



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Hurricanes' eight-game homestand begins with 3-2 loss to Dallas Stars

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes' longest homestand of the season began on a sour, losing note.

The Canes, in the first of eight games at PNC Arena, were beaten 3-2 Saturday by the Dallas Stars.

The Canes (24-9-3) led 2-1 late in the second period before a careless slashing penalty on forward Andrei Svechnikov in the offensive zone. It came with 46 seconds left in the period, allowing the Stars (13-12-10) to swing the game momentum.

Jamie Benn scored 17 seconds later on the Dallas' power play, knocking in a rebound, and Tanner Kero then scored early in the third as the Stars moved ahead 3-2. Goalie Jake Oettinger took it from there, finishing with 41 saves.

"I don't like the penalty 'Svech' takes because that's 150 feet away from our net and he doesn't need to do that and it leads to a goal," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Momentum was all going our way for sure."

Kero's second goal of the season came at 2:52 of the third after a strong forechecking shift for the Stars. Svechnikov, who appears to be struggling with his confidence, had a turnover in the Canes zone during the sequence.

Andrew Cogliano scored the game's first goal for the Stars in the opening period, deflecting a shot by Mark Pysyk, but Dougie Hamilton's 100th NHL goal and fourth of the season tied it in the first.

Hamilton's goal came on a setup pass from center Vincent Trocheck, who notched his fourth point in three games since returning from injury. Hamilton, deep in the zone, outwaited Oettinger and beat him with a rising shot — Hamilton had nine in one of his most complete games of the season.

"Just a read and reaction for me," Hamilton said. "I saw he was kind of a little late coming to me. I didn't really want to rush the shot."

Haydn Fleury's first goal — and first point — of the season gave the Canes a 2-1 lead in the second. Fleury's goal came after a big hit in the offensive zone by Cedric Paquette, who then screened Oettinger on the Fleury shot. But Fleury, in turn, believed he was at fault for the Stars' third goal by Kero.

"My fault. A little too casual and that cost us the game," Fleury said.

Goalie Alex Nedeljkovic, named the NHL Rookie of the Month in March, took the loss for the Canes, who had topped the Stars in the first four games between them this season.

"I thought we played well," Brind'Amour said. "That's a good effort from start to finish. A couple of mistakes you'd like to not have but they're going to happen."

No time to dwell on it, either. The Canes and Stars go at it again on Sunday night at PNC Arena.

"That's playoff style hockey," Hamilton said of Saturday's game. "We've got to play better and hopefully we can do that tomorrow."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021



## Frustrated Hurricanes drop 3-2 decision to Stars

For the third straight game, Carolina had only one power play opportunity

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — The Dallas Stars scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and held off a 43-shot Hurricanes onslaught to earn a 3-2 win Saturday at PNC Arena. Dougie Hamilton and Haydn Fleury scored for Carolina, and Alex Nedeljkovic made 22 saves in the loss.

### Three Thoughts

1. For the third straight game, the Hurricanes were awarded just one power play, and the frustration at the lack of calls seems to be boiling over. Whether it was uncalled penalties, phantom high sticks leading to plays being blow dead or the continually curious application of hybrid icing, Carolina doesn't seem to get the respect usually given to a team that is at or within whispering distance of the top spot in the league.

Since March 11, the Hurricanes have only had more than three power play opportunities once — they scored on 2 of 6 attempts March 27 against Tampa Bay — in 11 games. Carolina has had four games during that stretch in which they've had one power play chance, including Saturday night.

"That seems a little weird, especially when we play the game we play, which we have the puck a lot in the O zone," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Usually all that stuff evens out at some point. But it is kind of strange."

Hamilton, who has a team-high 14 points on the power play, said he couldn't comment on the officiating but would obviously like to see his team get more chances.

"As power play players, we want to be on the power play as much as we can," Hamilton said. "And we've been talking about how it's been tough just getting one a game. ... We've got to do a better job, I guess, of drawing penalties, holding onto pucks, challenging guys, (and) make it hard on the refs to make them make a call. So I think that's on us. I don't think we can really complain about the refs."

2. Vincent Trocheck continues to make an impact since returning to the lineup. He has four points in the three games since returning to the lineup — including an assist on the pass he made to set up Hamilton's goal — and now has points in nine straight games dating back to Feb. 27.

3. Feb. 28, 2020 — that's the last time I was in PNC Arena for a Hurricanes game. Carolina then hit the road, and ... well, we all know how it's gone since then. But Saturday

night was a return to a little bit of normalcy for me now that I'm vaccinated.

Covering games on TV and doing interviews via Zoom has not been easy, but I think I speak for all of the media still working when I say we're fortunate to have not been impacted beyond that during this unprecedented moment in our lifetime. That said, it felt good to be back tonight, and I hope it was one step toward getting back to how things were before.

### Number To Know

100 — Career goals for Hamilton, whose first period goal tied the game 1-1. Hamilton now has 36 goals in 165 regular season games with the Hurricanes, 0.22 per game. He had 42 goals in 245 games with the Flames (0.17) and 22 in 178 games with the Bruins (0.12).

### They Said It

"That third goal there was my fault. I was a little too casual, and I know it cost us the game. You've got to bring that every shift and learn from it."

— Hurricanes defenseman Haydn Fleury, who got his first point of the season with a second period goal but lost Tanner Kero in front of the Carolina net on what would become the winning goal early in the third period.

### Plus

Dougie Hamilton, Hurricanes defenseman — Hamilton was far and away Carolina's best player Saturday. On top of notching his 100th goal, he was rock-solid defensively and seemed to create the Hurricanes' best chances all night. Overall, it was probably No. 19's best game of the season.

"He was really good," Brind'Amour said. "Solid, obviously, had a lot of opportunities and made a lot of good plays. (He) played well defensively. ... He was definitely one of the better players out there."

Hamilton finished with a game-high nine shots on goal and the goal was his fourth of the season.

### Minus

Andrei Svechnikov, Hurricanes forward — Svechnikov continues to slump, and his frustration has become evident and hurt his team Saturday. He was called for slashing in the second period on a forecheck, giving the Stars a late-period power play they converted on when Jamie Been scored on a rebound to tie the game.

"I don't like the penalty that Svech takes because it's 200 feet, 150 feet away from our net," Brind'Amour said. "He



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

doesn't really need to do that, and that leads to a goal. Momentum was all going our way, for sure, (until then)."



## Recap: Canes Fall to Stars

Hamilton nets 100th career NHL goal in loss

By Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes were edged 3-2 by the Dallas Stars in the first game of a season-long, eight-game homestand.

Plus/Minus

Plus: Dougie Hamilton

With a goal (his 100th in the NHL), nine shots, two hits and two blocked shots in 23 minutes of ice time, Hamilton was a standout player for the Canes in the loss.

"He was really good. Solid," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Had a lot of opportunities and made a lot of good plays. He played well defensively. He was really good. He was definitely one of the better players out there."

Hamilton's fourth goal of the season tied the game at one in the first period. Vincent Trocheck fed Hamilton as he crept in from the point. Hamilton outwaited Jake Oettinger and roofed the puck for career NHL goal No. 100.

"It's just a read and reaction," Hamilton said. "I saw he was a little late coming to me, and I didn't want to rush the shot."

Hamilton has posted 19 points in his last 17 games (3g, 16a) and has recorded at least a point in 16 of those 17 games.

Minus: Penalties

For the third straight game, the Canes had just one power play opportunity.

"That seems a little weird, especially when we play the game we play. We have the puck a lot in the O-zone," Brind'Amour said. "That's the way it goes. Usually, all that stuff evens out at some point, but it is kind of strange."

It's also strange to see Andrei Svechnikov hauled down on a seemingly blatant trip that went uncalled. If the roles were reversed, he's certainly getting whistled for an infraction. At the same time, there were a grand total of zero penalties called in the third period; the whistles had seemingly been holstered.

And speaking of Svechnikov, he took a slashing penalty at the 19:14 mark of the third period. It was a blatant slash, and it was totally avoidable.

On the ensuing power play just 17 seconds later, Jamie Benn tied the game at two. That stunted the Canes' momentum heading into the intermission.

"I don't like the penalty Svech takes," Brind'Amour said.

"That's 150 feet away from our net. He doesn't really need to do that, and it leads to a goal."

Plus: Haydn Fleury

For a team that had scored 113 goals coming into this game, it was a statistical anomaly that Fleury had yet to find the scoresheet for a point.

In his 32nd game of the season, that finally changed.

The Canes' fourth line grinded out a shift that began with Cedric Paquette flattening John Klingberg, who retrieved the dump-in. The Canes stayed hungry on the puck, and it eventually worked up the far wall to Fleury, who teed off a shot that found its way through traffic and past Oettinger. Cedric Paquette, who had net-front presence, pointed right to Fleury, indicating his goal. Fleury smiled and tossed his arms up in relief.

"I've had chances all year," Fleury said. "It wasn't really from a lack of looks. The puck just wasn't really going in."

Minus: Late strike, early strike

After Benn tied the game at two with 29 seconds to play in the second period, the Stars took some momentum back into the intermission. Then, not even three minutes into the third period, Jason Robertson fed Tanner Kero in the slot for the quick strike to put the Stars ahead for good.

Stats Pack

9: With the primary assist on Hamilton's goal, Trocheck has now recorded at least a point in each of his last nine games played (5g, 7a).

2: This was just the second regulation loss in 16 home games this season for the Canes.

Quote of the Night

"I thought we played well. I can't fault our guys. That's a good effort from start to finish. A couple mistakes you'd like to not have. ... We played hard enough to win. Come with that effort, and most nights we're going to be rewarded." - Rod Brind'Amour

Up Next

Sunday. Same time, same place, same opponent.

"Every game against them has been a tough, physical hard-checking game. There's a reason they made it to the Final



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

last year," Hamilton said. "They play the right way. It's playoff-style hockey. We've got to play better. Hopefully we can do that tomorrow."

## Preview: Stars vs. Hurricanes

Hamilton: 'It's playoff-style hockey. We've got to play better'

By Michael Smith

Run it back: It's a rematch between the Carolina Hurricanes and Dallas Stars.

The Match-Up

Dallas Stars (13-12-10, 36 points) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (24-9-3, 51 points)

Sunday, April 4, 7 p.m.

Watch: Bally Sports South, FOX Sports GO

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

About Last Night

Though Dougie Hamilton netted his 100th career NHL goal and Haydn Fleury notched his first goal and point of the season, the Canes fell just short of the Stars in a 3-2 final at PNC Arena on Saturday Night. Jamie Benn tied the game at two on the power play late in the second period, and then

early in the third, Tanner Kero scored the go-ahead goal for Dallas.

"I thought we played well. I can't fault our guys. That's a good effort from start to finish. A couple mistakes you'd like to not have," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We played hard enough to win. Come with that effort, and most nights we're going to be rewarded."

Numbers to Know

19: After scoring his 100th career NHL goal, Hamilton now has 19 points (3g, 16a) in his last 17 games, a stretch that began with a record-setting, 14-game point streak. Hamilton, who leads the team in assists (26) and ranks tied for second in points (30), has failed to record a point in just one his last 17 games.

9: With the primary assist on Hamilton's goal on Saturday night, Vincent Trocheck has recorded at least a point in each of his last nine games played (5g, 7a). Trocheck ranks tied for second on the team in goals (14) and tied for third on the team in points (28), despite having missed nine games due to injury.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021



## Oettinger makes 41 saves, helps Stars get first win against Hurricanes

Kero breaks tie in third period in first of back-to-back set

By Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Tanner Kero broke a tie in the third period, and the Dallas Stars defeated the Carolina Hurricanes 3-2 at PNC Arena on Saturday.

It was the first win for the Stars against the Hurricanes this season (1-2-2). They play the second of their back-to-back set here Sunday.

Andrew Cogliano and Jamie Benn scored for the Stars (13-12-10), who have won two in a row for the first time since they opened the season with a four-game winning streak. Jake Oettinger made 41 saves after replacing scheduled starter Anton Khudobin, who was placed in the NHL COVID-19 protocol Saturday morning.

"He's mature beyond his years," Dallas coach Rick Bowness said of Oettinger, a rookie. "When you're that confident in your abilities you want to play. Nothing is going to rattle him at this point."

Dougie Hamilton and Haydn Fleury scored, and Alex Nedeljkovic made 22 saves for the Hurricanes (24-9-3), who had won four of five.

"We played hard and played well," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Give them credit; we know the pucks are getting to the net by them. I can't fault our guys. That's a good effort from start to finish. If we come with that effort most nights we're going to be rewarded."

Kero scored his second goal of the season at 2:52 to give the Stars a 3-2 lead after Jason Robertson made a no-look, backhand pass from behind the net to the low slot.

"We just wanted to be hard on the puck and [Robertson] made a great play to just walk out of the corner," Kero said. "Luckily I was all alone in front."

Cogliano scored when he tipped Mark Pysyk's shot from the right point to make it 1-0 at 3:41 of the first period.

"We do that quite a bit, where you drive off the wall and try to get to the net," Cogliano said. "I've probably done that 100 times this year, so it's nice to tip one in. A big goal for the team, just to get a good start."

Hamilton tied it 1-1 at 9:33 with his 100th NHL goal. He took a pass from Vincent Trocheck and pulled Oettinger out of position before flipping the puck into an open net from the right circle.

"I saw he was a little late coming to me. I didn't want to rush the shot," Hamilton said. "I kind of looked for five-hole and it wasn't really there, so I could go around him."

Carolina took a 2-1 lead at 13:04 of the second period on Fleury's shot from the left point that trickled through Oettinger's five hole. It was Fleury's first point of the season in his 32nd game and first goal since Feb. 29, 2020.

Benn's power-play goal at 19:31 tied it 2-2. Nedeljkovic saved John Klingberg's one-timer, but Benn gathered the rebound at the top of the crease and scored on a backhand.

"I'll tell you who did an incredible job tonight: Jamie Benn," Bowness said. "He was great on the bench. He's done a great job leading that third and fourth line. They want to chip in because they see their leader busting his butt and doing all the things you need to do to win."

The Hurricanes' 43 shots were the most Oettinger has faced in 18 NHL games. He denied Andrei Svechnikov cutting to the net with 32 seconds left.

"It's fun when they're coming at you," Oettinger said. "I love to play against the best players in the world, and I think they have some of those guys over there. To measure where I'm at is always super fun, especially against a team like that. The guys did such a great job in front of me tonight."

