



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

THE ATHLETIC

Hurricanes play their first complete game of the season vs. Lightning

By Sara Civian

Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour is an efficient man, even with his words. You saw that Saturday morning following a win over the Blackhawks, which also happened to be the morning of the first of four straight meetings with the defending Cup champion Lightning.

"This is a big challenge, obviously, four in a row with the Stanley Cup champs; that's probably not the best schedule," he said. "But, I mean, you gotta play them at some point."

No day better than a day when you thought you'd be playing a back-to-back regardless, I guess. The Canes were supposed to play the Blackhawks again, but the Steve Kornacki of the 2021 NHL season — a job I wouldn't wish upon anyone, mind you — had other plans. So began their side quest against the Lightning.

"I mean, it's not ideal, but for the times you expect the curveballs every day," Brind'Amour said. "This is part of it, we understand it. Every team has to deal with changes here and there, and there'll be more to come. We were going to play tonight regardless, it's just a different opponent to prepare for."

You know how baby experts say not to react when your baby trips because if you gasp or act scared they'll mimic that even if they aren't actually hurt? That's the vibe I was getting from Brind'Amour this morning.

It paid off in the most complete game the 12-3-1 Hurricanes have played this season — a 4-0 win over Tampa Bay that put them at the top of the division in points (25) and points percentage (.781).

As Brind'Amour said postgame, it didn't quite look like a 4-0 win. These teams were running full-court press, and the whole thing was as fast and exciting as advertised. It usually comes down to conditioning, the ability to capitalize on weird bounces, goaltending and a little bit of luck when two great teams face off.

Bare with me through the spin zone of the century here, but I think the 4-0 score doesn't do the Canes justice. This was an extremely close game for at least two periods, and Alex Nedeljkovic kept his cool while the Canes scored at a calculated, slow-but-sure rate. This was the opposite of their recent "score 15 goals in 23 seconds and blackout for the last two minutes of each period" trend.

It was important for the Canes to win a close game against a good opponent, and Andrei Svechnikov's affinity for empty nets takes nothing away from how much Nedeljkovic and the rest of the team earned this one.

I'm not one for the oddly specific, clearly biased stats, but this means something: Tampa Bay has been shut out only twice in the past 98 games, and the Hurricanes did it both times.

- The postgame vibe check was IMMACULATE ...

... I could go on. It's safe to say the energy that game exuded wasn't just in my head.

- I have loved Nedeljkovic's confidence — and how straight up he is about it — from Day 1. But I haven't always been sold on the idea of him as a No. 1 NHL goaltender. About 80 percent of that is due to things completely out of his control: He's been in the pipeline of a contending team, the Canes have called him up only when they're down bad, etc. But Saturday, he was amazing in his 24-save shutout — the first in his 10th career game and eighth career start — but it's a mutual trust situation. I'm not saying he's going to be the best goaltender ever or even a mainstay when Petr Mrazek returns. But I will say Saturday he entered the circle of trust. I'm sold on his ability to play in the NHL and intrigued by what else he could offer. "You're just happy for the kid. He's been a part of the organization for a long time. He's paid his dues and waited his time," Brind'Amour said. "He looked good tonight, and he was ready to go. He needed to make some big saves for us tonight, and he did. The guys played hard in front of him tonight. We're just happy for the kid."
- The NHL is a copycat league, and it's just as cyclical. I remember talking to noted shorter, puck-moving defenseman Torey Krug a few years ago about how the league got so much faster as this decade has progressed, making it more suited to his game. He said it'll just get slower and heavier again eventually, and that you have to be ready for anything. The same goes for stacking the first line. The Bruins brought that back in style, and social media line charts brought obsessing over line combinations to a new level. But sometimes it's not as simple as putting your best three forwards on one line and hoping for the rest of the game that it works. If it were that easy, wouldn't we all be NHL coaches? Brind'Amour clearly knows Svechnikov is good. He knows Martin Necas is good. He also knows a thing or two about depth scoring, and this team is talented enough throughout the lineup for the stars to make things happen.
- Speaking of depth scoring, can we talk about Nino Niederreiter—Vincent Trocheck—Necas? What other second/third line in the NHL has a combined 20 goals through 16 games? I also think a huge reason Jordan Staal has been thriving is there's considerably less pressure than ever for him to overperform now that the Canes aren't just a one-line team. And oh, maybe Brind'Amour spreads things out to relieve unnecessary pressure in the first place.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

- Last night I got home during the second intermission to catch the postgame Zoom, and Abby Labar's boyfriend, AKA our other roommate, was sitting on the couch. I was complaining to him about how much I hate cliches, then I said Cedric Paquette adds some much-needed sandpaper to the Hurricanes' lineup, then 45 seconds later Tripp Tracy said the same thing verbatim on the broadcast. Well, folks, he also added a team-high six hits Saturday and his first goal with the Hurricanes against his former team." You couldn't write a better script than that," he said. We definitely tried.
- It seems like the Hurricanes defense is finally back to normal, and that has everything to do with Jaccob Slavin saying he felt off the first few games and now feels better. You're going to see that a lot this season.
- Someone tweeted: "Jake Bean good," at me, and I have to agree. He told me earlier this season that he actually thought he'd play better in the NHL because he's so offense-oriented and he'd be able to dish it to people who are more likely to actually score. He has four assists in his past four games and is PP2 QB material.
- Speaking of Krug, I don't know where else to talk about this but I need to report it. Dougie Hamilton saw this:
- Then he told Stormy the Ice Hog that he needed a Stormy hat. Like, not the Canes PR or Tom Dundon or something, he went straight to Stormy the Ice Hog. Absolutely beelined it straight to the source. Not a month later, there we were.

DGB weekend rankings: An outdoor debacle, a bottom 5 shakeup, and yes, the Leafs

By Sean McIndoe

Well, it looked good. For a while.

You have to give the NHL credit for that much. After weeks of hype over just how beautiful the Lake Tahoe games would look, the real thing somehow exceeded expectations. The whole thing was jaw-dropping.

Then the game started and, well ... you know the rest.

The Knights and Avalanche were able to finish the game later that night, and last night's Bruins/Flyers game went smoothly (and still looked great), albeit in a new time slot. Still, there's no point pretending that this weekend won't be remembered as a failure. We'll remember the sights of players tripping over divots and a frustrated Gary Bettman explaining that the clouds weren't cooperating at least as much as the breathtaking pregame visuals.

The NHL is taking a lot of criticism over this, and criticizing how this league operates is pretty much half my schtick. But I don't think I can join in here, at least to the same degree that so many fellow fans and media seem to be. I don't see this weekend as being an example of incompetence, or Bettman forgetting that sometimes the sun shines during the day. Rather, I see a league that took a risk and got burned when they pushed a little too far. An outdoor game being waylaid by weather was always a possibility, and after over a decade, something close to the worst-case scenario finally played out. That's bad, but I'd still rather have an NHL that takes the occasional big swing rather than the conservative, play-it-safe version we get with almost everything else.

On to this week's rankings, where the top five look familiar but the bottom five gets a makeover ...

Road to the Cup

The five teams with the best chances of becoming the first team in history to win a Stanley Cup in July.

Saturday night marked Sidney Crosby's 1,000th game. The Pittsburgh crew broke down some of his most memorable

moments, while Ian and I debated whether he's officially one of the five greatest players ever. But the bigger story here is that Crosby got to the milestone at all; it can be hard to remember now, but there was a time when his long-term future in the sport seemed to be in doubt. Concussions cost him a chunk of his career, but his full recovery and return to the elite tier has been a gift to hockey fans.

Also, this was pretty hilarious:

5. Carolina Hurricanes (12-3-1, +16 true goals differential*) – The ongoing battle for the five-spot in these rankings has turned into a running subplot; the same teams keep holding down the top four spots, but we've already had four teams show up in this one. That includes the Flyers and Habs, who both made brief appearances before dropping out of the top five, as well as a Bruins team that was on their way to better things.

Last week the Hurricanes edged out the Maple Leafs. Those Leafs just finished a week where they took seven of eight points and pulled away on top of the North, but I'm not putting them in the top five just days after that game. The Panthers could have a claim, but for the second time in two weeks they end their weekend with a loss to the Red Wings. And the Blues didn't have a great week.

Luckily, Carolina made things easy on us with a solid week that ended with a weird weekend that saw their scheduled game against Chicago dropped for one against the Lightning instead. An impressive 4-0 win later, and they're good to stay in the top five for another week.

4. Colorado Avalanche (9-4-1, +15) – Auston Matthews stole the show early on Saturday and Connor McDavid returned serve in the late game, but MacKinnon reminded the night owls that he's still in that most-dangerous player conversation with a fun solo effort.

If you missed it, be sure to check out the clip of a mic'd up Alex Pietrangolo realizing what was about to happen once MacKinnon got moving.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

3. Vegas Golden Knights (10-4-1, +12) – I'm going to read next-to-nothing into Saturday's loss, given the circumstances, but it's worth mentioning that the Knights have now lost two-of-three to the Avs, and Colorado has arguably been the best team in all three games. The two teams are up again tonight, and another Avalanche win would flip the teams' positions in the standings, and probably these rankings too.

2. Boston Bruins (11-3-2, +13) – The Bruins looked amazing last night. No, not in the game, although they did win against an undermanned Flyers team. I mean before:

1. Tampa Bay Lightning (10-4-1, +18) – The Lightning have held the top spot all season long, but you could absolutely make the case that this is the week they should make way for someone else. I kind of assumed they would, with regulation losses in three of four and the Central quickly turning into a three-team pileup thanks to the Panthers insistence on sticking around.

But OK, so you drop the Lightning out of the top spot. Who takes over? The Bruins have also stumbled a bit lately. The Knights and Avs have spent the week playing each other, without a ton of separation. Carolina? That might actually be it — Dom already has them as the Central favorite, even as he still likes Tampa's Cup odds just a bit better.

