But if something just needs to be said among the players, does wearing the "A" on your sweater burden you with being more vocal?

"I don't know it's necessarily having the 'A,' but a younger team in general, I think it would," Murphy said. "Just the guys we do have, if we've been on a team a few years, been around a little bit, that it's kind of expected to maybe speak up at certain times to try to, I guess, to echo things that are being said around the room, to provide clarity and motivation for each other.

"That's just a part of anyone that's been around for a few years."

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1200218 Chicago Blackhawks

Absences of Jonathan Toews, Kirby Dach giving Dylan Strome chance to prove he belongs at center



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 24, 2021

By Ben Pope

Jan 23, 2021, 2:41pm CST

Injured center Kirby Dach has hung around the Blackhawks frequently this month, even though he likely won't play this season after having surgery to repair a fractured right wrist.

The Hawks were able to give him a late present for his birthday Thursday with their victory Friday against the Red Wings. Before the game, forward Dylan Strome tried to give Dach a birthday shout-out, too. There was just one problem.

"Kirby's been around the room and been positive and talking," Strome said. "Big birthday yesterday. I think he turned 19. I know he had a little pep in his step, and he was pretty happy with that."

The problem is, Dach actually turned 20.

Fortunately for Strome, the mistake can be forgiven. He has had other things on his mind, including helping the Hawks dig out of their early-season hole and hoping to seize an unexpected opportunity to prove he belongs at center.

With Dach and captain Jonathan Toews — who probably would have been the Hawks' top two centers this season — both out for the long term, Strome has been moved back to his natural position after spending some of last season on the wing.

"If we had Toews and Kirby here, I'd say there's a pretty good chance [Strome] may be playing the wing," coach Jeremy Colliton said Friday. "But that's something, of course, you talk to him about, and he was prepared to come in here and play wing. [It] allows him to play further up the lineup. But, obviously, now he has the opportunity to play center. He's played well."

Most centers have an easier time playing wing than vice versa, but that's not the case for Strome, who struggled mightily with the switch last season. He averaged 2.63 points per 60 minutes at center and 1.46 points per 60 minutes at wing. Plus, the Hawks outscored opponents 28-15 with Strome at center but were outscored 12-8 with him at wing.

"Last year was probably the longest stretch in my life that I played wing, and it's something to get used to," Strome said. "You're still in the NHL with great players and great linemates, so you have to adjust whenever you have to. But everyone has a position where they feel comfortable in, and [center] is obviously mine."

Back in the middle between Dominik Kubalik and Philipp Kurashev through the first five games of 2021, Strome has been solid. He has four points, including primary assists to set up goals Friday by Patrick Kane and Calvin de Haan, and has controlled possession decently well, ranking seventh on the team with a 52.6% on-ice scoring-chance ratio (30 for, 27 against).

Even his faceoff performance, long a weakness in his résumé at center, has improved. His winning percentage is up from 47.7% last season to 55.6% this season, albeit in a very small sample size.

"Gaining that confidence from Jeremy is huge," Strome said. "He can trust me to put me out for faceoffs, whether it's in the 'D' zone or 'O' zone, and get an extra shift here or there. If you can win those faceoffs and be reliable in your own zone, then you'll get that extra ice time and be out there at key situations. That's what every player wants."

Still, Strome's chances to stick at center remain murky. Although Toews' future is up in the air — his absence from player introductions Friday, while other injured players such as Alex Nylander and Brent Seabrook were present, was a worrisome sign — he might come back at some point. Dach, meanwhile, will be an integral part of the Hawks' 2021-22 plans.

And, more imminently, recently signed center Carl Soderberg has begun practicing with the Hawks and could displace someone from the lineup soon.

For now, however, Strome is making the most of the Hawks' needs at his favorite position.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200219 Chicago Blackhawks

Lankinen makes most of first two opportunities in net for Blackhawks

John Dietz

1/23/2021 3:40 PM

From the first time we heard Kevin Lankinen it was clear the Blackhawks goalie could talk the talk.

The Finn just oozes confidence, and it comes across without a hint of cockiness.

Well, now -- just two games into his NHL career -- we're also finding out that Lankinen can walk the walk.

Awarded a second straight start by coach Jeremy Colliton, Lankinen turned away 30 shots during a 4-1 victory over Detroit at the United Center on Friday. Nine came on the penalty kill, which was a perfect 5-for-5 after an abysmal start to the season.

Afterward, Lankinen admitted the home opener "was a big thing" and a dream come true.

"I always wanted to play here," said Lankinen, who lost his NHL debut 5-4 in overtime at Florida on Tuesday. "I've seen the crowd. I've seen all the history that goes in this building. I've been around a couple years learning, learning to know the boys, (getting) to know the organization. They've done a really good job of bringing me in and making me feel comfortable."

"This night has been on my mind for a long time."

The season is just five games old and this was just one solid performance against the underwhelming Red Wings, so it's absurd to suggest Lankinen has suddenly vaulted ahead of Malcolm Subban and Collin Delia. All three netminders will continue to get their chances over the next 51 games.

Despite the circumstances, Lankinen -- who signed a two-year deal in April -- feels no more pressure than he normally would when he steps between the pipes.

"There's always pressure playing goalie," he said. "That's just part of the position, part of the job. My pressure comes from inside because I want to play well. I want to be on top of my game."

"That's where the pressure comes from."

Impressive, isn't it?

Equally impressive was Lankinen's performance in the first period when Detroit easily could have taken an early lead.

Just 30 seconds into the game Lankinen exploded to his left and managed to deflect a Tyler Bertuzzi one-timer with his glove. Two minutes later, he swallowed up a shot by Bobby Ryan. Then came a tricky save off a shot that was redirected from the point. Lankinen quickly covered that puck and another one a few minutes later on Detroit's sixth shot.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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As impressive as the saves were, so was Lankinen's ability to limit second chances by freezing the puck or deflecting it out of harm's way.

Detroit's only goal Friday came on a nifty move by Dylan Larkin with 7:38 left in the game.

It ruined the shutout, but it definitely didn't dampen Lankinen's mood.

"I would lie if I said (the shutout) didn't cross my mind. It always does," said Lankinen, who spent four seasons in the Finnish Elite League and most of the last two in the AHL with Rockford. "But most importantly I didn't think about the score. I just wanted to win. I wanted to win so bad.

"I came in here prior to the game and prepared myself to win whatever it takes. Because I think today we can turn this thing over, get a fresh start at home.

"This can be a start of something good."

For the Hawks. And, quite possibly, for Lankinen.

"He's got a quiet confidence to him that you love to see in a goaltender," said coach Jeremy Colliton. "He plays under control, but he is athletic as well.

"Each time he goes up a level, there's always going to be a bit of an adjustment to getting comfortable. But he seems to feel like he belongs and that's sometimes half the battle for young guys trying to break through."

Slap shots:

The Hawks (1-3-1) host Detroit on Sunday, with puck drop at 11:30 a.m. After that, they'll play at Nashville on Tuesday and Wednesday, then return home to play Columbus on Friday and Sunday, January 31. ... The Hawks' power play (7-for-17, 41.2 percent) ranks second through Friday's games. Toronto is No. 1 at 44.4 percent. ... Patrick Kane has points in four straight games (3G, 2A).

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200220 Chicago Blackhawks

10 observations: Blackhawks earn first win of season

BY CHARLIE ROUMELIOTIS

The Blackhawks knocked off the Detroit Red Wings 4-1 on Friday at the United Center to pick up their first win of the season.

Here are 10 observations from the victory:

1. Head coach Jeremy Colliton rolled with the same lineup as Tuesday against Florida. Kevin Lankinen started in goal and Brandon Hagel stayed in for Matthew Highmore. Carl Soderberg, who was moved to the active roster, did not make his season debut but likely will soon.
2. This was the best performance of the season by any of the three goaltenders, no question. Lankinen stopped the first 24 shots he faced and finished with 30 saves on 31 shots for a save percentage of .968. Dylan Larkin broke his shutout bid with 7:38 left in the third period.
3. The Blackhawks scored at least one power-play goal for the fifth straight game, which is the third-longest streak to open a season in franchise history. The second-longest is six (1965-66) and the longest is 11 (1990-91). The 1993-94 Blackhawks also started the season with a five-game power-play goal streak.
4. Patrick Kane was the one who scored the first power-play goal, which was also the first goal of the game. It was the first time this season that

the Blackhawks scored first. They had fallen behind 2-0 in each of their first four contests and we're 0-3-1 in that span.

5. The second line of Dominik Kubalik, Philipp Kurashev and Dylan Strome was really good in the first period. The trio was on the ice for eight shot attempts for and one against and six scoring chances for and zero against, according to Natural Stat Trick. The only thing they didn't do was score.

6. Speaking of Strome, he was on the ice for three Blackhawks goals and recorded the primary assist on the first two. He now has four points (one goal, three assists) in five games.

7. The Blackhawks' penalty kill had been a problem in the first four games. They had previously given up five goals on 15 opportunities for a success rate of 66.7 percent, which ranked No. 28. It was much better on Friday, with the Blackhawks killing off all five penalties.

8. Calvin de Haan scored his first goal of the season with a blast from 54-feet out that beat Red Wings goaltender Thomas Greiss to make it 2-0. Ian Mitchell recorded his first career NHL point on the play after registering a secondary assist and it was a terrific shift by the 22-year-old rookie, who looped around Kane, fed it to Strome then went straight to the net. He kept his legs moving and that's a play that will certainly get highlighted by the coaching staff when they rewatch the tape.

9. DeBrincat was all over the scoresheet. He had two assists, seven shot attempts (four on goal), two hits, two blocked shots, two takeaways, a game-high eight controlled entries and 11 controlled exits in 19:21 of ice time, according to Sportlogiq.

10. Andrew Shaw scored a goal in the Blackhawks' home opener for the second straight season. But, more notably, it was his first goal since Nov. 7, 2019, after missing the second half of last season with a concussion. It's good to see him back and feeling like himself again.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 01.24.2021

1200333 Websites

The Athletic / NWHL Power Rankings for 2021: Who will win the Isobel Cup?

By Hailey Salvian

Jan 23, 2021

The National Women's Hockey League will play its 2021 season in a bubble in Lake Placid, New York, culminating with the championship game on Feb. 5.

With all the games at Herb Brooks Arena, we wanted to find out how the six teams stack up going into the season.

So with insights from NWHL writers Marisa Ingemi, Leighann Strollo, Anne Tokarski, and league color commentator Alexis Pearson, we dive into what to expect from each team.

One thing the panel was clear on: The Boston Pride are the team to beat, with 80 percent picking them as the champion. As for the MVP pick, the Pride's McKenna Brand beat out teammates Jillian Dempsey and Lovisa Selander, and the Riveters' Madison Packer.

Now for how the panel ranked the teams.