NOTES: Stars forward Jason Dickinson left after the first period with an undisclosed injury, but Bowness did not rule him out for Sunday. He had no update on Khudobin. ... Hamilton extended his NHL career-high home point streak to nine games (two goals, nine assists). He has scored 328 points (100 goals, 229 assists) in 588 NHL games for the Hurricanes, Boston Bruins and Calgary Flames. ... Trocheck extended his point streak to nine games (five goals, seven assists). ... Carolina forward Jordan Staal won 21 of 30 face-offs (70.0 percent). ... Robertson had his three-game goal streak end. ... Klingberg has scored six points (one goal, five assists) in a six-game point streak. ... Oettinger tied Jack Campbell (Oct. 20, 2013 at Anaheim Ducks) for the most saves by a rookie goalie for the Stars since they began play in Dallas for the 1993-94 season.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

**AP** ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Kero scores as Stars edge Hurricanes for 2nd straight win

By Bob Sutton

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Tanner Kero snapped a tie 2:52 into the third period, and the Dallas Stars beat the Carolina Hurricanes 3-2 on Saturday night to post consecutive victories for the first time since the opening week of the season.

"We wanted to string a few wins together so this is a good start," Kero said.

Andrew Cogliano and Jamie Benn also scored for Dallas, which won 4-1 at Nashville on Thursday night. Mark Pysyk recorded his first two assists of the season.

Jake Oettinger made a career-high 41 saves, matching the most for a Dallas rookie since the franchise relocated to Texas.

"He's mature beyond his years," Stars coach Rick Bowness said. "When you're that confident in your abilities, you want to play. Nothing is going to rattle him at this point."

Oettinger, 22, delivered after Anton Khudobin was placed on the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list. Oettinger didn't find out that he would be the starter until prior to the morning skate.

"You've got to be ready for anything, especially this year," Oettinger said.

The Stars last had a winning streak when they won their first four games of the year.

"We need to start climbing back in this race," Kero said.

Dougie Hamilton and Haydn Fleury scored for Carolina. Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 22 shots in the opener of an eight-game homestand.

The Hurricanes had been 4-0 against Dallas this season.

The teams traded goals in the first two periods.

Cogliano put the Stars in front on a deflection just 3:41 into the game. Hamilton responded for the Hurricanes when he

got a pass from Vincent Trocheck, made one slight move and basically shot into an open net at 9:33.

"It's just a read and reaction for me," Hamilton said.

It was Hamilton's 100th NHL goal, just two games after his 14-game point streak ended in a loss at Chicago.

Fleury put the Hurricanes ahead in the second with a shot from just inside the blue line. Oettinger appeared to have a read on the puck, but instead it bounced off a pad and between his legs. For Fleury, appearing in his 32nd game in 2021, it was his first point of the season.

"I've had chances all year," Fleury said. "It wasn't really from a lack of looks."

Benn's power-play goal with 29 seconds to play in the period tied it at 2. Stationed in front of the net, Benn collected a rebound and slid the puck around Nedeljkovic.

The sequence occurred after an ill-advised slashing penalty on Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov.

"You can't give goals to good teams," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It's too hard to come back from."

NOT THE PLAN, BUT ...

Khudobin had been expected to start in goal. His absence created an opening for Oettinger.

"I love to play against the best players in the world, and I think they have some of those guys over there," Oettinger said. "To measure where I'm at is always super fun, especially against a team like that."

Left winger Roope Hintz and defenseman Joel Hanley also were out of the Dallas lineup with lower-body injuries.

"For us to come in here injured and beaten up and show that we can beat anyone no matter who's in our lineup is a great testament to how deep we are," Oettinger said.

UP NEXT

The teams meet again Sunday night in Raleigh.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021



**SB NATION**  
**CANES COUNTRY**

## Recap: Canes open homestand with loss to Stars

The Carolina Hurricanes opened up an eight-game homestand with a 3-2 loss to the Dallas Stars Saturday night, letting a 2-1 advantage slip away.

By Alec\_Sawyer

The Carolina Hurricanes opened up an eight-game homestand with a 3-2 loss to the Dallas Stars Saturday night, as Dallas scored in the final minute of the second period and early in the third to come from behind and topple the Canes in PNC Arena.

The Stars opened the scoring in the first thanks to a redirection from Andrew Cogliano, before Jamie Benn and Tanner Kero added the game-tying and game-winning goals, respectively. For the Hurricanes, Dougie Hamilton netted the 100th goal of his NHL career while Haydn Fleury got his first of the season.

It was a physical affair that featured 64 combined hits, with Dallas winning that battle 37-27. In net, Jake Oettinger got the win for the Stars, stopping 41 of 43 shots faced, while Alex Nedeljkovic took the loss after saving 22 of 25 shots.

The Stars opened up the scoring less than four minutes into the game, as a sloppy start for both teams led to a deflection goal for Cogliano immediately off an offensive-zone faceoff win for Dallas.

Mark Pysyk laced a shot towards net after a Blake Comeau win in the faceoff circle, and Cogliano was able to get his stick out to it with Haydn Fleury draped on. Nedeljkovic, positioned to stop the Pysyk wrister, had no chance.

Carolina evened things up at 1-1 thanks to a milestone goal for Hamilton, who used some great patience to beat Oettinger to hit the century mark on his career goal tally. Hamilton received a good pass from Vincent Trocheck, who intercepted a pass in the circle, and used a great hesitation move to score.

Dallas threatened mightily late in the first period, holding the puck in the offensive zone for an incredibly long defensive shift for Jake Bean and Brady Skjei. The Canes survived that outburst and a physical first period as a whole though, with

the teams combining for 33 hits in the first 20 minutes. The Canes won that battle 17-16.

The second period started much like the first, with offense hard to come by for most of the frame. Dallas did get the game's first power play, as Brett Pesce went to the box for tripping, but couldn't get anything from it.

Fleury made it a 2-1 game with just under seven minutes left in the middle period, firing one from the point that bounced through Oettinger's legs and into the net. It was Fleury's first goal, and first point, of the season, with Cedric Paquette offering a good screen in front of net.

The Hurricanes once again didn't finish the period strong in the second. After an empty power play for Carolina, Andrei Svechnikov took a completely avoidable slashing call with under a minute to play in the middle frame.

Dallas didn't take long to tie things up before the second intermission, as Benn controlled a rebound off a John Klingberg point shot and backhanded past Nedeljkovic.

The Stars carried that momentum over into the third period, as Dallas grabbed hold of a 3-2 lead just 2:52 into the final 20 minutes. Pysyk made a good play to keep the puck in the offensive zone, and Jason Robertson threaded a perfect backhanded centering pass to Kero, who slotted it past Nedeljkovic.

The Canes had a quite a few good chances in a wide-open third period, including a beautiful individual effort from Martin Necas on a wraparound attempt that was barely snuffed out by Oettinger.

Carolina also probably would have liked to hear a few whistles blown in the final frame, as the Canes didn't go on a power play despite some seriously iffy moments from the Stars. Much to the chagrin of the Carolina fans in PNC Arena, the whistles stayed quiet.

Carolina pulled Nedeljkovic with about 1:30 to play, but couldn't find the tying goal. Dallas and Carolina will be back in action at PNC Arena Sunday at 7 p.m.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

## They said it: Brind'Amour, Hamilton, Fleury on loss to Stars

Rod Brind'Amour, Haydn Fleury and Dougie Hamilton spoke to the media following the Hurricanes' 3-2 loss to the Dallas Stars.

By Andrew Schnittker

Despite a great performance from Dougie Hamilton and Haydn Fleury's first goal of the season, the Hurricanes fell 3-2 to the Dallas Stars at PNC Arena Saturday night to open an eight-game homestand.

Fleury, Hamilton and Rod Brind'Amour spoke to the media after the game, here's a full breakdown of everything they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On the lack of power plays: It's a good observation. I think we were just kind of going back through it. We had one game here where we had a bunch of power plays. Now we've had four or five where we've had one. That seems a little weird, especially when we play the game we play when we have the puck a lot in the O-zone. But that's the way it goes. Usually all that stuff evens out at some point. But it is kind of strange.

On if the team isn't getting enough respect from the officials: It's just strange that we didn't get more than one power play in the last four or five. That is a little bit concerning. But I'm not blaming the referees on anything. We gave them a goal. We can't give goals to good teams. It's too hard to come back from.

On Dougie Hamilton: He was really good. He had a lot of opportunities and made a lot of good plays. He played well defensively. He was really good. He was definitely one of the better players out there.

On his takeaways from the game: We played hard and played well. I don't like the penalty that [Andrei Svechnikov] takes, because that's 150 feet away from our net. He doesn't really need to do that. That leads to a goal. Momentum was all going our way for sure. You're going to lose faceoffs here and there. Give them credit. We know the pucks are getting to the net from them, and they beat us off the wall for a tip-in. That's how they design it. We know that. We've got to better there. I thought we played well. I can't fault our guys. That's a good effort from start to finish. A couple mistakes you'd like to not have, but they're going to happen. We played hard enough to win. You come with that effort most nights, we're going to be rewarded.

Haydn Fleury

On getting his first goal of the season: Yeah. I've had chances all year. It wasn't really from a lack of looks. The puck just wasn't really going in.

On Cedric Paquette's hit to open up his goal: He gets in there on the forecheck. That's one of the things he's really good at. He separates the guy from the puck. It ended up being a really big hit. We kind of just buzzed around the zone from there. [Steven Lorentz] made a good play there to let it go through his feet. I just tried to get one through.

On having to match Dallas' desperation and energy: That's a big thing. That third goal there was my fault. I was a little too casual. It ended up costing us the game. You've got to bring that every shift and learn from it.

Dougie Hamilton

On the Hurricanes not getting the respect they deserve as a top team from the officiating: I can't really comment on the refs. Obviously as power play players we want to be on the power play as much as we can. We've been talking about how it's been tough just getting one a game. I think other than that Tampa game where we had a bunch and scored two goals, I think the last two weeks or something we've been one, maybe two a game. It's pretty hard. We've got to do a better job, I guess, of drawing penalties, holding onto pucks, challenging guys. Make it hard on the refs, to make them make calls. I think that's on us. I don't think we can really complain about the refs.

On his goal resembling his usual shootout move: I wasn't thinking, to be honest. I just tried to get the puck and it's a read and reaction for me. I wasn't really getting the puck and thinking 'I'm gonna do this move.' I saw he was kind of a little late coming to me. I didn't want to rush the shot. Then I kind of looked for five hole. It wasn't really there, so I could go around him. But you're right, I think it was very, very similar to the shootout goals. It's nice to do it in the real game, I guess.

On matching Dallas' desperation and energy: We knew that they would do that. I think every game against them has been a tough, physical, hard-checking game. There's a reason they made it to the finals last year. You could see from their game today that they play the right way. That's playoff-style hockey. We've got to play better, and hopefully we can do that tomorrow.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021



## Wolves win sixth in a row

Jeannot's PPG and Cooley's 31 saves earn sixth straight over IceHogs, too

Tanner Jeannot's power-play goal late in the second period stood up as the game-winner as the Chicago Wolves extended their winning streak to six games with a 4-2 win over the Rockford IceHogs Saturday night at the Wolves Training Facility.

Jeannot, who pushed his American Hockey League-leading goal streak to seven games, also gave the Wolves (14-2-0-1) their sixth consecutive win over Rockford (6-12-1-0).

Forwards Dominik Bokk, David Cotton and Cole Smith also scored for Chicago while rookie goaltender Devin Cooley made 31 saves — several of the spectacular variety — to give him two wins in two AHL starts.

"Obviously the result's great," said Wolves head coach Ryan Warsofsky. "I thought our goaltender was outstanding. Probably kept us in the game."

Rockford jumped on top 7:33 into the night when center Dylan McLaughlin swiped a Wolves pass in the high slot and zoomed in unimpeded for a quick wrister.

Chicago erased its early deficit when Sean Malone spied Bokk open in the slot and fed him for a wicked one-timer that made it 1-1 at 13:38.

The Wolves grabbed a 2-1 lead at 4:27 of the second when Cotton collected a Ryan Suzuki pass at the right faceoff circle, spun toward the net and whipped a shot home. Rockford replied with a 2-on-1 rush that rookie Josiah Slavin finished at the net on a feed from D.J. Busdeker.

The Wolves regained the lead with 43 seconds left in the second on Jeannot's power-play goal. Defenseman David Warsofsky fired from the right point and goaltender Cale Morris blocked it, but left a juicy rebound for Jeannot to sweep into the net for the 3-2 lead.

Smith added an empty-net goal in the final minute as the Wolves pushed their winning percentage to a league-best .853. That also ties the 2007-08 Calder Cup champions for the best start by a Wolves squad through 17 games.

Morris (2-1-0) posted 31 saves in the loss.

The Wolves hit the road for eight of their next nine games — starting with a 6 p.m. battle Wednesday in Rockford. The team returns to the Wolves Training Facility on Wednesday, April 21, against the IceHogs.

## TODAY'S LINKS

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

## SportScan

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

1207575 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' eight-game homestand begins with 3-2 loss to Dallas Stars

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

APRIL 03, 2021 06:27 PM

The Carolina Hurricanes' longest homestand of the season began on a sour, losing note.

The Canes, in the first of eight games at PNC Arena, were beaten 3-2 Saturday by the Dallas Stars.

The Canes (24-9-3) led 2-1 late in the second period before a careless slashing penalty on forward Andrei Svechnikov in the offensive zone. It came with 46 seconds left in the period, allowing the Stars (13-12-10) to swing the game momentum.

Jamie Benn scored 17 seconds later on the Dallas' power play, knocking in a rebound, and Tanner Kero then scored early in the third as the Stars moved ahead 3-2. Goalie Jake Oettinger took it from there, finishing with 41 saves.

"I don't like the penalty 'Svech' takes because that's 150 feet away from our net and he doesn't need to do that and it leads to a goal," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Momentum was all going our way for sure."

Kero's second goal of the season came at 2:52 of the third after a strong forechecking shift for the Stars. Svechnikov, who appears to be struggling with his confidence, had a turnover in the Canes zone during the sequence.

Andrew Cogliano scored the game's first goal for the Stars in the opening period, deflecting a shot by Mark Pysyk, but Dougie Hamilton's 100th NHL goal and fourth of the season tied it in the first.

Hamilton's goal came on a setup pass from center Vincent Trocheck, who notched his fourth point in three games since returning from injury. Hamilton, deep in the zone, outwaited Oettinger and beat him with a rising shot — Hamilton had nine in one of his most complete games of the season.

"Just a read and reaction for me," Hamilton said. "I saw he was kind of a little late coming to me. I didn't really want to rush the shot."

Haydn Fleury's first goal — and first point — of the season gave the Canes a 2-1 lead in the second. Fleury's goal came after a big hit in the offensive zone by Cedric Paquette, who then screened Oettinger on the Fleury shot. But Fleury, in turn, believed he was at fault for the Stars' third goal by Kero.

"My fault. A little too casual and that cost us the game," Fleury said.

Goalie Alex Nedeljkovic, named the NHL Rookie of the Month in March, took the loss for the Canes, who had topped the Stars in the first four games between them this season.

"I thought we played well," Brind'Amour said. "That's a good effort from start to finish. A couple of mistakes you'd like to not have but they're going to happen."

No time to dwell on it, either. The Canes and Stars go at it again on Sunday night at PNC Arena.

