



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 21, 2021

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Blue Jackets top Hurricanes 3-2 in a shootout after overtime drama

By Chip Alexander

Better settle in. All four games figure to be the same.

The Carolina Hurricanes and Columbus Blue Jackets only can play it one way, apparently: Tight.

So it went Saturday, and so it now has gone in the first two games of this four-game set, both needing more than 60 minutes to settle it.

The Blue Jackets won Saturday in a shootout, 3-2.

But only after Seth Jones tried the score 2-2 with 28.4 seconds left in regulation. Only after the Canes had an apparent winning power-play goal by Dougie Hamilton wiped out after a review and the ruling that Andrei Svechnikov preceded the puck into the zone and was offside.

"It's bad, you know. We were so close," said Svechnikov, who scored the Canes' first goal. "We were up 2-1 and they score. And it was kind of my fault in overtime. I went offside. I should have been patient."

Patrik Laine and Oliver Bjorkstrand had the shootout goals for Columbus (13-12-7), Bjorkstrand ending it in the fourth round after Laine had scored in the third round to extend it. Hamilton had the lone shootout goal for the Canes (20-7-3), who had won their last 10 shootouts and had not lost one since a 6-5 loss to Washington on Dec. 14, 2018.

Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins had robbed Martin Necas of a game-winning goal in the overtime, gloving a shot after a crisp move from his right to left after Sebastian Aho's setup pass. Hamilton then found the net on the 4-on-3 power play, but that was overruled.

Warren Foegele's goal with 4:13 left in the the third period pushed the Canes ahead 2-1. Foegele crashed the net, banged the puck past Merzlikins and then tumbled to the ice on an all-effort kind of play.

But after the Blue Jackets pulled Merzlikins for a sixth attacker, Jones unloaded from the top of the circle.

Svechnikov's second-period goal, also on a rebound, gave the Canes a 1-0 lead. Bjorkstrand tied it for the Blue Jackets in the opening minute of the third with a shot that glanced off a player in front of James Reimer.

Hamilton's assist on the Foegele score gave him points in 11 straight games, tying the franchise record for defensemen set by Mark Howe in 1980.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour called the game a "grind," which was a good description.

"It's a mental grind," he said. "You've got to stick to your game, you can't open up. We had the game won. Unfortunately things just didn't work out. Crazy ending in that overtime."

"Every time something bad happened we bounced back. In overtime, I thought we were really good. We had a bunch of good looks. Their goalie played really well."

The Blue Jackets won 3-2 Thursday in overtime after 60 minutes of tight-checking, physical play. It was more of the Saturday. Both teams took away time and space, clogged the neutral zone, blocked shots and put sticks on sticks in front of their net defensively.

Svechnikov's goal, his first 5-on-5 score since Feb. 4, came in the second period after Jordan Staal won a draw in the Columbus zone. During a puck battle to the side of the net, the puck bounced out to defenseman Brett Pesce, who fired a shot.

Svechnikov batted the puck in the net, then broke into a relieved smile. His recent scoring slump — two goals in 21 games before Saturday — had been frustrating for a player who expects so much from himself.

A look back

There are pluses and minuses to playing the same team four straight times, Foegele said Saturday.

The Canes and Blue Jackets matched up for a second time Saturday at PNC Arena, and they'll see each other two more times in Columbus this week.

"I think you treat it like every other game," Foegele said after the morning skate at PNC Arena. "The pluses are you try to find their weaknesses each game and try to make adjustments and try to capitalize on that."

"Minuses? I don't know if there are any minuses. Just that sometimes it's annoying playing the same team but that's the year we have right now."

Annoying is one word to describe the Blue Jackets (12-12-7) as an opponent. They're competitive, they're combative, much like their coach, John Tortorella. They're also looking to grind their way into playoff position in the Central Division, where the top four teams advance to the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Annoying? For Foegele, that was seeing Columbus goalie Joonas Korpisalo make a spectacular save on a Foegele shot Thursday. With Korpisalo down in the crease, Foegele had an open net but Korpisalo somehow stretched out to get his stick on Foegele's shot and stop it.

The Canes were leading 2-1. A Foegele goal could have been a backbreaker for Columbus, but the Blue Jackets tied the score and won in overtime 3-2.

"He's a good goalie. He's made that save, I don't know, that's his fourth time in the last two weeks on making the exact same save," Foegele said. "You put it away and you focus on the next game and you hope you get one on him next time."



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The lineup

Other than in net, Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour didn't change anything from Thursday. Same lineup, same lines, same defensive pairings.

Goalie James Reimer got his 17th start of the season after Alex Nedeljkovic started Thursday. Reimer had a four-game win streak end Tuesday in the 4-2 loss at Detroit.

Brind'Amour said there were no further updates on those who are injured: center Vincent Trocheck (upper body), forward Teuvo Teravainen (concussion) and goalie Petr Mrazek (thumb). None was at Saturday's morning skate.

Milestone for Waddell

Canes president and general manager Don Waddell will mark his 1,000th game as an NHL executive Saturday.

"He's been good because he's easy to talk to and there's good communication that way," Brind'Amour said Saturday. "It doesn't feel like he's the boss. He makes it feel like he's one of us, so to speak. I think that's been real positive around here and I think he's been great. A thousand games is a big deal."

Waddell previously was president and general manager of the Atlanta Thrashers. He first served as the Hurricanes' president before also taking on the dual job of president and GM in May 2018. The Canes have reached the playoffs the past two seasons.



Calls go against Hurricanes in 3-2 overtime loss to Columbus

The Blue Jackets benefitted from a no-call to tie the game late and Carolina had an overtime winner taken off the board

By Cory Lavalette

The Carolina Hurricanes had an overtime game-winner overturned by replay and then lost in the shootout to Columbus, coming out on the losing end for the third straight game and second in a row against the Blue Jackets in a 3-2 loss Saturday at PNC Arena.

Andrei Svechnikov and Warren Foegele scored for Carolina, and James Reimer made 29 saves in the loss.

Three Thoughts

1. There was an extra attacker goal that shouldn't have happened, a game-winning goal taken off the board, and the Hurricanes' first shootout loss in more than 27 months. Just add them all to the pile of the weird things that have happened in Columbus-Carolina games this season.

Carolina allowed a goal to Columbus defenseman Seth Jones with 29 seconds remaining to force overtime. But the goal probably should have never happened after Blue Jackets forward Jack Roslovic pushed Patrik Laine's felled stick back to his opposite winger — an illegal play that should have been a penalty. Laine went on to have the primary assist on Jones' goal.

Then the Hurricanes looked like they won the game in overtime, but a league-initiated replay correctly ruled Svechnikov offside earlier in the play when Carolina entered the zone. (More on this further down)

It might not be true irony, but it's at least worthy of an Alanis Morissette remix.

"You're preaching to the choir," Brind'Amour said of his team being sent to OT on a play that can't be reviewed yet getting denied in overtime because of replay. "I mean, it is what it is. ... I don't even get the (stick) rule anyway. Why can't the guy push the stick to them? What's the difference? But that's a rule.

"But you're not catching that live. ... Our sport's too hard to really referee live. You need a quick second look," Brind'Amour added, hinting again at his long-held belief that the NHL should move one referee from the ice to a booth with replay. "It'll come. It'll be 20 years, (and) I'll be long gone."

2. For as much heartbreak as the Hurricanes had in Saturday's loss, there was a silver lining. Any game against Columbus is going to look crowded and lack space, but Carolina found a way to carry play in all three periods and be the better team most of the night.

"I thought we all played hard," Foegele said. "We competed, and we know what the series against them is going to be. It's going to be tight and not much is given. You're gonna have to be gritty and just keep working hard and try to eliminate some of their chances.

"But I thought we played hard tonight — just unfortunate the way the results were."

Brind'Amour agreed.

"There's nothing not to like it other than the result," he said.

3. The Hurricanes continue to get dominant defensive efforts from the pairing of Brett Pesce and Brady Skjei. The duo both played more than 20 minutes at even strength while



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also helping Carolina stop both Columbus power play opportunities (Pesce was in the box for one of them).

Pesce has rightfully received praise this year for his play, but Skjei — after some up-and-down moments — has settled in as a perfect complement to No. 22. Skjei's offensive numbers are mostly nonexistent since he joined Carolina (four assists in 37 regular season games), but he's proven reliable both at even strength and also on the penalty kill.

He's also in the right role as a second-pairing shutdown defender. He's averaging 20:58 thus far this season, and that's perfectly in line with what he's done in the past three seasons — 20:41 in a season split between the Hurricanes and Rangers last year, and 21:14 and 21:02 the previous two years in New York.

And since joining the Hurricanes, Skjei's possession numbers have spiked from the mid-40s to the low 50s, usually against very tough competition with a lot of defensive zone starts. On Saturday, he was at 65.22% Corsi For and was on the ice for 30 of Carolina's 57 5-on-5 shot attempts.

The points will come for Skjei, but Brind'Amour has to be happy he has two pairings that are capable of dominating each night.

Number To Know

11 — Consecutive games with a point for Dougie Hamilton, who assisted on Foegele's third-period goal, tying him with former Whalers blueliner and Hall of Famer Mark Howe for the longest streak by a defenseman in franchise history. Hamilton is also now tied for fourth among all Hurricanes players since the franchise relocated to North Carolina. Sebastian Aho's 14-game streak last season is the record.

They Said It

"It's a weird, weird ending. We probably deserved better, but let's move on."

— Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour

Plus

Warren Foegele, Hurricanes forward — Two nights after he was caught deep in the Columbus zone in his first overtime ice time of the season, leading to the Blue Jackets' game-winning odd-man rush, Foegele put his hard-charging mentality to good use Saturday.

With just over four minutes remaining in regulation, Foegele crashed the net after a Hamilton shot and collected Brock McGinn's dribbling rebound attempt after fighting off Columbus' David Savard for the go-ahead goal.

It's the sixth goal of the season for Foegele, who surprisingly ranks third on the team in 5-on-5 expected goals and high-danger scoring chances behind Nino Niederreiter and Svechnikov. He's also played significantly fewer minutes than them this season — 320:19 in 27 games, compared to the 400-plus for Niederreiter, Svechnikov and Aho.

Minus

Andrei Svechnikov, Hurricanes forward — Carolina's young star winger got back in the goal column Saturday, but it was the goal that was taken away that will be remembered.

With the Hurricanes on a 4-on-3 power play in overtime, Dougie Hamilton rifled a shot past Elvis Merzlikins (35 saves) to seemingly give Carolina the win. But a look at the tape almost 20 seconds before the goal showed Svechnikov was offside on the zone entry — and not on a bang-bang play, but with Svechnikov clearly offside with both feet inside and standing perpendicular to the blue line.

"I just got too excited. I should have been a little bit patient," Svechnikov said, "but it happens, that's hockey. So I feel bad."

With a chance to win it in the shootout, Svechnikov came up empty.



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Recap: Canes Grab a Point in Tough Loss to Columbus

Canes lose first shootout since Dec. 2018

By Michael Smith

Twice it seemed as if the Carolina Hurricanes were going to come away with a victory against the Columbus Blue Jackets, first in regulation and then in overtime.

But twice it did not work out that way for the Canes in what ended as a 3-2 shootout loss.

"We competed. We know what this series against them is going to be. It's going to be tight and not much is going to be given. You're going to have to be gritty," Warren Foegele said. "I thought we played hard tonight. It's just unfortunate the way the results were."

The Difference

The Canes deserved a better fate, but hockey is a weird, random, beautiful game, and sometimes it just doesn't work out that way. This was one of those games.

"There's nothing not to like other than the result. It was a grind, and we knew that coming in," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We had the game won. Unfortunately, things just didn't work out."

Here's how the Canes had the game won - and then didn't.

With less than five minutes to play in regulation, Warren Foegele won a battle to get to a loose puck at the crease and tapped in the go-ahead tally.

"That's how you score in this league 5-on-5," Brind'Amour said. "They've got big D, and you've got to get inside them."

With just 28.4 seconds left in regulation, Seth Jones, the overtime hero for Columbus on Thursday, scored on a top-shelf wrister from the top of the right circle to tie the game at two and force extra hockey again.

In overtime, Dougie Hamilton appeared to score on a 4-on-3 power play, but Columbus challenged for an offside zone entry, and sure enough. The goal was wiped off the board, the Blue Jackets killed off the penalty and on the game went.

In the shootout, Hamilton scored again - and that goal stood - but he was the only Hurricane to beat Elvis Merzlikins. Patrik Laine scored in the bottom of the third to keep the shootout going, and Oliver Bjorkstrand netted the deciding goal in the fourth round.

"During our eight-game winning streak, there were probably games we didn't deserve to win. Tonight, we deserved better. That's just part of the game," Foegele said. "We fought hard tonight."

Plus/Minus

Plus: Andrei Svechnikov gets on the board

It was a quarter 'til 11 p.m. on Thursday night, a good hour after the game had ended, when Svechnikov was spotted back out on the ice shooting a bucket of pucks into the net. This scene isn't exactly uncommon - if he's not on the ice, he's practicing his shot in the shooting gallery the Canes have set up a short walk from their locker room - but it underscores his determination and dedication to bettering himself, especially after an overtime loss in which he felt like he could have made a difference.

You kind of had to figure Svechnikov was going to score the next game. Of course he did.

Svechnikov broke a scoreless deadlock late in the second period, as he set up camp at the top of the crease and batted in a rebound from a Brett Pesce shot out of mid-air.

"When you score, you get more confidence," he said.

Having scored his first goal since March 4, relief was evident in Svechnikov's fist pump and smile.

"It's a weight off his shoulders," Brind'Amour said. "He puts a lot of pressure on himself."

Minus: Having the game-winning goal in overtime disallowed

The Canes worked the puck around their formation on a 4-on-3 power play in overtime. Hamilton dished down low to Martin Necas, and he walked it up around Hamilton, who quietly slid off to the top of the left circle. Necas then skated the puck down into the high slot before dishing a no-look pass to Hamilton for the one-timer.

Game. Right?

Not so fast. Columbus challenged for an offside zone entry, and indeed, 19 seconds prior, Svechnikov had entered the zone just before the puck. No goal.

"I didn't know I was offside. I think I just got too excited," he said. "It's 4-on-3. I should have been more patient. It happens. That's hockey. I feel bad."

"He's still learning. He's going to learn on this one about going offside," Brind'Amour said. "Take that extra second and make sure. It's a 4-on-3. There's no reason to try to get excited and get that goal right now. One thing at a time. I don't think he'll do that again."

Stats Pack

11: Though his game-winning goal didn't stand, Hamilton did still extend his point streak to 11 games (2g, 11a) with the primary assist on Foegele's goal. That ties Mark Howe's



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franchise record for the longest point streak by a defenseman.

Dec. 14, 2018: The Canes had won their last 10 shootouts, a streak that dated back to March 2019. Before tonight, their last shootout loss came on Dec. 14, 2018 against the Washington Capitals.