1. Boston Pride

The Boston Pride were undoubtedly the best team in the NWHL last season. With a 23-1-0 record, they were the No. 1 ranked team, and



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were only one win away from being crowned Isobel Cup Champions before the final was postponed, and later canceled.

Their dominant core is, for the most part, back, including league scoring leader Jillian Dempsey, McKenna Brand, reigning defender of the year Kaleigh Fratkin and the 2019-20 goalie of the year Lovisa Selander. Not to mention they have a great coach in former NHLer Paul Mara back behind the bench.

There's a ton of star power up and down the lineup. And they should be extremely motivated to win after coming so close last season.

Strollo: "After a 23-1 season and retaining the bulk of their core, I expect Boston to bring the heat and be at the top of their game just like they were last year. They have an insanely good goaltending pair that they can and should trust in the crease no matter what, paired with captain Jillian Dempsey and her goals record, along with the huge offensive talent from McKenna Brand and No. 1 draft pick, rookie Sammy Davis. They are going to be just as hard, if not harder to beat than last season."

Tokarski: "The Pride are getting ready to have another absolutely ridiculous season. They returned so many of their key rookies from last season, like Christina Putigna and Tori Sullivan, in addition to veterans like Dempsey, Kaleigh Fratkin, and even third-year McKenna Brand. On top of that, they have an incredible crop of rookies coming in that will fortify any gaps left by their offense and by their defense, plus the return of two incredibly talented goalies in Lovisa Selander and Victoria Hanson. I would not be at all surprised to see the Pride back in the Isobel Cup Final, nor would I be at all surprised to see them take Izzy home."

Pearson: "A lot of top returning players with unfinished business after last season. I don't see any reason why they don't finish as one of the top teams in the league."

Ingemi: "Their depth is elite. The top line is the best in the game, and the second and third might be, well, the second and third best."

2. Minnesota Whitecaps

The Whitecaps were the only team to beat the Pride in 2019-20, and were set for what should have been a competitive final before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most of their core is returning and should once again prove to be a thorn in Boston's side this season.

Ingemi: "Lots has been made of the Pride revenge tour but the Whitecaps are in the same boat, perhaps with more motivation being overshadowed."

Tokarski: "The Whitecaps have been one of the quieter teams in the league this offseason in terms of bringing in new players. Much of their roster is returning from last season, with a few switches from the Beauts (Corinne Buie and Sara Bustad). That being said, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The Whitecaps made it to the Isobel Cup Final last year on the backs of some really talented players like Allie Thunstrom and Jonna Curtis, and I wouldn't be surprised to see them make the Final again with the added firepower of Haley Mack and Maddie Rowe. Especially when you consider that they're returning Amanda Leveille and Allie Morse in net, I think the Whitecaps will be having a pretty solid start and finish to the season."

Strollo: Much like the Pride, the Whitecaps retained a lot of their roster from previous seasons, which gives them an edge of having tons of experience skating together as a team. They also have one of the most accomplished goalies in Amanda Leveille, and a roster chock full of All-Stars. While their wins weren't as much of a sure thing as Boston last year, I think they are still a huge heavy hitter and will fall back into their respectable second place position."

Pearson: "Their game is all about speed with many returning players who make it such. They also have unfinished business from last season and I anticipate they have a successful season."

3. Toronto Six

The Toronto Six will be an interesting case study.

The team is the first Canadian expansion team to join the league since the CWHL abruptly shuttered. The 2019-20 season will officially mark their first appearance in the league.

They have a passionate and experienced coach in Digit Murphy, and some highly skilled players who have been waiting to make their season debuts since the Toronto Six made their first signings in April. With multiple delays to the start of the season, and several lockdowns due to the pandemic in Toronto, it's been a long road to get here for the Six.

Players were able to practice in groups of 10 over the summer but were only able to start full practices as a team a few short weeks ago.

This makes them the ultimate wild-card team to watch.

Pearson: "Even though they're the new kids on the block I expect them to do well this season knowing they have an experienced coach leading them and knowing there are talented players on that roster. Don't count them out. I think they might catch some teams by surprise."

Strollo: "No one should think that just because they are an expansion team, that they won't be good immediately. Digit Murphy is behind the bench, Emily Fluke was snatched up from the Pride and Shiann Darkangelo became the first captain. These are all mic drop worthy things on their own, and we get all three of them on one team. The one issue they may face is lack of consistency in their experience playing together and hitting their groove as one cohesive unit too late, but they are definitely going to come in hot and be a team to not sleep on."

Tokarski: "The Six are a bit of a wild card, in my opinion. I think they have some really talented players that I would not be at all shocked to see become stars — especially Mikyla Grant-Mentis, who showed us what she's capable of at the end of last season in Buffalo — but I also think they've built up a quietly reliable and underrated roster. I have on good authority from a friend that their goaltending duo is going to be the one to beat in Lake Placid, even with the existing tandem of (Amanda) Leveille and (Allie) Morse. I agree that (Samantha) Ridgewell-(Elaine) Chuli is an unbelievably strong combination, and I think the team also has some really responsible defenders to fortify their back end. My biggest concern is their scoring, but like I said, I would not be surprised to see (Mikyla) Grant-Mentis shine in that aspect."

4. Metropolitan Riveters

The Riveters could be a sneaky team to watch during the bubble.

They made some key additions in the offseason and effectively restocked their roster with talent after a sub-.500 year in 2019-20. Their captain, Madison Packer, was No. 4 in the league in scoring last year and has consistently shown she can be a difference-maker.

Tokarski: "I'm a little bit biased because I'm on the Riveters beat this season, but I think the Riveters are one of the most reformed teams and have one of the best chances to make it to the Isobel Cup Final from the more "underdog" teams — that is to say, everyone except Boston and Minnesota. You have Kate Whitman Annis returning forwards like Madison Packer, Kendall Corinne, Brooke Avery, and Kate Leary, all while adding Kelly Babstock. I think those players on their own say a lot about what the Riveters are capable of this season. My only caveat is that their blue line is looking a little young, but I have faith in Kiira Dossdall-Arena and Rebecca Morse to anchor the defensive corps and help out the rookies."

Ingemi: "Love their offense and defensive depth is solid, too. Goaltending concerns me more than anything but the Rivs are a sexy pick to do well."

Pearson: "Known as the tough team in the league as far as the physicality they play with. Lost in OT in the semifinals to the Whitecaps last year and I expect them to have an average season."

Strollo: "The Riveters are always an interesting team. They manage to mesh a lot of different styles of players together and make something work. The obvious story here is the re-signing of Rebecca Russo, as well



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as trading for Kelly Babstock, who will immensely up the offensive talent. With rookies Saroya Tinker and Bridgette Prentiss on the blue line too, I'm picking the Riveters to swing their gritty talent through the competition all the way to a Cup win."

5. Connecticut Whale

The Whale have been the underdog in the league the last few seasons, and that holds true again heading into the bubble, albeit a little less so.

GM Amy Scheer made some additions this offseason and didn't lose any players to free agency. As Scheer recently told Ingemi, the Whale are "ready to compete." They're likely on the outside looking in come the final four, but they should show some improvement.

Tokarski: "This ranking pained me a bit to put out there, especially because I think Bray Ketchum Peel and Amy Scheer have done a really great job building up the Whale over this past offseason. They've brought in some exceptional players (Amanda Conway, Abbie Ives) and returned some absolute dynamos (Janine Weber, Emma Vlasic, Shannon Doyle, etc.). I think what the Whale really have going for them is the chip on their shoulder. They made it to the semifinal last year, and while they ultimately lost to the Pride, they did beat out the Beauts in the play-in round, and I think that really says something about how the Whale are willing to put up a fight and go down swinging. As much as I would love to see them in the Isobel Cup Final, I think they're more likely to miss out on the playoffs or go down swinging in the semifinals."

Ingemi: "No Melissa Samoskevich slows their role, but I still think the Whale are on a better path."

Pearson: "Finished last season on a high note, considering how they've played in recent years. I expect an early jump from this team but not enough to rank them among the top teams in the league."

Strollo: "Ever the underdog, the Whale are chasing their first Isobel Cup and maybe being on the same ice as a certain other underdog team who took it all can spark something for them. Unfortunately, I just don't think it will happen."

6. Buffalo Beauts

The Beauts might have the most question marks on their roster, as they lost two of their top scorers in the offseason — Corrine Buie and Taylor Accursi.

They are expected to fall short inside the bubble season, as 80 percent of the panel picked them last.

Ingemi: "Their defense has some upgrades and Marie-Jo Pelletier is back as possibly the best in the league. Sans Taylor Accursi, though, the offense will struggle."

Strollo: "I feel for the Beauts this year because I think the potential they had last season, and the momentum from (the) restructuring of their roster will all, unfortunately, fall short in the bubble. They've lost two huge names in Taylor Accursi and Corrine Buie due to unavailability for the tournament. Without those two, I just don't see this team beating the likes of Boston and Toronto."

Tokarski: "The Buffalo Beauts have made a lot of strides during the offseason, especially with their draft picks and acquisitions like Whitney Dove, Neve Van Pelt and Kayla Meneghin. I think GM Nate Oliver has done an incredible job when it comes to recruiting and signing players, and I think the team is looking a lot stronger on the back end. That being said, I don't know if they have quite what it takes to be the powerhouse they once were when it comes to this season in Lake Placid. I had a lot of confidence in the roster and still do, but the loss of Taylor Accursi is a huge blow and while the team is defensively very solid, I'm not sure if they have the offensive firepower to recover from Accursi's absence."

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks fail to apply hard lessons learned as early-season slide continues

Iain MacIntyre@imacSportsnet

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VANCOUVER – Suddenly and unexpectedly back in the game Saturday and with a chance to save a series and restore some confidence, the Vancouver Canucks used all the hard lessons learned from a difficult start to the season and, naturally, applied none of them.

They made the same big mistakes – mistakes you can't overcome -- to get another discouraging result, losing 5-2 to the Montreal Canadiens at Rogers Arena to fall three games below .500 for the first time since March 26, 2019.

Seven games into the National Hockey League season, it's hard to say if the Canucks are good enough to compete in the Canadian division because all they've done so far is beat themselves.

They are 2-5-0, allowed the Canadiens to light them up with 17 goals in three games, and continue to get net-negative play from some of their top skaters.

On Saturday, after impressively rallying from a 2-0 deficit on third-period goals 2.5 minutes apart from Elias Pettersson and Nils Hoglander, the Canucks again reached for the self-destruct button by allowing Brendan Gallagher to score on a two-on-one at 9:07 and Jonathan Drouin on a breakaway at 12:44.

Gallagher scored after Quinn Hughes, Vancouver's No. 1 defenceman, bounced a pass off teammate Bo Horvat for a turnover at the Canucks' blue line. Drouin scored when J.T. Miller, Vancouver's top winger and a team leader, had his lateral pass intercepted under pressure inside the Canadiens' blue line.

It was the cliché incarnate: snatching another loss from the jaws of victory.