"That's playoff style hockey," Hamilton said of Saturday's game. "We've got to play better and hopefully we can do that tomorrow."

News Observer LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207576 Carolina Hurricanes

'Quickie' has quickly become a Hurricanes workhorse

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

APRIL 03, 2021 06:30 AM

Jesper Fast won the Players' Player Award so many times with the New York Rangers that they might as well have named it for him.

That is, if they didn't let him go.

The Rangers award, selected by teammates, is given to someone who "best exemplifies what it means to be a team player." That was Fast, five years running, for the Rangers. And he's quickly become the same kind of player for the Carolina Hurricanes this season.

"He's a guy who fits our mold in the way we want to play," Canes captain Jordan Staal said Thursday on a media call. "He's just an absolute workhorse. Every shift you see him and he's never going to quit on a puck. He's always going to be working. It may not always work out for him, but you know he's going to give it his all."

"He's played well for us down the stretch and done a lot of things under the radar that we appreciate as players and I'm sure as coaches."

The guy they call "Quickie" — the perfect nickname, yes? — had a big-time play Thursday against the Chicago Blackhawks. Jumping on a loose puck in front of the Chicago net, he knocked it off the inside of the post and past goalie Kevin Lankinen for the winning goal in a 4-3 road victory at the United Center.

The play was set in motion by center Vincent Trocheck winning a draw in the defensive zone. The puck went to Fast, who dropped off a pass to Trocheck and then went to the net as Trocheck got off a shot. The puck hit defenseman Calvin de Haan and bounced off Lankinen's left pad to Fast, who shot as he fell to the ice with 29 seconds left in regulation.

"Got a bit of a weird bounce and I almost missed the puck, too," Fast said of his fifth goal of the season. "But I was lucky it went post and in. Very happy with that."

When the Rangers allowed Fast to leave in free agency after last season, the Hurricanes signed the Swedish winger to a three-year, \$6 million



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

contract. The price was right and Fast's acquisition was one of the few offseason additions for the Canes.

His versatility has been a plus for a team that is 24-8-3 and contending for the lead in the Central Division. Fast can play on any line, can be used on the power play and in penalty killing. He gives the Canes another right-shot forward in the lineup.

Fast, 29, now has his first game-winning goal for the Canes and did it, coach Rod Brind'Amour said, by going into the "greasy area" in front of the net. According to the NHL, he became the seventh player in franchise history to score the winning goal in the final 30 seconds of a regular-season game.

"It's nice to see someone get rewarded for doing all the little things that make the team successful," said forward Warren Foegele, who scored twice in Thursday's game. "He's working hard out there and keeping plays in and giving space to the skill guys."

"Sometimes, he doesn't get recognized for that. But the team, we recognize that, so it's pretty awesome to see him get that one and get rewarded."

Fast was all set to play against the Canes last August when the NHL returned during the pandemic for the 2020 postseason. The Canes and Rangers faced off in a best-of-five format in a Stanley Cup qualifier in Toronto, and Fast was a quick casualty, knocked out of the opening game after just 32 seconds.

Delivering the big early hit was Brady Skjei, one Fast's Rangers teammates until dealt to the Canes at the trade deadline in February 2020. Fast would not return in the series as the Canes won in three straight games, and his absence from the lineup was felt by the Rangers.

The Canes, with Fast now in their lineup, can see why now.

### INJURY UPDATE

Brind'Amour said Friday he still is unsure how the three-goalie situation will shake out. Petr Mrazek put in a conditioning-stint game with the AHL's Chicago Wolves on Thursday, facing 45 shots and winning 5-2 in his first game action since injuring his right thumb Jan. 30 against Dallas.

"He hasn't really said, 'Hey, I'm 100 percent ready to play,'" Brind'Amour said. "I think he is but I want to make sure that I have a good conversation with him. I think it will be day to day. We'll just monitor it as we go." ...

Teuvo Teravainen got in some skating Friday, Brind'Amour said, as the forward continues to recover from a concussion. His return remains indefinite. "Nobody really has a handle on it," Brind'Amour said. "Hopefully has turns the corner."

News Observer LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207594 Dallas Stars

Consecutive wins, you say? Behind Jake Oettinger's 41 saves, the Stars finally defeated the Hurricanes

By Matthew DeFranks

8:49 PM on Apr 3, 2021 CDT

In the current Stars season, even minor accomplishments feel like major ones.

Thanks to a 3-2 win Saturday night at Carolina, the Stars won consecutive games for the first time in nine weeks. Dallas went 29 games

between starting the season 4-0-0 and beating Nashville on Thursday and Carolina on Saturday.

The win was the first over the Hurricanes this season and continues a pivotal road trip that could decide the Stars' fate ahead of the April 12 trade deadline. Dallas is 2-0-1 on the trip, with one game left in Carolina and two in Chicago.

Tanner Kero scored the game-winning goal 2:52 into the third period, burying a slick feed from behind the net by Jason Robertson. Andrew Cogliano and Jamie Benn also scored for the Stars. By tipping Mark Pysyk's point shot, Cogliano scored his fourth goal of the season. Benn's deft rebound goal was his second power-play goal in as many games.

"We needed to get on a bit of a run, so it's nice to get that away," coach Rick Bowness said. "I know it's a topic of conversation about not having the back-to-back wins. We needed to get that done tonight. We needed to find a way to win that game so we can move past that, and we did."

The Stars are five points behind Nashville for fourth place — the final playoff spot — in the Central Division with four games in hand.

It was a big enough feat beating the team that began Saturday leading the NHL in points percentage, a team that defeated the Stars four times already this season. But the list of missing Stars makes the two points more impactful.

Anton Khudobin was supposed to start Saturday night's game, but he was placed on the NHL's COVID-19 protocol list. Khudobin said before the season that he had COVID-19 in Russia in the offseason, so Bowness hopes that Khudobin suffered from a false positive test result.

Either way, Khudobin was unable to start, paving the way for Jake Oettinger, who made 41 saves.

"There was no surprise, it was just almost like 'Oh OK, what are you waiting for?'" Bowness said of telling Oettinger he would start Saturday. "It's his maturity. It shows on the ice, but really, he's mature beyond his years. When you're that confident in your abilities, you want to play."

Roope Hintz came out of the lineup after playing the previous three games through a nagging lower-body injury. Hintz has not played both ends of a back-to-back in more than two months, meaning he could be available for Sunday's rematch in Raleigh.

Alexander Radulov (lower body), Tyler Seguin (hip surgery) and Ben Bishop (knee surgery) were all unavailable but skating in Frisco. Bowness said Joel Kiviranta was still in a walking boot. Kiviranta has not played since March 21 because of a lower-body injury and is on injured reserve. Stephen Johns hasn't played all season.

A minor accomplishment like completing a game unscathed would be cause for celebration in Dallas.

The Stars lost Joel Hanley during Thursday's victory over the Predators, and he was again out Saturday night against the Hurricanes. His absence allowed Pysyk back in the lineup, and he produced an assist.

The Stars lost Jason Dickinson during Saturday's game with a lower-body injury, and he didn't play after the first period. Bowness did not have an update on Dickinson after the game.

The final damage count for the Stars? They were missing their top two centers, top two goalies, a pair of top-six wingers, a versatile center and a pair of depth defensemen.

"For us to come in here injured and beaten up and show that we can beat anyone no matter who's in our lineup is a testament to how deep we are and how good of a team we have," Oettinger said. "It's been a great start to this road trip, and [we're] just going to continue this into [Sunday]."

Without those players, it was Kero who provided the heroics.

Kero is not counted on to be a scorer. He hadn't played in the NHL in three years before this season. He had one goal with the Stars entering Saturday night. But he potted the game-winning goal in a game that



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

moved the Stars closer to playoff contention, a minor step toward a major target.

"It seems like when we have a good game, we have a setback the next game," Kero said. "We wanted to make sure we were keeping it going and try to string a couple together. We need to start climbing back in this race. Every point is important, so when you can get two in a row like that, that's big."

Dellandrea dishing it out: On Saturday morning, Bowness had a little chat with rookie forward Ty Dellandrea, and the message was simple: "You don't have to hit everything that moves out there."

"He brings so much energy, he just wants to get a piece of everyone," Bowness said. "But he's such a competitive guy, and he really lifts the spirit up on the ice, the enthusiasm."

Dellandrea was in the lineup for his third straight game, playing right wing on the fourth line. On Thursday night in Nashville, Dellandrea got into his first NHL fight when he dropped the gloves with Predators forward Luke Kunin.

"I like to get under people's skin," Dellandrea said. "It brings the intensity up in my game and gets me dialed in, as well as the team. I think it's always been in my game a little bit, but playing within the game and playing hard."

Dellandrea entered Saturday with 35 hits in 21 games.

"He's getting chances, he's excellent on the forecheck, he's banging bodies, he's going to the net," Bowness said. "He's hard to play against. That scrap at the end of [Thursday's] game, that's typical him. He seemed to enjoy it."

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207595 Dallas Stars

Stars' Anton Khudobin enters COVID-19 protocols, will miss start vs. Hurricanes

By SportsDay Staff

11:46 AM on Apr 3, 2021 CDT

On Thursday, Anton Khudobin had a strong outing in the Stars' win over Nashville.

Two days later, the Stars' goalkeeper won't get a chance to follow it up.

On Saturday, Stars coach Rick Bowness announced that Khudobin will miss his scheduled start against the Carolina Hurricanes because he has entered COVID-19 protocols. Bowness said the hope is that Khudobin's test is a false positive.

This isn't the first time Khudobin has tested positive for COVID-19. Khudobin said he had COVID-19 in Russia during the offseason.

Khudobin has taken the starting role this season for Ben Bishop, who has yet to play this year after having offseason knee surgery. In his absence, Khudobin has started 20 games and has a 7-9 record and a .908 save percentage. Bishop has begun skating again, but a firm timeline for his return isn't set.

Rookie Jake Oettinger will start in Khudobin's place. He is 5-3 on the season and has .909 save percentage.

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207603

Florida Panthers

Extra special night for Panthers' Alex Wennberg with a hat trick against Blue Jackets

BY WALTER VILLA MIAMI HERALD WRITER

APRIL 03, 2021 10:50 PM,

John Tortorella, according to many published reports, used a barrage of criticism to help run Alex Wennberg out of Columbus.

Wennberg, with his first career hat trick on Saturday night, may have helped run Tortorella out of Columbus, too.

That was the upshot of the Florida Panthers' 5-2 win over the visiting Columbus Blue Jackets at BB&T Center.

Wennberg, who also had the overtime goal that beat the Detroit Red Wings 3-2 on Thursday, was the biggest Panthers story on a night full of them, including the return from injury of Aleksander Barkov and Patric Hornqvist and the debut of a rookie defenseman.

"It's always extra special to play against your former team," Wennberg said. "Our line created a lot of chances, and I'm just trying to ride the wave."

Wennberg scored three goals on four shots to help the Panthers extend their season-best win streak to five games. The Panthers are now 17-0-1 when leading after two periods.

"He is so skilled," Panthers goalie Sergei Bobrovsky said of Wennberg. "It's great to see him score some goals. We're happy for him."

Wennberg had a career-high 13 goals and a career-high 46 assists for Columbus in 2016-2017. But he scored just 12 goals combined in his next two years in Columbus, and the Blue Jackets, on Oct. 8, 2020, bought him out of his original six-year, \$29.4-million contract. At the time, he had three more years left on his deal.

Suddenly a free agent, Wennberg quickly signed a one-year, \$2.25-million contract with the Panthers and GM Bill Zito, formerly part of the Columbus organization.

Now, it's Tortorella whose job is in jeopardy, according to reports, as the Blue Jackets are in next-to-last place in the Central Division.

Wennberg's big game — he now has 11 goals this season — overshadowed some other juicy Panthers story lines:

- Barkov and Hornqvist each had one assist as they returned from injury.

"Those guys are big pieces of our team," said Bobrovsky, who made 44 saves. "It looks like they never missed a game."

- Rookie defenseman Matt Kiersted, who starred as a senior this past season for the top-ranked University of North Dakota Fighting Hawks, made his NHL debut just a couple of days after signing a two-year contract.

Kiersted, playing in front of his parents and other friends and family members, had four blocks and no points in 12:47 of ice time. He also got 1:25 worth of ice time on the power play and seemed to take it all in stride.

"My parents might have been more excited than I was," said Kiersted, who turns 23 on April 14. "They were fired up."

- Panthers forward Frank Vatrano and defenseman MacKenzie Weegar each had one goal and one assist. Weegar now has a career-high 21 points.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

• Besides Wennberg, several other Panthers players are former Blue Jackets, including Bobrovsky, Anton Stralman and Markus Nutivaara.

Florida opened the scoring with 3:57 expired in the second period. Barkov's cross-ice pass set up Weegar for a goal from the left circle. Weegar fired a high shot just under the crossbar, and Columbus goalie Elvis Merzlikins had no chance.

The Panthers made it 2-0 just 52 seconds later. After Columbus lost the puck, Vatrano's pass set up Wennberg's one-timer from the right circle. The goal stood after a video review.

Just under four minutes later, Wennberg scored again — this time from the left circle — for a 3-0 lead.

Columbus spoiled Bobrovsky's shutout attempt with 2:46 expired in the third. Bobrovsky stopped Michael Del Zotto's long drive, but the rebound went directly to the stick of Oliver Bjorkstrand, who scored rather easily.

The Panthers took a 4-2 lead with 10:54 gone in the third. Owen Tippett stole a pass and raced in for a breakaway shot that was stopped before Vatrano scored on the rebound.

Columbus got one more goal on a score by Zach Werenski with 1:45 left, but Wennberg's empty-netter settled things for the Panthers.

## THIS AND THAT

• Zito has been busy the past few days. On Friday, the Panthers traded forward Vinnie Hinostroza to Chicago for forward Brad Morrison, 24, a former fourth-round pick of the Rangers.

Earlier in the week, the Panthers signed goalie Spencer Knight and Kiersted. Knight, the Panthers' first-round pick in 2019, played two seasons at Boston College. He turns 20 on April 19.

Miami Herald LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207604 Florida Panthers

Panthers top Blue Jackets behind Wennberg hat trick, maintain share of Central lead

By BILL WHITEHEAD

ASSOCIATED PRESS

APR 03, 2021 AT 11:34 PM

Alex Wennberg had his first career hat trick as the Florida Panthers beat the Columbus Blue Jackets 5-2 on Saturday night.

MacKenzie Weegar and Frank Vatrano each had a goal and an assist, and Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 44 shots to help the Panthers win their season-high fifth straight and maintain their position tied with Tampa Bay atop the Central Division.

Signed as a free agent after playing six seasons with the Blue Jackets, Wennberg said he was amped to be back in Columbus,

"I mean, it's always a little bit special to play against them," the second-line center said. "It was one of those games right now you're excited for this game and just the way it played.

Panthers coach Joel Quenneville was also pleased with Wennberg's play.