1,000: Tonight marked Don Waddell's 1,000th career regular-season game as an NHL general manager. He was the GM for the Atlanta Thrashers for 820 games (1999-2010) and has now served in the same position with the Canes for 180 games (2018-present).

Mood of the Night

Merzlikins denied Necas with an unreal glove stop in overtime, and Necas' reaction is the mood for the evening.

Quote of the Night

"We could have easily gotten frustrated the way the game was going. There wasn't a lot of action offensively for some guys. We stuck with it. It didn't happen. It was a weird game that way, but I'll take the effort." - Rod Brind'Amour

Up Next

This four-game series now shifts to Columbus for two games on Monday and Wednesday.



Blue Jackets rally past Hurricanes in shootout

Jones ties it with 29 seconds left in third for Columbus, which has point in five straight

By Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Elvis Merzlikins made 35 saves for the Columbus Blue Jackets, who rallied for a 3-2 shootout win against the Carolina Hurricanes at PNC Arena on Saturday.

After Seth Jones tied it with 29 seconds remaining in the third period, Merzlikins kept the game tied when he made a glove save on Martin Necas on a 2-on-1 at 1:13 of overtime.

"I thought Elvis just looked solid," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said. "There wasn't a whole lot of movement, and he makes just a fantastic save in that overtime."

Oliver Bjorkstrand scored and won it in the fourth round of the shootout for Columbus (13-12-7), which won 3-2 in overtime here Thursday and is 3-0-2 in its past five games.

"It was a very evenly matched game," Tortorella said. "Both teams played well and we found a way to win. I think the team has stayed with it and has been improving right on through this."

Andrei Svechnikov and Warren Foegele scored for Carolina (20-7-3), which has lost three in a row following an eight-game winning streak. James Reimer made 29 saves.

"There's nothing not to like other than the result," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It was a grind. We knew that coming in. We had the game won. Crazy ending there on the overtime, but there's a lot of good in there."

Prior to the shootout, Dougie Hamilton appeared to score the winner for Carolina at 2:14 with a one-timer during a power

play, but the goal was reversed for offside after a video review.

"Most of us thought we lost the game, and we got a second chance, so that was awesome," Bjorkstrand said. "The [penalty kill] did an awesome job. That's not easy."

Svechnikov gave Carolina a 1-0 lead at 14:29 of the second period. Merzlikins stopped Brett Pesce's shot from the low slot, but Svechnikov batted the puck in from the top of the crease for his second goal in his past 14 games.

"When you score, you get more confidence," Svechnikov said. "I've had so many chances in the last [few] games. You score, but you lost this game, so it's kind of bad."

Bjorkstrand scored 39 seconds into the third period to tie it 1-1. He skated through the slot after Hamilton failed to clear the puck, then flipped a shot from below the goal line that deflected off Reimer's pad and the skate of Hamilton into the net.

"When you get that wide, you can try to hit it off the goalie, defending players, your own teammates," Bjorkstrand said. "You try to throw it in there, and sometimes it goes the wrong way, sometimes it goes the right way."

Foegele made it 2-1 at 15:47 of the third when he knocked in the rebound of Brock McGinn's shot at the left post.

The teams will complete the four-game set on Monday and Thursday at Columbus.

"We put really a lot of effort and love into these (past) two games," Merzlikins said. "We are fighting for each other. We're blocking a lot of shots, we're playing good defensively. I'm really happy we are getting on the right track."



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NOTES: Bjorkstrand has scored six points (one goal, five assists) in five games against Carolina this season. ... Hamilton had an assist to extend his point streak 11 games (two goals, 11 assists), which ties Mark Howe (1979-80) for the longest by a defenseman in Hurricanes/Hartford Whalers history. Forward Sebastian Aho holds the overall record (14

games, 2019-20). ... Carolina won its previous 10 shootouts, dating to Dec. 14, 2018. ... This was Don Waddell's 1,000th regular-season game as an NHL general manager. Prior to becoming Hurricanes GM in 2018, he was Atlanta Thrashers GM from 1998-2010 (820 games).

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bjorkstrand scores in SO, Blue Jackets rally past Carolina

By Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Oliver Bjorkstrand scored in the fourth round of the shootout to give the Columbus Blue Jackets a 3-2 win over Carolina on Saturday night in a game in which the outcome appeared to be tilting in the Hurricanes' favor in the waning minutes.

Bjorkstrand and Seth Jones scored third-period goals for the Blue Jackets, whose only lead in the game came on the last attempt in the shootout. Elvis Merzlikins stopped 35 shots for Columbus, which tied the game in the final minute of regulation.

The situation appeared dire for the Blue Jackets a few times.

"We were at the end of the vine a couple of times, and found a way," coach John Tortorella said.

Carolina's Dougie Hamilton began the shootout with a goal. With Columbus down to its last chance, Patrik Laine converted to extend.

The Hurricanes appeared to win in overtime on a Hamilton power-play tally with 2:46 remaining in the session. But that was wiped out on a review because of offsides.

"I was down the tunnel, almost to the (locker) room," Jones said, figuring the game was over as he exited the penalty box. "Never happy to go in there (to the penalty box), but, yes, I was happy that we got a second crack at the penalty kill."

Tortorella said there were anxious moments even though his staff had confirmed that Carolina had been offsides.

"The refs were leaving the building. They were going out the gate," he said. "Everybody was leaving, including our players. ... For a couple of seconds there, I thought we had lost the game."

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour made several mentions to "a weird ending" while praising his team's determination.

Andrei Svechnikov and Warren Foegele scored in regulation for the Hurricanes, who dropped their third straight game following an eight-game winning streak. Goalie James Reimer made 29 saves.

Svechnikov was the offending player on the offsides in overtime.

"I don't think you'll see him do that again," Brind'Amour said.

Jones tied the game with 28.4 seconds left in regulation. He had two goals, including the overtime winner, when the teams met two nights earlier.

"It was a crazy ending," Tortorella said. "You look at the odds."

Foegele scored with 4:13 remaining in the third period to put Carolina back on top. Foegele dove between Merzlikins and Columbus defenseman David Savard and knocked the puck into the net.

Hamilton's assist on the play pushed his points streak to 11 games, marking the longest active string in the NHL.

Svechnikov, who had his first goal in seven games, opened the scoring with his first even-strength goal since Feb. 16.

"There's a lot of good in there," Brind'Amour said. "It was a good game by us. I thought we stuck with it. ... I'll take that effort."

The Blue Jackets pulled even 39 seconds into the second period. Bjorkstrand's shot bounced around before going off Hamilton's skate and into the net.

The Blue Jackets have played in five straight games that have gone beyond regulation.

The teams are halfway through a stretch of four meetings in eight nights.

"We don't have that many days off to really dwell on it," Foegele said of the outcome.

CHANGING FORTUNES

Merzlikins made a point-blank save of Martin Necas' attempt in overtime. It was reflective of the type of clutch sequences that went Columbus' way in the past two games.

"I think we are fighting really for each other," Merzlikins said. "I am really happy we are getting on the right track."

The Blue Jackets have won consecutive games for just the second time since mid-February.

THIS IS THE YEAR

Reimer's record dipped to 12-4-1 this season. That includes a 2-0-1 mark against the Blue Jackets.



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Until this year, Reimer was just 2-8-2 all-time vs. Columbus.

KEEPING UP WITH JONES

Jones has three of his four goals this season during a two-game stretch across three nights in Raleigh.

The defenseman hadn't scored in any of his previous career 27 outings against the Hurricanes.

Jones was called for a high-sticking penalty in overtime that led to Carolina's power play.

"That was a great kill, a great kill," Jones said of the work of his teammates on the penalty kill.

UP NEXT

The teams meet twice next week. Columbus heads for its only two home games during an eight-game stretch with matchups with the Hurricanes on Monday and Thursday nights.



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Recap: Hurricanes lose a shootout snoozer to Blue Jackets

No one is ever going to mistake Columbus Blue Jackets games for artistic marvels, least of all the Hurricanes, who dropped their second straight to their rivals from Ohio.

By Brian LeBlanc

There's a phrase used in soccer, "parking the bus," used when a team plays a frustrating brand of what's labeled anti-football and has no real ambition to create any offense whatsoever. Saturday night in Raleigh, the Columbus Blue Jackets not only parked the bus, but removed the wheels, set it on cinder blocks and auctioned it off for parts.

It took Andrei Svechnikov 35 minutes to break through, but just like Thursday, that proved to not be enough for the Carolina Hurricanes. The Blue Jackets tied the game twice before winning in the fourth round of a shootout to give them four points on their trip to Raleigh, taking a 3-2 decision.

Up to the point Svechnikov scored, the game seemed to be headed to an inevitable shootout even from the start. Carolina's best chance came early in the second period, when Nino Niederreiter's perfect one-time shot from the top of the near circle was deflected out of play by Elvis Merzlikins. The Jackets had a flurry after Svechnikov's goal that nearly saw Max Domi beat James Reimer with a deceptive wrister, but despite looking behind him Reimer made the save to keep the Hurricanes in the lead.

How snooze-inducing was the game? The most noteworthy play of the first half of the game was when Zach Werenski leveled Svechnikov with a clean hit, getting his stick stuck in Svechnikov's gear and prompting snickers that Svechnikov, given his propensity for undeserved penalties, would be whistled for holding the stick. (He wasn't, in a pleasant surprise.)

The Jackets tied it less than a minute into the third period when Oliver Bjorkstrand won a board battle, drew Reimer down and banked the puck off Dougie Hamilton's leg into the net. Then Carolina had to survive a suboptimal sequence where Martin Necas went awkwardly into the boards while avoiding a check, gingerly skating to the bench but remaining

there and not missing a later shift, followed by a Jordan Martinook slashing penalty that saw the Jackets nearly take the lead twice.

But survive they did, although not without some heartburn on consecutive chances by Kevin Stenlund, who split the defense, and Greg Robinson, who undressed Haydn Fleury and created a one-on-one down low with Reimer.

It wasn't like the Blue Jackets were pouring on the pressure, but every chance they had seemed to be of the high danger variety. Domi almost gave them the lead with a shot that banked off the glass behind Reimer and nearly banked in off the goalie's back as he spun around frantically to avoid the second odd deflection goal of the period.

Less than a minute later, Warren Foegele decided he had seen enough, tapping home the go-ahead goal pool-cue style on a scramble in front of Merzlikins. Hamilton earned an assist on the play, giving him assists in 11 straight games and tying Mark Howe for the franchise record in that streak.

Merzlikins headed to the bench with 2:00 remaining, and a minute into the extra skater situation the Jackets tied it again. Seth Jones was unchecked at the top of the circle from the same spot Slavin was denied in the second, sending the game to an overtime that very few wanted.

Martin Necas had a glorious opportunity to end the game a minute into the extra session, but Merzlikins robbed him with a highlight-reel glove save, causing Necas to look skyward in equal parts frustration and awe. Pesce then drew a high-sticking penalty on Jones, and Hamilton won it on a one-timer 30 seconds into the power play — or so they thought. Instead, the goal was reviewed for offside, and Carolina indeed entered the zone early, sending the Hurricanes back onto the ice and eventually into a shootout.

Hamilton scored in the shootout, but with what would have been the final shot Patrik Laine scored, sending it into extra shooters. In the fourth round Niederreiter missed and Bjorkstrand scored, leaving the Hurricanes with two points and two missed opportunities in the matchups in Raleigh.



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They said it: Brind'Amour, Foegele, Svechnikov on shootout loss

Rod Brind'Amour, Warren Foegele and Andrei Svechnikov spoke to the media after a shootout loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets.

By Andrew Schnittker and Brian LeBlanc

The Hurricanes lost in brutal fashion in a 3-2 shootout defeat to the Columbus Blue Jackets Saturday night, giving up a game-tying goal with under 30 seconds left in overtime and getting a potential overtime winner from Dougie Hamilton waved off on an offside challenge.

Rod Brind'Amour, Warren Foegele and Andrei Svechnikov spoke to the media after the loss, here's a full breakdown of everything they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On Svechnikov getting rewarded: It's a weight off his shoulders. Like I said, it doesn't really affect the way I think of how he's been playing. But for him, it's a big weight. He puts a lot of pressure on himself.

On Svechnikov playing hard: He does play hard. He takes a lot of penalties, because he's just tenacious and he's trying to go. You see he gets a lot of stick infractions, where he's on a second and third effort. It's not a lack of effort. He's still learning. He's going to learn from this one about going offside. Take the extra second, make sure; it's a 4-on-3, no reason to get excited and get that goal right now. One thing at a time. I don't think you'll see him do that again. There's a lot of learning process that's going on for him. He's still a young man.

On the ending to the game: There's nothing not to like, other than the result. It was a grind. And we knew that coming in, it's a mental grind. You can't open up, you can't do things and yeah, we had the game won. Unfortunately things just didn't work out. Crazy ending there, on the overtime [offside], but there's a lot of good in there. Obviously the last play is just a weird one. Seth Jones is a good player, we know that, and he ripped a good shot to tie it up. And then, still, every time something bad happened we bounced back. In overtime I thought we were really good. We got a bunch of good looks. Their goalie played really well.

On officiating: You're preaching to the choir. It is what it is. It's a rule, like you're talking about there – I don't even get the rule anyway. Why can't the guy push his stick to him? What's the difference? But that's the rule – but you're not catching that live. I don't know. Our sport's too hard to really referee live. You need a quick second look. It'll come. It will be 20 years – I'll be long gone when they get this figured out. But the refs are so good at catching most of the stuff. I don't know how they do it. We had a conversation today about it on the ice. I get to look at it ten times before I can figure out if it was right or not. They've got to make this on the fly. It's too hard.

On scoring greasy goals: That's how you score in this league five on five. Against these guys, they've got big D, and you've got to get inside them. It was a good game by us. I

thought we stuck with it. We could have easily gotten frustrated the way the game was going. There wasn't a lot of action offensively for some guys. We stuck with it and it didn't happen. It was a weird game that way. I'll take the effort and I'll take that 60 minutes. That was pretty solid.

On there being a skill to scoring greasy goals: Yeah, of course, that's a skill. That skill is getting to the net, finding a way to get your stick on pucks, finding a way to roll off your check. There's a whole dynamic going on in there. But more important is the will factor. You've got to be willing to get in there and do some dirty work. We did that tonight. Like I said, it was one of those things. Weird ending obviously, but let's move on.

Warren Foegele

On moving on from this one: You just forget about it and move onto the next game. During our eight-game winning streak, there were probably games that we didn't deserve to win and we won. Tonight, we deserved better and that's just part of the game. Just keep working hard the way we did. We fought hard tonight, and let's just focus on the next one.

On scoring greasy goals: For sure. You've got to go to the net if you want to score goals. Both those plays are just creating chaos at the net and creating a lot of pressure. It was nice that I got that in.

How hard is it to shake off a game like this: I think the nice thing this year is we play so frequently that we've got tomorrow to practice and then you go back to the game. We don't have that many days off. It's practice and back to the game.

On if he was happier with the effort: I thought we played hard. We competed. We know what this series against them is going to be. It's going to be tight and not much is going to be given. You're going to have to be gritty and keep working hard, just eliminate from their chances. I thought we played hard tonight, it's just unfortunate the way the results were.