"The third and fourth goals are just turnovers," Miller said. "On mine, I know I'm in a vulnerable spot there (and I) try to make something out of nothing. It was a good shift, too, and I give them a breakaway. Stuff like that.

"We talked a lot about raising our compete level and I felt we did that for pretty much the whole game. We're just finding a way to kind of shoot ourselves in the foot and give them too many easy ones right now. It's making it hard on our goalies, for sure. I feel like we're giving up so many breakaways and great Grade-A (scoring chances) a game."

The great Canadiens giveaway transpired less than 48 hours after Canuck coach Travis Green blistered his team for the turnovers it committed in Thursday's 7-3 embarrassment against Montreal.

Late in the second period Saturday, Pettersson fell over and lost the puck, creating a breakaway for Jesperi Kotkaniemi that Canuck goalie Braden Holtby actually stopped. Earlier, Hughes, last season's Calder Trophy runner-up, skated the puck into a turnover in the neutral zone, giving the Canadiens an outnumbered rush that ended with Jake Evans hitting the post shorthanded.

Pettersson and Hughes are the Canucks' best players, albeit still just learning at 22- and 21-years-old, respectively. Miller is in the top five on the team.



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If you made a list of the 10 best Canucks, the top half of the team, it's possible the only guys playing to expectations are captain Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser.

No team can win the way the Canucks are playing. The Canucks aren't even close to winning making the mistakes they are.

"Guys could be forcing a little bit," Green said Saturday after buying time to compose himself post-game by sending Hughes, Pettersson, Miller and Holtby to face reporters first. "We talked about it today, before the game, about taking unnecessary risks when you don't have to. I think that's part of puck management. Part of decision making is not only when you have the puck, but when you don't have it -- what position on the ice (are you) as far as stepping up and not stepping up."

Later, Green said: "I think, you know, your veteran guys need to be the ones that are composed and you make those type of (good) reads. And I think there's been times where we've pushed too hard, and it's cost us. I think tonight was just a case of we made a couple mistakes and when you turn the puck over, there's usually a scoring chance."

This is easily the most difficult stretch Pettersson and Hughes have encountered during their short NHL careers. The team started 9-3-2 last season, building enough confidence and points in the standings to survive the brief losing spells that occurred later on -- and in every season.

The year before, when Pettersson won the Calder Trophy, the Canucks started 10-6-1.

"I think we're trying to figure everything out right now," Hughes said Saturday. "I saw (on) the scoreboard at the end that we're giving up the most goals in the league right now per game. Obviously, that's not something that we aim for. Especially as defencemen, I think we've got to take onus on that and ... as a team, we've just got to be better."

Green said after Thursday's debacle that there is "immaturity" at times in the Canucks, explaining that it is as hard to win each season as it was the previous one, and suggesting his young team may not have been ready for the challenge of following up last summer's playoff breakthrough.

Pettersson's deflection goal on Saturday was his first of the season and ended his longest NHL points drought at five games.

"It was great to get one today," he said, "But I'm more concerned about us winning games. We have five losses now in seven games. A lot of stuff to work on. As for not contributing or making plays or creating scoring chances, I've got to be better with the puck and not turn it over, and just play better defence.

"We know it's a hard league, the best league in the world. We know how hard it is to win. We definitely need to work on some things to be more successful. We know what we're capable of, it's just finding it."

Soon, they hope.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' dominant win vs. Canucks another reassuring sign for GM Bergevin

Eric Engels@EricEngels

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Marc Bergevin, in one of his dapper suits, stretching out a mask with a smile so wide his face must be sore. That's what we're picturing right now as the Canadiens pack their bags and prepare to return to Montreal with 10 points banked in the standings following this season-opening, cross-country, six-game road trip.

He had a vision for this team, one he outlined before training camp got underway when he said, "We mean business, we're here to win, and we can play any way you want," and it's come to life immediately—with an easy-on-the-eyes, 5-2 win over the Vancouver Canucks on Saturday providing more vivid confirmation.

Still, the Canadiens' general manager couldn't have expected this right off the bat. No matter how excited he was about adding Jake Allen, Joel Edmundson, Alex Romanov, Tyler Toffoli, Josh Anderson, Corey Perry and Michael Frolik to a team that proved to him, in the 2020 Stanley Cup playoff bubble, it was much further along than a 24th-placed finish in the regular season would've indicated. He had to be concerned about this all coming together quickly after an abbreviated and exhibition-less camp.

Allen went 2-for-2 behind Carey Price, Edmundson gradually found his place and offered precisely what was expected of him, Romanov entered the NHL in an eye-opening, "Hello, world" kind of way, Toffoli recorded seven of his eight points on the season in three games against the Vancouver team he left to join Montreal, Anderson tripled his goal output and equaled his point total from an injury-riddled and forgettable 26-game 2019-20 campaign, and Perry made his Canadiens debut with a goal on his very first shot and offered a performance reminiscent of most of the 1,045 games he's played in this league.

Poor Frolik is still waiting for his chance, stuck behind a deep crop of forwards playing faultless hockey.

It's a full-team story so far. The Canadiens lead the NHL with 29 goals, with 16 of 20 skaters filling the net. The defence has produced more points than any other group of six in the league. The power play has cashed in on more than a quarter of its opportunities, the penalty kill has allowed six goals and scored four, and the team has ravaged its opponents at 5-on-5.

As coach Claude Julien said after Saturday's convincing win, "It's what we hoped for when we made all these acquisitions."

In his wildest dreams, he couldn't have seen it going quite this well this soon.

"We've found a better balance, and we wanted to assure ourselves that we had that," Julien said. "We have 56 games and we're playing almost every two days, so it's important to have that balance and that depth. We have it in front of the net, we have it at every position, and it showed again tonight ... These things have already revealed themselves."

Other things have been revealed, too.

When we interviewed Bergevin just before the Canadiens left for Toronto to start this road trip, he told us his team's defence was "not going to be fun to play against," and so far that's clear.

The evidence mounted from city to city, with Toronto's Auston Matthews wearing the marks of Shea Weber and Ben Chiarot crosschecks, with Edmonton super-scorers Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl combining for just one assist between them through two games, and with Vancouver star Elias Pettersson—desperate to snap a miserable early-season funk—being held to just one goal in three games.

And then there was what the Canadiens did to everybody else. It just seemed like everywhere the Leafs, Oilers and Canucks turned, those bleu, blanc et rouge sweaters were right in their faces.

"The pace hasn't changed," Bergevin told us after watching training camp. "What made us a fast team in the past is still available to our team."

That's undeniable now.



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And the variety Bergevin hoped the Canadiens would offer was featured throughout this trip, with a 55 per-cent share of the 5-on-5 shot attempts and 137 hits thrown.

Are these Canadiens tough? Like an Edmundson left hook to Tyler Myers's cheek.

Seeing the six-foot-four defenceman give up more than a couple of inches to avenge the Myers hit that concussed Joel Armia was a sign of how well him and the other new guys have integrated.

"Just awesome for a guy to step up like that," Jonathan Drouin said of Edmundson's decision to fight Myers. "When we saw (Myers) didn't get suspended, we knew it was going to happen; somebody was going to fight Myers, and just for him to step in like that—he had a great fight, too—it's just huge leadership."

Drouin loved what he saw from Perry, too.

Perry had to wait five games on the taxi squad to take Armia's place in the lineup. He's a Stanley Cup-winning, gold-medal-wearing legend of the game, and he's willing to push his ego aside for one significant reason.

"I'm here to win," he said. "I believe in this group, and you can see through the first six games and (you saw) through training camp everyone's here to win and show everybody that we mean business."

Nick Suzuki means business. He has vaulted his way to top-line centre status with at least a point in every game and with the type of defensive commitment that had Drouin refer to him on Saturday as "a mini Patrice Bergeron."

Centre Jesperi Kotkaniemi, at 20 years old, has Perry impressed.

And both Suzuki and Kotkaniemi are probably making Bergevin feel good about the fact that he didn't give either one of them up to get a six-foot-three, 218-pound, 22-year-old, established Francophone centre who reportedly wanted to join this Canadiens team but ended up being traded to Winnipeg on Saturday.

The GM doesn't have Pierre-Luc Dubois, but he's got the team he hoped he had before things got started on Jan. 13.

"All four lines are firing and we're playing solid defensively on the back end," said Edmundson. "So, it's been good. It's nice to see everybody contributing. Just gotta continue that."

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Sportsnet.ca / Analyzing what Jets get in Dubois, Blue Jackets in Laine and Roslovic

Mike Kelly

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The trade between the Winnipeg Jets and Columbus Blue Jackets features a pair of top three picks from the 2016 draft in Pierre-Luc Dubois (third overall) and Patrik Laine (second overall). Also headed to Columbus is Jack Roslovic (25th overall in 2015), who agreed to a two-year contract worth \$1.9 million annually after the trade was made. Additionally, the Jets will receive the Blue Jackets' third round pick in 2022.

For Dubois and Laine, this marks the end of their tumultuous tenures with the teams that drafted them. So, what can Jets fans expect from Dubois and Jackets fans from Laine and Roslovic? Let's take a look.

PIERRE-LUC DUBOIS

The last time we saw Dubois on the ice for the Columbus Blue Jackets, he was a disengaged player who was weak on a puck battle and late getting back to the bench on a line change. This is not who Pierre-Luc Dubois is and that's why this effort, or lack thereof, was so alarming. Dubois was clearly sending a message to his coach, John Tortorella and Torts sent one right back by benching him for the rest of the game.

In his fourth NHL season, Dubois has established himself as a top-line centre, twice flirting with 50 points while scoring 61 in the 2018-19 season.

Moreover, Dubois is a prototypical power forward who is more than capable of asserting himself physically and winning puck battles -- despite what we saw Thursday night.

Dubois' ability to win pucks back and protect it are also reflected in his offensive zone puck possession time. Dubois ranked 23rd in the NHL last season in OZ possession, averaging 31 seconds per-game, in line with Mitch Marner and Nikita Kucherov. With the puck on his stick, Dubois consistently looks to find teammates in dangerous scoring areas, ranking sixth in passes attempted into the slot and ninth in completions per-game last season.

Dubois also adds an element of speed in the Jets top-six. A dynamic skater, Dubois ranked 15th in the NHL in controlled zone entries (entering the offensive zone with possession of the puck) per-game at even-strength last season. Mark Scheifele ranked 13th and Nikolaj Ehlers, who will likely line-up alongside Dubois on the Jets' second line, ranked 11th.

Dubois brings size, speed and playmaking ability to the Winnipeg Jets, who will now feature Scheifele, Dubois and Stastny down the middle on their top-three lines.

After a revolving door of second line centres in recent years including Bryan Little, Kevin Hayes and Stastny (twice), the Jets now have a player who can more than fill the role.

However, they had to give up one of the most productive goal scorers in the league to get him.