I don't think any of those picks would be indefensible in the top spot. But for now, I'm doing what these rankings are supposed to do and erring on the side of the status quo until something happens that forces my hand. That might happen this week, as the Lightning face the Hurricanes three times in four nights.

*Goals differential without counting shootout decisions like the NHL does for some reason.

Not ranked: Toronto Maple Leafs – They're not here this week but they probably will be next week, and we might as well all get our heads around it now.

Here's a secret of the hockey-writing profession: We talk about the Leafs a lot because they have a huge fan base that wants to hear about them, but a lot of times we'd rather not because the reaction is so over-the-top. You get the Leafs fans, who can be all over the map from one game to the next. Then you get the fans who hate the Leafs and flip out whenever they're mentioned. Over the weekend I made a joke about Connor McDavid and Auston Matthews on Twitter and woke up to hundreds of responses from fans who had very strong feelings about the Leafs, both pro and con, that the world needed to hear. Some were yelling at me, but most were just mad at each other, or maybe the world in general, and just about all of them sounded like the sort of people you'd slowly back away from if you ever had the misfortune of meeting them personally.

So yeah, it's tempting to leave the Leafs out of the top five all season long just so I don't have to wade through a page full of "LOL it was 5-1" comments. I guess that's what I'm doing this week. But at some point, that becomes a cop-out.

Right now, the Leafs are running away with the North Division. You may not think it's a very good division, and you're probably right, although it's hard to say when nobody is crossing over to play anyone else. Even if the North is bad,

though, any team that can emerge as the strong favorite will have a clear path to the final four. Right now, the Leafs are doing that.

They don't have great goaltending, the second line isn't clicking, and Sheldon Keefe's team defense is still very much a work in progress. And the Leafs are steamrolling teams. They have the best points percentage and highest goals differential in the league, and you can only hand-wave that away for so long before it gets silly.

Maybe they'll do us all a favor and drop their pair against the struggling Flames, or get their doors blown off on Saturday in what will be a massively hyped Matthews vs. McDavid showdown. Maybe the teams I've got in the top five this week go all shield wall on us and don't let anyone else in. But at this point, the Leafs being in the top five is starting to feel inevitable. Like a parent telling his kids that screen time is almost over for the day, I'm giving you advance notice so you don't have a tantrum about it when it happens.

The bottom five

The five teams that are headed towards the best lottery odds and trying to figure out if we should call this an Owen Power Ranking.

So I just served up a top five that was almost identical to last week's. That's boring, and I apologize. The good news is that the bad teams have come through with a weird few weeks that's introducing some chaos to the bottom five. The Hawks are reasonably good now, the Sharks have had a few nice wins, and the Canucks have found their feet a bit, so we could shake open at least a few spots here if we wanted to. Let's do exactly that, just to keep it interesting.

5. Buffalo Sabres (5-7-2, -9) – Hello darkness my old friend. Sabres bottom five again.

There are no must-win games at this time of year, at least not when it comes to playoff spots. But Saturday's 3-2 win over the Devils might have been a must-win in terms of a fan base's psyche. If the Sabres had blown that one after going into the third with a three-goal lead, I don't want to think what those radio call-in shows would sound like.

As it is, we can use that game to nudge the Sabres up from "flatlining" to "mostly flatlining". I'll admit, I thought it might be different this year. That's kind of an annual thing with me, and I'm working on it, but even after last year's offseason debacle, I thought that shaking up the organization and adding guys like Taylor Hall and Eric Staal might finally flip the switch. The same team can't be bad every year, right?

Of course they can. Four straight losses heading into the weekend, all in regulation, spanning all the way back to January because of a COVID break. At seven points out of the playoffs with four teams to pass in the league's toughest division, another season is falling apart in Buffalo. Sabres fans know the drill. At the point, Sabres fans are the drill.

Screw it, let's do the Jack Eichel trade talk thing.

Some fans have been doing it for years, but it always felt like wishful thinking. He's good, he'd look great on your favorite team, so maybe one day he'll run out of patience and hit the market. It's the same thing we do to McDavid, and it never



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

means anything. Except maybe, this time it might. Eichel has reportedly been frustrated for a while, and with a new front office in place, who knows, right? It sounds crazy, but when Elliotte Friedman is giving answer like this, something could be up.

Let's pause and emphasize that "could" because by far the most likely scenario here is that Eichel stays, the Sabres move Hall at the deadline for less than they'd hoped and flip a few other pieces for futures, bring in a few reinforcements over the summer and I talk myself into them again by opening night. But for now, another lost season has a chance of turning into something much more.

4. Nashville Predators (7-10-0, -18) – The good news for the Predators is that they only lost once this week. The bad news is they only played twice, meaning there wasn't much opportunity to change the momentum on a season going off the rails.

They were teetering on the edge of the bottom five last week, and tipped over this week after splitting a pair with Columbus. Facing the Blue Jackets twice puts some nice symmetry on the season so far, since the Predators opened the year by taking back-to-back games over Columbus. They looked good doing so; it would pretty much be the last time we could say that. Since then, the Preds have lost 10 of 15, including seven of the last 10. Worse, all of those losses have come in regulation, so the NHL's fabled loser point that's supposed to keep the playoff races closer (but doesn't) isn't working for Nashville. At seven points back with three teams to catch just to get into fourth, they're not far from already being done.

So what now? A dismantling of the roster would seem to be looming, although David Poile can only do so much with some of the long-term deals he's handed out. Adam Vingan named five guys who could go, and Pierre LeBrun went into detail on one name that could be part of a blockbuster: Mattias Ekholm, a good defenseman on a cheap deal who's also going to create some expansion list headaches for the Predators if he's still around at the end of the season. A trade seems to make a lot of sense for everyone involved, and once you move a piece like Ekholm, you might as well start the rebuild, or at least the reload.

So just how deep do you go? Do you listen on other big names, maybe even Filip Forsberg? It sounds like David Poile might be willing to do just that.

3. Anaheim Ducks (6-9-3, -16) – The question heading into the season was "will John Gibson play like a Vezina candidate or will the Ducks be terrible" and it turns out the answer is yes. Three straight regulation losses have dropped the Ducks into last in the West, and it's hard to feel like that's undeserved. The weekend waiving of Adam Henrique suggests that changes are coming, and while a full-scale dismantling doesn't feel likely, it's probably time to focus on what still seems like a bright future. That would mean some big changes to the team's veteran core, as Eric Stephens

argues here. For now, they're back in the bottom five after taking a couple of weeks off.

2. Detroit Red Wings (5-12-3, -25) – After all that bottom five churn, we're back to two familiar teams at the very bottom of the list. The Wings have dropped three of four, although an impressive showing in a win over the Panthers keeps them out of consideration for the bottom spot.

Here's this week's Depressing Stat About a Bad Team:

1. Ottawa Senators (5-14-1, -33) – This wasn't a great week in the win/loss column, but that's fine because it will be remembered for the 5-1 comeback in Toronto. That's as it should be, because those are the sort of wins that can become part of the foundation of an identity. The Senators might be bad, even very bad, but if they can convince themselves that they're never really out of it and will never quit until the final horn, that can translate into unexpected wins that matter down the line. For a young team, this stuff matters.

In the short term, it could also mean that teams facing the Sens have to keep their foot on the gas during blowouts, which might get ugly, because this team still gives up a ton of goals. Matt Murray has not looked good, and any hope that a change of scenery would see him quickly regain his old form are pretty much gone. That doesn't mean the trade or the contract extension was a mistake, but we're at least trending there, and that's bad news for a team that doesn't like to spend. The Sens are supposed to start their run of unparalleled success by next season, and it won't happen unless Murray can turn things around. But as we were reminded this week, unexpected turnarounds sometimes happen.

Not ranked: Los Angeles Kings – The Kings have been a bottom-five mainstay, not just this year but for the last several. Not this week, though, after four straight wins. That put them over .500 and into the playoff picture in the West. Now the question might be whether we see them back, or if this is finally a goodbye to a rebuilding team that's ready for better things.

We won't get ahead of ourselves and call the Kings contenders, but they do seem like a team that's ready for the next step. And it's the right time for it, because the prospect pipeline is flush and the veterans still have at least a little bit left in the tank. And oh yeah, there's probably one playoff spot available in the West this year that shouldn't take much more than .550 hockey to claim.

We've seen plenty of teams try to rebuild and end up spinning their wheels for years without ever getting traction. That could still happen in Los Angeles – they've been rolling for four games, not four months – but all the signs are pointing in the right direction. Nobody wants to spend much time in the NHL's mushy middle. But when you've been in the basement for a few years, a quick stopover on your way to the upper half of the standings starts sounding pretty good.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021



Preview: Lightning vs. Hurricanes

Canes close out five-game homestand

By Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes close out a five-game homestand with their second of four straight match-ups against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Match-Up

Tampa Bay Lightning (10-4-1, 21 points) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (12-3-1, 25 points)

Monday, Feb. 22, 7 p.m.

Watch: FOX Sports Carolinas, FOX Sports GO

Listen: 99.9 FM The Fan, Hurricanes.com/Listen, Hurricanes app

About Saturday Night

Backed by 24 saves from Alex Nedeljkovic, who earned his first career NHL shutout, the Canes blanked the Lightning, 4-0, to take the first game of a four-game set between the old Southeast Division foes. Cedric Paquette scored his first goal with the Canes, and it came against the team with which he won the Stanley Cup last year, while Vincent Trocheck notched his 300th career NHL point with his ninth goal of the season.

"We were excellent tonight. We didn't give them much of anything," Nedeljkovic said. "From start to finish, we were playing our game and it showed. We got to them and got a few bounces our way."