Andrei Svechnikov

On the mood in the locker room after a loss like that: It's bad. We were so close. We were up 2-1 and then they scored. It was kind of my bad in overtime; I went offside. I should be a little bit patient. It's bad. We've got to stay focused and try to be focused on the next game.

On scoring being a relief for him: When you score you get more confident. I had so many chances in the last games, but when you score but you lost the game it's kind of bad. We've got to focus on the next game.

On being offside: I actually didn't know that I was offside. I think I just got too excited. It's 4-on-3, I should be a little bit patient, but it's hockey, that happens. I feel bad.

On scoring a goal at the front of the net: Sometimes you've got to go to the net, grind that puck, create that chaos and try to look for a bounce or something and score those goals. Especially against that team.



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SportScan

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

1206239 Carolina Hurricanes

Blue Jackets top Hurricanes 3-2 in a shootout after overtime drama

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

MARCH 20, 2021 06:39 PM,

Columbus Blue Jackets' Oliver Bjorkstrand (28) fires the game winning on Carolina Hurricane's goalie James Reimer (47) to secure a 3-2 victory on Saturday, March 20, 2021 at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C.

Better settle in. All four games figure to be the same.

The Carolina Hurricanes and Columbus Blue Jackets only can play it one way, apparently: Tight.

So it went Saturday, and so it now has gone in the first two games of this four-game set, both needing more than 60 minutes to settle it.

The Blue Jackets won Saturday in a shootout, 3-2.

But only after Seth Jones tried the score 2-2 with 28.4 seconds left in regulation. Only after the Canes had an apparent winning power-play goal by Dougie Hamilton wiped out after a review and the ruling that Andrei Svechnikov preceded the puck into the zone and was offside.

"It's bad, you know. We were so close," said Svechnikov, who scored the Canes' first goal. "We were up 2-1 and they score. And it was kind of my fault in overtime. I went offside. I should have been patient."

Patrik Laine and Oliver Bjorkstrand had the shootout goals for Columbus (13-12-7), Borkstrand ending it in the fourth round after Laine had scored in the third round to extend it. Hamilton had the lone shootout goal for the Canes (20-7-3), who had won their last 10 shootouts and had not lost one since a 6-5 loss to Washington on Dec. 14, 2018.

Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins had robbed Martin Necas of a game-winning goal in the overtime, gloving a shot after a crisp move from his right to left after Sebastian Aho's setup pass. Hamilton then found the net on the 4-on-3 power play, but that was overruled.

Warren Foegele's goal with 4:13 left in the the third period pushed the Canes ahead 2-1. Foegele crashed the net, banged the puck past Merzlikins and then tumbled to the ice on an all-effort kind of play.

But after the Blue Jackets pulled Merzlikins for a sixth attacker, Jones unloaded from the top of the circle.

Svechnikov's second-period goal, also on a rebound, gave the Canes a 1-0 lead. Bjorkstrand tied it for the Blue Jackets in the opening minute of the third with a shot that glanced off a player in front of James Reimer.

Hamilton's assist on the Foegele score gave him points in 11 straight games, tying the franchise record for defensemen set by Mark Howe in 1980.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour called the game a "grind," which was a good description.

"It's a mental grind," he said. "You've got to stick to your game, you can't open up. We had the game won. Unfortunately things just didn't work out. Crazy ending in that overtime.

"Every time something bad happened we bounced back. In overtime, I thought we were really good. We had a bunch of good looks. Their goalie played really well."

The Blue Jackets won 3-2 Thursday in overtime after 60 minutes of tight-checking, physical play. It was more of the Saturday. Both teams took away time and space, clogged the neutral zone, blocked shots and put sticks on sticks in front of their net defensively.

Svechnikov's goal, his first 5-on-5 score since Feb. 4, came in the second period after Jordan Staal won a draw in the Columbus zone. During a puck battle to the side of the net, the puck bounced out to defenseman Brett Pesce, who fired a shot.

Svechnikov batted the puck in the net, then broke into a relieved smile. His recent scoring slump — two goals in 21 games before Saturday — had been frustrating for a player who expects so much from himself.

A LOOK BACK

There are pluses and minuses to playing the same team four straight times, Foegele said Saturday.

The Canes and Blue Jackets matched up for a second time Saturday at PNC Arena, and they'll see each other two more times in Columbus this week.

"I think you treat it like every other game," Foegele said after the morning skate at PNC Arena. "The pluses are you try to find their weaknesses each game and try to make adjustments and try to capitalize on that.



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"Minuses? I don't know if there are any minuses. Just that sometimes it's annoying playing the same team but that's the year we have right now."

Annoying is one word to describe the Blue Jackets (12-12-7) as an opponent. They're competitive, they're combative, much like their coach, John Tortorella. They're also looking to grind their way into playoff position in the Central Division, where the top four teams advance to the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Annoying? For Foegele, that was seeing Columbus goalie Joonas Korpisalo make a spectacular save on a Foegele shot Thursday. With Korpisalo down in the crease, Foegele had an open net but Korpisalo somehow stretched out to get his stick on Foegele's shot and stop it.

The Canes were leading 2-1. A Foegele goal could have been a backbreaker for Columbus, but the Blue Jackets tied the score and won in overtime 3-2.

"He's a good goalie. He's made that save, I don't know, that's his fourth time in the last two weeks on making the exact same save," Foegele said. "You put it away and you focus on the next game and you hope you get one on him next time."

THE LINEUP

Other than in net, Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour didn't change anything from Thursday. Same lineup, same lines, same defensive pairings.

Goalie James Reimer got his 17th start of the season after Alex Nedeljkovic started Thursday. Reimer had a four-game win streak end Tuesday in the 4-2 loss at Detroit.

Brind'Amour said there were no further updates on those who are injured: center Vincent Trocheck (upper body), forward Teuvo Teravainen (concussion) and goalie Petr Mrazek (thumb). None was at Saturday's morning skate.

MILESTONE FOR WADDELL

Canes president and general manager Don Waddell will mark his 1,000th game as an NHL executive Saturday.

"He's been good because he's easy to talk to and there's good communication that way," Brind'Amour said Saturday. "It doesn't feel like he's the boss. He makes it feel like he's one of us, so to speak. I think that's been real positive around here and I think he's been great. A thousand games is a big deal."

Waddell previously was president and general manager of the Atlanta Thrashers. He first served as the Hurricanes' president before also taking on the dual job of president and GM in May 2018. The Canes have reached the playoffs the past two seasons.

"He's done a lot of hard work to get this group where it should be and where it needs to be," Canes captain Jordan Staal said Saturday. "He's been a big part of our success this season."

News Observer LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206256 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets capitalize on second chance in OT, down Carolina Hurricanes, 3-2, in shootout thriller

Brian Hedger

The Columbus Dispatch

Oliver Bjorkstrand (28) scores the winning goal in the fourth round of a shootout Saturday night against Carolina Hurricanes goaltender James

Reimer (47), giving the Blue Jackets a 3-2 victory at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C.

The game was over.

It was a valiant comeback, but the Blue Jackets were poised to settle for a point earned in overtime against the Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday night after Seth Jones's tying goal late in the third period. Dougie Hamilton had scored to cap a 4-on-3 power play in OT, the result of Jones' high-sticking infraction, and few Blue Jackets players were already headed to the visitor's locker room at PNC Arena.

Jones was one of them. Elvis Merzlikins, the Jackets' goalie, was another.

Both were called back to finish the game, which actually wasn't over because a league-mandated video review on OT goals showed the Hurricanes were offside entering the Columbus zone prior to Hamilton's shot.

New life led to a huge penalty kill for the Blue Jackets, who then came from behind in the shootout that followed to winning the game 3-2 on back-to-back shootout goals by Patrik Laine and Oliver Bjorkstrand.

Got all that?

"I was already halfway in the tunnel," said Merzlikins, who finished with 35 saves for a win he thought for sure was an overtime loss. "From one sadness to big happiness finishing the night, it's awesome."

It's also the way things have gone for the Blue Jackets of late.

Now four games past the mid-point in this 56-game season, they are starting to become that pesky, pain-in-the-neck team they've been the past few seasons in the Metropolitan Division – only now they're doing it within a realigned Central Division for this season.

This was the fifth straight game the Blue Jackets have taken to overtime, which means it was also their fifth straight game earning at least a point, and the Chicago Blackhawks have hit a 1-6-0 skid around the same time. Earlier Saturday, the Tampa Bay Lightning did the Jackets a favor by downing the Blackhawks 4-1 in Tampa, which kept Chicago two points ahead of Columbus for fourth place and the division's final playoff spot.

They're tied now with 33 points and 24 games left for each team. A couple weeks ago, most had written off the remainder of the Blue Jackets' season and a countdown clock was set for the eventual firing of coach John Tortorella.

Might want to hit the pause button on that one.

"I think we've been improving as a team for the last few weeks," Tortorella said. "We've (thrown) a couple away ... but I think the team has stayed with it and has been improving right on through this (stretch). Hopefully we just continue to stay together."

They don't have much choice with the COVID-19 abbreviated season now in full flight. Games are flying off the schedules of each team and the Blue Jackets have no room for a letup the rest of the way – beginning with yet another two-game set against the Hurricanes on Monday and Thursday at Nationwide Arena.

This was only their first sweep of a two-game set against the same team this season and it took everything they had to get it done, plus an assist from the video replay booth.

It also took steel nerves in a shootout that started with Hamilton scoring against Merzlikins and included failed attempts by Cam Atkinson and Max Domi in the first two rounds. Merzlikins started that comeback with a save in the second round against Martin Necas, whom he'd robbed in OT with an incredible save, and soon the Jackets' fate was on Laine's stick.

He didn't miss, firing a hard wrist shot past Reimer to extend the shootout despite diminishing confidence amid a scoring slump that's lasted 12 games. Nino Niederreiter missed the net to start the fourth round for Carolina, which gave Bjorkstrand a chance to win it.



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After starting his approach to the right wing, Bjorkstrand sliding to the slot area between the circles and roofed a wrist shot over the goalie's glove and under the crossbar for the win. It didn't count as an official goal, like the one Bjorkstrand scored 39 seconds into the third period to tie it 1-1, but it did give the Blue Jackets a huge second point.

It also capped a memorable finish.

"We still have a lot of work to do," said Jones, who tied it 2-2 with just 28.4 seconds left in regulation on his third goal in the past two games. "We have to continue to get better, because each game from here on out is more important than the last one. We understand the pressure and we're willing to be that hard-working team and gel together in the right time, I think, to fight for a playoff spot."

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206257 Columbus Blue Jackets

Following overtime victory in Carolina, Blue Jackets get another chance at sweep success

Brian Hedger

The Columbus Dispatch

Blue Jackets center Jack Roslovic, right, hugs defenseman Seth Jones after Jones' winning goal against Carolina on Thursday.

Maybe the seventh time will be the charm.

Going into another finale of a two-game set Saturday against the Carolina Hurricanes, the Blue Jackets will again be hunting for a sweep that has eluded them all season. They're 0-4-2 in the back half of two-game sets and, after winning 3-2 in overtime Thursday, the Jackets have another shot to nix a vexing trend.

"For us, we're going to have to be better, more consistently, to try to win another game," coach John Tortorella said after practice Friday in Raleigh, N.C. "I just think that's a conversation (about sweeping games) that's gone through the league because of the schedule, and I think you can fall into a trap a little bit in being (satisfied) with winning that first one."

The game will also be the second of four straight between the Jackets and Hurricanes, who will conclude the four-game stretch Monday and Thursday in Columbus.

Thus far, the Blue Jackets have come up short of sweeping a two-game set Jan. 19 in Detroit (3-2 OTL), Jan. 31 in Chicago (3-1 loss), Feb. 13 against the Blackhawks (3-2 OTL), Feb. 20 against Nashville (4-2 loss), Mar. 6 in Dallas (5-0 loss) and this past Sunday against the Stars (2-1 SOL).

It's not an easy task, but sweeping games is something the Blue Jackets (12-12-7) must do more often. The two points they earned Thursday pulled Columbus within two points of the Blackhawks for fourth place in the Central Division — and the final playoff spot — but a loss Saturday combined with a Chicago win would completely negate their progress.

In other words, it's time for the Jackets to get some sweep success.

Weird week for Grigorenko

Mikhail Grigorenko was supposed to play Thursday, but a "non-COVID illness" made him a scratch for the 11th straight game.

It was the latest challenge during an eventful week for the Russian forward, who was placed on waivers Tuesday, cleared and assigned to the taxi squad on Wednesday, then recalled Thursday. Grigorenko's

lineup spot was then filled by Kevin Stenlund, who tied the score 2-2 late in the second period of a game he was supposed to watch.

"How about Grigor's situation?" Tortorella said after the game. "He's waived, he comes back to the taxi, we take him off the taxi, starts throwing up, he's out of the game. He's going to come in the lineup, be on the second power play and play the game. He starts getting sick and now he's out again. And that's how 'Stens' comes in ... and Stens scores a big goal. That's hockey."

Bjorkstrand humming along

Lost amid the excitement of Seth Jones' overtime goal and Joonas Korpisalo's saves Thursday were Oliver Bjorkstrand's three assists.

The Blue Jackets' leading scorer moved his season totals to 26 points on 10 goals and 16 assists to extend his scoring lead over Cam Atkinson, who has 21 points on a team-high 11 goals and 10 assists.

Bjorkstrand assisted on all three of the Blue Jackets' goals Thursday, including primary assists on Jones' tallies.

Improving in OT

The game Thursday was the fourth straight for the Jackets that required overtime, and their victory on Jones' goal with 51 seconds left in OT improved their record to 2-0-2 in those games. That includes an OT win last Saturday against the Stars on Zach Werenski's goal with 4.5 seconds left in OT.

Combined with an overtime loss to the Florida Panthers on Mar. 11 that lasted 2:48 plus a shootout loss Sunday to the Stars, the Jackets have begun to stay alive longer in the NHL's 3-on-3 OT format. They're 3-0-7 overall in overtime games, including 1-0-3 in shootouts, but are playing noticeably better.

It doesn't hurt to have Jones, whose ninth career OT goal tied him with San Jose's Brent Burns for most by a defenseman since Jones made his NHL debut in 2013-14.

Grind line

Tortorella said Stephane Matteau and Ryan MacInnis would stay in the lineup Saturday after playing a physical game Thursday while skating on the Jackets' fourth line with Eric Robinson. It was only the second game of the season for Matteau and first game for MacInnis in more than a calendar year.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206258 Columbus Blue Jackets

Bjorkstrand scores in SO, Blue Jackets rally past Carolina

Staff Report

Mar 21, 2021 at 12:11a ET

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Oliver Bjorkstrand scored in the fourth round of the shootout to give the Columbus Blue Jackets a 3-2 win over Carolina on Saturday night in a game in which the outcome appeared to be tilting in the Hurricanes' favor in the waning minutes.