Since entering the NHL in 2016-17, only eight players have scored more goals than Laine. Only Alex Ovechkin and David Pastrnak have scored more on the power play. The 6-foot-5, 22-year-old Laine has all the makings of a future 50-goal scorer and goals are exactly what the Blue Jackets need.

Laine is in the second season of a two-year contract that pays him \$6.75 million annually and is eligible to negotiate an extension as of March 12. His agent, Andy Scott, tells Sportsnet, "Patty alluded this morning to some great memories he had in Winnipeg. He has never been traded before so this was all new to him, but he understands it is part of the business. In our view he fits nicely into this Columbus Blue Jackets team. He's heard from his new teammates, coaches and GM already and is really excited to get down to Columbus to get going."

Laine joins a Blue Jackets team that was one of the top defensive outfits in the NHL. They also ranked 28th in scoring and 27th on the power play. This season, despite efforts to play a more offensive style of game, the Blue Jackets rank 28th in goals and are 25th on the power play.

Emil Bemstrom, Cam Atkinson and Oliver Bjorkstrand have all spent time in the left circle on the power play this season, but it's a safe bet that when Laine joins the team, he will take over in his familiar spot. In the past two seasons, Laine has scored 18 of his 23 power play goals from the left circle -- many with his patented one-timer.

Laine has fired 81 one-timers at the net on the power play in the past two seasons, only Ovechkin, Steven Stamkos and Mike Hoffman have teed-



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up more. A dangerous shooting threat on the power play from below the top of the face-off circles will be a welcome addition for a Blue Jackets team that has been known to shoot predominantly from the perimeter while looking for rebounds and deflections.

Last season, less than 50 per cent of Columbus' shot attempts on the power play came from the home plate, slot area. Only Minnesota, Philadelphia, Anaheim, Dallas and Los Angeles shot from the perimeter more.

Whether it's the power play or at even-strength, Laine is one of the deadliest goal scorers from the high slot in the NHL. He is also an underrated puck mover. Laine ranked 22nd in controlled zone entries at even-strength last season, averaging just under five per-game.

John Tortorella has always been a defence-first coach and while Laine isn't a player who will be contending for a Selke Trophy any time soon, his overall game has rounded out in recent years. The Blue Jackets need goals and that's exactly what Laine brings to the table. If he can establish himself as a 40-plus goal per-year player as he enters his mid-20s, this trade could end up looking pretty good for Columbus who also received...

A Columbus native, Roslovic joins the Blue Jackets after signing a two-year contract with the team. Roslovic has played centre during his pro career and can add depth at the position for a Columbus team that has Max Domi, Alex Texier, Riley Nash and Mikko Koivu, amongst others, but no bonafide star power down the middle.

Last season, Roslovic played mostly with Blake Wheeler and Nikolaj Ehlers on a line that finished with an expected goals for percentage of 49.6 per cent. Roslovic is versatile and will likely see time on the wing and at centre. If he can establish himself as a second line centre with the Blue Jackets, that will be a win for his new team.

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Why Laine-Dubois blockbuster makes sense for Jets and Blue Jackets

Ken Wiebe@WiebesWorld

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WINNIPEG — The potential for an eventual union made so much sense that you figured it probably wasn't going to happen.

But the Winnipeg Jets and Columbus Blue Jackets appear to have decided now was actually the best time to take action with star players who preferred to be elsewhere in a blockbuster deal for both franchises.

For all of the debate involving the first and second overall picks in the 2016 NHL Draft, the discussion has now shifted squarely to the second and third picks -- who will forever be linked, thanks to Saturday's trade.

With Patrik Laine and 2015 first-rounder Jack Roslovic departing in the trade for Pierre-Luc Dubois, this is a move that could have serious ramifications around the NHL in terms of potentially shifting the balance of power.

The Jets are losing a proven sniper in Laine and a versatile forward in Roslovic, who was looking for a bigger role.

That is a significant price to pay, but it's also the cost of doing business when trying to acquire one of the most valued commodities in the NHL -- a six-foot-three, 218-pound pivot with plenty of offence in his game.

In bringing in Dubois, the Jets are adding a special talent who can provide an incredible one-two punch down the middle with Mark Scheifele.

During three-plus seasons with the Blue Jackets, Dubois has 66 goals and 159 points in 239 games, adding eight goals and 19 points in 26 playoff contests.

No, he's not as prolific as Laine, but Dubois had 42 goals and 99 points in his second season in the QMJHL and projects to be a guy that can eclipse 30 goals at the NHL level and provide some serious matchup challenges for the opposition.

Laine arrived on the scene in June of 2016, with his refreshing manner and lightning-quick release. He immediately became a fan favourite, filling the back of the net with great frequency while providing quotes at an equally rapid rate.

Laine wasn't afraid to be self-deprecating and he held himself to a high standard. When things got difficult, he dug in.

Laine immediately changed the dynamic of the Jets franchise, igniting memories of another Finnish superstar who made a remarkable impact before making an early departure in what became a Hall of Fame career. It didn't matter that Laine and Teemu Selanne didn't play anything close to the same style: they both loved Winnipeg and Manitobans loved them right back.

People across the province are just a bit surprised that those "Winnipeg is Good" t-shirts -- that were a result of a famous Laine quote -- have quickly become a collector's item.

Laine is a player that once scored five goals in a single game against the St. Louis Blues in November of 2018. As a second-year NHLer, he scored 44 goals and recorded 70 points.

In his "down" season, Laine still finished with 30 goals, which is a reason to celebrate for most players. This isn't to say some of the criticism wasn't warranted.

That 30-goal campaign featured 18 goals scored in a single month for Laine, which is a remarkable achievement. It also meant he scored only 12 goals in the remainder of the season and the dry spells were more prevalent than they had been previously.

One has to wonder what might have happened if the Jets had made Laine an offer of something in the neighbourhood of eight years for \$8 million dollars after that sensational sophomore season.

Instead, Laine appeared to grow frustrated by playing mostly on the second line, even if he was the featured option on the power play.

When Laine's agents made it known publicly this off-season that a change of scenery would be beneficial for both parties, you got the sense a potentially messy breakup was the most likely outcome.

From a historical perspective, you also realized that a player requesting a trade has rarely led directly to a trade (see: Evander Kane and Jacob Trouba for points of reference).

Of course, the initial Zoom call Laine had with reporters at the start of camp had a few awkward moments within it. He was given several opportunities to dismiss the notion he wanted out and chose not to do so, though he went out of his way to declare he would not become a distraction.

Laine stayed true to his words, even if the trade happened quicker than most people anticipated.

Laine's final game in a Jets uniform -- the 4-3 overtime win over the Calgary Flames that saw him score twice (including the overtime game-winner) and set up another -- was a fitting snapshot of the player he has blossomed into.



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On display was a budding power forward who relishes big moments and someone who wasn't afraid to put in the necessary work to round out his game.

Laine also showed his investment level by quickly coming to the aid of linemate Kyle Connor and emerging from the scrum with some blood on his face after an invitation to tangle with Flames forward Matthew Tkachuk.

How things got so complicated in this marriage still remains a bit of a mystery and it will be interesting to see how forthcoming Laine is going to be when he's ready to discuss the matter.

For now, Laine is turning the page and hoping to heal from the unspecified upper-body injury that kept him out of the past three games and figures to sideline him for several more.

He's the centrepiece of the biggest trade Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff has made since sending Kane and Zach Bogosian to the Buffalo Sabres in 2015.

Strangely enough, the pick acquired by the Jets to select Roslovic 25th overall was the final link for either organization to that deal.

Roslovic's departure is a classic case of a player who felt his path to the top-six was blocked by the other talented forwards on the Jets' roster.

Despite coming off career-highs of 12 goals and 29 points, Roslovic figured to be slotted in on the third line with Adam Lowry and Andrew Copp to start the season.

The combination of being unhappy with his place on the depth chart and needing a new contract as a restricted free agent meant that Roslovic remained home in Ohio as the season began.

Ironically, because of Laine's early-season injury, Roslovic probably would have been reunited with frequent Manitoba Moose linemate Kyle Connor in Game 2. That point is now moot, as Roslovic is joining Laine in fresh-start territory.

Laine arrives in Columbus as a guy who could quickly grow into the face of the franchise, while Roslovic gets to play for his hometown team -- a feel-good story as a product of the Ohio Blue Jackets AAA hockey program.

As for Dubois, the final chapter of his Blue Jackets career is one he'd quickly like to move past.

The breaking point in the relationship featured Dubois stapled to the bench for the final two periods on Thursday after what can only be described as a lackadaisical shift that drew the ire of Blue Jackets head coach John Tortorella.

Effort level isn't a concern when it comes to Dubois, who is coming off an outstanding playoff that saw him elevate his play against the likes of Auston Matthews and John Tavares in the qualifying round series that sent the Maple Leafs packing.

Because of quarantine rules, Dubois won't be able to jump into the Jets lineup for at least 14 days. Once he arrives, the Jets will likely put him beside Nikolaj Ehlers on what figures to be a potent second line with either veteran Paul Stastny or the Swiss Army Knife Copp.

Whereas Laine's bridge contract (which carries a salary cap hit of \$6.75 million and a salary of \$7.5 million) is slated to expire at the end of this season, the Jets get a bit more cost certainty -- and some immediate savings in the short term -- with Dubois.

Although he signed the deal with the full expectation he would be moved, Dubois is under contract for the next two seasons at \$5 million. He will be a restricted free agent with arbitration rights at the end of it and the initial belief is that the long-term price for both he and Laine should be similar.

That comes with one caveat -- all signs pointed to Laine not being willing to commit over the long term with the Jets.

Will it be any different for Dubois when he reaches that point? The Jets will cross that bridge when they get there, though the chances of keeping him around for the long haul are already higher than they would have been for his predecessor.

Plus, the benefit of having Duobis' father Eric in the organization as an assistant coach of the AHL's Manitoba Moose cannot be overlooked.

There is no doubt that Dubois has some big skates to fill, but you can be sure he's happy to start the next chapter of his career after enduring a public breakup of his own.

Winning a trade involving Laine was always going to be a difficult proposition for Cheveldayoff, but by bringing in a high-end player like Dubois at a premium position, the Jets remain in a position where they figure to remain competitive in the North Division.

Over the course of time, it will be the players at the core of this move that will ultimately determine who actually wins the deal.

Right now, both sides are working to strike a balance between being happy a resolution has arrived, while also feeling some disappointment over the departure of players who were expected to be part of the fabric of the respective organizations for years to come.

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' TJ Brodie returns to Calgary with new team, familiar role

Eric Francis@EricFrancis

January 23, 2021, 4:34 PM

It's not the sort of homecoming Calgary Flames fans have been ruminating over.

TJ Brodie's first game back in Calgary as a Leaf on Sunday afternoon will move the needle about as much as one of his interviews.