Numbers to Know

12-3-1: At 12-3-1 (25 points), the Canes have matched the franchise-best start through 16 games. You can probably guess which season it was (2005-06), and we all know how that season ended.

16: Three players - Trocheck, Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho - are tied for the team lead in points. All three players found the scoresheet on Saturday, and Svechnikov (1g, 1a) and Aho (1g, 1a) had multi-point performances.

2: The Lightning were not shut out once during their 70-game 2019-20 regular season and their 25-game run to the Stanley Cup. They've already been shut out twice in 15 games this season, both by the Canes.

1: Teuvo Teravainen missed Saturday's game with an upper-body injury. After the game, Brind'Amour provided this update on Teravainen's injury: "I'm hoping it's not going to be too long, but it's going to be a couple games for sure."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021



Ayres' win with Hurricanes still surreal on one-year anniversary

Emergency backup goalie says he will never forget game, was 'one of the biggest moments of my life'

By Mike Zeisberger

David Ayres can't believe it has been one year since he went from being a maintenance operations manager to one of hockey's best Cinderella stories in one memorable night.

Working at the Mattamy Athletic Centre (formerly Maple Leaf Gardens), Ayres had spent eight years as the practice goalie for the Toronto Marlies of the American Hockey League, with whom he'd also occasionally drive the ice resurfacing machine, and three for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

But Ayres had never played in an NHL game, or even an AHL game, until he got thrust into action Feb. 22, 2020.

On that day, the then-42-year-old became the first emergency backup goalie to win an NHL game when the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Maple Leafs 6-3 at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto. Ayres made eight saves in the final 28:41 after Carolina goalies Petr Mrazek and James Reimer each left because of injury, becoming part of NHL folklore.

"Even after all this time and everything that has gone on with the world, it's still kind of surreal," Ayres said. "It's almost like something out of a Hollywood script. I guess Hollywood thinks so, too, since I'm consulting with the writers on a movie Disney is doing on it.

"I think people can relate because it's kind of the story of an everyday person getting his shot, his moment in the sun. It's nice that it can put smiles on people's faces in COVID times."

Those same people have made sure to let him know it, too.

"Over the past year, someone has reached out pretty much every single day in some way or another about the game, whether it be at the grocery store, an interview, a podcast or via social media," he said. "Some want to talk about being at the game, others just want to say congrats.

"Sometimes it feels like 10 years ago, sometimes it feels like yesterday, but it makes you relive the moment."

So does walking into his living room at his home in Bowmanville, Ontario, located about 50 miles east of Toronto.

Behind the couch where he sits to watch Hurricanes games is a locker he set up to pay tribute to the team that provided

him the biggest thrill of his hockey career. The locker is in full view and contains all sorts of memorabilia, including the equipment he wore that night and a white jersey presented to him by the team autographed by Carolina fans.

"It was one of the biggest moments of my life, and I wanted to pay tribute to that," Ayres said.

Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said he had no idea of the locker Ayres has at home.

"That's great," Waddell said. "I mean, stories like this don't happen very often. He took advantage of an opportunity. If we don't win that game, no one would remember it like this. But we did, and they do.

"The story was such a great story. It's something for us to continue to remember, and especially our fans to continue to remember. They adopted this guy. He was put on a pedestal and he deserved to be put on a pedestal.

"When David came down to Raleigh shortly after that game, he was bigger than Gov. [Roy] Cooper. And I'm friends with the governor. He was actually texting me about David during the game he was forced to step into. Shows you how this story is so much bigger than a hockey story.

"The other thing this story did is to allow us to support David in some of the causes he is fighting for relating to kidney foundations."

Ayres received a kidney transplant from his mom, Mary, in 2004 and thought he'd never play hockey again, adding another layer to his memorable tale.

Because of COVID-19 protocols, Ayres can't be in Raleigh to celebrate his one-year anniversary Monday, when the Hurricanes will host the defending Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning at PNC Arena (7 p.m. ET; ESPN+, FS-CR, SUN, NHL.TV). However, Waddell said a ceremony will be held even without him in the building.

Ayres said he has taped a message for Hurricanes fans expressing his thanks, but that will be just part of an extremely busy day he estimates will feature countless interviews, including a podcast from Sweden and a 1-on-1 with NBCSN.

"It's something you'll never forget," he said. "It's something I'll always embrace for years to come."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

About Last Night: Hurricanes Win First Game of Measuring Stick Series with Lightning

Nedeljkovic and Paquette have a night of firsts while the Hurricanes again prove they are among the class of the NHL.

By Brett Finger

The Carolina Hurricanes and Tampa Bay Lightning kicked off a playoff-style four-game series last night, and it delivered on all fronts.

Two excellent teams went toe-to-toe, but it was the Hurricanes who pulled through and ended up winning handily. That was just game one, though, and you can rest assured that we are in store for three more excellent hockey games this week.

Before we move onto that, though, let's talk about last night.

A Night of Firsts

Perhaps the biggest story from last night's game was Alex Nedeljkovic, who recorded his first NHL shutout in the win.

Now, it actually wasn't the first time they hadn't allowed a goal in a game. Back in his first NHL appearance all the way back on January 17, 2012, Nedeljkovic came into the game in relief of Cam Ward almost exactly half-way through the game. Ned went on to stop all 17 shots he faced in ~30 minutes of action.

Saturday was obviously very different, though. It was a full 60-minute performance against the reigning Stanley Cup champions in a tone-setting game, considering that these clubs will go toe-to-toe for three more games.

It was also a big moment for Nedeljkovic in the scope of his career to this point. He has had to work for everything he has gotten in the professional ranks and last night felt like the culmination of a lot of that work.

"You're just happy for the kid," Rod Brind'Amour said last night. "He's been part of the organization for a long time and kind of paid his dues and waited his time. It was just nice to see that he looked good, and he was ready to go. He needed to make some big saves tonight, and he did. The guys played hard in front of him. We're just happy for the kid."

His journey is far from over, but last night was a moment to cherish, to be sure.

Cedric Paquette also had a big "first" last night, his first goal and point as a member of the Hurricanes.

Acquired last week in the Ryan Dzingle trade, Paquette clearly wasn't brought in for his offense. His physical edge had Carolina wanting him to come over in the deal, and he has absolutely delivered on that to this point. He is a hard forechecker and a playable fourth-line center.

That didn't make his first goal any less nice to see, though. He cashed in on a great centering pass from Jake Bean early in the third period to really put the dagger in his former team.

Even now, in the midst of a four-game Lightning storm, the Hurricanes have a Paquette full of sunshine.

A Playoff-Style Effort

Last night's game was a lot of fun to watch in large part because of the situation that these two teams find themselves in.

Due to a shuffling of the schedule by the league, last night was game one of four straight between the Hurricanes and Lightning. The game's early stages felt like game one of a playoff series with two clearly good teams feeling each other out. It wasn't necessarily exciting, offensive hockey, but it was really good hockey.

Things started to open up as the game went along, and it was an imposing effort from the Hurricanes that shows how far they have come over the last few seasons. We're at the point now where I think it's fair to say that they aren't "playing up" to their competition. They're just really, really good.

That doesn't mean that they are perfect, though, and there have certainly been instances where they've played down to their competition, but these kinds of measuring stick games against teams that are widely considered the league's best are important in proving that you're just as good as everyone else.

Last night was a great indicator of that for the Canes if you weren't already convinced.

Two First Lines

Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov both found the back of the net en route to two-point efforts last night, which was big for them heading into this string of games against Tampa. Still, it shouldn't be overlooked that this was yet another dynamite game from the trio of Nino Niederreiter, Vincent Trocheck, and Martin Necas.

At 2:19 of the second period, Trocheck scored the game's opening goal and the eventual GWG. It happened thanks to great forechecking pressure by the line and a good bounce down in front of the net that they definitely earned through how hard they've played this season.

That was goal number nine for Trocheck in his 15th game of the season, which re-tied him with linemate Niederreiter for the team-lead.

The Hurricanes' second line has been everything the team could have possibly wanted and much, much more. They have been flat-out dominant at 5-on-5, playing a perfect



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

brand of hockey for what this team wants to do. Their mixture of speed, skill, size, and willingness to forecheck and cycle pucks in the offensive zone makes them probably the hardest line to stop for the Canes.

Carolina is legitimately running two first lines right now, and this trio was the one that made so much sense on paper

entering the season. With Niederreiter bouncing back, Trocheck fitting in and Necas continuing to develop in front of our eyes, the Hurricanes have one of the most productive lines in hockey going right now. At 5-on-5, the line has scored seven goals and given up just one in north of 124 minutes. That's outstanding.

Carolina Hurricanes vs Tampa Bay Lightning Game 2: Game Preview and Storm Advisory

Rinse and repeat: The Canes play the Lightning in game two of four in a row.

By Zeke Lukow

Tampa Bay Lightning (10-4-1) at Carolina Hurricanes (12-3-1)

2021 Regular Season Game 16
Saturday, February 20, 2021 - 7 p.m. ET

PNC Arena - Raleigh, NC

Watch: Fox Sports Carolinas
Listen: 99.9 The Fan

SBN Opposition: Raw Charge

Follow Canes Country on Social Media

Twitter @CanesCountry
Facebook Canes Country
Instagram @canescountrypix

The Carolina Hurricanes took over first place in the Central Division standings after their 4-0 win against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday. It was the most complete team performance for the Canes this season. The game also featured Alex Nedeljkovic's first career shutout.

The Canes could stick with Ned coming off the shutout or go back to James Reimer in net while Tampa will probably stay with its starter, Andrei Vasilevskiy. The Lightning likely won't have to go to their backup Curtis McElhinney until Thursday which is the only game on the back half of the only back-to-back set of this four-game series.

Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Lightning
Record	12-3-1	10-4-1
Goals/Game	3.69	3.60
Goals Against/Game	2.69	2.40
Shots/Game	32.00	30.67
Face Off Win %	53.8%	50.1%
Power Play % (Rank)	28.9% (8th)	25.5% (10th)

Category	Hurricanes	Lightning
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	80.4% (13th)	86.3% (5th)
ES Corsi For %	54.52%	50.78%
ES PDO	101.93	102.52
PIM/Game	07:37	10:55

Goaltender #1

Category	James Reimer	Andrei Vasilevskiy
Record	8-1-0	9-3-1
Save %	0.896	.930
GAA	3.08	2.01

Goaltender #2

Category	Alex Nedeljkovic	Curtis McElhinney
Record	2-1-1	1-1-0
Save %	.911	.844
GAA	2.44	3.57

Game Notes:

- In the last 10 meetings between these teams, Carolina has picked up points in nine of those games with a 5-1-4 record. The Lightning rank third with 3.60 goals for per game but have yet to score against the Canes this season.
- Vincent Trocheck has gone streaking. He has a six-game point streak and a three-game goal streak. His last goal was also his 300th NHL point.
- The Hurricanes have improved to 12-3-1 (25 points) in 2020-21, which matches the 2005-06 team for the best record through 16 games in franchise history. The Hurricanes' .781 points percentage this



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

season is the second-highest of any team in the NHL, trailing only Toronto's .789.

- Victor Hedman has six multi-point games this season. His 488 career points is just one behind Brad Richards for fifth-most in Tampa history.
- Tampa Bay has gone three consecutive games without allowing a power-play goal and has given up just two power-play goals over the last nine

contests... The Lightning rank fifth in the NHL for penalty kill percentage (86.3%) and fourth for penalty kill percentage on the road (88.9%).

- The Hurricanes have three players tied for the team lead in points; Sebastian Aho, Vincent Trocheck, and Andrei Svechnikov all have 16 points. Vincent Trocheck and Nino Niederreiter are tied for the goal lead with nine.



Wolves geeked to go 7-0

Morgan Geekie scored two goals for the second time in 24 hours as the Chicago Wolves earned a 4-1 victory over the Iowa Wild Sunday afternoon at the Wolves Training Facility.

Center Rem Pitlick added his sixth goal of the season and rookie goaltender Beck Warm posted 40 saves as the Wolves (7-0-0-0) set the record for fastest start in franchise history. The 2007-08 squad opened 6-0-0-0 on its way to the 2008 Calder Cup championship.

Chicago had to earn the record as Iowa (2-3-1), incensed by a record-setting 10-2 loss to the Wolves the night before, set a physical tone from the start and outshot the hosts 41-14 for the day. The Wolves finished just one shot shy of the organization's single-game low.

"Got the 2 points, but not our best (game)," said Wolves head coach Ryan Warsofsky. "Thought we had a stretch in the first period that was pretty good; a shift or two here and there in the second and third. But for the most part, we were on our heels. Very good teaching moment in these young players' careers."

The Wolves jumped on top 8:25 into the game as defenseman Joey Keane, a 21-year-old Chicago native, launched a missile from the right point that banked off Geekie's back side into the net.

Geekie made it 2-0 with a power-play rocket at 18:06 of the first. Keane set him up in the right circle and Geekie unleashed a blast into the top right corner past goaltender Joel Rumpel's glove.

Pitlick tipped defenseman Frederic Allard's shot to push the lead to 3-0 just 58 seconds into the second period, but Iowa answered with Mason Shaw's goal at 11:54.

The Wild kept pushing and launched 19 shots in the third period, but the Wolves killed off two penalties in the final 10 minutes and added some insurance on Tanner Jeannot's empty-net goal with 3.1 seconds to play.

Warm improved his record to 3-0-0 with his career-high 40 saves while Rumpel (0-1-0) posted 10 stops in his first AHL start since March 2016.

The Wolves hit the road to face Grand Rapids at 6 p.m. Friday for a game that can be seen for free on the American Hockey League's Facebook page. The Wolves return to Hoffman Estates at 3 p.m. Sunday against the Griffins. To get your smiling face into the building, purchase a Wolves cutout and become a part of the Wolves Fan Gallery, presented by Hefty. To learn more, visit ChicagoWolvesStore.com.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://theathletic.com/2400670/2021/02/21/hurricanes-played-their-first-complete-game-of-season-vs-lightning/>
<https://theathletic.com/2401708/2021/02/22/dgb-weekend-rankings-an-outdoor-debacle-a-bottom-5-shakeup-and-yes-the-leafs/>
<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-tampa-bay-lightning-carolina-hurricanes/c-321666454>
<https://www.nhl.com/news/david-ayres-win-with-hurricanes-still-surreal-one-year-later/c-321656864>
<https://www.canescountry.com/2021/2/21/22293724/about-last-night-carolina-hurricanes-win-first-game-measuring-stick-series-tampa-bay-lightning-nhl>
<https://www.canescountry.com/2021/2/22/22294713/carolina-hurricanes-vs-tampa-bay-lightning-game-2-game-preview-and-storm-advisory>
<https://www.chicagowolves.com/2021/02/21/wolves-geeked-to-go-7-0/>

SportScan

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

1203625

Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes play their first complete game of the season vs. Lightning

By Sara Civian Feb 21, 2021

Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour is an efficient man, even with his words. You saw that Saturday morning following a win over the Blackhawks, which also happened to be the morning of the first of four straight meetings with the defending Cup champion Lightning.

"This is a big challenge, obviously, four in a row with the Stanley Cup champs; that's probably not the best schedule," he said. "But, I mean, you gotta play them at some point."

No day better than a day when you thought you'd be playing a back-to-back regardless, I guess. The Canes were supposed to play the Blackhawks again, but the Steve Kornacki of the 2021 NHL season — a job I wouldn't wish upon anyone, mind you — had other plans. So began their side quest against the Lightning.

"I mean, it's not ideal, but for the times you expect the curveballs every day," Brind'Amour said. "This is part of it, we understand it. Every team has to deal with changes here and there, and there'll be more to come. We were going to play tonight regardless, it's just a different opponent to prepare for."

You know how baby experts say not to react when your baby trips because if you gasp or act scared they'll mimic that even if they aren't actually hurt? That's the vibe I was getting from Brind'Amour this morning.

It paid off in the most complete game the 12-3-1 Hurricanes have played this season — a 4-0 win over Tampa Bay that put them at the top of the division in points (25) and points percentage (.781).

As Brind'Amour said postgame, it didn't quite look like a 4-0 win. These teams were running full-court press, and the whole thing was as fast and exciting as advertised. It usually comes down to conditioning, the ability to capitalize on weird bounces, goaltending and a little bit of luck when two great teams face off.

Bare with me through the spin zone of the century here, but I think the 4-0 score doesn't do the Canes justice. This was an extremely close game for at least two periods, and Alex Nedeljkovic kept his cool while the Canes scored at a calculated, slow-but-sure rate. This was the opposite of their recent "score 15 goals in 23 seconds and blackout for the last two minutes of each period" trend.

It was important for the Canes to win a close game against a good opponent, and Andrei Svechnikov's affinity for empty nets takes nothing away from how much Nedeljkovic and the rest of the team earned this one.

I'm not one for the oddly specific, clearly biased stats, but this means something: Tampa Bay has been shut out only twice in the past 98 games, and the Hurricanes did it both times.

... I could go on. It's safe to say the energy that game exuded wasn't just in my head.

I have loved Nedeljkovic's confidence — and how straight up he is about it — from Day 1. But I haven't always been sold on the idea of him as a No. 1 NHL goaltender. About 80 percent of that is due to things completely out of his control: He's been in the pipeline of a contending team, the Canes have called him up only when they're down bad, etc. But Saturday, he was amazing in his 24-save shutout — the first in his 10th career game and eighth career start — but it's a mutual trust situation. I'm not saying he's going to be the best goaltender ever or even a mainstay when Petr Mrazek returns. But I will say Saturday he entered the circle of trust. I'm sold on his ability to play in the NHL and intrigued by what else he could offer. "You're just happy for the kid. He's been a part of the organization for a long time. He's paid his dues and waited his time," Brind'Amour said. "He looked good tonight, and he was ready to go. He needed to make some big saves for us tonight, and he did. The guys played hard in front of him tonight. We're just happy for the kid."

The NHL is a copycat league, and it's just as cyclical. I remember talking to noted shorter, puck-moving defenseman Torey Krug a few years ago about how the league got so much faster as this decade has progressed, making it more suited to his game. He said it'll just get slower and heavier again eventually, and that you have to be ready for anything. The same goes for stacking the first line. The Bruins brought that back in style, and social media line charts brought obsessing over line combinations to a new level. But sometimes it's not as simple as putting your best three forwards on one line and hoping for the rest of the game that it works. If it were that easy, wouldn't we all be NHL coaches?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

Brind'Amour clearly knows Svechnikov is good. He knows Martin Necas is good. He also knows a thing or two about depth scoring, and this team is talented enough throughout the lineup for the stars to make things happen.

Speaking of depth scoring, can we talk about Nino Niederreiter—Vincent Trocheck—Necas? What other second/third line in the NHL has a combined 20 goals through 16 games? I also think a huge reason Jordan Staal has been thriving is there's considerably less pressure than ever for him to overperform now that the Canes aren't just a one-line team. And oh, maybe Brind'Amour spreads things out to relieve unnecessary pressure in the first place.

Last night I got home during the second intermission to catch the postgame Zoom, and Abby Labar's boyfriend, AKA our other roommate, was sitting on the couch. I was complaining to him about how much I hate cliches, then I said Cedric Paquette adds some much-needed sandpaper to the Hurricanes' lineup, then 45 seconds later Tripp Tracy said the same thing verbatim on the broadcast. Well, folks, he also added a team-high six hits Saturday and his first goal with the Hurricanes against his former team." You couldn't write a better script than that," he said. We definitely tried.