"He had a heck of a game, did a lot of good things besides scoring three," Quenneville said. "We're happy with his game. He's adding some speed to his game as well."

Florida honored Bobrovsky for his 500th NHL game — played Feb. 10, 2020, in Philadelphia — in a pregame ceremony, and the Russian goalie improved to 5-1-1 against his former club.

In his first game back after a six-game absence, Panthers' No. 1 center Aleksander Barkov tallied the primary assist on Weegar's goal.

Oliver Bjorkstrand and Zach Werenski scored for Columbus. Elvis Merzlikins made 22 saves through two periods but was replaced by Joonas Korpi, who stopped 12 shots in the third.

After a scoreless first period, Barkov found himself right in the middle of a hard-working cycle in the second and sent a slick pass through the slot to Weegar at 3:57.

Wennberg, who had Thursday's overtime winner against Detroit, scored 52 seconds later by finishing a 2-on-1 pass from Vatrano.

Then he added his second of the night from the left circle at 8:47 for a 3-0 lead.

"Right now it's kind of working my way a little bit," Wennberg said.

In the third, Bjorkstrand's putback cut it to 3-1 at 2:46, but Vatrano regained the three-goal margin at 10:54 with a rebound tally on Owen Tippett's breakaway.

"We just give too much for free," Columbus coach John Tortorella said. "For a team that struggles to score, you can't give up [two] free ones — really three free ones. We had control of the puck on their fourth goal, the breakaway. We turn it over there."

After Werenski scored, Wennberg complete the hat trick into an empty-net for his 11th with 7 seconds left.

"Wenny's a good player," Tortorella added. "I wish him the best. I hope he doesn't score tomorrow. I hope he [plays bad] against us, but I wish him the best otherwise."

## SIGNED ... AND PLAYING

The Panthers signed defenseman Matt Kiersted out of the University of North Dakota on Thursday and put him on the ice Saturday.

Kiersted, 22, was one of seven defensemen in the lineup as coach Joel Quenneville opted to use just 11 forwards. The lefty shot logged 12:47 of ice time and blocked a team-high four shots in his NHL debut.

## SCRATCHED

Tortorella has openly criticized the play of Jack Roslovic — acquired from Winnipeg with Patrik Laine on Jan. 23 — over the past few games and decided to make the Columbus native a healthy scratch in the team's first game in South Florida.

Roslovic, 24, has six goals and 16 assists in 31 games for his hometown club.

"Coach's decision," Tortorella said. "I'm not going to get into an explanation. My decision."

## BRIEF STAY

The Panthers made a trade Friday afternoon, sending forward Vinnie Hinostroza to his hometown Chicago Blackhawks in exchange for minor-league forward Brad Morrison.

A native of the western Chicago suburb of Bartlett, the 27-year-old Hinostroza failed to register a point in nine games in his first season with the Panthers, primarily skating on the fourth line.

Morrison, 24, has appeared in nine total games in stints in the AHL and ECHL this season.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 04.04.2021



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

1207605 Florida Panthers

Wennberg's hat trick, Bob's 44 saves lead Panthers past Columbus

Published 5 hours ago on April 3, 2021

By George Richards

The Panthers celebrated the career (to date) of former Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky before Saturday's game.

While Bobrovsky made 43 saves against his former team, it was ex-Jacket Alex Wennberg who did the big damage.

Wennberg, bought out by Columbus in October and snapped up by Florida the next day, scored his first NHL hat trick as the Panthers beat the Jackets 5-2 at BB&T Center.

"He had a heck of a game," Joel Quenneville said of Wennberg. "He did a lot of things other than scoring three. We're happy with his game, he is adding some speed as well. The puck was falling him around a little bit."

Florida has now won five consecutive games and remain tied with Tampa Bay atop the Central Division with 54 points apiece.

The Panthers have also won four of five against Columbus this season with the sixth meeting coming Sunday evening.

Saturday, the two teams were scoreless after one with Bobrovsky and Elvis Merzlikins going shot for shot.

But, on Florida's 17th shot of the night, MacKenzie Weegar crashed the left side of the net and buried a pretty cross-ice feed from Sasha Barkov to make it 1-0.

A mere 52 seconds later, Wennberg charged up and fired a shot so hard that it originally was waved off by the referee.

Play was stopped after NHL officials saw the replay and Wennberg was awarded the goal and a 2-0 lead.

Later in the period, Wennberg sniped one from the left circle to make it 3-0.

Wennberg, who had five goals for Columbus last season and a total of 15 in his past three, now has 11 goals with the Panthers including four in the past two games. Wennberg got the OT winner against Detroit on Thursday.

He scored into an empty net in the final seconds of the third.

"Wenny is a good player," John Tortorella said afterward.

"I wish him the best. Hope he doesn't score tomorrow, or against us. I hope he sucks against us, but I wish him the best otherwise."

Said Wennberg: "I think it's always a little bit special to play against them. Yeah, we played against them a few times in the past but this is one of those games you're excited about. We played a good game, had fun out there."

Joonas Korpisalo, who likely gets the start for Columbus on Sunday, came in to start the third. Merzlikins ended his night with 22 saves.

Down 3-0 coming into the third, Columbus got its first goal off its 35th shot of the night when Oliver Bjorkstrand knocked in a long rebound at 2:46 of the period.

Florida made it a three-goal game once more when Frank Vatrano scored off a rebound from an Owen Tippett shot. Columbus scored with 1:45 left, but Wennberg's empty-netter with 6.9 seconds left ended any threat.

"It was great to be in action," said Bobrovsky, who will likely get Sunday off with Chris Driedger expected to start. "As the season goes on, you may get 20 shots or 40 shots.

"You just have to be there for your teammates and step up try your best when they need you. It was a pleasure to play. The guys did a great job offensively. Great game all over."

### SERGEI'S BIG NIGHT

The Panthers honored Bobrovsky's 500th NHL game — which happened during the 2019-20 season — before Saturday night's game.

All players wore 500 on their warmup sweaters with their last names spelled out using the Cyrillic alphabet.

He seemed to get a kick out of that, most of all.

"From the time I walked into the locker room before the game and saw all the jerseys with the last names in Russian and how the boys were trying to figure it all out," Bobrovsky said with a laugh.

"And it was all the way through. I tried to take in every moment and enjoy every moment of this special night. The boys did a great job and I appreciate the whole organization, my teammates everyone. It was definitely special and a memorable night for me."

Bobrovsky was joined on the ice by his wife Olga and the team played a video of his career highlights as well as shoutouts from friends, family as well as past and current teammates.

Bobrovsky was also presented him with his gifts from the league including a silver goalie stick. Bobrovsky and his wife were also gifted a first-class African safari vacation by the team.

"I did not expect that obviously but that is a place I have wanted to go in the course of my life and see the animals," Bobrovsky said. "It was perfect. I have to plan it perfectly. I really appreciate the gift. It is special and it is awesome."

A week after he was playing in the NCAA tournament with North Dakota and two days after signing a free agent deal with the Panthers, defenseman Matt Kiersted made his NHL debut.

Kiersted, wearing No. 8, took the traditional rookie skate before warmups, taking a few twirls around the ice before Bobrovsky led the rest of the team out.

He played 12:47 off 19 shifts in his debut game, blocking four shots.

Kiersted definitely did not look out of place.

"It's the National Hockey League so it is a jump from college," he said. "The faster play stood out to me, things happen quicker. Guys are better at making plays and it is tougher to defend."

Said Quenneville: "I thought he looked very comfortable, showed a lot of poise. He did a lot of good things. I like the way he processes the game. ... Really good game for him to start."

Kiersted said the Panthers told him on Friday to prepare as if he would be playing but he did not think he would — until they told him before morning skate that yes, he was.

His family had all traveled south with him so they were able to be on hand for his first NHL game.

"I immediately got the jitters right away, called my parents when I left (the arena) and I was pretty excited," Kiersted said. "Pretty crazy day, but an exciting day."

He is not sure if he will be able to keep the '500' warmup jersey he wore, but he sure liked it.

"That was a cool jersey," he said. "I have never seen my name in Russian before."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

Florida Hockey Now LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207606 Florida Panthers

Bob honored, Panthers get Barkov & Hornqvist back for Blue Jackets

Published 17 hours ago on April 3, 2021

By George Richards

Last February, Sergei Bobrovsky played in his 500th NHL game. He later got hurt, and then Covid-19 shut down the season. On Saturday night, the Panthers will salute the milestone before their game against the Blue Jackets.

Bobrovsky, of course, played most of those 500 games with Columbus.

In seven seasons, he played 374 games with the Blue Jackets leading them to the playoffs four times and winning the Vezina Trophy twice.

The Panthers have been waiting for the right time to honor Bobrovsky and, Columbus' first visit of the season seems just about perfect.

When Bobrovsky beat the Jackets 4-2 at Nationwide Arena last month, he said facing Columbus continues to mean something.

"It was fun, definitely fun to be back and play against the Jackets," Bobrovsky said. "They have a good team. I respect those guys, the organization a lot. ... Seven years, I spent a lot of time here. A piece of my heart is still here."

Bobrovsky, over the course of 11 NHL seasons with Philadelphia, Columbus and Florida, has played in 528 games which is 69th all-time among goalies.

The team plans to have a pregame ceremony before Saturday's games. Playing in 500 games, for a goalie, is compared to a positional player getting No. 1,000.

Only three goalies in NHL history — Roberto Luongo is one of them — have ever played in 1,000 games.

Bobrovsky is expected to start Saturday's game after Chris Driedger made 25 saves in Thursday's 3-2 overtime win against Detroit.

It was Florida's fourth consecutive win which has pulled it into a tie with Tampa Bay atop not only the Central Division standings but the entire league.

This will be the fifth of eight meetings against Columbus with the Panthers winning three of the first four.

Florida is getting two of its top players back as well.

Joel Quenneville said Saturday morning that both Sasha Barkov and Patric Hornqvist will return to the lineup.

Both had missed time with undisclosed lower-body injuries. Barkov missed the past six games, Hornqvist five.

### NEW GUYS ARE HERE

Both Matt Kiersted and Spencer Knight were at Saturday's optional morning skate at BB&T Center with Quenneville saying Kiersted would be in the lineup on Saturday.

Kiersted signed with Florida on Thursday as a collegiate free agent who had gone undrafted but evolved into an All-American defenseman at North Dakota.

Quenneville said the Panthers would find a way to get Knight into a game as well moving forward. Both players ended their collegiate careers last weekend in the NCAA regional finals.

Matt Kiersted ready for his shot with the Florida Panthers

### HINOSTROZA TRADED

Vinnie Hinostroza is headed back to Chicago as the Panthers traded the lightly-used forward to the Blackhawks for center Brad Morrison.

Morrison, 24, has played six games for AHL Rockford this season as well as three games for the ECHL Indy Fuel. It is thought he will be assigned to the shared AHL team in Syracuse as Florida cleared a roster spot which Kiersted took Saturday.

Hinostroza signed a one-year deal during the offseason but struggled to get into the lineup. Hinostroza only played in nine games with the Panthers and had no points.

Florida Hockey Now LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207596 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings hang with defending champs, but fall at Tampa Bay, 2-1, in matinee

Helene St. James

Detroit Free Press

The Detroit Red Wings played well defensively but their inability to score cost them against the defending Stanley Cup champions.

They gave up two early goals, then made things interesting in the third period of their Saturday matinee against the Tampa Bay Lightning at Amalie Arena.

The Wings wound up with a 2-1 loss that left them 12-22-4 on the season, but on the whole they played well.

"They are a good team," coach Jeff Blashill said. "They are really good on the rush. But there were moments we did good stuff and moments we weren't good enough. I thought we were good enough to score more than one."

**THE FUTURE:**How Michael Rasmussen, Givani Smith bring something different to Wings' rebuild

Thomas Greiss gave up goals to Ross Colton and Brayden Point in the first half of the first period. Adam Erne converted on a setup by Frans Nielsen in the third period. The Wings pulled Greiss with 1:38 to go for the extra attacker.

"Once we got going, once we picked up our physicality and the pace, we didn't spend nearly as much time in the defensive zone," Dylan Larkin said. "We made it hard on them. We played hard. They are a great team at home. We did a great job on the penalty kill."

The teams meet again Sunday in Tampa.

Eight is great

Erne netted a careerhigh goal four minutes into the third period. Frans Nielsen won a battle for the puck behind the Tampa goal line, and got the puck out front. Erne took a couple whacks at the puck to beat Andrei Vasilevskiy. That was Erne's second goal in two game and put him at a career best. "Erne has done a good job," Blashill said. "Eight goals by him is a real good statement for him. He's scored a lot of dirty goals."

A pick and a miss

It's easy to draft in hindsight, but Brayden Point is a steady reminder of the mistake the Wings made in 2014 when they chose Dominic Turgeon



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

at 63rd, passing on Point who went at 79th to the Lightning. Point scored his 16th goal of the season at 7:26 of the first period; that extrapolates to 36 goals in an 82-game season, a mark Point already has hit twice.

### Lineup notes

Evgeny Svechnikov cleared waivers and was added to the taxi squad. Veteran forward Valtteri Filppula replaced Svechnikov in the lineup, starting on a line with Vladislav Namestnikov and Frans Nielsen. The more intriguing combination had Michael Rasmussen with Anthony Mantha and Givani Smith – that's a big line, with Rasmussen checking in at 6-foot-6, 229 pounds, Mantha at 6-5, 234 and Smith at 6-2, 210.

### Special teams report

Bobby Ryan and Sam Gagner weren't available because of injuries, leaving the Wings short two power play regulars. That left them struggling when they got man advantages, but to the Wings' credit they did a really good job killing penalties, denying the Lightning on three opportunities through the first two periods.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207597 Detroit Red Wings

Game thread recap: Tampa Bay Lightning 2, Detroit Red Wings 1

Marlowe Alter

Detroit Free Press

Detroit Red Wings (12-21-5) vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (25-9-2)

When: 1 p.m. Saturday.

Where: Amalie Arena in Tampa, Fla.

TV: Bally Sports Detroit+.

Radio: WWJ-AM 950 (Red Wings radio affiliates).

How to bet: Place legal, online bets at BetMGM Sportsbook.

• Box score

Game notes: Tampa has won three of four in the season series, but the Wings won the last meeting, 6-4, on March 11 in Detroit.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207598 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings extend losing streak in Tampa, 2-1

Ted Kulfan

The Detroit News

The Detroit Red Wings had no answer Saturday for Tampa Bay Lightning goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Tampa gave itself a cushion early, then skated to a 2-1 victory over the Red Wings.

Adam Erne continued his breakthrough season with a career-high eighth goal at the 4 minute mark of the third period, cutting Tampa's lead to 2-1.

The Wings had good scoring opportunities after Erne's goal — Erne himself had a couple — but the Wings couldn't get another past Vasilevskiy, the likely Vezina Trophy winner this season, who was tough in the late stages of the game.