Bjorkstrand and Seth Jones scored third-period goals for the Blue Jackets, whose only lead in the game came on the last attempt in the shootout. Elvis Merzlikins stopped 35 shots for Columbus, which tied the game in the final minute of regulation.

The situation appeared dire for the Blue Jackets a few times.



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"We were at the end of the vine a couple of times, and found a way," coach John Tortorella said.

Carolina's Dougie Hamilton began the shootout with a goal. With Columbus down to its last chance, Patrik Laine converted to extend.

The Hurricanes appeared to win in overtime on a Hamilton power-play tally with 2:46 remaining in the session. But that was wiped out on a review because of offsidess.

"I was down the tunnel, almost to the (locker) room," Jones said, figuring the game was over as he exited the penalty box. "Never happy to go in there (to the penalty box), but, yes, I was happy that we got a second crack at the penalty kill."

Tortorella said there were anxious moments even though his staff had confirmed that Carolina had been offsidess.

"The refs were leaving the building. They were going out the gate," he said. "Everybody was leaving, including our players. ... For a couple of seconds there, I thought we had lost the game."

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour made several mentions to "a weird ending" while praising his team's determination.

Andrei Svechnikov and Warren Foegele scored in regulation for the Hurricanes, who dropped their third straight game following an eight-game winning streak. Goalie James Reimer made 29 saves.

Svechnikov was the offending player on the offsidess in overtime.

"I don't think you'll see him do that again," Brind'Amour said.

Jones tied the game with 28.4 seconds left in regulation. He had two goals, including the overtime winner, when the teams met two nights earlier.

"It was a crazy ending," Tortorella said. "You look at the odds."

Foegele scored with 4:13 remaining in the third period to put Carolina back on top. Foegele dove between Merzlikins and Columbus defenseman David Savard and knocked the puck into the net.

Hamilton's assist on the play pushed his points streak to 11 games, marking the longest active string in the NHL.

Svechnikov, who had his first goal in seven games, opened the scoring with his first even-strength goal since Feb. 16.

"There's a lot of good in there," Brind'Amour said. "It was a good game by us. I thought we stuck with it. ... I'll take that effort."

The Blue Jackets pulled even 39 seconds into the second period. Bjorkstrand's shot bounced around before going off Hamilton's skate and into the net.

The Blue Jackets have played in five straight games that have gone beyond regulation.

The teams are halfway through a stretch of four meetings in eight nights.

"We don't have that many days off to really dwell on it," Foegele said of the outcome.

CHANGING FORTUNES

Merzlikins made a point-blank save of Martin Necas' attempt in overtime. It was reflective of the type of clutch sequences that went Columbus' way in the past two games.

"I think we are fighting really for each other," Merzlikins said. "I am really happy we are getting on the right track."

The Blue Jackets have won consecutive games for just the second time since mid-February.

THIS IS THE YEAR

Reimer's record dipped to 12-4-1 this season. That includes a 2-0-1 mark against the Blue Jackets.

Until this year, Reimer was just 2-8-2 all-time vs. Columbus.

KEEPING UP WITH JONES

Jones has three of his four goals this season during a two-game stretch across three nights in Raleigh.

The defenseman hadn't scored in any of his previous career 27 outings against the Hurricanes.

Jones was called for a high-sticking penalty in overtime that led to Carolina's power play.

"That was a great kill, a great kill," Jones said of the work of his teammates on the penalty kill.

foxsportssohio.com LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206259 Columbus Blue Jackets

What just happened? Blue Jackets, left for dead, take improbable win in Carolina

By Aaron Portzline

Mar 20, 2021

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A fuming mad Seth Jones had almost reached the Blue Jackets' dressing room, and Elvis Merzlikins was headed the same direction behind him in the tunnel. As the goal horn blared and the Carolina Hurricanes celebrated a victory in PNC Arena, the rest of the Blue Jackets were filing off the bench in disappointment.

"The refs were leaving the building," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said. "They were going out the gate."

It appeared the Hurricanes had won 3-2 on Dougie Hamilton's power-play goal in overtime, and it was a bitter pill for Columbus.

The Jackets had twice come back from two third-period deficits, including Jones' score-tying extra-attacker goal in the final minute of regulation to force the OT. And now the game had ended with Jones sitting in the penalty box for high-sticking.

He stormed out of the box in disgust when Hamilton's shot eluded Merzlikins.

"I wasn't happy with the penalty I took," Jones said. "I was down the tunnel, almost to the room and a couple of guys had to call me back."

But while Jones, Merzlikins and others were off to commiserate in the visitors dressing room, the wheels of justice were kicking into gear, not just with Blue Jackets video coach Dan Singleton and assistant coach Kenny McCudden, but also with the NHL's situation room in Toronto.

The NHL initiated a review of Hamilton's goal, and it determined that Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov had been offside when the puck entered the Blue Jackets' zone 19 seconds before Hamilton scored.

The Blue Jackets made the most of their second chance, surviving another high-wire act in a shootout to beat the Hurricanes 3-2. Patrik Laine kept the shootout alive with a clutch goal in the third round. Oliver Bjorkstrand, who scored earlier in the game, won it with a bar-down wrist in the fourth.

"From sadness to big happiness," said Merzlikins, who had 35 saves and stopped three of four shootout attempts. "Finishing the night like this, it's awesome."



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The win, coupled with Chicago's loss earlier in the day to Tampa Bay, pushed the Blue Jackets into fourth place in the Central Division, meaning they'd made the playoffs for a fifth straight season if the season ended today.

The Jackets, after fighting to find their way for much of the first half of the season, have peeled off a five-game point streak (3-0-2).

"We still have a lot of work to do," Jones said. "We're never satisfied. There's not time to be OK with our game because each game from here on out is going to be more important than the last one.

"But we understand the pressure. We're willing to be a hard-working team and jell together at the right time to fight for a playoff spot."

The Blue Jackets came off the mat no fewer than three times Saturday. "We were at the end of the vine a couple of times," Tortorella said.

The first was late in regulation, down 2-1, with Merzlikins pulled in favor of an extra skater.

Jones was set up above the right circle while Laine engaged in a battle for the puck in the left corner, losing his stick in the process. Laine picked up his stick just before it shot back to him, and he corralled it and surveyed the ice.

Laine's pass across the zone to Jones was perfect, and Jones picked a corner of the net behind Carolina goaltender James Reimer with 28.4 seconds remaining to tie it at 2.

It was Jones' third goal in two nights, sending the Blue Jackets beyond regulation for the fifth straight game.

The second came in overtime, which took a wrong turn for the Blue Jackets at 1:44 when Jones got his stick high on Carolina defenseman Brett Pesce, putting the Hurricanes on a four-on-three power play.

Before Hamilton's apparent goal was even scored, Tortorella said Singleton and McCudden — watching on video from elsewhere in the building — had signaled to Blue Jackets assistant coach Brad Larsen that the play was offside.

"I didn't realize — I know the rule now — that the league is going to initiate that anyways," Tortorella said. "I didn't know for sure. For a couple of seconds there I thought we had lost the game. But the (the league) had full control of it."

The players were summoned back to the ice. Jones went back into the penalty box to serve the rest of his penalty, and the Blue Jackets went back on the penalty kill, with still 1:49 to kill.

"Most of us thought we lost the game and now we get a second chance," Bjorkstrand said. "Most of us honestly thought it was a good goal. We didn't see the offside."

The Blue Jackets survived the OT penalty kill and rode the game into the shootout. Again, they found themselves on the brink of defeat.

Hamilton scored in the first round of the shootout (no review needed), and the Blue Jackets went into the third round needing Laine to score to keep the game alive. Laine came into the game with one goal in his previous 11 games.

He ripped a wrister over Reimer's left pad to keep the game alive.

"Patty's had a tough time finding the net," Tortorella said. "It's been a little bit of a struggle. He scores a big goal for us."

Merzlikins stopped Nino Niederreiter to open the fourth frame, setting up Bjorkstrand for the game winner.

"We put a lot of effort and love into this game," Merzlikins said. "We're fighting really for each other. Even if somebody makes a mistake, there is a partner who is going to save his ass. We're blocking a lot of shots, playing really good defensively, which is important for us.

"I'm really happy that we're getting on the right track."

Wait. What happened?

Blue Jackets players weren't the only ones who walked away prematurely after Hamilton scored the apparent game winner.

Several Blue Jackets fans said via social media that they turned off the game immediately, believing Carolina had won.

Some fans following on Twitter scrambled to turn their TVs back on. Others wondered why their phone wasn't alerting them to the final score.

Snacks

- Bjorkstrand had the shootout winner, but he also had a hand in four of the five goals the Blue Jackets scored in the first two games of the four-game series. Bjorkstrand had three assists in Thursday's 3-2 win and scored the Blue Jackets' first goal Saturday, an odd-angle shot in the first minute of the third period. He leads the Jackets with 11-16-27 in 32 games.

- Tortorella went with Cam Atkinson and Max Domi in the first two rounds of the shootout. Domi is now 0-for-8 in his shootout career. Laine had missed his first two shootout attempts with Columbus.

- The Blue Jackets got a noticeable lift from their newly composed fourth line of center Ryan MacInnis with wingers Stefan Matteau and Eric Robinson. They appeared to tilt the ice back to even at least a couple of times in the second period after Carolina started to ramp it up.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206340 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's Vasilevskiy earns career-high 11th straight victory

Eduardo A. Encina

TAMPA — The numbers Andrei Vasilevskiy has put up this season — including another personal best set Saturday against the Blackhawks — have placed the Lightning goaltender in the league MVP conversation, something rare for players at his position.

But it's how the 26-year-old has put the team on his back time after time, such as during a second-period blitz by the Blackhawks, that has made him a worthy midseason candidate for the Hart Trophy.

Tampa Bay's 4-1 win at Amalie Arena was closer than the final score indicates. The Lightning were clinging to a 2-0 lead when Chicago put 11 consecutive shots on goal against Vasilevskiy midway through the second period, and he turned each one away. Forward Yanni Gourde then scored to make it 3-0 with less than six minutes remaining in the period.

Vasilevskiy got his career-best 11th straight victory and tied the franchise record for consecutive wins, set in the 2018-19 season by Louis Domingue.

Vasilevskiy also leads the league with 20 victories, needing the second-fewest games (24) in NHL history to reach the mark. Boston's Tiny Thompson reached 20 in 23 games in 1929-30.

Despite scoring three goals in the second to go up 4-0, the Lightning (22-6-2) were disappointed with surrendering numerous scoring chances and having to depend so much on Vasilevskiy, who finished with 30 saves.

Can the powerful torque in the 2021 Mustang Mach-E put gravity to the test?

"We know we have the best goalie in the world," said captain Steven Stamkos, who scored his team-high 15th goal in the second. "He showed



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it again (Saturday), but you don't want to rely on that too often. But 'Vasy' was outstanding and gave us a chance to ultimately win the game."

At times, the Blackhawks have given the Lightning fits this season, taking control of a game with a fast, relentless offensive push. But the Lightning improved to 6-0-1 against them this season.

"(Vasilevskiy has) been a brick wall back there the entire season, so it gives us this little extra confidence to know that when we're out there," said forward Anthony Cirelli.

Before the Blackhawks' flurry of shots in the second, the Lightning were able to kill a 5-on-3 power play for 1:23. The period ended with perhaps Vasilevskiy's finest save of the game. He stopped Patrick Kane on a breakaway, denying the MVP candidate's backhand with his left pad.

"We should have grabbed some momentum after that 5-on-3," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Instead, Vasy had to keep us in it."

Gourde's fifth goal against the Blackhawks this season came with 5:45 left in the second at a time Chicago had stolen momentum. Gourde swept across the right circle, held off Blackhawks defenseman Calvin de Haan while scooping a one-handed shot with his right hand into goaltender Malcolm Subban's body. Gourde then skated across the crease and put in a rebound with a backhand.

"That probably burst their bubble a little bit," Cooper said. "But we needed that, obviously, because we needed to stop a little bit of the momentum they had going."

Stamkos scored on a power play with 1:39 left in the second, rifling a wrist from below the left circle off a rebound. He also assisted on a goal, increasing his points streak to six games.

Defenseman Victor Hedman had three assists, giving him 26 for the season. Brayden Point's 14th goal and Cirelli's ninth gave the Lightning a 2-0 lead early in the second.

Chicago's Alex DeBrincat ended Vasilevskiy's shutout bid, scoring 4:50 into the third on a shot from the slot.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206240 Chicago Blackhawks

Chicago Blackhawks look a step behind in a 4-1 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning to wrap up a 6-game trip

By PHIL THOMPSON

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

MAR 20, 2021 AT 6:08 PM

The Chicago Blackhawks' two-game road series against the Tampa Bay Lightning ended in much the same fashion as the Hawks' home series against them: disaster.

During the Hawks' 4-1 loss Saturday — their fourth straight to cap a six-game trip and sixth in seven games — the Lightning beat up the Hawks during another chippy affair.

Yanni Gourde scored his fifth goal against the Hawks this season in the second period, and Victor Hedman had three assists.

"Going in there you're going to have a lot of battles that people don't forget," Hawks forward Alex DeBrincat said. "That's just the way it is."

The Lightning made it difficult for the Hawks to get clean passes through the neutral zone but they gave them fits on defense. The Hawks defense

failed to slow the Lightning in transition and were hammered on second and third chances at the net.

The Hawks couldn't stay out of their zone in the first period before Brayden Point knocked in his own rebound to put the Lightning up 1-0 at 6 minutes, 21 seconds of the first period. Duncan Keith couldn't control a centering pass that went off his stick and lost a puck battle by the back wall as the Lightning kept it in the zone.

Keith was involved in the Lightning's next goal as well, and it came after another example of bad blood between the teams.

Before a second-period faceoff, DeBrincat and Gourde started jawing and shoving each other with their sticks and drew offsetting cross-checking penalties. During the four-on-four, Anthony Cirelli caught Keith flat-footed in the high slot and got by him as he received a pass from Mikhail Sergachev. Cirelli went forehand-backhand with no one between himself and Hawks goalie Malcolm Subban.

With less than six minutes left in the second, the Lightning zigzagged out of their zone with some precise passing, and as Hawks defenders closed on Barclay Goodrow and Blake Coleman in the neutral zone, Coleman found Gourde racing up the right side unchecked.

Gourde snapped a shot and put in his own rebound with Calvin de Haan riding his back.

In another defensive snafu, de Haan tried to clear up the middle of the ice, but Hedman one-timed it from the high slot. Subban blocked and stuffed Alex Killorn's tap-in attempt, but the puck bounced to Steven Stamkos for a sharp-angled wrist.

The Hawks couldn't capitalize on some prime opportunities against Andrei Vasilevskiy, including an 82-second stretch in which the Hawks had a five-on-three advantage and a clean Patrick Kane breakaway that he couldn't lift over the Lightning goalie's leg pad.

"Yeah, I mean, 5-on-3's got to convert," DeBrincat said. "They do a good job of blocking shots and getting into the lanes."

The Hawks outshot the Lightning 26-17 through two periods.