It seems like the Hurricanes defense is finally back to normal, and that has everything to do with Jaccob Slavin saying he felt off the first few games and now feels better. You're going to see that a lot this season.

Someone tweeted: "Jake Bean good," at me, and I have to agree. He told me earlier this season that he actually thought he'd play better in the NHL because he's so offense-oriented and he'd be able to dish it to people who are more likely to actually score. He has four assists in his past four games and is PP2 QB material.

Speaking of Krug, I don't know where else to talk about this but I need to report it. Dougie Hamilton saw this:

Then he told Stormy the Ice Hog that he needed a Stormy hat. Like, not the Canes PR or Tom Dundon or something, he went straight to Stormy the Ice Hog. Absolutely beelined it straight to the source. Not a month later, there we were.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203700 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning seek net gains against Carolina

By Eduardo A. Encina

Published Earlier today

Updated Earlier today

The Lightning were down only a goal just about five minutes into the second period Saturday night when forward Blake Coleman had an open look at the net from the left circle. It's the best one he would have all night.

Instead of putting the puck on goal, Coleman flipped it back through traffic toward defenseman Victor Hedman, who was trailing in the slot. The Lightning lost possession and one of their best scoring opportunities of the game in their 4-0 loss at Carolina.

"Nine times out of 10, I'm shooting that puck," Coleman said Sunday, replaying the lost opportunity in his mind. "So things like that, when you're playing your game and you're feeling good, it's a no-brainer shot. Things like that we've just got to get back to."

The loss was the Lightning's third in four games, and in two of those — both against Carolina — Tampa Bay has yet to score. This from a team that ranks third in the league in scoring.

With so much skill on their roster, sometimes the Lightning's worst enemy can be themselves.

Against the Hurricanes, who pressure relentlessly and frustrate teams by taking away their space, the Lightning found themselves being too fine — trying too hard to find the perfect opportunity — in a one-goal game. And before they knew it, after a couple of turnovers led to goals, they ended the night looking at a four-goal loss.

"We've just got to do a better job of getting pucks and bodies to the net," Coleman said. "I didn't think we really tested their goalie (Saturday). We made a lot of perimeter shot attempts and things like that but nothing real, real dangerous from inside the hash or scoring areas. So for me, personally, I just have got to make sure I'm doing a better job getting into the blue paint, getting pucks there, getting my body there, whatever it is. You've got to score some ugly ones against this team."

Assistant coach Derek Lalonde said the Lightning call it their "shot scramble" game, and it's a big reason why they won the Stanley Cup last season.

In games in which the Lightning have struggled, it has been an issue. Constantly putting shots on goal breaks down a defense, and the law of averages says if a team holds true, eventually the defensive wall an opponent builds will break against the caliber of offense the Lightning have.

"I think it's an identity thing," Lalonde said. "When you play a really good team that defends well in this day and age of how teams are committed to playing in front of their goal, there's always five players usually between the player and the scoring area or the net."

"You have to shoot the puck. You need to get the puck to the net, and then you hopefully break them down now from there. And for the most part, over the last couple years, we've had good buy-in with that. But it's always a hard reminder when you play a really good team that's committed to playing the right way all the time. That's why it's hard to win in this league. But you got to be committed to it. It'll be our message going forward."

So far, the Central Division-leading Hurricanes (12-3-1, 25 points) — who have dropped the Lightning (10-4-1, 21 points) down to fourth place — have figured out how to stop Tampa Bay's offense. But with three more games against Carolina coming up this week, starting Monday, the Lightning are looking to make adjustments. That starts with putting more pucks on net.

"A lot of those shots create second-chance opportunities," said Alex Killorn, who passed up on a shot on a two-on-one break in the second period Saturday. "We've been trying to get a little too pretty with it. Maybe because it's worked in the past, but against a team like this who's so defensively sound, they don't give up much. You got to get those greasy ones and just get as many shots on (net) to increase the odds."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203647 Florida Panthers

Red Wings Hold Off Panthers 2-1 After Brome's 1st NHL Goal

By CBSMiami.com TeamFebruary 21, 2021 at 10:42 am

DETROIT (AP) — Mathias Brome scored his first NHL goal late in the second period, and the Detroit Red Wings held on for a 2-1 victory over the Florida Panthers on Saturday.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

Patrik Nemeth also scored his first goal of the season for the Red Wings, who won for only the second time in seven games. Detroit rebounded from a 7-2 loss to the Panthers the previous night.

"I had the same thing happen in my first year in Sweden — I went 13 or 14 games before I got my first point — so I know it will come when you keep creating chances," Brome said. "I would be more worried if I didn't have any chances."

Alex Wennberg scored for Florida in the first period, but the Panthers allowed two goals in the second.

"I think we had a flat second period," Florida forward Frank Vatrano said. "Obviously they're going to be a hungrier team today with the performance they had yesterday."

With the score tied at 1, Dylan Larkin got open in the slot for Detroit. Goalie Sergei Bobrovsky stopped his shot, but Brome was there to put away the rebound. It was the rookie forward's first career point in his 18th NHL game.

Detroit's Anthony Mantha hit the post on a breakaway with just under four minutes remaining in the third, but the Red Wings didn't end up needing the insurance goal.

There was a moment of silence before the game after the death of Sergei Tchekmarev, a longtime team masseur for the Red Wings.

"This was obviously a very, very difficult 24 hours for us," Larkin said. "It was a tough game, which happens in this league, but more importantly to lose a friend — someone we cared about so much, and he returned that back 1000 times more with everyone he met. I tried my hardest and a lot of guys tried their hardest to come to the rink tonight with the same enthusiasm he always had."

Florida opened the scoring on the power play. Wennberg was left alone in front and had time to stickhandle a bit. The puck eventually bounced back to him off goalie Jonathan Bernier's stick, and Wennberg was able to slam it in for his fifth goal of the season.

Nemeth tied it in the following period, beating Bobrovsky to the glove side with a wrist shot from the left circle.

"We gave 'em two free goals, and to me that was the difference," Florida coach Joel Quenneville said.

The loss cost Florida a sweep of its four-game trip. In fact, it was the first regulation loss on the road for the Panthers this season. They'd been 6-0-1.

Bernier made 38 saves.

NOTES: The Red Wings assigned D Alex Biega to the taxi squad. ... Detroit went 0 for 2 on the power play, its 12th straight game without scoring with the man advantage. ... Florida had 16 shots in the third period.

UP NEXT

Panthers: Host the Dallas Stars on Monday night.

Red Wings: Host the Nashville Predators on Tuesday night.

Miami Herald LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203662 Nashville Predators

Five 'big' Nashville Predators names who could be gone if struggles continue

PAUL SKRBINA

Imagine the Nashville Predators with no Ryan Ellis. Or no Viktor Arvidsson. Or no Ryan Johansen.

That reality might not be far from the imagination should the team continue its slide this season.

Goodbye, 2017. Hello, 2024.

Eleven players still with the organization were there for the Stanley Cup run nearly four years ago. They were part of the organization the following season, when the team won the Presidents' Trophy, making it difficult to fathom how they have fallen so far so fast.

We recently suggested three players - Mattias Ekholm, Mikael Granlund and Brad Richardson - who could very well be gone before the April 12 trade deadline.

But what happens after that if the season continues on this track?

General manager David Poile, who has been hesitant to overhaul the roster since those glory days, might have his hand forced or risk facing more gory days. He might have to resort to his original plan of a youth movement.

Poile might be trying to deal players whose values have gone significantly down. Nobody said pain wasn't involved in a rebuild. He also might be tempted to expose players in this summer's expansion draft - see: Johansen, et al. - in hopes he can unload some of those contracts.

Patience, prospect development and shrewd trades can be part of the process too.

Nobody save for captain Roman Josi, who has a no-movement clause, should be deemed untouchable. Well, except maybe Filip Forsberg.

Kyle Turris didn't work out and was bought out. Johansen did work out after he was traded for Seth Jones. He helped them to that Stanley Cup Final. Then, for the last two seasons, he didn't. Matt Duchene, so far, hasn't lived up to his \$8 million per year billing after Poile unloaded P.K. Subban to get him.

Arvidsson has shown flashes of offensive prowess but he's been injury prone.

The list goes on and on.

WINNERS, LOSERS: Nashville Predators and NHL Central Division: Winners, losers from Week 5

Here's a list of potential "big" names who might make sense to deal, keeping in mind that big contracts could be difficult to move with the uncertain status of the salary cap:

Ryan Ellis

Age: 30

Position: Defenseman

Contract status/cap hit: Signed through 2026-27/\$6.25 million

The skinny: Probably the Predators most valuable trade piece come the offseason. He's a proven veteran who has paired well with the Norris Trophy-winning Josi. Has seven consecutive seasons with at least 27 points and is averaging a career-high 24:47 in ice time this season. He could land the Predators some high draft picks, though the alternate captain could be a difficult one to let go.

Viktor Arvidsson

Age: 27

Position: Forward

Contract status/cap hit: Signed through 2023-24/\$4.25 million

The skinny: Holds the franchise's single-season record for goals with 34, but injuries have dragged those numbers down in recent seasons. Has a



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

career-worst 3.8 shooting percentage this season. Managed just 28 points in 57 games last season. Twice he's scored 61 points, so there would be interest.

Ryan Johansen

Age: 28

Position: Forward

Contract status/cap hit: Signed through 2024-25/\$8 million

The skinny: Has zero points at even strength this season, the same number of goals he has overall. His downward slide last season has leaked into this one. Five times he's hit 60 points, including one 71-point season. But he had just 36 last year. He could be a candidate for exposure in the expansion draft this summer, if Poile can convince the Seattle Kraken to take him.