"Not too satisfied right now," forward Dylan Larkin said of the rally that fell short. "We lost 2-1, we were there. (We) again didn't have the best start but we battled back into the game.

"Vasilevskiy was good, he did what he does."

Tampa's Ross Colton and Brayden Point scored 3:19 apart in the first period, but it was Vasilevskiy who starred against the Wings with 25 saves including numerous big stops late to preserve the lead.

"In my mind he's the best (goaltender) in the league, and might be by a lot," coach Jeff Blashill said. "That's not any disrespect to the other goalies but he's real good. You have to find ways to score. One of the ways that you can score on any goaltender is make sure you have great traffic and score dirty (goals). ... We have to continue to find ways to score those dirty goals."

The teams will complete the weekend back-to-back with another game Sunday (noon, NBC/WWJ 950). The Wings have lost 17 straight regular-season games in Tampa.

Goaltender Thomas Greiss stopped 27 shots for the Wings, extending his improved play of late.

The play of Greiss, and a Wings' penalty kill that snuffed three Tampa power plays, were other key reasons the Wings were able to stay close.

"We had some big penalty kills, one in the second (period) and third, are those are big and keeps the thing at 2-0," Blashill said. "(Greiss) was good, he made a number of good saves again, kept us in it. The goalie can keep you in the game.

"He looks like he's on top of his game, like the beginning of the season. He's worked with Jeff Salajko (Wings' goaltending coach) to kind of get his game back to the level he's been at different times in his career and this season."

Other than Greiss, the other Wing who really stood out was Erne, who continues to make an unexpected impact offensively.

Frans Nielsen centered a pass in front to Erne, who was fighting for position and slipped a puck past Vasilevskiy near the post, cutting the Tampa lead to 2-1.

It was the third goal in five games for Erne, who reached his career high in goals while playing against the Tampa team that traded him to the Wings in August 2019.

"Erne has done a good job," Blashill said. "Eight goals on our team right now is a real good statement from him."

The goal energized the Wings, who followed with some good shifts.

But Vasilevskiy, who defeated the Wings for the 12th consecutive time, was powerful in net.

As has been the case too often from the Wings' perspective, a brief spurt or bad period, in this case the first period, hurt them again.

"They looked like a real good hockey team (in the opening 20 minutes)," Larkin said. "The puck movement, we didn't have an answer for it. We didn't grind them enough to start the game. But you have to tip your hat to plays being made in this league and they certainly made some good plays there.

"We responded and Greiss was great the rest of the game. We just came up short but we can't keep coming up short in games like this, against teams like this. We have to start getting results and it's not going to be easy.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

"But you can't be satisfied with a 2-1 loss."

Detroit News LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207599 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Adam Erne seized opportunity to add scoring to grind game

Updated Apr 02, 6:05 PM; Posted Apr 02, 6:05 PM

By Ansar Khan | [akhan1@mive.com](mailto:akhan1@mive.com)

Adam Erne was drafted just outside of the first round in 2013, No. 33 overall, not a spot where teams take a player they project as a grinder or fourth-liner.

Cleary, Steve Yzerman, Tampa Bay's general manager when the Lightning selected Erne, saw some scoring potential in the 6-1, 212-pound winger.

Some of that offensive ability has emerged this season with the Detroit Red Wings. Erne has seven goals in 30 games on a team that doesn't score a lot, playing on a line relied on for defense, forechecking and energy. It equals his career high established with the Lightning two years ago in 65 games.

"He's starting to come into his own," Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said. "He's had to earn his ice time. I haven't given it to him. As we've gone through the season, he's earned bit by bit a little bit more."

Erne is tied for third on the team in goals, behind Anthony Mantha and Robby Fabbri, who have 10 each. His line, with Luke Glendening and Darren Helm, has been the team's most stable unit this season.

"Just playing with confidence every night," Erne, 25, said. "Blash has given me a role on this team, I've kind of just ran with it. I really enjoy playing with Glenny and Helmer. I think we play a similar game that kind of helps us keep it simple and consistent night to night. We don't turn pucks over. We make it a point to play in the other team's zone. If there's a 50-50 play, we always try to keep it smart and make sure we get it in their zone. A lot of nights we do a good job of keeping them in their zone."

They will face a tough challenge this weekend with two matinee games in Tampa Bay, Saturday (1 p.m., Bally Sports Detroit) and Sunday (noon, NBC). The defending Stanley Cup champions (25-9-2) are tied for the league lead with 52 points. The Red Wings (12-21-5) have lost 16 consecutive regular season games at Amalie Arena, including the past 15 in regulation, dating back to Feb. 17, 2011.

Erne's work ethic earned him power-play time shortly after the season began. He is now established as the bumper (slot man) on one of the units and five of his 11 points (three goals, two assists) have come on the power play. He is tied with the injured Tyler Bertuzzi for the team lead in power-play goals and only Filip Hronek has more power-play points (eight assists).

"As the coach trusts you a little more you start to understand exactly what he's looking for from you," Erne said. "I feel like he's given me a little bit of a leash to not be afraid to make some plays, as long as they're not stupid turnovers or whatnot. I feel like I found the ability to make some plays and not just try to grind every shift but be able to create more offense."

Said Blashill: "Last year he was on the power play a little bit and made just a few mistakes and got taken off. This year he earned it in practice. He was subbing in for somebody and we said, 'OK, he seems to be doing a good job.' We put him on, and he's done a good job time after time.

That's the essence of grab it. He's done a good job of grabbing more minutes because of the opportunity he's been given."

Erne is one of the team's most-improved players. He scored only two goals in 56 games last season, his first in Detroit, both coming in the same game.

"Last year statistically was not a great year for anybody, especially myself," Erne said. "I knew I needed to prove again that I belonged."

Injury update: Blashill said goaltender Jonathan Bernier won't be ready to play Saturday while forwards Bobby Ryan and Sam Gagner are questionable. All practiced Friday in Tampa.

Michigan Live LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207690 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens have nothing but bitterness to take from bad loss to Senators

Eric Engels@EricEngels

April 3, 2021, 11:40 PM

MONTREAL — We wouldn't call it a slap back to reality, but more of a shove, like the one Brady Tkachuk gave Shea Weber towards the end of their first-period fight in Saturday's 6-3 win for the Ottawa Senators over the Montreal Canadiens at the Bell Centre.

Because there aren't many — if any — big-picture conclusions to draw from this game, in which Tkachuk got the better of Weber and the rest of Montreal's best players beat themselves.

Remaining Time -1:25

Weber & Tkachuk set the tone with late first period fight

Exhibit A: Jeff Petry, who's played like a Norris Trophy contender for the bulk of this season, finished the game minus-5.

Oh, and though this is most certainly a flawed stat a lot of the time, it was perfectly representative on this occasion, with Petry uncharacteristically fighting the puck as opposed to handling it.

We asked him what he'd take from this game before moving on to Monday's match against the Edmonton Oilers.

"Nothing," Petry said.

Probably a good idea for him, and for everyone else in a red sweater.

Remaining Time -0:31

Anderson unhappy with way Canadiens responded to Senators

This game started with Brendan Gallagher, one of Montreal's most reliable scorers and most disciplined players, missing an excellent scoring chance and taking a double-minor for high-sticking all in one sequence.

Tkachuk made Gallagher pay for that 42 seconds in, with a power-play goal that beat Carey Price clean and easy.

The Canadiens' No. 1 goaltender was No. 2 to the pucks for much of this night. He made some great saves, but was caught down early on three of the five goals he allowed, with the last of them the most forgettable of the bunch — a flubbed shot by Artem Anisimov that went through him while he swam around on his knees trying to track the play.

Rogers Hometown Hockey



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NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

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In between, despite Tyler Toffoli scoring in his first game back after a three-game layoff with a lower-body injury and Josh Anderson popping two goals to keep the Canadiens tight to the Senators through two periods, this was sloppier than a mud bath for the home side.

"Obviously tonight wasn't our best performance, let's be honest," Anderson said.

It was arguably Montreal's worst, with a 3-1 loss to the Calgary Flames on March 13 the closest comparable. It started and ended that way, with a careless turnover leading to Drake Batherson's empty-net goal in the waning minutes of play.

Going back to the beginning, even if Price could've been better on the first goal against, both Paul Byron and Weber had control of the puck before it was turned over and then fished out of the back of their net.

With the score tied 1-1, the Canadiens allowed a shorthanded 2-on-1. Gallagher steamed his way back into the play, but instead of taking Nick Paul (the puck carrier), he was angling to catch the uncatchable Connor Brown. Oddly, Petry was in better position to take Brown to the net and let Gallagher close out Paul, but the steady defenceman got caught in no man's land.

Paul took a low shot and Price steered it right to Brown, who popped it in before the Senators celebrated like they found a c-note in the back pocket of an old pair of shorts.

Remaining Time -2:10

Tkachuk talks what drove Senators in up & down game over Canadiens

The line of Gallagher, Tomas Tatar and Phillip Danault had double the attempts, double the shots, four times as many high-danger chances and outscored its opponents 9-0 at 5-on-5 over its last six games. In this one, it had some great moments but none that were rewarding, and the Senators out-battled them on the first of Evgenii Dadonov's two goals.

The second one Dadonov scored, to make it 4-2 just over eight minutes later, was a total gimme — a chance to get a shot off completely unmarked in the middle of the slot, with Petry and Jesperi Kotkaniemi behind the net while Brett Kulak scrambled (unsuccessfully) to make up the deficit in coverage.

"It was a bad night," said Canadiens coach Dominique Ducharme. "We weren't good. We weren't good in our execution. We weren't good without the puck. We weren't good in battles for the puck. We weren't good."

"You're going to have bad games," Ducharme added. "It can't happen too often, but even when you have a bad night you still have to find a way to control the controllable. We gave up gifts tonight. Even on a bad night, you have to be able to manage."

And if you don't, it's best off to flush it immediately and move onto the next one, because the only thing for the Canadiens to take out of Saturday's loss to the Senators was a bitter feeling.

There's no sense in letting that linger, not with 22 games to play over the next 38 nights.

"It's about how we respond now," said Anderson.

Last time the Canadiens played as poorly, they came back with a 4-2 win over the Winnipeg Jets on March 15. They'd be wise to draw lessons from that ahead of facing the Oilers.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.04.2021

1207691

Websites

Sportsnet.ca / FOR THE NEXT ONES

By Sonny Sachdeva in Calgary

After a legendary start in hockey in Sparwood, B.C., Dampy Brar played pro all over the U.S. But today, his true mission is teaching the South Asian community the game he loves — and teaching the hockey world about his community.

At first, Dampy Brar doesn't notice all of the eyes on him. It's 1997, early enough in the year that the heat you'd expect to seep into this Huntsville, Ala., arena is still a few months off, and the 20-year-old is just trying to catch a glimpse of himself in the glass. His reflection flashes purple-and-orange as he and his teammates trace half-speed circles on the ice, Brar draped in new colours for the third time this season, his first in pro hockey. This third club — the Central Hockey League's San Antonio Iguanas — has given him the green light to go helmetless for this warm-up skate, a no-go during previous stops in Ohio and Tennessee.

So, young and rambunctious, Brar's curling through the zone feeling like a stone-cold pro — no bucket, hair slicked back, quietly thrilled to finally be able to imitate the big-league vets he's watched on TV his whole life. But out among the chestnut-and-navy seats, those eyes wait to remind him he's not quite the image he's long seen on-screen.

The stands at the Von Braun Center appear to float in mid-air. The bottom of the seats sit level with the top of the dasher boards, giving those on the ice the sense they're in a fishbowl with the crowd looming above, peering in. When Brar, still moving through his pre-game laps, lifts his gaze up above the glass, he immediately notices all the eyes fixed on him, on his jet-black hair. The expressions he sees in the crowd are hard to place; there's displeasure and irritation, but with a hesitance that dulls the edges.

More than anything else, the faces staring back at him seem confused, he thinks, and he's got a pretty clear idea why: They're trying to figure out his brown skin, and they're failing, as if his skin itself is a conundrum, as if he's got formulas scrawled across his cheekbones, quadratic equations stamped on his forehead. They're baffled by him. And as they try to solve the puzzle, they continue staring, pointing, maybe trading theories of how he wound up here.

"I felt like an animal in a zoo," Brar says now, thinking back on the moment.

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[sportsnet.ca/molson](https://sportsnet.ca/molson) for full details.

Before Brar can second-guess his impression of the crowd, an onlooker makes his way down to the glass. Brar's headed his way, en route to the bench to spit out the three pieces of bubblegum he's been chewing throughout the warm-up skate — again, stone-cold pro. Stepping off the ice, he hears the fan toss out a bizarrely casual, "Hey, Black guy," as he ditches the gum. "You're not supposed to play hockey."

Brar pauses, looking behind and beside himself for a moment. He turns back. "You talking to me?" he asks. Now he's baffled, too, wondering if the name stitched to the back of his jersey isn't a clear enough hint at his Indian roots.

He's met with only a blank stare, so Brar gets free of the interaction the same way he has so many times before when similar efforts to break him down have been volleyed over the wall, and the same way many



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

navigating the hockey world with more melanin do: He laughs it off, skates away and continues on.

Two decades removed from his on-ice career, Brar's now working to rid hockey of those uncomfortable moments. The player-turned-coach is the co-founder of Apna Hockey, an organization working relentlessly to grow the game among Canada's South Asian community. But, while he spends his time training everyone from young skaters with NHL dreams to older community members going for their first spin, Brar's work is just as much about getting South Asians acquainted with hockey as it is the reverse. It's about getting more people in the hockey world to a place where they see enough brown faces in enough places that, at the very least, they know what they're looking at.

It wasn't always as fraught as that Alabama warmup. Brar's earliest days in the game were actually much the opposite. Growing up in the heart of the Rockies in Sparwood, B.C., he was beloved when he stepped on the ice. And somehow, in that remote coal-mining town of only a few thousand, Brar was rarely the only one on his young teams with brown skin and black hair poking out of his oversized helmet. In fact, it was seeing other young Sparwoodian hockey players who looked like him that first got Brar hooked on the sport.

"We all lived in these townhouses that were next door to each other, in front of each other, and I would see these Indian kids, the older kids, play hockey," he says, remembering how he'd watch their games for hours on end before he was old enough to join in.

Eventually, he convinced his dad, Ram, to stop by the only store in town that sold hockey equipment to buy him a stick and puck. From that point, the obsession was sealed, Brar endlessly shooting his plastic puck into a milk crate in the family's unfinished basement. Even when he was finally old enough to play actual games, they weren't enough to scratch eight-year-old Brar's hockey itch. "He would go play the game, come home, clear out the living room and he would play hockey with his little Hot Wheels cars," his sister, Preet Bains, remembers. "Two opposing teams and then a little marble. And he'd play for hours. Like, this kid was non-stop."

Such was his devotion, even other sports were bent to resemble hockey in any way possible. "If it wasn't hockey, it was a sport based on hockey," says Kam Heer, one of Brar's closest friends from his Sparwood days. "We'd play baseball, but rather than use a baseball, we'd use a tennis ball, roll it on the ground, and use a hockey stick."