"They're a team that punishes you when you make mistakes," Hawks coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We made a few and they scored. They made us suffer. I thought we created more than enough, especially the second period."

They finally broke through on DeBrincat's third-period wrist, set up from below the goal line by Dominik Kubalik. It was DeBrincat's 16th goal of the season.

Vasilevskiy had 30 saves while Subban stopped 25 shots.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206241 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks avoided fighting back against Lightning aggressions at Jeremy Colliton's request

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Mar 20, 2021, 7:41pm CDT

The Blackhawks and Lightning developed an odd rivalry this March.

After Connor Murphy's match penalty for hitting Erik Cernak on March 7 — the third of five meetings between the teams in a 16-day span — the Lightning were ready for the rivalry to explode during this now-concluded series.



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On Thursday and Saturday, the Bolts constantly harassed the Blackhawks — focusing particularly on Murphy — after whistles, hoping to instigate a fight or skirmish. On Saturday, that after-the-whistle aggression spilled into normal play at times, including one moment when Alex Killorn clotheslined Adam Boqvist with a blindside glove to the face.

But at coach Jeremy Colliton's request, the Hawks refused to engage or fight back.

"We don't want our top guys sitting for five minutes, unless there's a specific reason," Colliton said after the Hawks' 4-1 loss Saturday.

"When you play the same team multiple times, it's going to get chippy, and you hope you give as much as you take. Play hard, play between the whistles, be hard to play against — that's what we're going to do."

It initially seemed likely the growing tension between the two teams would erupt.

During his pregame press conference, Colliton detailed why he believed Murphy's hit on Cernak was legal, then passionately denounced the Lightning's tactics to try to goad Murphy into fighting Thursday.

"It just doesn't make any sense to me," he said. "They've got some guys who play a hard game, a physical game. If [Lightning defenseman Victor] Hedman finishes a hard check on Murph, I don't think they're going to love if we've got guys chasing him around the ice or expecting that he should take a five-minute [major] or risk breaking his hand on someone's head."

He said he'd specifically instructed Murphy not to fight.

"Murph has no problem answering the bell," Colliton said. "He probably would love to. But we've asked him not to because he's too important to our team. We need him on the ice. He's a hard player, he's a physical player, and that's part of what he brings. I don't think he should have to be warding off challengers for the whole game."

Yet while the Lightning's aggressive behavior continued undeterred once the puck dropped, Colliton's message to his team — avoid unnecessary penalties, even if it means not standing your ground — remained the same, too.

And so the Hawks followed that instruction. Nikita Zadorov didn't deliver any big hits. Murphy never entertained the Bolts' solicitations. Not even minor-league scrapper Reese Johnson, inserted into the lineup for just his fifth NHL game, made any noise.

Only Alex DeBrincat went to the penalty box for any sort of retaliation. He and Yannick Gourde were both given cross-checking minors for a relatively tame pre-faceoff duel in the second period.

"The ref thought it was a good idea to put us both in the box," DeBrincat said. "I didn't really think they were going to call a penalty, but I guess better sit two minutes than five for fighting."

True to Colliton's fears, the Lightning then scored during four-on-four play with DeBrincat sidelined.

The Hawks and Lightning will face each other only once more in the regular season, and not until April 27 in Chicago. By then, the teams' behaviors this month might well be forgotten.

But Colliton's strategy to keep his players out of the penalty box could prove relevant against other opponents before then.

Asked what kind of situation would justify in his mind a fighting major, he offered only a brief answer:

"You know it when you see it."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206242 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks' losing streak continues with another loss to Lightning

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Mar 20, 2021, 6:36pm CDT

So much for Florida vacations.

The Blackhawks finished winless in eight games in the state of Florida this season after a 4-1 loss Saturday against the Lightning.

The first four of those road losses against the Lightning and Panthers started the season on an awful note. The latter four, all within the last week, essentially negated the 14 wins the Hawks accumulated in between.

And so the Hawks return home after their 1-5 road trip at 14-13-5 overall, four games below real .500 and back on the playoff bubble. The gap they'd built between themselves and the middling Stars, Blue Jackets and Predators has been quickly squandered.

"All the teams we played [on this trip], when you make mental mistakes or you're soft in key moments, they score [and] they make you pay," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We're working pretty hard for our chances, and it's not coming as easy as sometimes it does, and you go through stretches like that. But we've been made to suffer for the mistakes we make, and we have to react accordingly."

"We needed a lot more points than we got," Adam Boqvist said succinctly.

The Hawks have created more scoring chances than they've allowed only four times in their last 16 games, but Saturday was actually one of those occasions: The Hawks were credited with 36 scoring chances to the Lightning's 27.

Yet they failed to convert on their opportunities against Andrei Vasilevskiy — who won his 11th straight start this season and 10th in 10 career starts against the Hawks — and allowed the Lightning to convert a handful of theirs against Malcolm Subban.

An 82-second five-on-three power play midway through the second period, when they trailed 2-0, exemplified that contrast.

The Hawks passed the puck around but didn't move themselves and therefore didn't open up any shooting lanes through the Lightning's three compact defenders. They took four shot attempts during those 82 seconds — two by Patrick Kane, two by Dominik Kubalik — yet none made it on goal.

Six minutes later, forward Yannick Gourde — a thorn in the Hawks' side between and after the whistles every time the teams play — extended the lead to 3-0. By the end of the period, it was 4-0 and realistically out of reach. A third-period Alex DeBrincat goal made little difference.

"The five-on-three has got to convert," DeBrincat said. "They do a good job of blocking shots and getting in lanes. But we have two extra guys out there, so we should be able to make a play. We have to work on that. It just wasn't there today."

Duncan Keith had a particularly rough outing.

Before the first Lightning goal, the veteran defenseman failed to clear the zone, lost a board battle, then lost goal-side positioning on the eventual scorer, Brayden Point. Before the second goal, he lost his man mark during four-on-four defense and let Anthony Cirelli score on a miniature breakaway.

"When we made a mistake, they punished us," Colliton said. "We're going to make mistakes. But the unforced ones are not getting beat to



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the net, getting beat up ice, turning pucks over in critical areas. Those are things you want to stamp out if you're going to beat top teams."

The Hawks' only solace is they won't have to return to Florida again, at least in the regular season.

They were outscored 38-17 in the eight games there, a parade of tropical humiliations. During the third period Saturday, they looked merely eager to leave.

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1206243 Chicago Blackhawks

Tensions between Blackhawks, Lightning rising as Jeremy Colliton denounces behavior around Connor Murphy

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Mar 20, 2021, 11:43am CDT

Connor Murphy's March 7 hit on Erik Cernak has sparked heavy frustrations between the Blackhawks and Lightning. Getty

Tensions between the Blackhawks and Lightning, largely stemming from Connor Murphy's March 7 hit on Erik Cernak, have hit a boiling point this weekend.

Ahead of Saturday's 3 p.m. game between the two division rivals, Hawks coach Jeremy Colliton emphatically denounced the Lightning's behavior in Thursday's game, when they frequently tried to incite Murphy into a fight.

"I don't think he should have to be warding off challengers for the whole game because he's finishing his checks," Colliton said during his pregame press conference. "[Murphy] has no problem answering the bell. He probably would love to [fight]. But we've asked him not to, because he's too important to our team. We need him on the ice. We've asked him to suck it up and make a team decision and just play, and he's done that."

Murphy received a match penalty and was ejected from that March 7 game — which was extremely chippy throughout — after the hit.

But the NHL did not suspend or fine him afterward, and Colliton said Saturday he believed the hit was actually legal.

"He went through [Cernak's] chest," Colliton said. "He hit him hard, but I don't believe it was a dirty hit... I'm well-acquainted with headshots and obviously against them in any way. But at best it was glancing, incidental contact there. Obviously [Cernak] missed the rest of the game, but it wasn't a head issue; otherwise he wouldn't have played 20 minutes the next game against Detroit."

Thursday's matchup — a 4-2 Hawks loss — was the two teams' first meeting since March 7, and the Lightning tried to take enforcement into their own hands.

Barclay Goodrow was given an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty in the first minute of the game for trying to instigate a fight with Murphy. Other Lightning players were often seen jostling Murphy during stoppages later in the game.

"Goodrow came up to me and challenged me to fight," Murphy said postgame Thursday. "I just said no to the fight and he wouldn't get it go, so he got a penalty. There were times throughout the game guys are going to chirp and have some trash talk because they're unhappy about the last game...and that's just the way it went."

Lightning coach Jon Cooper, after the game Thursday, conversely ripped Murphy for not accepting the "ramifications for what you do."

"This is a tough game and tough players play it," Cooper told reporters. "If you're going to be physical, you've got to reap what you sow."

Leading into Saturday's rematch, Cooper's comments and his players' actions have struck a chord with Colliton and the Hawks.

Growing frustration with other teams was always inevitable given the NHL's scheduling format this year, and the Hawks and Lightning will be playing their fifth game against each other in a two-week span. (They have just one remaining meeting this season: April 27 in Chicago.)

But this level of outward distrust and anger between two teams, especially before a game even starts, has rarely been seen around the league in 2021.

Colliton declined to disclose the Hawks' lineup Saturday morning — the third consecutive game day against the Lightning in which he has kept it secret. Then he named Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman in an example pointing out what he perceives as the hypocrisy of goading Murphy.

"They've got some guys who play a hard game, a physical game," he said. "If Hedman finishes a hard check on 'Murph,' I don't think they're going to love if we've got guys chasing him around the ice or expecting that he should take a five-minute [major] or risk breaking his hand on someone's head."

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1206244 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks taken to task by Tampa Bay in 4-1 setback

John Dietz

Follow @johndietzdh

Updated 3/20/2021 8:49 PM

Fighting in the NHL has all but disappeared over the past few years.

Some believe that's good for the game. Others think it's made the game more dangerous, especially for smaller players who are more likely to be targeted without fear of repercussions.

With all that said, it was interesting that the Blackhawks rarely reacted to countless pokes, prods, hits, elbows and flat-out challenges during their two games at Tampa Bay over the last three days.

"When you play the same team multiple times it's going to get chippy and you hope you give as much as you take," Hawks coach Jeremy Colliton said after a 4-1 setback to the Lightning on Saturday dropped his team to 14-13-5. "Play hard, play between the whistles, be hard to play against. That's what we're going to do, too."

Except that the Lightning were far better at all of that, especially in the rematch.

The pivotal moment came when Yannick Gourde appeared to bait Alex DeBrincat on a neutral-zone faceoff early in the second period. Both players were given cross-checking penalties and with the Hawks' top goal-scorer in the box, the Lightning took a 2-0 lead when Anthony Cirelli beat Malcolm Subban at 1:53.

"We were just battling for position and a few cross-checks thrown," said DeBrincat, who scored the Hawks' lone goal. "The ref thought it was a good idea to put us both in the box."



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On Gourde's next shift he cross-checked Patrick Kane to the ice. Later in the second, Alex Killorn caught Adam Boqvist with an elbow that sent the Hawks' defenseman sliding to the ice. No penalties were called in either situation.

And there was no response from the Hawks.

"Certainly we don't want our top guys sitting for five minutes, unless there's a specific reason," Colliton said. "We want our top guys playing."

All this bad blood began when Connor Murphy flattened Erik Cernak at the United Center on March 7. The Lightning kept trying to bait Murphy into fighting Thursday, but the D-man never obliged as he was told by the coaching staff to stay out of any fracas.

"We've asked him to suck it up and make a team decision and just play," Colliton said. "He's a hard player, he's a physical player and that's part of what he brings. I don't think he should have to be warding off challengers for the whole game because he's finishing off checks."

That last point clearly perturbed Colliton, who didn't think Tampa Bay would like it if the script were flipped.

"Well, to me it doesn't make any sense to me," he said. "They've got some guys that play a hard game, a physical game. If (Victor) Hedman finishes his check with a hard check on Murphy I don't think they're gonna love if we've got guys chasing him around the ice, or expecting that he should take a five-minute (penalty) or risk breaking his hand on someone's head."

The Hawks had more than enough chances Saturday, but couldn't solve Andrei Vasilevskiy, who made 30 saves and tied a franchise record with his 11th straight victory.

The Vezina Trophy finalist turned away breakaway attempts by Carl Soderberg and Patrick Kane, and also staved off all 7 shots the Hawks had on 4 power-plays -- one of which was a two-man advantage for 83 seconds.

"They're a team that punishes you when you make mistakes and we made a few and they scored," Colliton said. "They made us suffer."

The Hawks, who have lost six of seven, play eight of their next nine at home. The first two are against Florida on Tuesday and Thursday.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206245 Chicago Blackhawks

10 observations: Blackhawks routed in road-trip finale

BY CHARLIE ROUMELIOTIS

The Blackhawks were routed by the Tampa Bay Lightning 4-1 on Saturday at Amalie Arena to wrap up their six-game road trip.

Here are 10 observations from the loss:

1. The Blackhawks arguably played better in this game than Thursday. They led in shot attempts (43-21), shots on goal (26-15), scoring chances (29-13) and high-danger chances (12-5) through two periods, according to Natural Stat Trick, but lost in regulation for the fourth straight game, which is their longest losing streak of the season.

2. Andrei Vasilevskiy was on his A-game yet again and the Blackhawks simply couldn't crack him. He stopped the first 28 shots he faced and finished with 30 saves on 31 shots for a save percentage of .968 for his 11th win in a row, which ties Louis Domingue for the longest winning streak by a goaltender in Lightning history.

3. The Blackhawks generated 36 total scoring chances, which is their fourth-most in a game this season. They've generated at least 35 scoring chances four times this year and three of those games have been against the Lightning. The Blackhawks are 0-2-1 in those games.

4. The Blackhawks had several opportunities to tie the game up at 1-1 but couldn't. Perhaps their best chance came at the 9:14 mark of the first period when Carl Soderberg found himself on a shorthanded breakaway but was denied by Vasilevskiy.

Andrei Vasilevskiy denies Carl Soderberg on a shorthanded breakaway. #Blackhawks pic.twitter.com/xjtqYq8n3r— Charlie Roumeliotis (@CRoumeliotis) March 20, 2021

5. The Blackhawks had a 5-on-3 power-play opportunity for 1:23 in the second period when the deficit was 2-0 and needed to cash in to give themselves a legitimate shot to get back in the game. They recorded seven shot attempts and two shots on goal but failed to find the back of the net. The Blackhawks finished the game 0-for-4 on the power play.

6. Alex DeBrincat and Yann Gourde were each penalized for cross-checking 15 seconds into the middle frame after hacking and whacking one another prior to a neutral zone faceoff. The officials made it known they weren't going to let that escalate any further, and the Lightning won that trade-off because Anthony Cirelli scored during the 4-on-4 action to make it 2-0.

7. Gourde has five goals and four assists for nine points in seven games against the Blackhawks this season. He has a combined four goals and four assists for eight points in 23 games against the other six Central Division teams.

8. The Blackhawks gave up the first five shots on goal in the second period. They recorded the next 11, yet it was the Lightning who outscored the Blackhawks 3-0 in the middle frame. The Lightning improved their second-period goal differential to +13, which ranks No. 2 in the NHL.