Matt Duchene

Age: 30

Position: Forward

Contract status/cap hit: Signed through 2025-26/\$8 million

The skinny: He had 13 goals and 29 assists in his first season with the Predators last year, after signing as a free agent. Twice he's reached 70 points. But unloading him at his age with his contract could prove tricky.

Filip Forsberg

Age: 26

Position: Forward

Contract status/cap hit: Signed through 2021-22/\$6 million

The skinny: Probably the most promising offensive threat the team has. Six times he's scored at least 20 goals. A contract extension might be more in order than a trade, though he certainly would be attractive to other teams. If Poile can somehow pull off another trade or two like he did when he acquired Forsberg from the Capitals, the team would be better off keeping him.

Tennessean LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203729 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Urgency for Canadiens to bust slump ratchets up after loss to Senators

Eric Engels February 21, 2021, 11:47 PM

This feels like a breaking point for the Montreal Canadiens, who are hanging their heads over a 3-2 overtime loss to an Ottawa Senators team bringing up the rear in the all-Canadian North Division.

That's four in the last five, it's five of the last seven, and the Canadiens need to pick themselves up and reverse this immediately before it gets any further out of hand.

So here's looking at Claude Julien and his coaching staff; at 35-year-old captain Shea Weber; at alternates Paul Byron and Brendan Gallagher; at struggling forwards Phillip Danault and Tomas Tatar; at Carey Price; at Stanley Cup winners Jake Allen, Joel Edmundson, Tyler Toffoli and Corey Perry.

Because it's not up to 20-year-old Jesperi Kotkaniemi or 21-year-old Nick Suzuki to steady this group and get it back on the rails.

Though it is Suzuki who identified why the Canadiens have only managed more than two goals in just one of their last seven games.

"I think we're pretty much all up in our own heads right now," he said after scoring 1:17 into Sunday's game and making a mistake that started the play that led to a goal at the other end eight minutes and 30 seconds later. "I think just overthinking it, playing not to lose, and that's never a good thing to do. I think at the start of the season we were real energized and everyone was having fun. It's just that's gotten away from us."

Julien is in his 18th season behind an NHL bench. He's seen enough of these bad stretches to know where the solution lies.

"It's just a matter of simplifying your game and playing with some confidence and making things happen," he said. "At the end of the day, we should've simplified our game. Some of the breakaways we give is we're playing high-risk hockey at times. We're making some decisions that are high-risk and it ends up costing us. So we just need to settle down here and play a more stable type of game."

Julien unimpressed by Canadiens sloppy play in loss to Senators

Julien must get the Canadiens to do that immediately—after they played right into Toronto's hands on Saturday and gave the Senators four power plays, five breakaways and the game-winning goal Brady Tkachuk scored on Sunday—or that 7-1-2 start to the season won't be the only thing flushed away. He needs to get his message across, get back to the drawing board on a power play that started well and has since scored just once over its last 19 opportunities, and he needs to help re-install some confidence in his group.

But Julien can't do it alone. He can't do it at all without the veterans we mentioned above passing on his message.

That Perry echoed it post-game is a sign Julien still has his team's attention.

"We just have to limit our mistakes, limit the turnovers," the 35-year-old, who scored late in the third period to tie the game 2-2, said. "It's all about us. We sometimes give them more than they deserve and that's about taking care of the pucks in the right situations and knowing what's on the clock or whatever it is. We'll fix it, and we'll move forward."

The Canadiens can't afford another step back. They've got another game against this plucky Senators team Tuesday before two to close out the week against a Winnipeg Jets team that pulled ahead in the standings. Everything has tightened around them, with Edmonton surging and the struggling Calgary Flames and Vancouver Canucks not far behind.

And you can tell the Canadiens feel the walls closing in.

Suzuki confirmed it, saying he can sense the tension on the ice, on the bench and in the room.

"Overthinking is a big thing in hockey," he said. "I've gone through it the last few games (he went four without a point prior to Sunday's game). I'm just trying to play simple. I know we're not scoring as much as we did at the start of the season. We know we have to bear down on those chances and a couple of those opportunities to shoot where we're looking to pass. We've just got to keep it simple as a team and get back to basics of what we were doing before."

No one expected the Canadiens were going to continue scoring four-and-a-half goals per game like they did over their first 10, but they can't be forcing things so much and sacrificing their defensive structure to get over three.

They made a mess of things against Ottawa. If it wasn't for Allen, who made 36 saves—six of them in the dying minutes on plays that could've ended the game well before Tkachuk one-timed a puck that banked off exhausted Canadiens defenceman Alexander Romanov—this game never would've made it to overtime.

"He gave us a great performance, and gave us a chance to at least get a point," said Julien.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

And Allen spent the rest of his night watching the Canadiens work hard but not smart.

"No question goals are tough to come by right now, but that's going to happen," he said. "They were pouring in at the start of the year. They're drying up a little bit right now. They'll come back. We have too good players and too many guys that work too hard in this locker room for the puck to not go in the net. It's gonna come."

It has to. Not now, but right now.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203730 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / With Maple Leafs, Galchenyuk has final chance to carve out his place in NHL

Chris Johnston

February 21, 2021, 3:48 PM

TORONTO -- Alex Galchenyuk may be down to his final chance.

It's no secret that the doubters significantly outnumber the believers when you're joining your seventh organization after recently going unclaimed on the NHL's waiver wire while owning a contract that can be buried entirely in the minors.

Where exactly the Toronto Maple Leafs fall on that scale isn't clear.

Galchenyuk was a risk-free acquisition for them and helped free up a valuable contract slot since the Leafs traded two low-depth players to the Carolina Hurricanes last Monday to take him. But they are an intriguing landing spot for the 27-year-old forward due to their heavy resources and a nine-member player development staff that should be able to help salvage anything still salvageable in the former third-overall draft pick.

At this stage, he's a reclamation project for a first-place team that is under no pressure to play him. The Leafs are making a modest bet with the possibility of some upside and the onus is entirely on Galchenyuk to prove there's a future brighter than his recent past.

"We can sit here and talk all day about my career ... but that's not where my head is," he said Sunday. "My head is here and I'm really excited to be here."

Home of the Leafs

Stream 38 Toronto Maple Leafs games this season with Sportsnet NOW. Plus, SN NOW+ subscriptions now include access to NHL LIVE!

CHOOSE PLAN

His head was spinning a week ago when he celebrated a birthday by getting traded to the Hurricanes from the Ottawa Senators. He was instructed to remain in Canada while Carolina general manager Don Waddell offered him around to the six other North Division teams, reasoning that his quarantine-exempt status would carry some added value during a season where any player typically added from a U.S.-based organization isn't available to skate for 14 days because of federal regulations.

After being passed through the waiver wire, Galchenyuk was eventually dealt for the second time in a little more than 48 hours -- acquired by the Leafs for Egor Korshkov and David Warsofsky.

"It was a pretty wild couple days," said Galchenyuk.

He was given a couple days to pack up his life in Ottawa and joined the Leafs for his first skate at Scotiabank Arena on Thursday morning. Within minutes, Randi Milani -- the team's assistant skating development

consultant -- pulled out an iPad and was recording him taking strides up and down the ice.

Galchenyuk's career was forged on his offensive abilities. He possesses a heavy shot and was a skilled playmaker in his prime, but he hasn't been able to cultivate other areas of his game while seeing the minutes and production dry up over time.

He arrives in Toronto looking to "just be fully me."

"You know, deserve that opportunity and then stick with it," said Galchenyuk. "Keep working, keep attacking, keep playing aggressive and go out there and make plays. That's my game. And compete."

"I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

It's not clear how soon he might find himself playing for a 14-3-2 Leafs team that is pretty crowded up front. However, when he eventually gets a chance to join Sheldon Keefe's lineup, he'll almost certainly find himself with linemates who possess offensive ability.

Jason Spezza, Travis Boyd, Jimmy Vesey and Nic Petan are among those who have been pulling down fourth-line minutes of late.

All Keefe has told Galchenyuk so far is to get settled in his new surroundings and stay ready. The organization clearly has modest expectations.

"With his skillset and what he's accomplished in the league, we see great potential there for him," Keefe said last week. "But obviously, he's a guy that's trying to find his way and find his game."

Galchenyuk is a long way removed from his 30-goal season with the Montreal Canadiens but he was a productive NHLer as recently as two years ago. He's seen his rope get progressively shorter, though, with a 418-game stint in Montreal followed by 72 games in Arizona, 45 games in Pittsburgh, 14 games in Minnesota, eight games in Ottawa and no games in Carolina.

This could be the last NHL stop if he doesn't carve out a niche with the Leafs.

At least Galchenyuk finds himself in a place with all of the available tools and resources needed to better himself. It's been difficult to see a once-promising career crumble so quickly, but he's still got a chance to live his dream.

"Even if there wasn't hockey involved, I've been moving a few places throughout the last years. It was tough, but it's part of life," he said. "It's exciting, depends how you look at it."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203731 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Emotional Crosby reflects on bond with Malkin, Letang after 1,000th game

ThomasKetkoFebruary 21, 2021, 1:01 AM

One thousand games into his NHL career, it wasn't just the Stanley Cups or the MVP awards, the All-Star nods or the gold medals that were on Sidney Crosby's mind. It was the people he shared them with.

The list of names he's skated alongside is long, as one would expect it to be at this point in his storied career. But, after a day of celebrating all he achieved and all he's become over his 16-year NHL journey, two pivotal characters in his hockey story stood out: Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang.

"We've been through so much together," Crosby said following his 1,000th game, a 3-2 win against the New York Islanders. "To be able to



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

play here together, to basically come in together as young players trying to figure things out, go through what we've gone through, whether it be individually with injuries and being there to support one another, winning championships together, there's a lot of history there. A lot of great memories."