The Flames will most certainly recognize his decade of service with a Jumbotron salute all eight media types in attendance will see, which is sure to be punctuated by stick taps from his former teammates.

They certainly liked the 30-year-old defenceman, who went about his business as quietly as anyone in Flames history.

Rarely interviewed -- he liked it that way -- the soft-spoken Brodie was a fourth-round draft pick the Flames brought along slowly to become a dependable, two-way defenceman whose skating ability made him a top-pairing candidate for the bulk of his last six years here.

To no one's surprise, Brodie received very little credit for helping Mark Giordano win the Norris Trophy two years ago when he did well to limit the glaring defensive lapses that made him the fans' top whipping boy for several seasons.

The debate over the summer, after Brodie signed a four-year, \$20-million deal with the Leafs, was whether the man signed to replace him, Chris Tanev, will ultimately be an upgrade.

Three games in for the Flames, it's impossible to quantify.

Four years down the road it may still be a fool's errand to dissect, as the two play significantly different games and will be tasked with different roles.



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Brodie's elite skating makes him eligible to play in almost every situation, including the role he was brought to Toronto to play, as a steadying influence for budding superstar Morgan Rielly.

Tanev is in Calgary to focus more on defence and penalty killing, as a second-pairing mainstay alongside 23-year-old Noah Hanifin.

So far so good, in both cases.

Brodie has three assists in six games, which includes a helper on Toronto's first power play goal Friday, when he made a solid play to keep the puck in the zone before offering up one of his deceptive point passes that ultimately led to Adam Brooks' first NHL strike.

The 31-year-old Tanev has one helper in three outings, which came on opening night when he made an impressive pinch that led to an Elias Lindholm goal. It made good on Giordano's suggestions through camp that Tanev will surprise many with his offensive upside.

Tanev's eight blocked shots in Game 2 made a sizable early impression on fans who now come to expect the selfless 31-year-old to be a rock-solid penalty killer.

Again, the sample size is small given the Flames have only played half the games the Leafs have and have had nothing to do but practice and rest since their last game Monday.

A big part of the impact Brodie's departure is having on the Flames is that it prompted the club to thrust 24-year-old Rasmus Andersson onto the top pair alongside Giordano, where he has acquitted himself well so far.

Andersson's bigger impact is expected to come on the power play where he has one of his three points, while using his formidable shot, poise and smarts to quarterback the team's top unit, which has opened the season at a red-hot 37.5 per cent clip.

Andersson tops all Flames defenders in ice time, Brodie sits second on the Leafs and Tanev has the Flames sitting fourth in penalty kill with a 91.7 per cent efficiency rate.

So far, both teams have every reason to be happy with their new situations.

"Totally different players but both really effective at what they do," said Flames coach Geoff Ward when asked for his take on Tanev replacing Brodie.

"Both fit into our top four extremely well. When TJ was here he played a lot with Gio and they were a really good tandem. We really like what Chris brings to our lineup in terms of playing with younger players. Him and Hani are building nice chemistry. As Chris gets more comfortable I'm sure he's going to expand his role. Toronto got better when they signed TJ. Even though he was quiet he was an important part of our leadership group. He was a big part of our team and if you watch Toronto now he's a big part of what they do."

With the Leafs' defensive depth lacking for many years, the Brodie signing made so much sense.

"He's just been a really steady, consistent, low maintenance guy," said Toronto coach Sheldon Keefe, echoing the words of every Calgary coach who has worked with Brodie.

"Like every player there's an adjustment period, but he looks really comfortable. When I talk about our team not getting rattled or fazed by anything that might have occurred in any of our games, he epitomizes that. He makes a mistake, or the team makes a mistake, it doesn't rattle him -- he just goes out and plays his next shift. That's really valuable for a defenceman, in particular."

Brodie said after Friday's win he hadn't spent any time thinking about his return to Calgary, nor had he been in touch with any teammates since this frantic season started.

"It will be good to face off with them," said Brodie, who said he's playing a similar role to the one he played in Calgary. "I didn't really think about (returning) at all. My main focus was here and getting to know the guys and trying to know the systems and trying to create chemistry here."

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens notebook: Myers decision highlights flaw in suspension process

Eric Engels@EricEngels

January 23, 2021, 2:02 PM

MONTREAL -- Here's a text I received from a current player — not a Montreal Canadien — who felt Tyler Myers's hit, which concussed Joel Armia with 2:28 remaining in Thursday's 7-3 Canucks loss, was worthy of a suspension from the NHL's Department of Player Safety: "The hit was unnecessary. Myers blindsided him. Armia was vulnerable. Even if he didn't hit him in the head, he should get a game or two."

The DoPS announced late on Friday Myers wasn't getting any games. Not even a fine.

I know that outrages the Canadiens — and their fans, many of whom flooded my Twitter mentions over the last 24 hours to express as much, some of them in the most colourful language imaginable and most of them with the same gripe as this player.

Canadiens coach Claude Julien pled his case for a suspension after Thursday's game and, in doing so, pre-emptively outlined the other reason all these people didn't end up liking the decision to not suspend Myers.

"I didn't like the hit—especially with 2:28 to go in a 6-3 game," Julien said.

I don't blame him, or anyone else, for feeling this way. It's garbage-time in the second game of a three-game series between the Canucks and his Canadiens, and as the player who texted me Friday put it, "the hit was unnecessary."

I agree on that.

But everyone upset about it needs to realize that their anger should be directed at the way the rules are written, not how they're applied by the DoPS, which decides whether or not a player should be suspended purely on legality of a play and nothing else. All the context — the situation of the game and the hit coming on an unsuspecting player from the "blindside," doesn't get factored in until the DoPS decides the hit violated a rule. A judge can't sentence someone for a crime they haven't been convicted of, and this is just like that.

In this case, the rule the DoPS was looking at to determine whether supplementary discipline was warranted was Rule 48, which stipulates that "a hit resulting in contact with an opponent's head where the head was the main point of contact and such contact to the head was avoidable is not permitted."

The DoPS provides in its video explanation replay angles that clearly show that Myers first made contact with Armia's chest and body, and that the head is not the main point of contact. And even though the DoPS acknowledges there was "head contact on the hit," it explains in detail how it arrived at the conclusion the head is not the main point of contact.



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"On most plays where the head is the main point of contact, we see the head moving independently in the same direction as the player's body," the DoPS video states. "That head snap, as we have previously described it, is an excellent indicator that the head has absorbed more force than the rest of the body."

But the DoPS judges that Armia's head isn't the main point of contact because a) they can see it's his chest in the video and b) because his head doesn't snap back independently in the same direction as his body.

Unlike this hit from Vegas's Ryan Reaves on Vancouver's Tyler Motte, which clearly is an illegal check to the head with the head as the main point of contact and the head snapping back independently to offer confirmation of the fact:

One last thing on the Myers-Armia hit: When I watched it in real-time and then again on one of the replay angles, I felt Myers unnecessarily thrust upwards to deliver the hit. But the DoPS, armed with several other angles to review from, explains why it judged that wasn't the case.

"On almost every body check, the player's natural hitting motion involves some measure of upward momentum into the hit, which is allowable provided it is not excessive," the DoPS says before finally concluding, "This is a legal, full body check with an unfortunate end result."

What's unfortunate to me, aside from Armia being concussed, is that the DoPS doesn't have the leeway to venture into the gray zone of all the context around this hit to make its decision on whether or not it's a suspension-worthy offence. Because it's patently obvious, based on all that context, that it's a dirty play and the exact type of play the league should want to remove from the game — even if they want to keep legal body checks in the game.

But with the rules being what they are, Armia being unsuspecting, Myers "blindsiding" him and this happening under the game-circumstances outlined above isn't considered by the DoPS to determine the legality of the hit. Again, the DoPS goes by the book — black and white, no gray — and none of this stuff is written in the book.

Where all that stuff comes into play is if and when the DoPS decides an illegal check to the head was made. Once the distinction is made that a rule has been broken, the game circumstances, the predatory nature of the hit, Armia's vulnerability, the injury caused and the offender's suspension history all factor into how severe the punishment should be.

Don't like the process? Change the rules.

But the tweets and rants admonishing George Parros and all the others who work under his supervision on the disciplinary committee are misplaced here. Parros and co. are the judge in this scenario, and judges don't lock people up unless they've been charged and found guilty of breaking the law.

If you want to change the law, petition the general managers and the NHL's competition committee to amend the rules and give the DoPS more leeway to apply them while taking more than just the letter of the law into consideration.

You have to think that with Myers in Vancouver's lineup for Game 3 with Montreal Saturday, the potential for fireworks is sky high.

"Before that incident even happened, we talked about it being a possibility that when you play teams consecutively, two-three games in a row, there's going to be bad blood that's going to happen along the way," said Julien on Friday. "This is not the first, and it won't be the last of these kind of things happening, and it's up to each team to deal with it the way they see fit. Go ahead and do what you have to do."

Enter Corey Perry.

The six-foot-three menace has been waiting on Montreal's taxi squad for a chance to play, and he's coming in for Armia for the type of game he's made for.

Not that Perry has to address things with Myers. They have Josh Anderson, Joel Edmundson, Ben Chiarot and Shea Weber, who can all fight, if it comes down to that.

Beyond fighting, expect the Canadiens to keep up the physical game they've displayed so far, perhaps even ratchet it up a level.

But also keep in mind that the Canadiens play the Canucks six more times after Saturday's game, including twice in Montreal in early February. So, there's no guarantee of anything blowing up right away.

As Julien noted, "For us, the most important thing (Saturday) is we need to win a hockey game. That's what we want to do here. So, what the league decided we can't control. We control how we perform (Saturday) and that's all we can focus on right now."

What Canadiens want to do better is...

Tighten up defensively.

I asked Julien to expand on that Friday.

"Sometimes it's not so much about stopping the plays or killing the plays, but even coming out of our own end and some better support and all that stuff," the coach replied. "The other thing, too, is we can do a better job of collapsing. We've given some quality chances from the slot area and I think our forwards can do a better job here being aware that sometimes we get caught watching the Ds to worry about the back end and not taking care of what we call 'the House Area.'"

"That's an adjustment there with a lot of new players that we have to get them to focus on a bit better."

Even without Alex Edler and Travis Hamonic, and for a team depending on very inexperienced defencemen, you have to know the Canucks are going to play a much tighter game to start reversing their 2-4-0 start to the season.

Especially when coach Travis Green said this after Thursday's blowout loss:

"We weren't just giving up scoring chances, we were giving up goals. We gift-wrapped probably four or five goals. It wasn't a game where we were hemmed in our zone... it was just giving up breakaways. In this league, if you give up chances that are gifts, you're going to lose bad."

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It takes a lot of energy to launch a new franchise in the middle of a pandemic. Fortunately, energy is something Toronto Six head coach and president Digit Murphy has in near-unlimited supply.