9. Duncan Keith did not have a particularly great series against the Lightning. He was on the ice for all four goals against in Game 1 and three of the four goals against in Game 2.

10. Head coach Jeremy Colliton inserted Reese Johnson into the lineup for Lucas Wallmark after giving a passionate response before the game about the Lightning trying to bait Connor Murphy into a fight for his hit on Erik Cernak in their previous outing at the United Center. It wasn't exactly a chippy game, but there was certainly a reason why Johnson, whose known for his physical play, was part of the forward group.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206246 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks' rough trip cuts playoff lead, could determine trade deadline plans: 10 observations

By Scott Powers

Mar 20, 2021

The Blackhawks understood March could be brutal for them.

Beginning with a three-game homestand against the Tampa Bay Lightning at the start of the month, the Blackhawks were facing tough opponent after opponent for 11 consecutive games. They had the Lightning, then the Dallas Stars, then the Florida Panthers, the Lightning again and finally the Panthers again. After their 4-1 loss to the Lightning on Saturday, the Blackhawks are through nine of those games and have gone 2-6-1.



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Not good, obviously.

The Blackhawks were securely in the final playoff spot in the Central when March began, but that's no longer the case. With just five points in the month, the Blackhawks are on the verge of being knocked out of fourth place. They have 33 points through 32 games. The Columbus Blue Jackets have 31 points through 31 games. The Blue Jackets play the Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday night. Percentage-wise, the Stars are in sixth place in the division and have 25 points through 26 games.

The Blackhawks have to be ecstatic to be returning to Chicago. It was a 13-day, six-game trip. Being on the road is especially dreadful this season considering the limitations placed on players because of the pandemic, but this one had to be especially tough considering the length and the Blackhawks' 1-5 record. Now the Blackhawks return to Chicago for six consecutive games at the United Center, and their playoff chances might just depend on the outcome of this coming stretch. Only 24 games remain in the season.

The Blackhawks get that, too.

"We got to play with some desperation," said Alex DeBrincat, who scored the lone goal in Saturday's loss. "We were up a lot of points going into this road trip, and that lead has dwindled down. We got to get back to that hockey we were playing when we were doing well, playing desperate and putting pucks in the net. So, I think that's it."

1. One league source had thought the aggressiveness of Blackhawks president of hockey operations and general manager Stan Bowman at the trade deadline might be determined by the just-concluded trip.

It's not as if Bowman or anyone in the organization is expecting a Stanley Cup run, even with the team's early success, but the team is weighing the value of keeping the group together, helping the young players along and gaining big-game experience, whether it's in the regular season or the playoffs.

You would have to think Bowman is considering trading someone like Mattias Janmark more now than he was a few weeks ago. The Blackhawks weren't far off from a playoff spot last season when Bowman decided to deal Robin Lehner and Erik Gustafsson, two expiring contracts, for what he could get at the trade deadline. With Janmark's production, versatility and low cap hit, he is expected to have some value on the market. One source thought a second-round pick was possible.

Someone like Janmark isn't blocking anyone's path now, but it'll get a little more crowded with Kirby Dach expected back. Plus, it'd probably be worth giving someone like MacKenzie Entwistle an NHL look at some point. Even Brandon Pirri might be worth a look again as the offense, especially the power play, comes and goes.

2. The story of Saturday's game was capitalizing on opportunities. The Lightning did so. The Blackhawks did not.

The Blackhawks couldn't score on a five-on-three power play that final 1:23. They went 0-for-5 on the power altogether.

The Blackhawks had a blah third period, but they were the better team through two periods. They had a 21-13 edge in scoring chances.

There was this chance by Carl Soderberg:

Patrick Kane had this breakaway:

There was a point in the second period when the Blackhawks were ahead 23-13 in shots on goal. The problem: They were trailing 3-0.

That brings us to the other part of the story. The Lightning had some grand chances themselves, and they converted on them. The Blackhawks failed to clear a puck, and Brayden Point made them pay on the first goal. Duncan Keith lost Anthony Cirelli during four-on-four play, and Cirelli scored alone at the net for the second goal. The Lightning beat the Blackhawks up ice on a breakout, and Yanni Gourde scored the third goal.

Bang, bang, bang.

"They're a team that punishes you when you make mistakes, and we made a few and they scored," Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton said. "They made us suffer. I thought we created more than enough, especially the second period. We had a long stretch where we were putting pressure on. We're down 1-0 and they get the four-on-four goal and we had a long, hard push and the third one was tough. We weren't able to break through, and when we made a mistake they punished us. That's clearly an area we've got to be better in. We're gonna make mistakes. It's no surprise there. But hopefully the unforced ones are just not getting beat to the net, getting beat up ice, turning pucks over in critical areas against really good players. Those are things you want to stamp out if you're going to beat top teams like we've been playing. There's still things we can build on over the last few games, but ultimately we've got to put it together to get results."

3. Here are the game's analytics from Sportlogiq:

Offensive-zone possession time

7:53

6:51

Slot shots on goal

20

13

Rush scoring chances

8

4

Controlled entries

36

41

Controlled exits

66

69

Stretch passes completed

10

14

4. This is another way to look at the game through analytics:

5. Brandon Hagel doesn't always show up on the score sheet, but he does a lot of things that give the Blackhawks an opportunity. Drawing penalties is one example of that. He drew his 10th penalty of the season Saturday. Only DeBrincat (11) has more.

Hagel has been getting more and more responsibility from Colliton. Hagel was put on the top power-play unit Saturday and replaced Ryan Carpenter in the bumper role.

6. Who can read lips? DeBrincat and Gourde had an interesting interaction before this faceoff and were both put in the box.

DeBrincat was asked what was said and unsurprisingly said, "Not much."

7. The Lightning seemed to want a piece of the Blackhawks throughout the two-game set. Colliton addressed before the game the Lightning trying to get Connor Murphy to fight in the last game for a previous hit on Eric Cernak.

This is a long quote, but it's worth printing in full. He made some valid points.

"I don't understand the idea ... for me, the hit he had in Chicago, he got a penalty for it," Colliton said. "I think that was enough considering. I thought he went through the guy's chest. He hit him hard, but I don't



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believe it was a dirty hit. I don't agree with the thought that you should have to answer for playing hard and finishing your check. That kind of thing is always going to be part of the game, I hope.

"I'm well acquainted with head shots. I'm obviously against them in any way. At best, it was glancing incidental contact there. Obviously, the player missed the rest of the game, but it wasn't a head issue. Otherwise, he wouldn't have played 20 minutes the next night, the next game against Detroit. Murphy has no problem answering the bell. I think he'd probably love to, but we've asked him not to because he's too important to our team. We need him on the ice. We've asked him to suck it up and make a team decision and just play. He's done that. As I said, he's a hard player. He's a physical player. That's part of what he brings. I don't think he should have to be warding off challengers the whole game because he's finishing his check. That's just my opinion.

"To me, it just doesn't make any sense to me. They've got some guys who play a hard game, a physical game. If (Victor) Hedman finishes a hard check on Murph, I don't think they're going to love it if we got guys chasing them around on the ice, or expecting him to take a five-minute (penalty) or risk breaking his hand on someone's head."

8. Colliton's decision to sit Kevin Lankinen for the game and go with Malcolm Subban wasn't unexpected. Lankinen looked less sharp over recent games and allowed 11 goals on 91 shots for an .827 save percentage.

Colliton was asked Friday if he'd be watching Lankinen's games played considering he hasn't played a ton of games in any season throughout his career.

"That's something we're going to manage with all our young guys who haven't played a full season at this level," Colliton said. "And it's hard, even the guys at junior if they've played 70 games, it's a lot different playing in the NHL. The demands are higher. We'll try to stay on top of it and give them the best chance to ... obviously, we want them to keep improving. In order to do that, you want them to be as fresh as possible."

9. Colliton is also aware some young players aren't getting in enough games.

Defenseman prospects Wyatt Kalynuk and Lucas Carlsson have played in just three games in the past month. Defenseman prospect Nicolas Beaudin has had five games. Some of that is due to the unique aspects of the season. All three of those players are on the taxi squad and were on the road trip. They all got into at least one game on the trip, but with the Blackhawks being healthy and Ian Mitchell and Adam Boqvist getting the priority among the young players, they spent most of the trip practicing.

"I think there's positives and negatives to it, no question," Colliton said. "I think opportunity to be around a team and the coaches and just getting to understand what it's like, the everyday routines and demands that there is in this league. Most of them have got a chance to play, some more than others, but that experience will help them when maybe they do have the opportunity to break in a little more regularly. We are mindful of the fact we'd like to get them playing a little more. That may happen as we have longer stretches at home here in the second half of the season. But all the teams, it's a new set of circumstances this year. Everyone's doing the best they can. We're trying to make the best of it. When we do have them here, we're making sure they have extra work, try and involve them in the team practices as much as possible and the team preparation, so that it becomes easier when they do get a chance."

10. It's been nearly two weeks since Dach began practicing with his teammates again. Colliton wanted to bring him on the trip to get him more up to speed.

So where do things stand?

"No new timeline," Colliton said. "Obviously, having him with the extra group, whether it's skating with the extra guys or with the team, that's what he needs to move along here and get closer to playing. It's hard

when we're gone for so long, the fact that he could come, that certainly helps us."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206368 Websites

The Athletic / NHL eyes \$200 million deal for remaining broadcast rights. PLUS: Nathan MacKinnon cereal and more

By Sean Shapiro

Mar 20, 2021

Negotiations for the second piece of the NHL's national broadcasting rights in the United States are moving to the forefront after the NFL announced its own media rights deals Thursday.

The NHL has been interested in finalizing a deal for the remaining portion of its rights since it came to a seven-year \$2.8 billion agreement with Disney and ESPN on the league's so-called A package March 10. But for potential B package suitors NBC and Fox, the NFL was a much bigger fish to focus on, with the financials of those deals having an impact on what's left in the budget to bid for the NHL.

Both NBC and Fox are set to pay around \$2 billion annually to the NFL — essentially doubling what they have been paying. The NHL is believed to be seeking about \$200 million a year for its B package.

CBS, also paying the NFL close to \$2 billion a season in the new deal, is considered a dark horse when it comes to NHL rights. Amazon, which made a statement about its future in sports streaming when it purchased the rights to "Thursday Night Football," could also have more interest in the NHL after it purchased the naming rights to the home of the NHL's 32nd team in Seattle.

NBC, at this point, is still considered the favorite to land the B package. With the network's 10-year deal as the exclusive national rights holder in the United States expiring, NBC balked at A package prices that ESPN eventually paid. But the network is still believed to have an interest in the NHL and "both NHL and NBC are very attached to that marquee Jan. 1 event" in the Winter Classic, a source told The Athletic.

The NHL and other major leagues are also closely watching what happens with NFL Sunday Ticket, the out-of-market package on DirectTV. ESPN and the NFL are believed to be exploring moving the out-of-market package to ESPN+ — a development that would be a boost for the NHL because of the potential boom it could lead to in ESPN+ subscribers.

"Anything that brings more of that audience to ESPN+ and then allows them to be in the space where the NHL streaming package is, that would be great for the league," an NHL executive said. "It puts our sport in a much better spot to get the casual fan, someone who wouldn't buy a streaming package now just for hockey, but the sports fan who will still be exploring ESPN+ for something to watch when the NFL games aren't on."

Streaming will also be key in how the league plans to grow internationally.

For example, unless you live in the Baltics, Wednesday's announcement that Nordic Entertainment Group (NENT) had acquired the NHL's streaming rights in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia for its Viaplay streaming service likely meant little to you. But the deal is another signal of how things are trending with the NHL, and the NENT deal is likely going to be part of a growing trend of streaming deals in Europe for the NHL and other international markets. It gives the NHL more flexibility in many



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markets to leverage revenue, whether that's working out streaming deals with existing TV partners or other streaming services.

About those RSNs

The national television deals are taking center stage, but regional sports networks (RSNs) are also entering an important stretch.

The Sinclair-owned RSNs, which have local rights for a dozen NHL teams, will rebrand from Fox Sports to Bally Sports on March 31 after the sports gaming company purchased the naming rights.

From a consumer standpoint, very little changes beyond the branding. The channels will remain the same and will be carried by the same providers (this doesn't help the YouTube TV or Hulu fiasco). In the long term, there will likely be more of a gaming and gambling presence, but according to one source, that's not likely going to happen during the remainder of the 2020-21 NHL season.

For those channels, the biggest focus right now is the massive behind-the-scenes undertaking with the rebrand of Bally Sports. There's a long checklist, and one Sinclair network producer said, "it's one of the busiest times I've ever seen in sports television."

Meanwhile, the altering of season schedules because of the COVID-19 pandemic could have an impact on viewers, potentially setting up an April when some difficult decisions are going to be made by local channels when it comes to airtime.

MLB opening day is April 1. It's not a coincidence the Bally names go into effect before that day. But the NHL and NBA will also be active throughout April. For markets where an RSN has the rights to all three professional teams, there is a higher probability of schedule crossover. In those cases, the NHL team will often be the one moved to an alternate or overflow channel. In markets where a network doesn't have a second overflow channel, sharing a game time with the local NBA and MLB team could mean the NHL team is only available by stream on the soon-to-be-named Bally Sports app.

Why is the NHL team often likely to be third in the pecking order? MLB and NBA rights deals typically cost more to Sinclair than an NHL rights deal. Ratings typically also reflect that, so the higher-value properties get higher-value treatment when it comes to a schedule crossover.

Pavelski's media play

Joe Pavelski's sports media company has a new name and platform.

Kompany39, founded by the Dallas Stars forward in 2017, has been rebranded as TorchCo. This week, the company launched a new digital consumer-based platform called TorchPro.com, which aims to connect athletes with fans and particularly younger athletes.

"We wanted to create something that could be used as a tool for younger athletes and parents, that younger generation," Pavelski said. "Through TorchPro, it'll be set up where we can share and pass on knowledge."

Chief executive officer and co-founder Matt Fornataro said the idea for the company was born when he would help Pavelski at a summer camp in Wisconsin.

"The concept was: How can we take the things Joe is teaching to 100-something kids in Wisconsin and make it more available on a more regular basis?" Fornataro said. "We started by telling stories and working more with athletes, helping them tell stories, and this is more of that next step to really connect with fans and younger players."

TorchCo's plan is to have a mix of video and written content that provides both advice on drills and training while also telling the stories behind an athlete — something Fornataro said hockey players tend to be more reluctant to share.

"There are some great people in the sport, but we don't know anything about them or they don't share it, and I think at the end of the day is most guys are just scared to do that," Fornataro said. "They don't need to be. You can be a hockey player, but you can also be a person and it's just

taking the lengths and giving the space where we can allow athletes to grow comfortable with that themselves."

Before the rebrand, Kompany39 had produced videos with Pavelski, detailing his path to the NHL. TorchCo is also working with Charlie McAvoy, Kacey Bellamy, Brandon Yipp, Mike Green and Riley Sheahan, and Fornataro said there are plans to bring more athletes into the fold.