The fact that seemingly every Indian family in the town had put their boys in hockey was more than a quirky sidenote to Brar's story. It was essential to why he fell in love with the game, why he was able to convince his parents to let him play at all, why he didn't feel the isolation in those younger days that many players of colour do. Sparwood hockey in the early '80s was like a wrinkle in time and space — a tiny town hidden among the mountains where the more diverse vision of the sport many South Asian hockey fans dream of had already begun to take shape. "My parents, when they came to Canada, seeing a big East Indian population in Sparwood, the transition to going into hockey was very easy for them," Brar says. "Because there were older [Indian] kids — five, six years older — that were playing hockey, it was easier for my parents to kind of trust and say 'All right.' ... Actually having somebody that looked like me playing hockey — and a bunch of them, at all different age levels — it just made it easier for me to like the game."

And what a shame it would've been had Brar not felt hockey was his to play. Because once he arrived on the ice, he flat out dominated. He lasted only two games in novice hockey as an eight-year-old, scoring a cool 20 goals between them, before his parents were told he'd have to move up and play with the 10-year-olds. So, on he went to roll with the older kids, to a team where four others in the locker room were Indian, too. A couple of years later, Brar's scoring began to cause a ruckus once again when, acclimated to the uptick in skill, he took to scoring four, five, six goals a game. The association instituted a rule maxing players out at three a night. "So, in the first 10, 15 minutes of the game, I would get rid

of my three goals," Brar remembers with a laugh, "and then I would end up trying to set up my teammates."

Junior B was the same story. After initially falling short of making the local Elk Valley Raiders because his 14-year-old frame was too small, Brar made the cut the next year. Despite taking Brar that second time out, the coach made sure to tell Ram his son was still too slight to thrive in the sport. But Brar put up four goals in his debut. "The whole town was talking about it," his father beams.

Blessed with the chance to play on teams full of colour, Brar became something of a Sparwood legend. Parents and coaches tossed around comparisons to a young Wayne Gretzky, his mom Satwant remembers proudly. And when his team fell behind in games, there was one name the fans in the stands would chant: "All the parents, they would start saying, 'Damps, turn your motor on! Damps, turn your motor on!' And he brings the team back," Satwant says.

For other Indian kids in the community, it was a thrill to see a Punjabi player roll through the opposition — just as it had been for Brar in his own younger days. "Being an East Indian in a mining town, to watch him play, it was a privilege," says Heer.

And Brar's skill was all the more impressive given the way on-ice development in small towns like theirs operated in those days. "Back then, we didn't have the [hockey] camps that we do now, so everything that was done was literally done through himself, his desire to play the sport," Heer says. "It was all his drive, his passion. No one was there to give him that [advice]: 'Hey, you know, if you worked on this, you'd be better.' It was, 'I've got to do this myself.'"

"Being an East Indian in a mining town, to watch him play, it was a privilege."

In 1995, Brar's drive carried him to Edmonton's Concordia College. He figured it would be among his last stops in the sport, but his penchant for dazzling parents in the stands paid off, as it just so happened that one father had a pretty good eye for talent — Bill LaForge, the one-time coach of the Vancouver Canucks, who had guided NHL mainstays like Keith Primeau and Ken Daneyko during their junior days. It was LaForge who eventually took Brar aside and told him he had the chops to play pro hockey. So impressed was the former big-league coach, he helped Brar get a shot the very next season with the International Hockey League's Las Vegas Thunder, at the time the minor-league affiliate of the NHL's Phoenix Coyotes.

For a skinny kid from Sparwood who thought Alberta college hockey would be his peak, it was a gigantic leap — even before he stepped inside the rink. "I had never driven in a big city," Brar says. "When we'd drive to Calgary, I'd drive to the outskirts and then my dad and I would flip seats, and he would drive in the city.... I mean, in Sparwood, there were no traffic lights, just stop signs."

Even the step before the leap had seemed enormous. "My mom was always worried about me — she was worried when I was in Edmonton. She thought Edmonton was like Manhattan. They were like, 'Oh my God, he's living up in Edmonton.' ... Then the next year I'm in the States, and it was just an eye-opener. Freeways, concrete everywhere."

This wasn't exactly Middle America, either. It was Las Vegas in the '90s. It was driving to practice at the Thomas & Mack Center, six minutes down East Harmon Ave. from the MGM Grand. "You hear about it on TV, and now you're there.... It was crazy, just seeing a different lifestyle."

He also had to figure out how to hold his own at what was by far the highest level he'd ever played. He wondered what he'd gotten himself into, but trusted LaForge's belief in him. And sure enough, Brar — no stranger to a high-flying debut — put up enough points in the Thunder's training camp intra-squad game to ignite a pro career, beginning with the ECHL's Toledo Storm. After a few games there, and a few more with the Central Hockey League's Nashville Nighthawks, he landed in San Antonio, ultimately topping 20 goals by the end of his rookie season with the Iguanas. The next year, he finally found stability with the West Coast



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

Hockey League's Tacoma Sabercats, his fifth pro team in two years, but the one with whom he'd go on to spend the next half-decade, win a championship, and become a genuine WCHL fan favourite.

Tacoma gave Brar a steady career as a pro, some numbers he could proudly hang his hat on and a fanbase that took to him wholeheartedly, but life as a brown hockey player in America wasn't without challenges. He was crowned the club's most popular player year after year, but that feeling of acceptance was rattled by moments similar to the one he'd experienced in Huntsville. It was more significantly shaken on Sept. 11, 2001. The events and aftermath of that morning forever altered the daily reality for all with brown skin. For some, that day-to-day was knocked just slightly askew; for others it was damaged irreparably. Brar was lucky to be plying his trade in a city that knew him beyond his brownness, that had accepted him already, but things got tougher the next year when he moved on to Boise, Idaho, for the final season of his career. There he found himself cornered in those uncomfortable situations once again, and more frequently — he recalls being particularly taken aback by one fan, who said hello by jokingly referring to him as a "little terrorist."

Brar's instinct was always to laugh it off — to be as open as he could in answering genuine questions and sharing his deep connection to his culture, while trying his best to block out the rest of the noise. But there were times when that approach was of little help. Flying, as any brown person living in the post-9/11 world can attest, was among the most tense experiences. "Anywhere we flew, I was always randomly searched," Brar recalls of road trips in the tail end of his Tacoma days. "Every time randomly searched, every time the wand comes out."

It was in those repeated moments of awkwardness that he saw his attempts at educating his teammates begin to bear fruit. Eventually, when Brar was stopped for the customary "random" search, his teammates began stepping in, asking why it was Brar who was always subjected to the extra measures. Even if they were met with the usual refrain — "He just came up in the system" — Brar appreciated it all the same.

On one particular trip home from a game in Alaska, an Anchorage airport security guard stopped Brar in the terminal, the "system" not even nearby to hypothetically bring up his name. "I was just walking by with six, seven teammates, and the guy goes, 'Excuse me, sir. You.' I'm like, 'Yes?' — 'I need to search your bag.'" Brar's teammates weren't having it. "[One of my teammates] stepped in front and said, 'No, he didn't get flagged earlier,' and the boys put up a front." More security guards walked over to see what the fuss was about, Brar's teammates repositioning and now standing between him and the original questioner. "They're like, 'This happens to him every time.' And the other gentleman was kind of provoking the situation."

Another request for Brar's bag came, this time more aggressively. "No way," a teammate at the front of the pack threw back. "Then search every one of our bags. Don't just search his." The situation was eventually diffused, the team going on its way. But Brar hasn't forgotten what it meant to have that support. "It was nice to see that the boys had your back," he says. "That's what hockey, and team sports, is all about."

"I learned a lot about how I was different. I definitely looked different, I was treated very differently. I understood what racism was, unfortunately, at a very young age."

If Brar's story feels like a hopeful vision of hockey's progress, his Apna Hockey co-founder Lali Toor's feels the opposite. For Toor, there was no ascent in a diverse, puck-loving mountain enclave; no opportunity to truly see his potential through; no teammates shielding him from the barrage. It was because the two founders took such profoundly different paths, because their opposing timelines showed the full spectrum of the experiences of South Asians in the hockey world, that Apna Hockey was born.

Fifteen years after Brar first strapped on a pair of skates, a three-year-old Toor first stepped on the ice with his dad, who'd arrived in Edmonton from India just in time to see Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier stockpile Stanley Cup rings, cementing his love of the game. While Brar came up

in a town in which his skill reigned supreme, Toor made his bones in a competitive city that bred more than a couple of bona fide NHL stars. And he could hang with them, too — in 2000, at eight years old, Toor was playing in tournaments with some of the top young talents in the country, suiting up alongside future NHLers like Brendan Gallagher and Jaden Schwartz.

But despite showing as much early potential as Brar, there was one crucial element that separated Toor's time in the sport from his future partner's: Brar had the chance to see brown faces in the game all around him; Toor never saw a single one. "I learned a lot about how I was different," he says. "I definitely looked different, I was treated very differently. I understood what racism was, unfortunately, at a very young age." And he was reminded of that difference constantly, from all angles: "The coaches on my team. The coaches on other teams. The parents. The fans in the stands."

Toor didn't need a trip across the border to be confronted by the discomfort that had found Brar in Huntsville. It sought him out at home, on Canadian soil, and followed him doggedly through each practice, each game. He was nine years old when 9/11 knocked his daily reality off-kilter. The "terrorist" comments started soon after, along with others even more vile. And it kept snowballing, eventually shoving Toor off course at a time when those he'd once gone toe-to-toe with were moving on to the next key phase of their careers. "I felt like I was really hindered in my bantam AAA year, when I was supposed to be getting ready for the WHL Draft," he says. "There were a lot of incidents that I wished I had a role model for. Someone that looked like me, that played at a high level."

"To be honest, I wish I knew Damps back when I was a kid."

The two met in August 2017, and when they did, it seemed to both as if they'd been headed towards each other for years. The connection was so instant, in fact, it couldn't be contained by the initial medium. Toor had already laid down the early foundation for Apna Hockey, creating a social media presence to highlight South Asian athletes in the sport. An Instagram message from Brar to wish Toor luck on the effort quickly turned into an impromptu phone call, which quickly turned into an hour-long drive to meet in person. "I wanted to really hear Lali's story," Brar says of what compelled him to suggest the hour-long trek the first time they ever spoke. "I could hear his emotion, his disappointment, his hurt, on the phone. And he goes, 'Damps, you got to play pro hockey. You made it. You did things that I wanted to do.'"

They connected in Red Deer, the mid-point between Edmonton, where Toor was still residing, and Calgary, where Brar had moved. "I was like, 'I need to see this guy's eyes. I need to see him for real, what he went through,'" Brar remembers. "What really drove me is that, if he's feeling like that, there's got to be other players that may feel like that."

The face-to-face lasted three hours, Toor sharing all he'd endured in his younger days, Brar looking back on his own journey, how he'd made it through. They spoke of their vision to raise up, connect and be a voice for their community. By the time Brar was pulling onto the highway for the drive back to Calgary, Apna Hockey had become a two-person operation.

In the four years since, the organization has grown immensely. What started as an Instagram account to show South Asian kids they have brown role models in the game has become a multi-faceted network aimed at changing the complexion of the sport as a whole. "Our main priority is to connect our South Asian community in the hockey world with mentors, with coaches, with media members. We want to be able to uplift and elevate this community," says Toor. "[It's] not for me or Damps or any individual person — Apna Hockey is for the South Asian community. It's there as a network, a support network, where kids can look up and see other players playing at an elite level. Girls from our community that play minor hockey can look up to girls that are getting university-level scholarships."

The support comes in more forms than inspiration alone — it's also granted young South Asian kids a tangible path to play the game. In 2020, Apna Hockey partnered with Bauer to give away roughly 800 pieces of equipment to families who couldn't otherwise afford them. Toor



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

and Brar began designing First Shift programs — those specifically for families new to the sport — with the equipment company, too. They're in talks with Edmonton Oilers brass in hopes of setting up Apna Hockey camps that would put kids on the ice alongside NHLers, with a greater vision of similar efforts in every Canadian NHL city. They've brought South Asian players out on the ice for training sessions aimed at teaching the finer details of the sport. That hockey school has now expanded from Alberta to the other side of the country, Brar running the on-ice sessions in Calgary while a trio of coaches brought on board in January — J.K. Gill, one of the first players of South Asian descent to suit up in the OHL, his brother J.C. Gill, and Simran Sandhu — work with kids in Ontario.

"It's not for me or Damps or any individual person — Apna Hockey is for the South Asian community. It's there as a network, a support network, where kids can look up and see other players playing at an elite level."

It's all part of a larger vision. In Punjabi, 'apna' essentially means 'our,' and more than anything else, their goal from Day 1 has been to live up to that name — to make clear that this game is ours, too. Sandhu's perspective was a crucial addition to that mission, given her own tumultuous history in the Greater Toronto Hockey League. "Being really young, being really vulnerable to comments you hear on the ice and off the ice, I was never really exposed to situations like that [before]," she says of the racially tinged barbs she'd received for the first time in those GTHL days. "And being the only girl, and the only South Asian female in the whole league, it was kind of disheartening."

Like Toor, it was the weight of all she went through in those years that pushed Sandhu to join Apna Hockey's cause, to try to build a better situation for the next generation. "I want to be there for those youths that are looking to start the sport and may be scared," Sandhu says. "And even for parents who have those barriers in their head, of 'Oh, I don't know if my girl can play hockey. Can she even play in a boys' league?' I want to challenge that."

It's why another key facet of the organization's efforts has been mentoring South Asian players at various levels as they go through their own trials on and off the ice. Toor knows firsthand the difficulty of trying to navigate those waters without that kind of support. "Just knowing that we've created a system where no one feels alone anymore, that's what I feel really happy about," he says. "Because when you feel that isolation, being alone, thinking you're the only one, it'll eat at you."

He still doesn't notice the eyes on him, even as he swings by just a few feet from the crowd, the scattered group waiting to take the ice watching him intently. But this time, Brar's not distracted by the search for a glimpse of his reflection, not concerned with the state of his on-ice style. He's looking instead at the young skater mirroring his strides, corralling passes and whipping them back with all the strength he can muster. The two glide through half-speed circles, parallel as they spin around the ice, all of Brar's attention trained on the young man whose helmet bears the same No. 19 he once wore. It's early afternoon on this sun-soaked March day in Calgary, and with Brar's first session already done, his son — 13-year-old Saiva Brar — is stealing a moment out on the ice with his dad before the next class begins.

The rink they're marking up has a quintessentially Albertan air about it. An outdoor pad covered by a massive white tent, it sits like a great, white barn amid swaths of open land. Through the gaps in the structure, you see cars float by in the distance down Springbank Rd., the dull whirr of their engines occasionally swelling and fading amid the sound of metal carving ice.