Staff Report

Digit Murphy needs a Toronto Six forward to fill in on defence for one drill. When Breanne Wilson-Bennett silently volunteers by gliding from the blue line, where a pack of players are lingering, toward the net, Murphy's foghorn-level reaction reverberates around the rink: "YES!"

As they practice just north of the city on a mid-January Tuesday, the women are on the precipice of finally seeing game action during this season hijacked by COVID-19. Their eagerness shows. The Six whip around the ice in black, yellow, grey and blue streaks, their different sweaters rippling underneath chugging arms like flags in strong wind. Playing an attacking role in front of the goalie means your lower back is subject to the same sort of cross-check tenderizing you'd expect during a



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real contest. When two players inadvertently collide, sending one spilling to the ice, Murphy can't resist: "Bodies are flyin'!" she yells.

Even if the National Women's Hockey League's two-week bubble tournament wasn't just around the corner, Murphy would be running the show with the same ardour. It's as if the most juiced-up spin class instructor imaginable has put on an all-black track suit, grabbed a right-handed stick that looks half-a-foot too long for her and hit the ice. Four months into these practices, everyone's used to her energy and knows the beats. The players stand in place while Murphy describes how she wants them to defend. Her voice sounds strained from constant elevation, but it never breaks. Her head moves side-to-side in slow, exaggerated fashion as she cues her charges to finish her sentence: "Head. On. A..." "Swivel," they answer, before she punctuates the point: "Swivel! Swivel! SWIVEL!"

Practice is serious and joyful all at once. Praise is shouted, but critiques from Murphy come in close-up, quieter talks. Playful headlocks dot downtime between drills and after one huddle breaks, Murphy pushes away with her captain Shiann Darkangelo. The coach is holding her stick upside down and appears to be treating the blade as a microphone. Whatever Murphy is doing, Darkangelo is visibly delighted. Then the whistle blows and the whirring starts again.

Murphy's off-ice pace is just as frenetic. In her role as Six president and coach, she has a hand in everything from marketing to making sure every pertinent point is in the team newsletter. She's also a capable and willing carnival barker, promoting the women's game and spreading her message of female empowerment through the press she does.

Additionally, there's game film to devour and episodes of her "Anyone Can Lead" Instagram series to record. And all that has to happen outside the time Murphy carves out for her partner, Aronda, and the six grown children in their family. "I was talking to one of my friends and she's like, 'Dig, you just have an intense career,'" Murphy says. "I'm like, 'Right?' She's like, 'Good on you, because not many people could deal with the stuff you've dealt with in your life.' I've been wired for it."

A 59-year-old who's been blazing a trail in the women's game for most of her life, Murphy has an unshakable core that propels her forward at one speed. "I call her 'The Tornado' for a reason," says longtime friend and former coaching foe Katey Stone. "I love her to death, but she's got so much energy. It's awesome, but it's crazy. It's crazy." Being a force of nature is a good thing — maybe even a necessity — when you're launching an expansion team in a re-modeled league against the backdrop of both a pandemic and the continuing rift in North American women's professional hockey. And true to form, Murphy is thriving in the chaos of an upside down world, meeting challenges the only way she ever has: "I deal with things head on and people either love me or hate me," she says. "Of course I care if people hate me, because no one wants to be hated, but I can't be any other way."

Last year was always going to be one of big change for Lindsay Eastwood. The Ottawa native wrapped up a four-year career at Syracuse University in the spring, having spent the past two seasons as Orange captain. Continuing on in hockey meant Eastwood would either play for an NWHL club or join the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association. The PWHPA formed in the spring of 2019, after the Canadian Women's Hockey League folded earlier that year. The organization is populated with high-profile stars from the women's game whose goal is to gain the kind of financial backing that would allow women playing in a single North American pro league to make a living wage. The NWHL pays its players, but the money is more like an honorarium than a salary. As she gamed out her future, Eastwood talked to multiple NWHL clubs, while also jumping on PWHPA conference calls to get a feel for that organization. She was initially leaning toward the latter, but Toronto general manager Mandy Cronin — who had reached out to Eastwood earlier in 2020 when Cronin was still GM of the NWHL's Buffalo Beauts — circled back with some news. "A month or two [after first connecting] she calls me back and says, 'I'm actually with Toronto now and I really want you to talk to Digit Murphy,'" Eastwood recalls. "I didn't want to close any doors."

The NWHL expanded to Toronto in April of 2020, essentially one year after the two CWHL teams in the region — the Toronto Furies and Markham Thunder — were shuttered. Cronin was the team's GM and, to begin with, Murphy's sole role was that of team president. The Six talked to multiple people about the coaching job, but soon learned some candidates were a little leery of planting their flag with the NWHL. With so much uncertainty swirling, Murphy agreed to put her decades' worth of bench experience to use and take the gig herself. When Eastwood fulfilled Cronin's request to talk to Murphy, the defenceman — who knew of the legendary coach, but had never met her — wasn't on the phone long before her mind started moving in new directions. They talked about the importance of working in the community and setting a visible example for the next generation — the "see it, be it" factor. "She had me inspired from Day 1," says Eastwood, now a member of Toronto's blue line.

"I deal with things head on and people either love me or hate me."

The motivational force Eastwood responded to was born Margaret Pearl Degidio in Cranston, R.I., her middle name owing to the fact she had arrived on Pearl Harbor Day in 1961, 20 years after the December 7 attack. She was welcomed into a blue-collar family and benefitted from the presence of a strong, non-conformist woman right away. "My mom let me have short hair, she let me wear boys clothes because that's what I wanted to wear," Murphy says. "I climbed trees, I played street hockey, I played with G.I. Joes — everything that was atypical for a girl, but my mom never said no. My mom was just like, 'Who cares? She is who she is.' Which is really important. There were so many women my age [who heard], 'No! You're wearing dresses!'"

It wasn't long before the neighbourhood kids massaged Degidio into "Digit," sometimes opting for "Digit the Midget" to tease a youngster whose slight frame coursed with vinegar. When the antagonizing escalated from verbal to physical, Murphy responded the only way she felt she could. Thumping the boys wasn't her first choice back then, and she's still reticent to talk about it now, not because it's a painful memory but because she's loathe to glorify anything that could be construed as bullying. Each after-school bout she won, though, only increased her credibility. "In order to live in that system, you have to perform in that system," she says. "So I would go down and beat boys up because it allowed me to play on the playground, but it wasn't my first choice."

The Degidios' version of knowing the right people was being friends with the man who drove the Zamboni at a local rink. Murphy's first forays onto arena ice were with her younger brother and sister, just running around in boots while her dad and the Zamboni pilot puffed cigarettes. When her brother started playing organized hockey — the sport certainly had a community in Cranston — Murphy exploited a little side pad for figure skaters, which she often had all to herself, skating through her one-person games.

There were no girls teams in the area when Murphy first fell in love with the sport, but two women — Jackie Bogosian and Barbara Butler — saw no reason that fact couldn't change. Jackie's husband, Bob, was part of the local hockey association and the trio rounded up enough girls of all ages — Murphy was about 12 years old at the time in the early '70s — to form two teams that skated on Thursdays and Saturdays. "They would have the buzz," Murphy says, referencing the horn that would blast every two minutes to signal shift changes, "and you play the good kids against the good kids and the bad kids against the bad kids."

Murphy was definitely good. Eventually, the better players were climbing onto a bus every Sunday and travelling about 80 minutes north to play games in a girls' league located a little west of Boston. Bob coached the team, but Jackie played a huge role as an on-the-ground organizer. "She was on the ice, that was important for me," Murphy says. "It wasn't just Bob."

"I never thought, 'What are people going to think?' I just kind of followed my heart."

Murphy was figuring out she was a fantastic hockey player in the aftermath of Title IX changing the game for female collegiate sports in America. Suddenly schools had to offer women equitable opportunities to



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participate in sports. When it was time for her to make the NCAA leap in 1979, Murphy — with significant financial assistance from the institution — did so at Cornell, the same university that produced hockey's most celebrated intellectual, Ken Dryden.

Hockey-wise, Murphy was never going to be out of her depth. Away from the rink, though, she was thrown beyond her existing horizons. Trips to Manhattan with new friends pulled back the curtain on a previously foreign, affluent universe. "I'm a poor kid from Cranston," she says. "I [spoke] a different language from a dialect standpoint. It's MAH-Gret Degidio from CRAHN-ston, Rhode EYE-land. And they're like, 'What did you just say?'"

"It was this different level of [sophistication] that was added to my life, and [I learned] I could hold my own. And I was a streetfighter, right? So I really got in the back door at Cornell, but I figured out a way. [And after graduation] you were just looked at different because you were an Ivy-Leaguer. That was the springboard to do anything in life for me.

"I try to do as much for kids as I possibly can because I know what that one moment of acceptance can do for you."

Katey Stone knew her Harvard Crimson were always in for a tough go when they played Digit Murphy's Brown Bears. The Bears were going to bring it and if things weren't going the way Brown's coach thought they should, you could set your watch to the fact plumes of smoke would start pouring from Murphy's ears. "But it's just passion," Stone says. "It's all passion."

After earning her business degree from Cornell, Murphy had landed herself well-paying but ultimately unsatisfying logistical work with the computer company Data General. She offered to take a buyout during a staff reduction and pivoted toward a new career as a physical education teacher in an effort to reconnect with her love of sports. While taking classes at the University of Rhode Island in 1987, she learned there might be an opening for an assistant coach behind the Brown bench. Murphy found women's head coach Steve Shea's number and rang him up. "I go, 'I'm Digit Degidio, you remember me? I played at Cornell?'" she says. "He goes, 'Oh yeah, I remember you.'"

A season-and-a-half later, Murphy was the lead bench boss — making half the salary of a men's coach, she notes. By the mid-'90s, she turned Brown from an also-ran into an Ivy League and ECAC powerhouse. Recruiting players was a huge part of her job and it was through that effort Murphy met Stone and current Six owner Johanna Boynton, as the two women worked and coached together at a New England prep school. As Boynton got to know more about Murphy, one thing started to really jump off the page. "I was so impressed with how she was able to do the job and be a mom," Boynton says. "That still is super-challenging, but is much more accepted and understood today. [Thirty years] ago, it was much more unusual."

In the early 2000s, Murphy was living in North Smithfield, R.I. with Ken Murphy — the man she married in 1990 — and their four children. Through connections in the youth sports circle, she met a woman named Aronda Kirby. Aronda's son, Griffin, was a kindergarten classmate of Murphy's son, Brian. A bond formed between the two women over shared passions, then grew into something beyond friendship. Digit recalls the experience of falling in love with Aronda as one of the most thrilling and frightening of her life. "It was something you had to do because it was the right thing to do for you and you had to see it through because if you didn't, you'd always be wondering," she says. "I never thought, 'What are people going to think?' I just kind of followed my heart and I said, 'People love me, I know my kids love me and I'm just going to get through it.'"