Both Letang and Malkin were central to the festivities Pittsburgh organized to commemorate Crosby's milestone. Along with the rest of the Penguins, they wore sweaters featuring Crosby's No. 87 for pre-game warmups and partook in his iconic ritual of undoing, and then re-tying his skates on the ice.

"Crosby is going to be the one that keeps [the goal pucks]," Letang said after scoring two goals in the win. "It's his night. It's a special one... I'm just going to keep my warmup jersey."

During a heartwarming pre-game video tribute, which wove together iconic moments from Game 1 through 999 with congratulatory thoughts from Crosby's family, his idol Steve Yzerman, and fellow players like John Tavares and Steven Stamkos, it was the words of Letang that were especially poignant.

"Three Cups, Conn Smythe, Hart Trophies, you did it all and it was a pleasure for me to be next to you for all those great moments," Letang said during the tribute. "Everybody is watching you and they can learn from you and I'm the first one to have done it for 1,000 games. ... But the most important thing is I got a friend, and you're going to be my friend forever."

When the video concluded, Letang and Malkin joined Crosby on the ice to present him with a mosaic, composed of images from each of the Penguins captain's regular-season games to date, and the iconic hand-forged silver stick awarded to NHLers upon crossing the 1,000-game threshold.

To see three of the most iconic Penguins figures from the last two decades standing there, side by side, smiling in that moment looked scripted. Pre-determined, even. The kind of scene one would expect in any great story about the game.

But there was a time in the early 2010s when concussions and their aftershocks threatened Crosby's playing future. Letang endured both concussions and a stroke, all before turning 30. Malkin simultaneously tore his ACL and MCL in his left knee.

Any one of those events could have turned celebrating a milestone for longevity into a what-if. Instead, the ending still isn't here yet. And on this night, with 1,000 games' worth of memories swirling around them, they stood together.

"To know that they were a part of it tonight, and when you come back and reflect and think about all those things, definitely hard to keep it together," Crosby said. "Didn't help when I looked over and saw Geno having a hard time, too."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203732 Websites

TSN.CA / Campbell practises with Leafs; unsure about return to game action

By Mark Masters

The Maple Leafs held an optional practice on Sunday at Ford Performance Centre.

For the first time since sustaining a leg injury on Jan. 24, Jack Campbell practiced with teammates on Sunday. However, it remains unclear when he will be ready to return to Toronto's crease.

"I'm feeling really good," the goalie said. "I'm just focusing on feeling a little bit better each day and getting the rust off and today was a great start. I had a blast out there with the fellas. It was a good first step and we'll see what the trainers have for me tomorrow."

Campbell got hurt late in a game at Calgary, but stayed in during the final few minutes to help preserve a win.

"I just wasn't going to come out of that game," he recalled. "We traveled the day before, no morning skate, three minutes left, I can handle an injury, per se. It's not fun to do that, but asking Freddie [Andersen] to go in with three minutes left after sitting on the bench for three hours, it's not a great thing to do so I definitely wasn't coming out."

Campbell is 2-0-0 on the year with a .923 save percentage.

"It's a little frustrating," the 29-year-old admitted. "I worked pretty hard this summer to make sure this didn't happen two games in but, you know, you can't really control it once it's happened. I've learned a lot about my body since then and just working on some things in the gym. Thankfully, we have great people here to help us and it's been great to see the boys winning so that's been a big plus."

Campbell refused to share specific details about the injury saying that was up to the coaches and management.

Andersen has started 11 of 12 games since Campbell got hurt posting eight wins and a .909 save percentage in that stretch.

"Man, he's been tremendous," Campbell gushed. "It's not easy to ask a guy to play that many in a row and play to that level every game."

Andersen's ability to bounce back has been notable this season.

Saturday night was the latest example as Andersen saw Montreal erase Toronto's 2-0 lead in a matter of 33 seconds during a wild second period.

"He just looks calm, confident and his presence has been a big confidence builder for our team," Campbell said. "It's been awesome."

How does Andersen work on the mental side of the game?

"It's a long conversation we can have later, but I think just have someone you trust and work with outside of hockey," he said. "On a personal level, just keep getting better at it. It's not something you can ever perfect, but it's something you can be as good as as possible. When you do make mistakes you'll come back quicker and recover for the next play."

Andersen leads the National Hockey League in games started (16).

After the Leafs squandered that 2-0 advantage on Saturday, Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner teamed up to restore the lead. Zach Bogosian fed Matthews at the Montreal blue line with Toronto's No. 1 centre then absorbing a hit from burly Canadiens defenceman Shea Weber to spring Marner.

"Matts saw [Weber] coming there," Marner said. "I was talking to him. It's a great little area pass and I think that's one of my first look-offs on a two-on-one, but lucky enough it worked out."

Marner's decision to make a play on his own rather than feed Travis Boyd was another sign of his growing confidence in his shot. Matthews' decision to take a hit to make a play was further evidence of his high hockey IQ and desire to do what's necessary to win.

"I want to score," Matthews said after the game. "I want to produce and do those things, but I've been trying to do little things that help the team win and put the momentum back on our side too. It's [about] more than scoring goals, but obviously that's what I'm here to do and that's what I want to do. But just playing that full 200-foot game and competing night in and night out, that's really all I've been looking at, looking for myself to do."

Matthews is doing that extremely well right now with linemate Joe Thornton even suggesting he deserves to be up for the Selke Trophy along with the Hart Trophy.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

"I'm just so impressed with his demeanour," said Campbell. "He's obviously a superstar and does everything incredible, but he also puts the work in, things not everybody sees. He comes in every day and he has his own stuff that he's got going on. He puts himself in position to go out and dominate and that's what he's been doing. Obviously, you got to give credit to the boys and I'm sure he'd be the first one to give credit to his linemates, but watching him at this level is special and [we're] not taking it for granted."

Matthews has a remarkable 18 goals in 18 games this season and has only been held without a point once. It's hard to put into words what he's doing.

"He's playing at a different level right now," forward Alex Kerfoot observed. "It seems like he's playing a different game than most guys out there. I don't have any more adjectives other than what you guys have been using."

"Get him the puck," Marner said. "The guy's on fire now. When our line comes out of our zone with the puck in our hands, we're pretty confident we can do some pretty good things in the offensive zone."

Marner is second in the NHL with 30 points while leading all forwards in average ice time (22 minutes and 40 seconds).

"Auston is setting new standards it seems every day for himself and thus our team as he's carrying us to great things," said coach Sheldon Keefe, "but I think it's also important that we recognize the play of Mitch Marner here and how he's really teamed up with Auston and they're pushing each other to new heights. It's been fun to watch that."

'They're pushing each other to new heights': Matthews, Marner magic drives Leafs

Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner continued their incredible start to the season on Saturday in Montreal. "They're pushing each other to new heights," said coach Sheldon Keefe. Matthews scored twice against the Canadiens and is now up to 18 goals in 18 games. Can Marner sum up what his pal is doing? "No one can," Marner said. "Get him the puck ... The guy's on fire."

The Leafs will be facing a desperate team on Monday night as the Calgary Flames arrive in Toronto having lost three straight including a 7-1 drubbing at the hands of the Edmonton Oilers on Saturday night.

"They've got the best player," Matthew Tkachuk said of the Leafs, "the guy who's playing the best in the league right now on their team. Similar to what we've seen the past two games here against [Connor] McDavid, a big test. Big test and we're really going to see what we got these next two games."

The Leafs swept two close games in Calgary in January with Tkachuk featuring prominently in both encounters. In the first game, he fell on Campbell late in the third period when the Leafs goalie was already ailing with the leg injury. After Toronto won the next game, Jake Muzzin flipped the puck at Tkachuk right after the buzzer sounded sending the Flames winger into a rage.

"We're playing arguably the best team in the league these next two games," Tkachuk said after Saturday's loss. "They're going to be intense games because they came into our rink and took it to us two games. It's our turn to do a little payback here."

Calgary-born winger William Nylander didn't see the ice for the last eight minutes and 45 seconds of Saturday's game.

"Both [Saturday] and last game he's had a lot of really good stretches where he's got good legs and he looks real dangerous like he's ready to break out," Keefe said. "I didn't like some of the things [Saturday] once we got the lead. As a team, I didn't think we did great things in the second period, but in the third period we really got it going the way we wanted to and I didn't think Willy matched that."

After Columbus coach John Tortorella benched star Patrik Laine earlier this month, Keefe was asked by TSN about his philosophy when it comes to in-game discipline.

"Everything is situational," Keefe said. "It's usually an accumulation of things. You don't overact to one incident or one different thing. For me, it's usually the end of a long line of events that have occurred with a lot of communication and discussion. It's not something I resort to all that often."

Nylander has failed to produce a point in seven of the last eight games. Keefe attempted to generate a spark in Thursday's blow-out win over the Senators by giving Nylander shifts with Matthews in the third period while John Tavares got to ride shotgun with Marner.

In the last two games, Tavares and Nylander have been joined on their line by Kerfoot.

"We can still get better," Kerfoot said on Saturday night. "We've had some O-zone sequences, but we gave up a few too many odd-man rushes against and we've got to tighten that up. Those two guys are great players and it's a lot of fun when I'm able to go out there play with them. I just try to bring a little bit of energy, bring my speed, get in on the forecheck and retrieve some pucks."

The line got on the board Saturday after Nylander was benched. Jason Spezza took Nylander's spot for a shift and set up Kerfoot during a two-on-one rush.

William Nylander didn't see the ice during the final eight minutes and 45 seconds of Saturday's game in Montreal. "In the third period, we really got it going the way we wanted to and I didn't think Willy matched that," Leafs head coach Sheldon Keefe explained. Nylander has been held without a point in eight of Toronto's last nine games.