Brar throws a hitch into their pattern, catching a pass on the toe of his blade and darting forward quicker than expected, flipping the puck by Saiva's left skate to test the defenceman's readiness. The younger Brar's eyes widen behind the protective cage of his helmet as he adjusts to handle the plot twist, ever awed by his dad's handles. Later, when the day's training sessions resume, Saiva will casually glide to the corner and stash his helmet on the bench, adjusting his hair before returning to

his dad's side to help set up the next drill. His own quiet moment of no-bucket glory.

If not for Saiva, Brar wouldn't be here at this rink right now, wouldn't have that white Apna Hockey logo over his heart, emblazoned proudly upon the black tracksuit he's donned for these coaching sessions, because for a time it seemed Brar might be done with the game entirely. He needed a break from the constant grind after wrapping up his near-decade in the pros. And when he did return, the game dealt him two separate ACL tears, which, all told, kept him off of skates for four straight years. But then Saiva came along, and a few years later, his daughter Saachi. And seeing them begin to putter around on the ice, Brar felt compelled to help show the way. Serendipitous timing took care of the rest — he started taking a greater role in coaching Saiva's teams, and started running sessions with him, Saachi and other kids in the area, paying for the ice out of his own pocket. And just as things began to crescendo, hinting at something bigger, he found himself at an Earl's in Red Deer across the table from Lali Toor.

Brar's been leading Apna Hockey's on-ice operations in Calgary ever since, and his impact has been clear. You see it in Heer's son, six-year-old Kamden, who's trained with Brar from Day 1. Kamden idolizes the former pro, his passion for the game grounded in wanting to be just like Brar, Heer says. You see it in 12-year-old Jaden Gill, whose dad, Lakhvinder, has seen Brar go as far as setting up video calls outside of practice to teach his son extra drills. "There's times where he's actually FaceTimed my son and spent a good half hour with him," Gill says. "Just trying to show him the best he could while at home on his own time." You see it in the effort Brar's invested in supporting South Asians in women's hockey, hoping to show young Saachi it's just as much her game as it is his. That message was never clearer than in 2018, when Brar and Hayley Wickenheiser helped bring India's national women's team from Ladakh to train in Canada, Saachi right there to take it all in.

"We were finally acknowledged, finally acknowledged by the NHL, saying, 'You guys are onto something. You guys are doing something that's bigger than just North American hockey.'"

The greatest impact Brar's had, though, hasn't come from the young skaters' perception of him, but from his genuine understanding of them. From the chance he's provided to finally learn from someone who understands who they are, where they come from, what they carry with them. What does that look like in practice? "Well, for one, he knows my son's name," says Gurb Tumber, whose 10-year-old has been working with Brar for years. "There have been coaches who couldn't even pronounce his name. My son's name's not that hard — it's Sahaj. (But) he's been called 'Sam.' He's been called 'SJ.' Like, coaches will just change his name.

"How are you going to teach a kid when you can't even pronounce his name? ... That kind of stuff's not necessary when it comes to Dampy."

All of the days, months and years of work he's put in ultimately came together in a single moment when Brar was named the winner of the NHL's Willie O'Ree Community Hero Award in September 2020. But the joy it brought him wasn't found in the trophy itself, or even the spotlight. What mattered more was what it said about all the effort he and Toor had poured in — what it said about the entire Apna Hockey vision. "When he called me and told me, I started crying," says Toor. "We were finally acknowledged, finally acknowledged by the NHL, saying, 'You guys are onto something. You guys are doing something that's bigger than just North American hockey.'"

It was also recognition of a journey that started long before, though. It was recognition of those younger days in Sparwood, where Heer says Brar was — even as a kid — always teaching, always bringing in younger kids to join their games, telling everyone else to take it easy on them. Even as the town's star player, his focus was ensuring everyone felt involved, included. It was recognition of that four-city rookie-year grind, when the game tried to push him out, and he refused to relent. It was recognition of Tacoma, where even while living in a country that had grown hostile to those who looked like him, Brar continued to answer



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

questions, continued to educate those around him about his love for the culture that made him.

The accumulation of all those bricks laid Brar's path to his spotlight moment, quite literally — while O'Ree and the NHL selected three finalists out of more than 700 applicants, it was a public vote that took Brar the rest of the way. And the votes poured in from everywhere — from Sparwood, from Tacoma, from Calgary, even from his parents' village in India. Those years of love for the communities around him were answered with an outpouring of love right back. Brar's wife, Gurdeep, who spearheaded the entire nomination and voting operation, smiles wide when she thinks back to the moment their family found out he'd won. "Saiva started bawling. They were hugging each other," she remembers. "It was so sweet."

"It was unbelievable," says Saiva. "I was tearing up. Our whole family was in shock."

Brar's Willie O'Ree Community Hero Award was ultimately decided by a fan vote — a testament to the number of lives he's affected

It wasn't until Brar had moved away to America that his father finally opened up to him about what he himself had faced back in Sparwood. When Brar was younger, he would tell his parents whenever the rare situation would arise — a racist comment on the ice, an altercation. Ram would always say, "Don't worry. Be strong." He'd tell his son to beat them on the ice, beat them with his skill. So Brar took that to heart — when those situations arose, he steeled himself. In Huntsville, in Anchorage, he'd smile back at the perplexed faces, laugh off the biting remarks. "It made me strong-willed. So, when I faced it, I wasn't too bothered by it," he says. "I remembered it, there's no question. It would always stick with me. But I never let it affect who I am."

Eventually, Ram felt it was time to tell his son the full story, opening up about the discrimination he'd faced back when he was a Dryer Control Operator for Sparwood's Westar Mining. He told him about the comments he'd get from white coworkers, about the tense situations that would ensue. "But he said, 'I knew my place. That I needed to take it.'"

It's a familiar sentiment. For first-generation Canadians whose parents came here for a better life, a different life, it's one we know well — the idea that those who made that journey feel they aren't owed a freedom quite the same as ours. Hasan Minhaj, the California-born comedian whose parents immigrated from India in the '80s, touched on this idea in his 2017 special Homecoming King. He recalls a moment, in the days after 9/11, when his father answered the phone to a barrage of racial epithets screamed in his ear, and when the family heard, minutes later, the windows of their car being smashed outside. He remembers his father quietly sweeping the broken glass from the street, and what he said as he did.

"He looks at me and goes, 'Hasan, these things happen, and these things will continue to happen. That's the price we pay for being here.' That's when I was like, oh, we really are from two different generations," Minhaj says in the film. "My dad's from that generation, like a lot of immigrants, where he feels if you come to this country, you pay this thing like the 'American Dream Tax' — you're going to endure some racism, and if it doesn't cost you your life, well hey, you lucked out.... But for me, like a lot of us, I was born here. So I actually have the audacity of equality."

It's that same audacity that lies at the heart of all Apna Hockey does — the notion that equality is owed, not earned. That in hockey, like anywhere else, difference doesn't make you deserving of discrimination. It's what Brar described to O'Ree when he spoke to the legendary trailblazer early on in the award process.

"If you win, what are you going to do?" O'Ree asked him.

"Mr. O'Ree, you're an ambassador for the game. You broke barriers. I want to replicate that," Brar replied. "I want to do what you're doing, but with our South Asian community. I want to grow the game. I want to be a voice when diversity and racism and inclusion come into play. We want

to connect our communities, so that we're one.... I want to go to different cities to do hockey camps and just spread the game of hockey, the love of hockey."

The goal, for both Brar and Toor, is as plain as it is powerful, as obvious as it is ambitious. Support those who come next, give them the opportunity to thrive, and create space for their voices to be heard. That simple blueprint is why Apna Hockey came to be at all.

"When I was playing, I was voiceless. I was unknown. I had no platform," says Toor. "So we created a platform for our community to speak out."

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Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: Projecting USA's Olympic roster from 'deepest pool' ever

Luke Fox@lukefoxjukebox

April 3, 2021, 10:00 AM

A quick mix of things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep. Is this the best column on Sportsnet.ca? Not even close.

1. Following Wednesday's announcement that Team USA's 2022 Olympic roster would be designed by general manager Stan Bowran and assistant Bill Guerin, I took a stab at doing their job.

Man, there are some quality players on the outside looking in. Get ready for Snub SZN, America.

When building a group that could go head to head with Team Canada next winter, I left names like Johnny Gaudreau, Jake Guentzel, Brady Tkachuk, Vincent Trocheck, Chris Kreider and Thatcher Demko off my list.

"The good news is that we'll have an extremely difficult task in settling on a final roster as we have so many great players," Guerin said. The man ain't lying. "We've got the deepest pool of players that we've ever had."

2. This anticipation of the 2021 trade deadline feels different to Paul Maurice than the 22 others he's spent behind an NHL bench.

Maybe it's the two-week quarantine his new forward Pierre-Luc Dubois endured before he could start acclimatizing himself to the Jets race. Maybe it's the compact schedule, which comes with compact standings.

But there's something else, another effect of playing a team sport in a pandemic: a tightening bond among men who spend all their non-family time in each other's company. Because, well, what else can you do?

"There's been a great opportunity here for the team to spend time together," Maurice said. "There feels like a real closeness in our group, right?"

When you live life in a bubble — rink, plane, rink, home, repeat — it's tougher for the noise to penetrate.

"Maybe it feels like there hasn't been as much talk about it. That's what it feels like here. The normal trade deadline feels like there's a long ramp up to it and there's more time for speculation. Maybe we've just been on the road and haven't been reading anything, but it doesn't feel the same. None of this feels the same," Maurice continued.

"There's a chance we're closer together now than at any other time. We only see each other, so it's a pretty tight-knit group. There doesn't seem



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

to be as many guys asking, 'Hey, what are you hear out there? What's going on?' They're pretty happy with the group that we have."

3. I wonder how Demko's five-year, \$25-million extension will affect the rest of the pending RFA goaltenders: Nashville's Juuse Saros, Philadelphia's Carter Hart, Washington's Ilya Samsonov, New York's Igor Shesterkin, Arizona's Adin Hill and Carolina's Alex Nedeljkovic — who slipped through waivers in January and got crowned Rookie of the Month in March.

The prudent play in cases with inexperienced goalies is to opt for the bridge route. But the team wins if it can buy UFA years early on a No. 1 in the making.

Vancouver's bet on Demko began when they let Jacob Markstrom walk. Braden Holtby's two-year deal was signed in the off-season, in part, to meet expansion exposure qualifications.

If Holtby's career-worst stat line — 4-6-2, 3.57, .894 — and second season of decline scares Seattle from selecting the 2018 Cup champ, would Jim Benning sweeten the pot?

Remember, Pittsburgh traded a second-round pick to Vegas to ensure George McPhee selected Marc-Andre Fleury.

If Holtby's \$4.3-million AAV remains on the books, the Canucks would be taking a \$12.34-million hit in the crease, thanks to Roberto Luongo's lingering deal.

Holtby's actual salary jumps to \$5.7 million in 2021-22. That would be a \$13.74 million crease for Francesco Aquilini — in a year Quinn Hughes and Elias Pettersson need significant raises.

Ron Francis might be smelling an opportunity to snatch an extra asset from his geographical rival.

4. Quote of the Week deserves the audio and visual treatment. Erik Karlsson blessed us with the ultimate sound bite:

5. Nick Robertson felt "kinda relieved, to be honest" when he found the net for the Toronto Marlies on Wednesday, scoring the game-winner in his first game back from an oblique injury.

Marlies coach Greg Moore reunited Robertson with his ol' Peterborough Petes friend and linemate Semyon Der-Arguchintsev, who already has three assists in his first two AHL games since returning from the KHL.

"I thought they complemented each other really well. Uncle Joey (Anderson), as a mentor, I thought he did a really good job. He was talking to those guys every shift, helping coach them up with details, keeping them all on the same page. It was really good to see the creative play between the three of them. You could tell that Robertson and Semyon definitely have some chemistry," Moore said after defeating Stockton.

"The communication is at a high level. Any time you have players who have played with each other in the past and have had success, it makes sense to give them a look together and see how they can do at a higher level."

While Robertson and his elite shot garner more attention than any other Leafs forward prospect, Der-Arguchintsev is one to watch.

"Semyon, he's just high talent, lots of skill, can anticipate plays, find his teammates. Really elevates everybody that's on the ice with his puck play," Moore said. "It's been nice to have the impact that he's had in the last two games. It'll be interesting to see where he continues to build moving forward.

With Robertson, 19, still adjusting to life in the pros, SDA's arrival brings a level of comfort on the ice.

"We use each other as much as possible. I know exactly what he's doing; he knows what I'm doing," Robertson said. "We were talking about it, and we hadn't played together in a year. It was great. I love the kid, and we're very close. It was nice to have a game like that."

6. This week's signing of blue-chip goalie prospect Spencer Knight to his entry-level deal has some wondering if the Florida Panthers will make pending UFA Chris Driedger available for trade.

I get the logic of not wanting to let Driedger walk for free, but as a surprise contender, we'd take issue with Florida dealing away a 10-win netminder with the best GAA (2.18) and save percentage (.927) on the club.

The Hart situation in Philly should reinforce the need to bring young goalies along slowly.

Seller beware.

7. Since three teams fired the old guy and brought in a new guy mid-season, not one has won more games than it has lost.

Montreal Canadiens under Dominique Ducharme: 7-3-5

Calgary Flames under Darryl Sutter: 5-7-0

Buffalo Sabres under Granato: 1-4-2

8. The St. Louis Blues won the Cup in 2019 and posted the best regular season in the West in 2020. Now? They've lost four straight, eight of 10, registered a negative-13 goal differential, and have watched their playoff odds (19.3 per cent) slip below that of rebuilding Los Angeles.

Even if the Blues make the cut, they'll be facing a powerhouse like Colorado or Vegas in Round 1. Defenceman Vince Dunn (RFA) and winger Mike Hoffman (UFA) have each been healthy-scratched at points during this underwhelming campaign, and we have to believe GM Doug Armstrong will shake things up.

There's rumoured interest in Taylor Hall, but Armstrong now knows what a championship team looks like. Does he instead see this as an opportunity to reload for next season?

Left wing Jaden Schwartz is having a difficult contract year, producing two goals and 11 points in 20 games. Does he get moved?

It made sense for Armstrong to take his chances with pending UFA Alex Pietrangolo last season, but unless the Blues get on a run fast, this certainly feels like a season to avoid the "own rentals."

Big decisions await in St. Louis.

9. We're not sure what fining superstars and multimillionaires Connor McDavid and Nathan MacKinnon \$5,000 apiece accomplishes after they've already been penalized in-game for their elbow and helmet chuck, respectively.

Feels like a half measure. Either the penalty is sufficient, or the action is so outrageous that the player needs to be punished.

McDavid's salary (before endorsements) is \$14 million this season. Fining him \$5,000 is equivalent to fining the average full-time employed Canadian \$19.51.