Following her heart meant dealing with audible whispers, both in the community and at work. Murphy knew gossip was flying in the summer of 2002, so early on that fall, she stood in the Brown locker room and let fly. "I said, 'Guys, look: I got married at Brown, I had my children at Brown, I live my life at Brown, now I'm getting divorced at Brown,'" she remembers. "If anyone has anything they want to discuss with me, my office is upstairs. People's lives are personal and I want you to learn this

lesson: If you don't know anything, you shut your mouth and if you want to know anything about what I'm going through, my office is up there and my door is wide open."

Difficult as things could be at times, there was also a foundation upon which to build. "The great thing for us was the families had been friends and our kids were already good friends," Kirby says. "So there was already so much love in our group. That was a huge kick off the starting block. It came down [more to] blending logistics, if you will, because there's a lot to do to manage the lives of six kids and two adults."

That's especially true when the two household heads don't hesitate to fling themselves into the causes and ventures that stoke their fires. When Kirby learned a power plant was trying to set up shop in their town, the couple joined a successful 18-month fight to turn it away. ("It was like Erin Brockovich," Murphy says.) They started an elite hockey program for girls in Rhode Island called the Ixpress and established a non-profit called Play It Forward Sport, which aims to support women and girls in every sporting pursuit you can think of. And they've both always been only too happy to speak with the press about the issue of gay marriage.

One day Murphy had a conversation with a man who was enormously passionate about pushing women's lacrosse forward. She came home after and told Kirby they should use the Play It Forward model to start a league for a sport to which neither of them had any serious connections — which is eventually what they wound up doing. "I was like, 'What?'" Kirby recalls. "But, sure!"

In 2012, Murphy took the job as GM-coach of the CWHL's Boston Blades. Not long into the gig, she realized she was ill-suited for all the administrative tasks that came with being the GM. Kirby — who had graduated in the early 1980s with a computer science degree — began taking on a lot of that work. The following season, she officially became Boston's GM. The pair led a potent Blades team featuring Team USA stars like Meghan Duggan and Hilary Knight to two Clarkson Cup titles in three years. Murphy's next post marked her most adventurous career move yet, as — in 2017 — she re-located to China to coach the CWHL's Kunlun Red Star in its first year of existence. It was a no-regrets experience, but it only took one season to realize it wasn't a perfect match. "It was a different culture, a culture that wanted immediate results for a transactional outlay of cash," Murphy says.

"I've never been coached by a person with the same philosophy as her."

Though pro hockey now accounts for a big portion of her resumé, that may not have been the case had Murphy got the job she applied for in 2009: coach of the men's hockey team at Brown. At that point, she had a 20-year history as a head coach at the institution. Brown opted to hire Brendan Whittet, who had extensive assistant coaching experience in NCAA men's hockey, but no previous track record as a head coach. (Whittet still coaches the Bears.) Whatever went into the decision, those close to her know Murphy was dismayed. To this day, it burns Kirby. "Can you tell I'm still mad?" she rhetorically asks after listing all the reasons Murphy deserved the job and lamenting what a lost opportunity it was for the school to set a meaningful precedent.

Over the years, Stone had heard Murphy pound the table for changes in women's college hockey — changes some just figured there was no sense in even asking for. Murphy was a driving force behind getting women's games moved from Saturdays and Sundays to Fridays and Saturdays — like the men — so female players could get a day off before returning to class. Murphy and Stone were both part of the American Women's College Hockey Alliance, which essentially laid the groundwork for the NCAA to eventually institute a women's national championship tournament in 2001. Getting the men's job at Brown would have been transcendent, but even the attempt created ripples. "Regardless of what the result was, the process was significant," Stone says. "Someone applies for a job like that, then all of a sudden people are like, 'Maybe I could do that.'"

Six owner Boynton had a lot to catch Murphy up on when they bumped into each other at a game between their alma maters last winter, before the pandemic. In the summer of 2019, Boynton — who wore the 'C' for



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Harvard in the late 1980s — had been approached by Boston Pride owner Miles Arnone about investing in an evolving NWHL. After she and her husband, John, did some heavy research, they decided to get involved. Today, they hold a minority interest in the Pride and are the main owners of the Six. Boynton, who runs a successful home-building business, is bullish on the long-term prospects for what could be termed the NWHL 2.0. The circuit — established in 2015 by Dani Rylan Kearney — is transitioning from a model where the league owns all the teams to one in which there are individual owners for each club. Right now, only Boston and Toronto have independent ownership, while the Minnesota Whitecaps, Buffalo Beauts, Connecticut Whale and Metropolitan Riveters remain NWHL owned. Dovetailing with all of this is a change at the top, as Tyler Tumminia replaced Rylan Kearney as league commissioner in the fall. Tumminia, who brings with her a wealth of experience from minor-league baseball, was originally named chairman of the Six last spring before moving to the league office. According to Boynton, these are just the headline-grabbing moves for a league doing everything it believes is necessary to blossom. "There is now a constitution and bylaws and an affiliation agreement that mirrors all the other professional sports," she says. "We're not doing it as we go; we've spent months crafting these documents."

This mentality is what got Murphy's attention when she encountered Boynton at the game between Harvard and Cornell. After China, Murphy shifted her focus away from hockey toward another business venture, the particulars of which she keeps under lock and key. "I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you," she says. The pandemic, however, scuttled her ability to get out and drum up funds. Meanwhile, she'd kept in contact with Boynton after their encounter, calling her now and then during morning walks. Murphy was skeptical of the NWHL when it started a half-decade ago, believing it was overextending in trying to pay players around \$20,000 per year. As it turned out, those figures were not sustainable and salaries later shrunk. Boynton knew if she could sell Murphy on what she saw as the new NWHL it would supercharge the Six with passion and know-how. Eventually, Murphy joined the squad, further legitimizing the organization and league. "I really believe, when you have people like [Boynton, Tumminia and Murphy] at the ground floor of this whole thing, that they've got a serious opportunity to be successful," Stone says.

Murphy wouldn't have left all her family behind in New England to come to Toronto alone if she didn't believe that was the case. She's over the moon about being in Lake Placid, N.Y. for the tournament that kicks off on Saturday and will determine a 2021 Isobel Cup champion on Feb. 5. NBC Sports will air both semifinals and the grand finale of the event. According to a release from the league, this marks the first time women's pro hockey will be shown live on a major network in America. Murphy is banking on slow and steady growth, which will allow the NWHL to scale up as it goes. It's a long game in her mind, meaning you do what's required in the interim to just keep skating. "Why can't we be comfortable [having other careers] by day and hockey players by night?" she says. "Men's lacrosse has done this for years. Why is it so wrong to do this in hockey as we evolve?"

It's a stretch to suggest Murphy is mellowing in any appreciable way, but she does believe she's gotten a tiny bit better at tempering her emotions in certain situations. Once in a while she'll tell a friend, "The old Digit would have reacted differently." Boynton also notes that, as strong-minded and straight-ahead as Murphy can be, she's still malleable. "While she might have a personality and approach that some would find harder to receive, that doesn't end up being a nonstarter," Boynton says. "She works with [players] in ways [that work for them]. She can hear it when [something] is not resonating with a player."

"I love what I freakin' do."

That said, every Toronto charge is going to hear Murphy's overarching message again and again. The three-pillar approach she emphasizes off the ice is empowerment, education and inclusion. Once the puck drops, it's fun, fast and furious. "I've never been coached by a person with the same philosophy as her," says Eastwood. "Without giving away any secrets, she really lets us play free and she doesn't want to limit us."

What else would you expect from a person who's never had much time for restrictions? Her go-for-it attitude has led her here, to a spot she both deserves and feels lucky to have. "I love it more now [than ever]," she says of coaching and running a team. "As you get older and have experience, everything becomes way more clear. To take the way I think now and have all this knowledge capital and be able to apply it and talk about it and lead the next generation is just so inspiring and empowering for me. And to have the Toronto Six people believe in me, those top-level people, it continues to push my confidence to another level to help evolve the next generation. And it's so fun. I could talk for days; I love what I freakin' do."

She's not alone.

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Five Takeaways: Canucks vs Canadiens

By Jeff Paterson

TAKEAWAYS

For five minutes early in the third period on Saturday night, the Vancouver Canucks dominated the Montreal Canadiens. They had the puck and wouldn't give it back. They flooded the Habs zone and had the Canadiens on their heels. They attacked the net and put two pucks in it. And all of that hard work allowed the Canucks to get back on even terms and tie the game 2-2. That was the good news. The bad news is that hockey is a 60 minute game and the Canucks simply can't allow themselves to think that playing hard for a five minute burst is enough. Because in the end, those five minutes meant nothing as Montreal countered with three unanswered goals and won going away handing the Canucks a second straight loss and their fifth in six games. The Canucks need to realize that when they play like they did in those five minutes good things can — and often will — happen. But then they need another five minutes like that. And five more after that, too.

There was plenty of talk from Canucks players at the post-game podium that Saturday was a step in the right direction. But the bar can't possibly be so low that such a performance is viewed as progress. As a response to a 7-3 loss on Thursday, the Canucks started Saturday night with one shot in the opening 13 minutes — and that included an early a power play. Overall, the Canucks were outshot 33-25 on the night and at even-strength they were outshot 28-18 and outchanced 27-17. For a fourth straight game, the team allowed five goals and on the season now they've surrendered a league-high 33 — a whopping 4.75 per game. Last season through seven games, the Canucks were 4-3 and had allowed 15 goals. This season, they're 2-5 with 33 goals against. The Canucks need to be careful about falling into the trap of thinking that overall efforts like Saturday night's are good enough. They're not.

It's hard to imagine things turning around unless the team's best players have the puck more than they have through the first seven games. Although he scored his first of the season, Elias Pettersson struggled again on Saturday as the Habs outshot the Canucks 8-2 at evens with EP40 on the ice. It was no better for JT Miller with the visitors holding a 9-3 edge in shots while the team was outshot 10-7 with Quinn Hughes on the ice. That should be the Canucks' greatest advantage. Those guys tilted the ice heavily in the Canucks' favour all of last season and were all play driving beasts. So far, they have been forced to defend far too much and play without the puck. To make matters worse, all three have been guilty of terrible turnovers and have tried to force far too many passes that have been easily picked off by opponents. Pettersson, Miller and Hughes remain among the Canucks' very best players, but until they



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start playing like it – and playing like they did last season – it looks and feels like an awfully steep hill for this team to climb.

What you saw on Saturday was essentially the Canucks best line-up. The group got Alex Edler back from a one-game absence so Travis Hamonic was the lone veteran blueliner out of the line-up. And based on his sluggish start, how much better is Hamonic than Jordie Benn who made his season debut on Saturday? Up front, Travis Green justifiably opted to make Adam Gaudette a healthy scratch after a slow start and replaced him with Zack MacEwen, who forced Nick Suzuki to put the puck over the glass with an aggressive forecheck and later set-up Jake Virtanen with a terrific backhand pass. An argument can be made that MacEwen was more impactful in his 9:51 of ice time than Gaudette has been at any point this season. This is it. This is the team they've assembled. There are no reinforcements waiting in the wings. Is it good enough? That's a question that must be asked based on the evidence presented. Are the Canucks better than they've shown so far? I have to believe they are. But being better than they've shown so far may not be enough to overcome this sluggish start.