In addition to the rebrand, TorchCo also purchased the Morning Blitz, a daily sports newsletter that specializes in quick recaps of the prior day's event in the sports world. The Morning Blitz will continue to operate under the same name but will now be powered by TorchCo and share specific stories about TorchCo athletes.

Adding a daily presence is something Fornataro said TorchCo had been looking for, and Pavelski compared the morning newsletter to the email he gets each morning from the NHL with headlines.

"We get that email every morning with things that you guys have written across the league," Pavelski said. "A lot of times I'll read through that and there's things I'll find interesting or take note of. Like if a guy just came back from injury or something and had a great game, I like to read and look about why. It's that daily focus, that's what I felt we were getting with the Morning Blitz and something that can connect with what we want to do with fans."

Costly coach firings

The Buffalo Sabres fired Ralph Krueger on Wednesday, a move that came with little surprise in Buffalo as the franchise continues to flounder this season.

Krueger is under contract with the Sabres through the end of next season for \$3.75 million, which Buffalo is still on the hook for after relieving him of his coaching duties.

That makes Krueger one of a handful of NHL coaches now getting paid this season not to coach.

Mike Babcock continues to be the headliner, taking home \$6.25 million through the end of the 2022-23 season from the Toronto Maple Leafs after getting fired in 2019. Claude Julien is set to make \$5 million next season from the Montreal Canadiens after he was fired earlier this season, and Geoff Ward, who was making considerably less, is also getting paid out through the end of his contract.

Gerard Gallant is also getting paid through the end of this season by the Vegas Golden Knights after he was fired in January 2020.

This isn't a new development. Coaches getting paid out at the end of their contracts is common, but it's a more notable expense for NHL teams in a financially difficult season because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

They're grrr — wait

Nathan MacKinnon's face is now available on cereal boxes in Colorado.

MacKinnon Krunch made its debut in early February at King Soopers in the Denver area, with an original run of 25,000 boxes. The frosted corn flake cereal features MacKinnon on the cover in a black CCM jersey. The cereal distributor, Public Label Brands, doesn't have NHL license rights, so the words "Colorado Avalanche" don't make an appearance on the box.

Public Label Brands has done other athlete cereal boxes in the past, including Fleury Flakes with Marc-Andre Fleury when he played for the Pittsburgh Penguins.

MacKinnon and Public Label Brands originally came to a deal for the cereal box before the 2019-20 season and the photo on the front of the box was taken around that time. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the rollout until February.



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"It's cool, man. Not sure how it's selling, but I've had a couple pictures sent to me and people seem to like it," MacKinnon said in February. "It's not like a Wheaties thing or anything, but it's cool."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206369 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why it's time for Jack Campbell to be given the Maple Leafs' net

Luke Fox@lukefoxjukebox

March 21, 2021, 1:03 AM

TORONTO – If there is a goalie controversy in Toronto, it's this: Does Jack Campbell love his teammates more? Or do Jack Campbell's teammates love him more?

As an end-game buzzer sounded the death of the Toronto Maple Leafs' 1-6 slump and the long-awaited rise of a healthy Campbell, 21 men skated in happy procession to congratulate Saturday night's first star, one by one.

The final three players in line waited to the end of the queue, bringing a tiny bit extra to the celebration.

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Third-string goalie Michael Hutchinson had fetched the game puck to hand to Campbell ("He didn't have to do that; it coulda went to anybody tonight," Campbell said, forever paying the good vibes forward). And Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner each took a moment to put their hand on Campbell's head, look him in the eye and relay a message. Plus a hug.

The exact words will remain private, but rest assured they were more than "good game."

"I appreciate every teammate, of course, and love them all, but those two guys definitely lead our team," Campbell said. "They shared some really nice things. I'll just keep it to myself. It was sincere by them. It meant a lot to me.

"It just meant a lot. Basically, about my battling through the adversity. It's been a long road and tough year with the injury. But those guys mean the world to me. [I] look up to them. So, it just makes me more motivated to play well next week."

Rest assured, the seldom-used Campbell will play next week. And, no, there is not a back-to-back on the schedule.

Coach Sheldon Keefe suggested No. 1 Frederik Andersen's nagging lower-body injury may take the decision out of his hands altogether. (Andersen was deemed unable to back up Saturday after acknowledging both physical and confidence struggles earlier in the week.)

But even a rested Andersen must now concede the crease to see just how far Campbell can run, given that the 29-year-old has his legs back.

At this point, riding Campbell is in everyone's best interest — and not just because #LeafsTwitter might otherwise riot.

"He's playing with a ton of confidence. We have a ton of confidence in him," Zach Hyman said. "He saved every shot, so it makes our life a lot easier."

In blanking the Calgary Flames 2-0 on Saturday, Campbell posted consecutive shutouts ... 22 days apart. He's made 71 straight saves, blanking the competition for 133 minutes and 27 seconds and counting. Campbell is the first Toronto goalie to post two shutouts in a row since Andersen in November of 2017.

Campbell has a 4-0-0 record in 2021, a 1.00 goals-against average, and a .965 save percentage. He's also the only NHL-level goalie Toronto has under contract for 2021-22.

Andersen, 31, has admirably carried the heaviest of loads for the entirety of his first four-and-a-half seasons as a Leaf.

Mentally and physically, it's taken a toll. Andersen is 13-8-2 behind an improved blue-line, and his .897 save percentage signals a career low and a third straight season of decline. Not awful. Just OK.

Never before has Andersen had his ice time challenged like this. The Hutchinsons and Curtis McElhinneys and Garret Sparkses of the world weren't a threat to grab the ball and sprint.

How Campbell battles — and how the Leafs, in turn, battle in front of him — suggests a longer leash is due.

Campbell was well-protected early, as Toronto rolled four lines, committed defensively, and scored the all-important first goal.

But he came up big on deflections and penalty kills as Calgary poured on the heat. He even stoned Matthew Tkachuk with the old-school, two-pad stack Campbell typically reserves for practice. You know, to make the lads laugh.

"Highly competitive. Never out of the play. Big saves at key times. Great energy about him, both in the crease, body language, all those things. When he comes to the bench to drink water at TV timeouts, he's got a great energy about him," Keefe described.

"Players really enjoy that about him. I think that's really what you're looking for. The guy doesn't play as much, but when he goes in, it gives the group confidence."

Small sample sizes be damned: Campbell must be the guy, for now. Winks, stick-taps and all.

Through the emotion of finally returning to the ice after a day-to-day leg injury that stretched three weeks, Campbell summed up his recoveries and setback as "a wild ride." The valleys? "Super stressful."

Though Soupy would never dare let that on to the boys.

"You know, he's had days where he's been down and frustrated, but he tries to hide it and just comes with a great attitude," said Jason Spezza, who provided the game-winner and played with Campbell back in their Dallas days.

Added Alexander Kerfoot: "Any adversity that comes his way, he's able to handle it. And he's the same guy every day at the rink. Just a pleasure to be around.... It doesn't affect his attitude or his energy."

After pouring so much work into his conditioning and technique since the pandemic hit, working closely with goalie coach Steve Briere, leaning on Andersen and Hutchinson for support, Campbell succumbed to bouts of frustration after only being healthy enough to start one game a month.

Yes, even the happy-go-luckiest of us are still human.

So, after Saturday's win, Campbell stretched wide to show his appreciation for the troops on military appreciation night, all his teammates for bringing their A-game, and the Leafs' medical staff.

"They're incredible. Every day they're there on top of it, and you couldn't ask for more support than I've gotten. I feel bad putting them in a tough



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position with this. I guess it's part of the game, but I haven't really had to go through it much in my career," Campbell said.

With the Edmonton Oilers and Winnipeg Jets now on their heels like shoe polish, the Maple Leafs need to start the goalie who gives them the best chance to secure two points.

"It's a huge win," Campbell said. "We needed it. We really needed it."

About as bad as the Maple Leafs need Jack Campbell right now.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.21.2021

1206370 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Newfoundland patience, confidence has Oilers building something special

Mark Spector@sportsnetsec

March 21, 2021, 2:16 AM

EDMONTON — The Edmonton Oilers were always that team that could not be convinced there were 60 minutes in a game. They just never believed that, if you just survived the opponent's push, there would be time left to have a push of your own.

"In the past we tried to come back from a (deficit) by cheating on offence, and it was led by Connor and myself," Leon Draisaitl admitted moments after sniping the game-winner in a 4-2 victory over the Winnipeg Jets. "Him and I, we figured out that, if you stay patient — if you continue to play good defence — you're going to get your chances."

That, dear readers, is leadership.

They are the best two players on the team — the captain and an assistant — who don't just talk the right game. They're playing it now, and as such, so is the entire Edmonton Oilers lineup.

"We're trying to build something here, and there's a long way to go," McDavid said. "There is that belief — we're doing a better job of holding teams when they are up. We (used to) have nights where we're down one, and we let them get another one, and dig ourselves an even bigger hole.

"When you're down you've got to hold 'em. And if it takes all period long, then it takes all period long. We'll take our chance when we get it."

Winnipeg scored twice before the game was 16 minutes old on a pair of lucky-bounce, pinball goals, a hint that perhaps this wasn't going to be Edmonton's night. But the third goal never arrived, and before the horn, McDavid made the score 2-1, pulling into a tie with Auston Matthews with a league-leading 21 goals.

Neither team scored in the second, a period in which the old Oilers traditionally would have pushed the envelope, taking all kinds of chances to tie the game. As if it somehow had to happen before the end of 40 minutes.

Instead, they came out in the third, got yet another goal on a lovely shot by Darnell Nurse, and laid down a third period in which the Jets had only eight shots. Finally, their break arrived as a puck kicked out to McDavid as he flew through the neutral zone, and Draisaitl hustled down the right side to find a shooting position.

McDavid dished and Draisaitl dined, one-timing a laser just inside the post from distance. Patience, and then opportunity — the exact formula of which the Oilers' two superstars speak.

"Not much to explain," shrugged Draisaitl. "A pretty pass. He made it easy for me to put in."

"I mean, the guy scored 50," said McDavid. "It's not an easy goal by any means. He's still a long ways out there. And puts it right in the right spot."

The real point is, when you have the quick strike ability that the Oilers possess, and you build a lineup that can check well enough to hang in there long enough for the right chance to arrive...

Well, they're tied in first place in the North this morning. We're thinking that they just might have something here.

Remaining Time -1:21

Oilers' Smith talks winning up and down game against Jets

"We've four ways to win ... in different ways," said goalie Smith, who erased any advantage in goal the Jets might have by simply being better than Vezina winner Connor Hellebuyck. "We've been behind and come back, we've been in close games, we've been fortunate to have big leads in some games."

Smith turns 39 on Monday. He's been on a lot of teams over the years, in a lot of different stages of their maturity. His current team has found its stride with an 18-7 record in its last 25 games, and just knocked off an excellent Jets team with a 2-1 win and then a 4-2 victory in which they trailed by a pair.

"It's valuable to get used to playing in close games, coming from behind in games during the season," Smith said. "Some games are filled with power plays and penalty kills, and other games there doesn't seem to be much space out there, and you try to win a five-on-five battle.

"It's all valuable confidence, and valuable information that goes into the back of your mind every night. Heading into playoffs, you want to be as prepared as possible."

McDavid has known nothing but the orange and blue of Edmonton. He's never felt the vibe here before, that he's feeling right now.

"The confidence, you can just feel it throughout the lineup. We're getting contributions from everybody ... from the net out, guys are working hard and buying in," he said. "Starting to believe is a big part of it.

"Guys are buying in. It's dangerous, and contagious."

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Sportsnet.ca / Chris Tanev emerging as Flames' most important player

Eric Francis@EricFrancis

March 20, 2021, 11:10 PM

It didn't take long for the off-season debate among Calgary Flames fans to be settled.

Would Chris Tanev represent an upgrade or downgrade on the departed T.J. Brodie?

As the two faced off this weekend, it was made abundantly clear there were no losers in the exchange.

Brodie has stabilized the Toronto Maple Leafs' blue line with a steadiness that has allowed Morgan Rielly to shine once again.



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And the long list of intangibles Tanev brought to the Flames was on full display in a two-game split that saw him shut down the NHL's top goal scorer.

Blocking Matthews's shots and habitually rubbing him out in the corner, Tanev showed a national audience why he's earned almost four minutes more ice time under Darryl Sutter than he did under Geoff Ward.

"Did you see in the third period how he jumped right into the shot?" said Rittich, referring to a particularly perilous block on a Morgan Reilly blast.

"When I saw it I thought he took that somewhere to the face. It's not just blocks. How confident he plays in the defensive zone and everything he can do, it's huge for our team. He's one of the best defensive playing guys I've ever seen. He's unbelievable – everything he does."

In a defence-first system like Sutter's, Tanev is now all but officially the most important player in Flames silks.

At least in the eyes of the new coach.

"He plays such a fundamentally sound game and within the structure of what we're trying to do; he's comfortable playing against those top guys like that," said Sutter, who used Tanev for a team-high 24:31 on Friday and 23:55 on Saturday.

"Put it this way, with Chris you can count on him all the time, it doesn't matter what type of game it is."

Tanev's defensive brilliance has not only taken pressure and minutes off of 37-year-old Mark Giordano, it has allowed Noah Hanifin to elevate his game to the point where he's earning power play time.

Unfortunately for Tanev, Brodie and the Leafs pulled a similar trick on all of Calgary's top guns Saturday to post an easy win that saw the Flames' offence fail to threaten Jack Campbell's perfect outing.

One night after limiting Calgary's top two lines to a total of just three shots, the Leafs allowed eight of the 29 shots on goal to come from Calgary's stone-cold six.

Only four were high danger chances, which spoke volumes about just how much Calgary's top guns are struggling of late.

The Flames found themselves chasing from the opening draw, but managed to hold the fort in front of Rittich until the final two minutes of the first, when ageless Jason Spezza roofed his seventh of the year from a sharp angle.

"He's a great player, so as I've said, it takes all five guys whether you're playing Matthews, McDavid, Wheeler or Scheifele," said Tanev, who leads all Flames defenders with a plus-six rating.

"He hit a couple posts. We got lucky, but we'll take it."

The Flames' second loss in six outings under Sutter was part of a brutal evening for them in the standings, as the two teams they're chasing went into overtime before fourth-placed Montreal widened the gap to four points with a win over fifth-placed Vancouver.

It was also a particularly bad night for Dillon Dube and Josh Leivo, who both played under six minutes.

"We had a better first period tonight than we did last night, but they switched their lines around and we had some guys who couldn't handle the size of Toronto up front so we had to move lines around," said Sutter, whose club plays in Ottawa on Monday.

"We had three lines, probably ten guys that were playing the right way, and like we needed them to play, so we just kept playing them."

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1206372

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Gallagher does it all, sparks crucial shootout win over Canucks

Eric Engels@EricEngels

March 21, 2021, 12:51 AM

MONTREAL — The curse was lifted, the dragon was slayed, the overtime/shootout demon was laid to rest, with the home team wearing bleu instead of rouge.