Reminds me of this Jay-Z couplet in response to the NBA fining the billionaire \$50,000 for entering the Kentucky Wildcats locker room: "I ball so hard (folks) wanna fine me/ But first (they) gotta find me/ What's 50 grand to a (guy) like me?/ Can you please remind me?"

Fifteen dollars have been raised on GoFundMe.com.

10. When Brady Tkachuk appeared on John Scott's Dropping the Gloves podcast, he was asked for one name. Who's better, Matthews or McDavid?

"This is the American in me: I gotta go with Matthews. I mean, he scores in all different ways. I know McDavid has the high-end speed, but Matthews is right up there with speed, strength, and he's got an unbelievable shot. So, I gotta go with the American boy," Tkachuk responded.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

"He can fly. And he's a horse. He's strong. You can't knock him off the puck too often."

Fun fact: Tkachuk got to attend the 2020 All-Star Game in his native St. Louis when Matthews pulled out with his wrist injury. There is also a family connection here....

Great interview, by the way. Check it out, Sens fans. Another interesting tidbit is learning that Tkachuk binges hockey fights, watching them from current players and his dad's era.

11. I'll stick with my guns and say Nick Foligno is the ideal forward target for the Maple Leafs' needs, but Scott Laughton of the disappointing Flyers checks almost all the boxes.

A left wing/centre hybrid, the 26-year-old pending UFA is held in high regard by the Flyers.

Coach Alain Vigneault described Laughton as "one of our character players" during their bubble run to the Eastern Conference semifinals, and Laughton was presented with the club's Yanick Dupre Class Guy Award, given to the Flyer who best illustrates character, dignity, and respect for the sport.

Laughton doesn't have trade protection, but the Oakville, Ont., native proposed to his Allentown girlfriend just this week.

The Flyers' playoff chances have shrunk to 2.9 per cent, and the long shot must consider its options.

Laughton not only brings offensive upside, he tops all Flyers forward in average penalty-kill time (1:55). Bringing in Laughton would alleviate the need to have centre Jason Spezza take PK faceoffs then rush off for a change.

Laughton is an established 3C who has won the majority of his draws in the NHL and uses his body to throw hits and block pucks. His underlying metrics would grab Kyle Dubas's eye, he's a plus-8 player on a minus-22 squad, and he has trained in the summer with members of the Leafs. Plus, his \$2.3 million cap hit is palatable.

The catch here is that all the reasons why the Leafs may want Laughton are also reasons for Philly to re-sign him.

12. Happy Easter, everyone. Enjoy the long weekend.

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Spezza valuable in his role as he cracks Top 100 scorers

By Mark Masters

Jason Spezza picked up the 960th point of his National Hockey League career on Friday night moving into 100th place on the all-time scoring list.

"I welcomed him to the 100 club," said a grinning Joe Thornton, who's No. 14 overall with 1,521 points. "It's very special ... it's a huge accomplishment."

"A huge honour to be in that group," Spezza said, "but I'm still playing so I'm just going to keep going and will get a chance to look at all that stuff when we're done."

Based on how he looks this season, the 37-year-old is far from done. Spezza has produced eight goals and 12 assists despite averaging just 10 minutes and 38 seconds of ice time per game.

"I happen to believe the fourth-line minutes and role he's been given helps his cause," noted coach Sheldon Keefe. "There's a natural sense to give him more, but I think he's in a good place and it helps our team when he can produce where he is."

Spezza is able to exploit mismatches against other third and fourth lines. It's allowed him to produce 15 points in five-on-five play this season, which is fourth on the team, ahead of John Tavares (13) and William Nylander (14) among others.

"He goes under the radar a little bit," Keefe pointed out. "Teams let their guard down a little bit when he and his line are out there."

'He oozes skill': Thornton welcomes Spezza into the top 100 points club

Jason Spezza has joined 'a real fun group' by reaching the top 100 points club according to No. 14 on that list, Joe Thornton, who called it a huge accomplishment. Maple Leafs head coach Sheldon Keefe explained how his role on the fourth line has helped maximize his output this season.

Spezza leads the Leafs in points per 60 minutes (3.0) just ahead of Mitch Marner (2.67).

"We kind of have the same attitude," Marner said. "The happy kids, constantly happy just coming to the rink and being with one another here in this locker room. He brings that every single day. Regardless of how many minutes he plays, he always does something on that ice that I think amazes our whole team."

On Friday night that something was a shootout goal, which helped clinch the win for the Leafs. Spezza showed tremendous patience and poise to beat reigning Vezina Trophy winner Connor Hellebuyck.

"It wasn't what I originally planned," Spezza said. "As soon as I kind of got a touch on it, it rolled up on edge so at that point you just want to take your time. I was able to settle it by the time I got to Hellebuyck and then just tried to make a good move and out-wait him and lucky it went it."

"He just oozes skill," said linemate Alex Kerfoot. "He goes into those with a plan. He knows what he's doing. He's got a long reach, has lots of moves, can shoot, can fake, so we have a lot of confidence when he's in those situations."

Spezza's tenure in Toronto got off to a tough start when former head coach Mike Babcock made him a healthy scratch in the home opener for the 2019-20 season.

Spezza eventually got into the lineup, but never gained much traction with the former coach. In fact, Babcock only used him once in three shootouts and it came eight rounds into the skills competition after Tyson Barrie and Ilya Mikheyev had already gotten a chance.

Spezza may have lost a step since breaking into the league way back in 2002, but the former second overall pick has never lost the hands.

"Talent, obviously, is the biggest thing and he continues to work at his game so that the talent stays sharp," said Keefe.

The coach also lauded Spezza for improving defensively this season to the point where he's carved out a penalty-kill role as a face-off specialist.

And, of course, Spezza continues to be a leader on a team looking to take the next step.

"In the games when he doesn't play that much, he's vocal and his talking just makes it seem like he's there and always locked in," Marner said. "It's great having him on the bench and he's done some wonderful things for us this year. He's a big part of this team and he's been a big part of a lot of our wins."

"A real fun guy to be around," said Thornton. "I wish you guys could experience this group. It's a real fun group to be around and we're enjoying each other's company."

'I'm just going to keep going': Spezza cracks top 100 points list with another vintage night



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

Jason Spezza picked up his 960th career point on Friday night to move past Henrik Zetterberg and into 100th place on the NHL's all-time scoring list. "A huge honour to be in that group, but I'm still playing so I'm just going to keep going and will get a chance to look at all that stuff when we're done," the 37-year-old said. Spezza also settled a rolling puck before notching the shootout winner against the Jets.

For the 10th straight game, the Leafs failed to score on the power play. This is the franchise's longest drought since 1997.

"We just want to give it some time to breathe here a little bit with settling into consistent units," Keefe said after watching the team go 0-for-3 on Friday night. "We've told the guys we're not changing it. We're not changing anything so get comfortable with who you're playing with, get comfortable together and find a way through it."

The Leafs have failed to score on 26 chances over this 10 game dry spell. The team even got a full two minutes on the man advantage in overtime on Friday, but couldn't convert.

How do they get back on track?

"Usually starts from passing," said Thornton. "Crisp pass. Work downhill. Shots. More, more, more shots. The key, as well, is funneling as many pucks as you can to the net and ultimately be good [at the] net front. You know what, I'm really not too worried about it to be honest with you. Two power play lines that are two potent lines, they just have to be comfortable with each other, but no worries on my end on that."

Here's how the units looked on Friday:

No. 1: Morgan Rielly, Auston Matthews, Marner, Tavares and Wayne Simmonds.

No. 2: Jake Muzzin, Spezza, Thornton, Nylander and Zach Hyman.

Early in the season, Toronto had two units rolling with Matthews and Marner anchoring one and Tavares and Nylander on the other. In the current alignment, Tavares is sticking in the bumper role with Matthews and Marner while Thornton has shifted to the other unit.

"It just gets him more involved," Keefe explained. "John's proven over his career that he's a very productive player on the power play and we like his ability there. We like his ability on face-offs. I'm really hoping we can get those two units really firing and pushing each other and making it hard on the opposition."

Tavares has scored five of his 10 goals this season on the power play.

In Wednesday's game against the Jets, Toronto loaded up with a stacked top unit featuring the core four forwards and Rielly, but Keefe felt the group actually took a step back.

So, the focus is now on re-establishing a balanced approach.

"It's not necessarily what it does to the power play, but it's a trickle-down effect just to the habits and energy of the entire team throughout the power play and coming out of the power play," Keefe said. "We just played a Winnipeg team that has got one unit that is extremely dangerous and gets a little more time than the second, but that second unit, you know, you have [Nikolaj] Ehlers and [Pierre-Luc] Dubois coming over the boards on the second group and that unit is extremely productive and doesn't give you any time off. You got to kill the full two minutes all the way through and it's a daunting task when you're trying to prepare for it."

Tavares sticks with Matthews-Marner unit as Leafs let slumping PP breathe

Despite going scoreless on the power play in their last 10 games, Sheldon Keefe explains why he isn't going to deviate from his strategy that much as the team looks to get back on track. Joe Thornton also shared his thoughts on how the team can improve on the man advantage.

Jack Campbell missed practice on Saturday. Keefe termed it a "maintenance day" and said the goalie was feeling "good" following a 31-save win on Friday.

The Leafs will start Michael Hutchinson on Sunday with Campbell scheduled to go on Monday. The team always planned to split the back-to-back set and this way Campbell, who has been hampered by a left leg issue this season, gets a bit more rest.

"We have to be smart with how we manage his workload despite the fact we don't have Frederik [Andersen] available," said Keefe

Campbell is 8-0-0 on the season with a spectacular .951 save percentage, which is by far the best mark among goalies with at least eight appearances. And Keefe believes the 29-year-old can continue to thrive in a bigger role. Campbell has never started more than 25 games in a single season.

"We can only go off of what we've seen here and I would say the potential is great," the coach said. "You can see his confidence growing and you can see the team's confidence in him growing as well."

Campbell has beaten the Flames twice this season, including on Jan. 24 in Calgary when he initially sustained the leg injury.

Hutchinson will be looking to regain some momentum as the Leafs have dropped his last three starts.

Sheldon Keefe revealed that Michael Hutchinson will get the start in the crease on Sunday, giving Jack Campbell a rest after spectacular showings in back-to-back games. TSN's Mark Masters has more.

Why does Kerfoot use a candy cane style tape job on his sticks?

"I started in college, actually," he said. "I ordered some sticks that were supposed to be grip sticks and they ended up not being grip sticks and so during that time I tried tinkering with some things. Someone told me to try the candy cane so I tried it, liked it, had a few good games, got used to it and now I can't change away from it. I've tried a little bit and maybe I will try and get away from it in the future, but I'm just so used to feel of it now that I've stuck with it."

Kerfoot logged 14 minutes on Friday, which was the most ice time he's received in a game since March 15. The 26-year-old centre likes the chemistry being developed on his line with Thornton and Spezza.

"For us, the key is just keeping things simple," the Harvard product said. "We don't need to force anything through the neutral zone. When we're able to get it in behind them and work them down low, Jumbo is so good behind the net, and Spezz is really good with the puck. When we're able to get it down there and use our skill and awareness away from the puck it makes it tough on teams. But, we can get ourselves in trouble when we try and force things."

Kerfoot on origin of candy cane tape job, chemistry with Thornton-Spezza

Alex Kerfoot explains the origin of his signature candy cane tape job, and the chemistry he has developed with veteran linemates Joe Thornton and Jason Spezza this season.

Defenceman Justin Holl missed Saturday's practice.

"Just a maintenance day for him," said Keefe. "He's been sore the last little while so we just decided to give him the extra day, but he'll be fine."

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TSN.CA / Maple Leafs continue to manage Campbell's workload



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 4, 2021

By Kristen Shilton

TORONTO — Proceed with caution.

That's the Maple Leafs' reigning philosophy when it comes to managing the health of goaltender Jack Campbell. It's a prudent one at that. Campbell is a perfect 8-0-0 on the season, with a sparkling .951 save percentage, and has recently taken over the starter's net from an injured Frederik Andersen.

Campbell himself is still nursing an injury too though. It's the same nagging leg problem that has forced him to miss two stretches of time this year, and the Leafs aren't taking any chances of it becoming serious again.

Campbell sat out Saturday's practice in Calgary after backstopping Toronto to a 2-1 shootout win over Winnipeg on Friday, and Michael Hutchinson will start the first half of the Leafs' back-to-back against the Flames on Sunday.

"We were going to split both guys; we were going to use both of them," coach Sheldon Keefe told reporters on Saturday of the goaltending breakdown. "We just thought it made sense to give Jack the extra day. We've got to continue to be smart with how we manage his workload. Despite the fact that we don't have Frederik available, we've still got to be smart with Jack here."

Andersen did not join the Leafs on their current four-game road trip. He's been sidelined since March 20 with a re-aggravated lower-body issue and remained in Toronto to undergo further testing. Keefe said earlier this week the results Andersen had received showed he's continuing to make progress, but there is no timeline yet for his return.

That has thrust Campbell into the spotlight, and he's earning serious accolades. Campbell's eight consecutive wins to start the season is second-most by a goalie in Leafs' franchise history, behind the great Felix Potvin.

This season his .951 save percentage and 1.35 goals-against average are best in the NHL by a goaltender who has made at least five starts, and he's the only undefeated netminder in that category.

Campbell had primarily been in a back-up role for four seasons with the Los Angeles Kings before Toronto acquired him in a Feb. 2020 trade. But increasing his responsibilities amid Andersen's ongoing struggles doesn't concern the Leafs at all.

"I think we can only go off of what we've seen here and I would say the potential [for him as a longer-term starter] is great," said Keefe. "He's gaining more confidence, gaining more experience. Soupy was outstanding for us [Friday]. There was some backdoor stuff where he's got to really compete and work to get over make a big save and he did that."

"He's just a very, very confident goalie right now," added Joe Thornton. "He's seeing the puck really good, he's [feeling] healthy, and his confidence [is great]."

As such, the Leafs continue to have ample confidence in Campbell.

"He's really feeling it right now," said Alex Kerfoot. "He's calm, composed in the net, and he's just an athletic guy so he's able to make some saves that not a lot of guys can and it's fun to watch him out there right now."

If Campbell's been riding high, Hutchinson's in a bit of a slump. Toronto's third-string goalie is 0-1-1 in his last three starts, including a brutal performance in Ottawa on March 14 where he allowed two goals on three shots and was pulled. That losing decision ultimately went on Andersen's record after he replaced Hutchinson in net.

Hutchinson did have one of his best games of the season against Calgary, with a 22-save showing in Toronto's 2-1 overtime win on Feb. 24. The Leafs will be counting on him to channel that success again come Sunday. Calgary has just one win in its last seven games, while the

Leafs are finally on a roll with four wins in their last five. They expect to keep that momentum going.

"We know that there's no easy games in this league or in this division and we've seen that throughout the year," said Kerfoot. "Any team can beat anyone. [The Flames have] got a lot of skill on their team, they play hard, defend well. It's going to be a tough matchup again tomorrow we got to be dialled in."

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