Kerfoot took that spot on the second line when Zach Hyman missed Thursday's game due to injury. The gritty winger returned to action on Saturday, but slotted in on the third line with Pierre Engvall and Ilya Mikheyev.

"He's far from 100 per cent here," Keefe acknowledged, "but getting a game off, it seemed like he had a little extra legs, especially in that third period. He was putting on a clinic with how he was on the puck."

Hyman sustained the initial injury after blocking a shot off his foot in Wednesday's game against Ottawa. He blocked another shot off the foot in the second period on Saturday.

Even with Hyman hobbled, Keefe was pleased with how the third unit meshed.

"That line was on the offensive side of the red line most of the game," the coach observed. "Those three guys didn't seem like a lot of fun for Montreal."

Alex Galchenyuk addressed the media for the first time since being traded from Ottawa to Carolina and then Toronto during a 48-hour stretch last weekend.

Galchenyuk, the third overall pick in the 2012 NHL draft, has suited up for five different teams during the last three years.

"I'm not going to sit here and talk a lot about what went right and what went wrong," he said. "We can sit here and talk all day about my career and the turns, but that's not where my head is. My head is here, and I'm really excited to be here."

What's his mindset now?

"Just be fully me and, you know, deserve the opportunity," he said. "And then stick with it. Keep working. Keep attacking. Keep playing aggressive and keep going out there and making plays. That's my game. And compete. That's the biggest thing."

Tuesday will be Galchenyuk's first full practice with the Leafs.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

TSN's Kristen Shilton has more on Galchenyuk's outlook here

The Leafs held a practice designed for players who didn't suit up in Montreal, but Spezza never seems to miss a chance to hit the ice. The 37-year-old snuck on for a quick workout only hours after landing back home. The others on the ice on Sunday were Galchenyuk, Nic Petan, Alexander Barabanov, Scott Sabourin, Mikko Lehtonen and Campbell.

TSN.CA LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203733 Websites

TSN.CA / Galchenyuk excited to settle in with Leafs after rocky few seasons

By Kristen Shilton

TORONTO — Alex Galchenyuk might never have predicted a career trajectory that went from high first-round draft choice to landing with six different teams in the last three years. But following his trade from Carolina to the Maple Leafs last weekend, Galchenyuk is decidedly uninterested in focusing on his rocky past, when there is still a potentially hopeful future ahead.

"We can sit here and talk about what went right, what went wrong," Galchenyuk told reporters on a Zoom call Sunday following some on-ice sessions at Ford Performance Centre. "But I think that's part of playing hockey, playing the sport. There was a lot of great times. We can sit here and talk all day about my career and the turns, but that's not where my head is. My head is here, and I'm really excited to be here."

How he arrived in Toronto has been a winding road, punctuated by the events set in motion eight days ago. That's when, on Feb. 13, Galchenyuk was traded by Ottawa to Carolina for Ryan Dzingel and then subsequently placed on waivers. When he cleared, Galchenyuk was traded again, this time to the Leafs for Egor Korshkov and David Warsofsky. All that went down over the span of an eventful 48 hours — both personally and professionally.

"It was a pretty wild couple days," Galchenyuk admitted. "Definitely a big weekend, and I turned 27 too [on Feb. 12] at that time, so a big couple days. [Carolina] had just told me to sit tight [after the trade] and they'd let me know what the plan was the next [morning], and then the next morning I was on waivers."

That wouldn't be the first time in recent years that Galchenyuk has been staring down the barrel of imminent change.

The third overall pick by Montreal in the 2012 NHL Entry Draft, Galchenyuk faced the weight of expectations that come with being such a selection. He tried living up to them with the Canadiens, appearing in 418 games and amassing 108 goals and 255 points. His best season to date unfurled with a 56-point campaign in 2015-16, the only time Galchenyuk has ever hit the 30-goal mark.

In June 2018, Galchenyuk's time in Montreal came to abrupt end, when he was shipped to Arizona in exchange for Max Domi. He'd spend one season there, appearing in 72 games with 19 goals and 41 points.

Then it was off to the next stop, this time via trade to Pittsburgh, where Galchenyuk almost immediately suffered a lower-body injury that would hold him to just 45 games and 17 points for the Penguins before he was traded to Minnesota. Galchenyuk appeared in 14 regular season games for the Wild and notched seven points, and went on to skate in four postseason contests as well.

By late October, Galchenyuk had signed a one-year, \$1.05 million free agent contract with Ottawa, but started out the season for them as a healthy scratch. When he did get in, Galchenyuk failed to record a point

in his first seven games, and ended up with one goal in eight total appearances before the trade to Carolina.

While he never actually reported to the Hurricanes, the whole experience has been a whirlwind for Galchenyuk, and he's happy now just to be focused on hockey.

"[The hardest part] is the move itself from one place to another," he said. "It's not really hockey things, but trying to find a home and this and that. But obviously over the years you meet a lot of guys, a lot of teammates and then you bring some friendships along the way, and then there's a new system now, everything is new. But it's part of life and it's exciting [to get going]."

One teammate who was especially glad to see Galchenyuk in the fold is goaltender Jack Campbell. After Galchenyuk did a 30-minute practice session with Leafs' assistant skating consultant Randi Milani, he joined Campbell, who's rehabbing from a leg injury suffered on Jan. 24, to do some on-ice work together.

Campbell goes back a long way with the winger, to when they both played in the Ontario Hockey League from 2010-12. Moving up through hockey's ranks, Campbell also faced Galchenyuk when he was netminder for the Los Angeles Kings, and couldn't resist resurrecting a memorable encounter when the two shared a dressing room for the first time.

"He actually ripped a one-timer by me in preseason like three years ago in Arizona," Campbell laughed. "And when I saw him the first time, I said, 'Remember the shot?' and he was like, 'Oh yeah!' It was cool; I'm glad he's on this side now. I like his demeanour out there, he has fun but he works really hard and I think everybody will see how skilled he is too so I'm really excited to have him."

The goaltender isn't the only familiar face for Galchenyuk in Toronto. He was taken in that 2012 draft just two spots ahead of where the Leafs took Morgan Rielly, and Galchenyuk said they've stayed in touch over the years after getting to know one another during pre-draft events.

More than anything though, Galchenyuk is anxious to actually bring his skill set into the Leafs' lineup, although he admits head coach Sheldon Keefe hasn't told him much about when or where that might happen.

"I haven't spoken a lot about a plan or where [I'll play] and all that stuff," he said. "[Keefe told me to] just keep getting better, stay prepared, stay ready and I'll get my opportunity."

Until that time comes, Galchenyuk intends to continue tapping into the Leafs' skill and development team to ensure he's ready to make good on his chance.

"Skill is a big part of my game," he said. "I'll keep working on it and be dialed and then keep focusing on making a few adjustments and then keep working on the traits of the game. Today was the first time I had to pretty much touch base on some things [with the skills' staff] and I'm looking forward to that and keep working. Keep working, keep attacking, keep going out there and making plays. That's my game and you've just got to compete basically."

TSN.CA LOADED: 02.22.2021

1203734 Websites

USA TODAY / After Lake Tahoe, here are 10 places NHL should try to play outdoor games

Chris Bumbaca

Through one day, the NHL's Lake Tahoe experiment saw mixed results.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 22, 2021

Did it look great on TV? Yes, for the one period it was on before poor ice conditions — the sun turning the surface to slush — caused an eight-hour delay that pushed the game past midnight on the East Coast.

Regardless, the setting is undeniably cool. Events like this could find their way into the annual calendar, NHL chief content officer Steve Mayer said, although some more consideration toward the weather will have to be taken into account.

Here are some places the NHL should consider holding future outdoor contests.

Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada

The originally desired destination for this weekend's games, restrictions made playing there impossible. Hopefully those hurdles can be cleared during non-pandemic times to deliver a stunning presentation.

The Great Lakes

Dropping a rink on a frozen body of water could be treacherous, but the Great Lakes do freeze over in extreme temperatures, which appear more common in the Midwest each winter.

Some great hockey cities sit right on these lakes' shores, creating easy matchups and marketing opportunities. If Lake Michigan can one day freeze over, play it right off Navy Pier in Chicago and have the Blackhawks face a regional rival such as the Minnesota Wild. Viewing options from there for fans could perhaps be possible.

Grand Canyon

You want views? Are there many better than this? Temperatures drop low enough at sundown to make it possible, perhaps.

Pebble Beach

Or another oceanfront golf course. Waves crashing into the shore, a salty mist wafting overhead. Pebble Beach is likely too warm, so perhaps head up the West Coast for a chance to showcase the Seattle Kraken.

Central Park, New York City

The overhead shots of Central Park in Manhattan are already spellbinding. Having fans involved might be possible.

National Mall, Washington D.C.

Similar to the Central Park idea, see if the public can become involved, while playing a game between America's monuments.

Yosemite National Park

Set up a rink at Yosemite Village and stay for the natural beauty in one of the country's most treasured grounds. Glacier National Park in Montana, finding a frozen-over lake there, is another similar idea.

Aircraft carrier

Taking a page out of the college basketball playbook, the NHL can build an event around Veteran's Day and put on a showcase for the troops. A hockey game in the middle of the ocean? Pretty cool.

Bristol Motor Speedway

Michigan Stadium, "The Big House," hosted 100,000 hockey fans a few years back. Pack another non-hockey stadium to the gills here and construct the rink on the infield. Have near-ish teams Carolina and Nashville play.

Fairbanks, Alaska

No, not "Mystery, Alaska" a movie that served as the inspiration for more remote NHL outdoor games. But in Fairbanks, incorporating the Northern Lights would put the visuals over-the-top.

USA TODAY LOADED: 02.22.2021