Just when you thought the Montreal Canadiens needed to burn those reverse retro jerseys, they broke their 0-9 post-regulation slump dressed in them.

"They look too good to get rid of," said Brendan Gallagher after the Canadiens beat the Vancouver Canucks 5-4 in the shootout at the Bell Centre on Saturday. "Nice to end a couple of streaks — (the first win in five games wearing the reverse retros) and got an overtime win, too."

Hallelujah.

The Canadiens never would've made it to the extra frame without Gallagher, who William Wallace'd them into the fight when they so desperately needed someone to. And make no mistake, this started off as one of those nights — 24 hours after a disastrous overtime loss to these same Canucks, after J.T. Miller (who scored the winner in that game) called this one Vancouver's most important one of the season, with a chance to pull one point ahead of the Canadiens in the North Division standings.

The Canadiens needed someone to put the team on their shoulders — especially with leading scorer Tyler Toffoli missing his first game of this campaign with a lower-body injury — and that was Gallagher's music.

Blow a lead in the middle period after dominating for half the game? No problem, just throw Gallagher over the boards.

It was a little over five minutes after Brock Boeser made it 2-1 Canucks on the power play that Gallagher stepped onto the ice, floored the gas pedal and double clutched his way 1-on-2 down the left wing. He backed Tyler Myers off the line, started the pressure in Vancouver's zone and then jumped into the slot before baiting Myers into a penalty.

The chaos Gallagher created on the play left Tomas Tatar wide open to score his first goal in 12 games to tie things up.

Need a lead to go to the third period with? No problem, send Gallagher.

With a minute and a half to play in the second, the five-foot-nine winger trapped Canucks forward Adam Gaudette, stole the puck off him just inside the offensive blue line, dove to get it over to Tatar, picked himself up, rammed himself into Canucks defenceman Alex Edler, created a screen in front of goaltender Braden Holtby, got shoved to the ice and then celebrated from his backside as Joel Edmundson's point shot clanked off the bar to put the Canadiens up 3-2.

And when Montreal allowed goals 33 seconds apart to go down 4-3 in the first minute of the third period, things got tense.

Remaining Time -0:31

Gallagher reveals his new superstition for shootout success

"We were playing a good game," said Canadiens coach Dominique Ducharme. "But it seemed every time we made a mistake, it cost us. They weren't so much mental mistakes, but more mistakes in execution. We made them and we paid cash."

And then some players initiated the refund process.



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"Guys like (Shea Weber), our captain, and Corey Perry," said Ducharme, "those veteran guys who just have good words, too, on the bench and can calm things down with the guys."

On the ice, Gallagher, Tatar and Phillip Danault ramped things up. It was at 5:29 of the third period that Danault pulled an offensive-zone faceoff straight back to Gallagher, who put everything he had into a wrist shot that beat Holby for his 12th goal of the season.

The three of them played a dominant game, including an excellent shift in overtime before Gallagher sat on the bench, rubbed Jesperi Kotkaniemi's head for good luck and watched Tatar score the winner in the shootout.

And there he was afterwards, ready to answer questions from the podium, with a cut on his right cheekbone, a mark on his left one, a gash in his lip and a tooth missing from the bottom row of his smile.

"I used to rub (Canadiens prospect) Cale Fleury's head (during the shootout), and he's not here, so I needed a new guy and KK was beside me," Gallagher said. "I kinda forgot about it until right before (Tatar) went, so I started rubbing his head. It's 2-for-2, so next shootout — I'm pretty superstitious — you can count on that being a thing that I'll be doing."

It's just one of dozens of things Gallagher does that makes him such an important player to the Canadiens, the 28-year-old who general manager Marc Bergevin got choked up about after giving him a six-year, \$39-million contract extension over the off-season.

The stuff on the ice is where the value is so obvious night in, night out.

"He's a little pitbull," said Tatar. "He's very strong around the net, and he might be one of the best in the league at the job that he's doing. He reminds me of (former Detroit Red Wing and infamous net-front piñata) Tomas Holmstrom a lot — he's very strong around the net. You don't see many players doing that job that he does, and he does it so well. In that area, he knows how to battle, how to react. I ask him a lot of times for tips — how to be making his shot tips and to create a chance out of nowhere. He's just very good around the net.

"To be honest, I wish I could do that. He's one of the rare players who does it and I think he's very valuable to our team."

Off the ice, Gallagher's the guy who everyone rallies around. He's the guy who fires up and challenges his teammates in the room, stands up for them when facing the media, like he ritually has for Price when the goaltender has received heat from all sides.

The Edmonton native even went out of his way to praise Price on Saturday, after Price came up with the big saves when it mattered most but allowed four goals on the first 14 shots he faced.

On the ones Price made in the shootout, after Boeser scored on Vancouver's first attempt, Gallagher said, "I think our bench had a lot of confidence. It's pretty easy when you've got that guy in your net. Especially on a Saturday night. We were feeling pretty good he was going to make the save. Once the first shot beat him, he wasn't getting beat again. It was nice for (Tatar) to give him some support there, and obviously the skill guys stepped up and did their job."

Price knew he had an opportunity to make a difference in the end because the gritty leader did his part.

"Gally's an awesome teammate," said the 33-year-old who's been alongside Gallagher for nine seasons. "His work ethic obviously speaks for itself. He's very supportive off the ice, and he's fun to hang out with. Over all these years, we've had a lot of great times together. And I appreciate him sticking up for me, too."

TSN.CA / Leafs look for slump-busting start from perpetually positive Campbell

By Mark Masters

TSN Toronto Reporter Mark Masters reports on the Maple Leafs, who held an optional skate at Scotiabank Arena on Saturday.

In need of a slump-busting start, the Leafs will turn to Jack Campbell tonight. The team's back-up goalie will be playing for the first time since aggravating a leg injury on Feb. 27 in Edmonton.

"I know it's been a long road for him," said coach Sheldon Keefe. "He just continued, really, to be himself and put the work in."

"It doesn't effect his attitude or his energy," said third-line centre Alex Kerfoot. "One of the nicest guys I've ever met so any adversity that comes his way, he's able to handle it."

Campbell has only played in three games this season due to the injury.

"He's just a positive guy," said veteran forward Jason Spezza, who got to know Campbell when both were in Dallas. "You know he's had days where he's been down and frustrated, but he tries to hide it and just comes with a great attitude."

When healthy, Campbell has been excellent, winning all three of his starts this season with a .951 save percentage. That includes a 31-save effort in Calgary on Jan. 24 when he initially sustained the leg injury.

"Highly competitive. Never out of the play. Big saves at key times," observed Keefe. "Great energy about him both in the crease, body language and all those things, and when he comes to the bench to drink water at TV timeouts. He's got a great energy about him."

After injury-plagued run, Leafs believe 'Soupy' can help them snap slump

Jack Campbell will make his second start in 53 days when the Leafs play their second game of a back-to-back tonight against the Flames. The netminder has been dealing with some injuries this season, but the club believes he can help them snap out of a funk that has seen them lose six of their last seven games. Mark Masters has more.

If Campbell plays well tonight it could lead to a string of starts.

Frederik Andersen is 2-5-0 with an .876 save percentage since returning from a lower body injury on March 3 and has admitted he's struggling to get his confidence back. It's a big reason why the Leafs have dropped six of seven games.

"When you're losing games it seems like every mistake ends up in the back of your net," said Spezza. "For us, as players, we have to tighten that up and we also have to know that we're doing a lot of good things. It's not fundamental changes we have to make. We just have to batten down our habits a little bit and be a little more confident in our play."

The Leafs have allowed the first goal in six of seven games, including on Friday when the first shot went in.

"Mentally that's a tough hurdle for guys to get over," said Keefe. "We're going to have to be a lot better from the start here and look to play with the lead."

Campbell didn't have any issues with rust when he returned from the first injury absence in Edmonton. He stopped all 30 shots he faced against the Oilers.

'I know I didn't lose my abilities': Andersen looks inward as slump worsens

Frederik Andersen allowed four goals on 18 shots as the Leafs fell to the Flames on Friday. "Personally, I know I didn't lose my abilities to play good," Andersen said. "It's something that starts by me looking inward."



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The 31-year-old plans to work on his tracking after getting beat by some long-range shots. Andersen is now 2-5-0 with an .876 save percentage since returning from a lower-body injury.

Alex Galchenyuk earned a positive review in his Leafs debut.

"He forechecked real well," said Keefe. "I think that's an underrated part of his game, something that is somewhat unexpected. Just the more I watched his game on video both in the NHL with Ottawa and his time with the Marlies, just the way he moves his feet and gets up the ice and puts pressure on other team's defence. I think that created some opportunities for his line and really helped them spend time in the offensive end."

"Definitely felt pretty good," said Galchenyuk, who was playing his first NHL game since Feb. 11. "A lot of excitement, a lot of emotions."

Galchenyuk finished with three shots on net while logging 11 minutes and 19 seconds alongside John Tavares and William Nylander.

"We worked hard," the 27-year-old said. "We were good on the forecheck. Obviously, chemistry takes a little bit of time. I think with the right work ethic we'll find it. We're trying to stick with it, throw it on net a few times and [create] a couple lucky bounces."

"When he has the puck he's confident and looks to make a play with it," said Keefe. "I liked his game. It looked to me like he had the potential to score if the puck came to him in the right spot. He looked like he was hungry and had good legs. I was encouraged with what I saw from him."

Wayne Simmonds was happy with how he played in his return from a broken wrist.

"All things considered I thought it was pretty decent," he said. "I was able to do the things I wanted to do out there, but it doesn't matter much if you don't get the two points. I think, personally, I felt okay."

Simmonds picked up an assist on Spezza's first-period goal providing a good fly-by screen on Jacob Markstrom.

"He didn't get a great deal of minutes yesterday, but I thought he looked good," noted Keefe. "Obviously, I was watching that closely. He had good touches of the puck. He skated well and got involved with the forecheck so that was encouraging to see."

Simmonds played 10 minutes and 36 seconds in his first game since Feb. 6.

Simmonds, Galchenyuk happy with return games

Alex Galchenyuk describes what his chemistry was like with his line in his Maple Leafs debut on Friday night, while Wayne Simmonds says he felt 'okay' in his return from injury.

Justin Holl landed a huge neutral-zone hit on Johnny Gaudreau in the second period, which raised the temperature in Friday's tilt. Flames defenceman Juuso Välimäki immediately confronted the Leafs defenceman taking a roughing penalty. A little later, Matthew Tkachuk challenged Holl to a fight.

"I, personally, thought it was a clean hit, but the nature of the game is you got to answer for it so you do it," said Holl, who had only fought once previously in the NHL.

"He did a great job," said Simmonds. "First and foremost, you want to get some licks on their better players and he did a great job there. That was a big hit on Gaudreau. A guy came up the ice after him and he handled himself and then Tkachuk challenged him to a fight and he handled himself again. The boys love to see that and I, personally, love that stuff."

What message was Tkachuk sending by dropping the gloves?

"Don't touch Johnny like that," the gritty Flames winger explained. "I don't think a lot of guys liked the hit. Whether it was clean or whether it was dirty ... it was a little away from the boards and he could've got hurt."

Tkachuk pointed out that Holl likely wouldn't fight Milan Lucic, Sam Bennett or Brett Ritchie so he had to take the initiative.

'Don't touch Johnny like that': Tkachuk fights Holl after big hit on Gaudreau

Flames forward Matthew Tkachuk dropped the gloves with Justin Holl on Friday night after the Leafs defenceman crushed Johnny Gaudreau with a big neutral-zone hit. "I, personally, thought it was clean, but the nature of the game is you got to answer for it so you do it," said Holl. What message was Tkachuk sending? "Don't touch Johnny like that."

The Leafs outshot the Flames 27-18, but struggled to breakdown the Flames defence.

"Calgary did a good job of clogging the middle in their zone," Simmonds said. "We had a lot of offensive-zone time, a lot of shots directed at the net. We've definitely got to do a better job getting second and third opportunities and breaking through their box in front of their net."

"We've got to skate through that," said Keefe. "At times you've got to shoot through that, get yourself on the inside that way."

It will help if the power play gets going again. Toronto has converted on just one of 13 chances during this seven-game swoon. So, they're not even getting two chances a game right now.

"There's been too many times where we're too quick to give up the puck and we haven't stressed the defenders enough," Keefe said. "I think that's a big part of drawing penalties."

Leafs Ice Chips: Handling the heat and unclogging the middle

With a win last night, the Flames handed the Leafs their sixth regulation loss in the last seven games. Calgary has been playing more of a disciplined style, clogging up the middle under new head coach Darryl Sutter, and TSN's Mark Masters asked Sheldon Keefe how his team can overcome that tonight.

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USA TODAY / Washington Capitals' Tom Wilson set to return from seven-game suspension. What can we expect from him?

Mike Brehm

USA TODAY

Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson went more than two years without a suspension, then was hit for a seven-game ban this month.

The hit was on Boston Bruins defenseman Brandon Carlo, who spent a night in the hospital after being crushed into the boards.

The league said it issued the suspension, the fifth of Wilson's career and his second longest, because of the "totality of the circumstances" surrounding the hit.

The Capitals disagreed with the ruling but chose not to appeal because Wilson likely would have served the entire suspension by the time the process was completed.

"There's nobody that knows the details of body checking and what the league is looking for in evaluating on body checking more than Tom," general manager Brian MacLellan said. "He's very detailed in it."

Wilson is eligible to return Saturday night against the New York Rangers and vows to adjust.



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"I can't be missing seven games," he told reporters Friday. "I can't be missing one game. I got to be in the lineup."

What can we expect from him? USA TODAY Sports hockey staffers weigh in:

Mike Brehm: I take Wilson at his word because from his 20-game suspension (reduced to 14) in 2018 until March, he had avoided the attention of NHL Player Safety. He was physical without being illegal. You could question whether he delivers hits that he doesn't need to deliver, but his physical play opens things up when he's on the ice. He'll also need to behave because the clock has reset and any future suspension would give him repeat offender status and a higher per-game cost.

Jimmy Hascup: For this season? Sure. For the rest of his career? I have my doubts based on his history. He has transformed from more of a one-dimensional bruising forward during the start of his career to one of the premier power forwards in the game. But until I see him let up on some hits and play smarter, I can't sit here and say he is going to be without any controversy moving forward. It's weird because I do think he is sincere when he says he needs to avoid this type of thing ... but that doesn't seem to change his mindset during the heat of the moment on the ice.

Jace Evans: I don't anticipate much change from Wilson, both to his and the Capitals' detriment. He's in his eighth full season in the NHL, turns 27 later this month and has played more than 600 games, including playoffs. This is just the type of player he is. If he had actually learned his lesson in any meaningful way, it would have come after he picked up that 20-game suspension in 2018. But he's continued to ride the line and it finally bit him once again when he went high and hard on Carlo. Wilson is talented and plays a key role for the Capitals thanks to his versatility, but it seems he's going to miss more games for the team in the future because to this point, any "change" in the way he plays has just been lip service.

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