The Canucks have one win in regulation. It came on opening night in Edmonton. Since then they've surrendered something in the standings to their last six opponents. In a season in which every game is against division rivals and the teams the Canucks are battling with for playoff positioning in the all-Canadian North Division, the points you give up are almost as important as the points you gain. The Canucks have beaten one team in 60 minutes – that was the first game of the season which after no exhibition action was essentially a coin toss. Since then, the Canucks are 1-5 with their lone victory in a shootout against Montreal last Wednesday. This team needs wins and it needs to start winning without being charitable. They'll get their next shot on Monday in the first of three straight at home against Ottawa. It seems ridiculous to think, but given the start to the season, this week feels like it could be a referendum on this team and this season. Buckle up.

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Canucks vs Habs postgame takeaways

By Jeff Paterson

TAKEAWAYS

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2) There was plenty of talk from Canucks players at the post-game podium that Saturday was a step in the right direction. But the bar can't possibly be so low that such a performance is viewed as progress. As a response to a 7-3 loss on Thursday, the Canucks started Saturday night with one shot in the opening 13 minutes – and that included an early a power play. Overall, the Canucks were outshot 33-25 on the night and at

even-strength they were outshot 28-18 and outchanced 27-17. For a fourth straight game, the team allowed five goals and on the season now they've surrendered a league-high 33 – a whopping 4.75 per game. Last season through seven games, the Canucks were 4-3 and had allowed 15 goals. This season, they're 2-5 with 33 goals against. The Canucks need to be careful about falling into the trap of thinking that overall efforts like Saturday night's are good enough. They're not.

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Blue Jackets, Jets hope risky blockbuster swap proves mutually beneficial

By Frank Seravalli

Two GMs killed three birds with one stone.



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Rarely in NHL history have three unhappy players been traded for each other in the same transaction, a triangle of malcontents now flipped across borders in the hope that their frowns are turned upside down.

The Winnipeg Jets traded superstar Patrik Laine and centre Jack Roslovic to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday in exchange for burgeoning centre Pierre-Luc Dubois, the player drafted directly after Laine in 2016, and a 2022 third-round pick. Winnipeg retained 26 per cent of Laine's cap hit and salary this season to make the money work, leaving the Laine and Dubois part a dollar-for-dollar swap.

All three players made trade requests public - Roslovic as many as 18 months ago, Laine over the NHL's offseason, and Dubois on New Year's Eve as he inked a new two-year deal to start the season.

This deal is the closest the NHL will get to an NBA-style blockbuster, where players under team control regularly dictate their destination, a seismic shift from hockey's norm.

This is a deal that was likely on the table for weeks. The Jets had long expressed interest in Dubois, whose father, Eric, is an assistant coach with the franchise's AHL affiliate Manitoba Moose. It was hastened by Dubois' relationship with coach John Tortorella unravelling for all to see during Thursday night's loss in which Dubois was benched for the entirety of the final two periods - with Tortorella saying Dubois' effort had "eroded."

Blue Jackets general manager Jarmo Kekalainen fielded offers from 22 teams across the NHL on Friday, according to sources, including the Montreal Canadiens, Calgary Flames and Anaheim Ducks, before settling on Winnipeg.

There's no doubt that Laine's fiery, three-point first game of the season - his only showing since suffering a minor injury - helped grease the wheels already in motion.

"This was the right time for both parties to move in a different direction," Kekalainen said of Dubois in a statement Saturday.

For the Jets, this was an exercise in asset management. Plain and simple.

Neither Laine nor Roslovic had a future on Canada's prairies. Roslovic, a restricted free agent prior to signing a new two-year deal with Columbus, declined to even report to Winnipeg. The mercurial Laine was in the final year of his contract, requiring an expensive new pact that the team likely didn't want to offer and the player did not want to sign.

Now, the Jets - who have been thin down the middle for a couple years - have two No. 1 centres in the fold with Mark Scheifele and Dubois.

Coach Paul Maurice will have no shortage of tantalizing options at his disposal once Dubois completes his required quarantine. With Dubois centering Nikolaj Ehlers on the second line, Paul Stastny can be shifted to the wing, and the intelligent Adam Lowry can continue in his third-line role. It allows for Maurice to load up when necessary, like Toronto and Edmonton do regularly, with Dubois on the wing on the top line or the top power play unit.

"We're giving up an elite shooter that I firmly believe is going to develop into a strong, very powerful power forward," Jets coach Paul Maurice said. "And then we're going to get a power forward that I think is going to develop into an elite point-producer. Different starting points. They'll both get to, in my mind, at the end of their career the same place. They're going to be big, powerful men that'll drive play and drive offence."

It's the type of trade that a better balanced Jets lineup could help shift the balance of power in the all-Canadian North Division. Remember: Dubois wasn't far behind Laine in production the last two seasons: Laine collected 58 goals and 113 points, while Dubois had 45 goals and 110 points.

Dubois helped drive the Blue Jackets' playoff run last summer. He had 10 points in 10 postseason games, including a hat trick and four points

against Toronto in the qualifying round and six points against the eventual Stanley Cup champion Lightning in the first round.

Plus, both Laine and Dubois are 22, but with Dubois signed to a two-year deal at \$5 million per season that fits the team's cap structure, the Jets have gained an extra year of control of the player. (Dubois is under team control for four seasons, Laine was under team control for three seasons because Laine entered the league one year earlier.)

It's fair to say that neither of these organizations would have imagined this outcome when they selected Laine and Dubois at No. 2 and No. 3 overall in 2016. It's like a plane crash - err, a Jet crash - where multiple points of failure on both sides in both franchises led to irretrievably broken relationships.

Still, there is risk in every trade.

The risk for the Jets is that Laine departs the 'Peg and becomes the Finnish Flash 2.0.

Painfully, Sunday marks 25 years to the day that Teemu Selanne scored his last goal in a Jets jersey. Like Laine, he exploded onto the scene in Winnipeg. Selanne scored a league-best 76 goals as a rookie; Laine netted 36 as an 18-year-old and followed that up with 44 in an electrifying sophomore season.

Laine leaves Winnipeg with 140 goals in 306 games, including the overtime winner on opening night. Selanne ended his Jets career with 147 goals in 231 games.

The problem is Selanne went on to strike 537 more times with the Ducks, Avalanche and Sharks in his Hall of Fame career.

Both were fan favourites, incredibly popular players in the market. No player has sold more jerseys than Laine in the Jets' 2.0 reboot. But that popularity - which makes the trade so difficult for Jets fans to digest - mostly ignores the reality that was staring Winnipeg in the face in the near future.

And that's the risk in this for the Blue Jackets.

Trading a top-flight centre for a winger generally doesn't work out in a team's favour. But Laine is far from an ordinary winger. He's an elite game-breaker who is arguably the best pure shooter of his generation going to a team that has struggled to score goals.

"Patrik is a player we know very well and in a short time has become one of our league's most proficient goal scorers," said Kekalainen, the NHL's only Finnish general manager, of his countryman Laine.

Beyond that, there is no guarantee that Laine meshes with Tortorella, or loves life in another NHL small market stop, or can even come to amicable contract terms with a Blue Jackets franchise that has notoriously wielded the CBA-enabled hammer to keep restricted free agent pay within their team structure. No Columbus player earns more than \$5.8 million - and that now includes Laine with the salary retained by Winnipeg.

"We're going to try to build a long-term relationship with him," Kekalainen said.

They're going to have to try, just like the Jets will with Dubois, in the hopes that this change of scenery is mutually beneficial.

Only time will tell.

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Canucks vs Canadiens Gameday Preview



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 24, 2021

By Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – For the third time in four nights, the Vancouver Canucks (2-4) will face-off against the Montreal Canadiens (3-0-2) at Rogers Arena. The Canucks took Wednesday's match-up 6-5 in a shootout while the Habs responded with a 7-3 win on Thursday. The Canucks have one win in their last five games while Montreal has won three of four and picked up at least a point in each of its first five games of the season.

Canucks captain Bo Horvat has scored a pair in each of the past two games and enters action with a share of the National Hockey League lead with five goals in the early going this season. Brandon Sutter scored the Canucks other goal on Thursday.

Concern continues to mount in Vancouver as Elias Pettersson has gone five games without hitting the scoresheet and has just a single point – an assist on opening night – to show for his first six outings. On Thursday, Pettersson did not register a shot and had just one attempt on goal. For the season, he is fifth on the team with 13 shots on goal through six games.

Braden Holtby is expected to get the start in goal. Holtby has both Canuck victories so far including Wednesday's win over Montreal in which he made 31 saves through overtime and stopped three of four shootout attempts. With injuries to blueliners Alex Edler, Travis Hamonic and Jalen Chatfield, it's expected that former Canadien Jordie Benn will draw in tonight. This will be his first game after starting the season in COVID protocol. If Edler is unable to play, either Guillaume Brisebois or rookie Jack Rathbone would likely be activated from the team's taxi squad.

It's been a wild ride for Canucks special teams in the first two games of this set against the Habs. On Wednesday, the Canucks scored three power play goals. A night later, they added another with the man-advantage, but surrendered a pair of short-handed markers. They have also allowed a power play goal in each of the first two games against Montreal.

Overall, the Canucks need to shore up their defensive game. They have given up the most goals in the NHL (28) and are last in goals against per game (4.67).

The Canadiens are likely to make a couple of line-up changes for tonight's game. Carey Price is expected to return to the net after backing-up Jake Allen on Thursday. Price gave up five goals and two more in the shootout on Wednesday. And veteran Corey Perry is expected to make his Montreal debut after signing with the team as a free agent. Perry will slot in for Joel Armia who suffered a concussion as result of a heavy hit from Tyler Myers late in Thursday's contest. Paul Byron is listed as questionable after he was hit in the foot by a slap shot on Thursday night.

Former Canuck Tyler Toffoli has been the story of this mini-series to this point. He arrived in Vancouver without a goal and now has a share of the league-lead with five. After netting a hat trick on Wednesday, Toffoli added two more a night later. He also has an assist giving him 5+1=6 in the two games so far.

Jeff Petry (2+5=7) and Nick Suzuki (1+4=5) have both notched points in every Montreal game so far this season.

On Thursday, Montreal outshot Vancouver 42-17 including 18-3 in the second period. The Habs also outscored the Canucks 4-0 in that middle period.

After tonight, these teams will meet again to open February with a pair of games in Montreal. Habs captain Shea Weber is slated to play his 996th career NHL game tonight and is tracking to play his 1000th game when the Canucks are at Bell Centre on February 2nd.