



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2021



## Tweetmail: Which Staal Brother Has the Best Flow?

By Michael Smith

Hello and welcome to a special edition of Tweetmail presented by Segra. This week, I take your Twitter questions straight to Jordan Staal, as he closes in on his 1,000th career game in the National Hockey League.

Let's get to it.

Who has the best flow in the family? - @Shhlomes

Staal: Eric had some pretty good flow this year. I'm losing my hair. When it's all said and done, Marc usually has the steady flow. His always looks pretty solid.

What is the current feeling in the locker room, and as captain, what is your role in the team environment? - @AddieCSmith

Staal: The feeling is good. We're playing some good hockey. There are always hiccups throughout games and maybe a period here or there, but as a group, we're very confident. We've bought into how we want to play. We're trying to get as consistent as we can with it. We're a very confident group. If we're down, we feel like we can keep going and find ways to win games no matter what. That's what you want. Our goaltending has been really good and steady for us. It's all been good stuff.

How have you changed in your second year as captain? - @ArcherforCanes

Staal: I'm having a better year this year. I was frustrated with my year personally last year offensively. The puck has been going in for me, which is nice. We were cruising along until COVID hit and all that stuff. Who knows how that playoff run would have went. It doesn't really feel too much different as far as the room and everything goes.

Do you spend a lot of time working on faceoffs, or have you naturally been pretty good at them? - @FleurySkjei & @BornACaniac

Staal: I wasn't very good coming into the league. I don't spend a ton of time on it. I've just learned over the years. I may or may not get the benefit of the doubt from a few refs out there, as well, since I've played so long, but not every time. You just learn. It's a little bit of a chess match between the player you're playing against, how you want to beat him and changing it up sometimes. And then going back to your strengths, that's just using my body and strength as much as

I can. It's a learning curve as a player. You'll watch our young guys come up and get better and better at it as they go.

What do you do to prepare for playoff games? Any pregame rituals? - @ToTheSkye

Staal: I don't think playoffs are really any different in preparation. When it is playoff time, though, my mind might shift from a little less on everything else around me to more on hockey. It just kind of takes over. Your body is kind of always on. It's a good thing, but it can be exhausting. My wife has helped me through those times giving me some extra hours of sleep and stuff like that. As for the actual preparing, I'm just a routine guy, like most guys. I kind of do the same stuff, the same stretches. It's all very similar.

In the year(s) of weird that COVID has brought us, has there been anything unexpected that's kept you going? - @sparkleshorty

Staal: It's hockey that's kept me going. When you're injured, you always want to get back out there. During COVID, we just wanted to get back out there and play. We really miss the fans, though. That part has been nice to have some fans back. The normalcy is being able to play and compete. That's what I've done my whole life. That's been my normalcy, for sure.

Are there any similarities between this Canes team and the Penguins team you won the Stanley Cup with in 2009? - @Brstunna

Staal: Yeah, very similar, I think, especially with some young guns and the way they carry themselves. It reminds me of Sid and Geno. They want to be the best. That's what you want from your best players. Then, you've got some great depth and great defensemen, the whole works. It's a very similar feeling.

How do you feel about the nickname Staal Bunyan? - @Blevenger & @\_thomas\_wilson\_

Staal: [laughs] That's Tripper. It is what it is. Tripper has a large vocabulary of stuff. He can bring up a lot of different stuff. That's another one of his good ones.

Not really a question so much as a simple thank you for being our team's leader. - @Andy\_Elliott78

Staal: Thank you!



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## Preview: Red Wings vs. Hurricanes

Canes donning Reverse Retro sweaters against Original Six opponent

By Michael Smith

Now sitting atop the Central Division, the Carolina Hurricanes continue their longest homestand of the season with a two-game set against the Detroit Red Wings.

### The Match-Up

Detroit Red Wings (13-23-6, 32 points) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (27-9-3, 57 points)

Saturday, April 10, 7 p.m.

Watch: Bally Sports South, FOX Sports GO

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

### Numbers to Know

12: Vincent Trocheck has recorded at least a point in each of the last 12 games he's played (7g, 10a). Despite playing in only 30 of the Canes' 39 games this season, Trocheck ranks second on the team in points (33), tied for first on the team in goals (16), and first on the team in both power-play points (16) and power-play goals (7).

6: Alex Nedeljkovic recorded a 24-save shutout, his third clean sheet of the season, on Thursday against the Panthers. As a team, the Canes have recorded six shutouts this season, which ranks tied for first place in the NHL with the New York Islanders.

3-for-8: After being held without a goal on the man advantage for four straight games, the Canes have converted 37.5% of their power play chances (3-for-8) in the last two games.

### The Opposition

Last five games: 1-2-2, 4 points

On the road: 4-14-2, 10 points

CAR vs. DET: 3-2-0

Leading scorer: Filip Hronek, 22 points (2g, 20a) in 42 games

The Red Wings arrive in Raleigh on the heels of a 7-1 defeat at the hands of the red-hot Nashville Predators. Bobby Ryan, who totaled 14 points (7g, 7a) in 33 games, has not played since March 28 and will miss the remainder of the season with an upper-body injury. On Friday, Detroit traded defenseman Patrik Nemeth to Colorado in exchange for a fourth-round pick in the 2022 NHL Draft.

### The Last Meeting

The Canes saw their eight-game winning streak end in a 4-2 loss in Detroit on March 16. Adam Erne tallied two power-play goals in the first period to help the Red Wings gain the special teams edge. Nino Niederreiter and Sebastian Aho tallied for the Canes in the loss.

"It could have gone either way. I thought we played pretty well, and they played a really good game. They played us hard," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "They capitalized, and that's it. We move on. It certainly wasn't a lack of effort."



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

## Carolina Hurricanes vs. Detroit Red Wings: Game Preview

In the last game before the trade deadline, the Hurricanes look to scoop up two more points.

By Sarah.A

Carolina Hurricanes (27-9-3) vs. Detroit Red Wings (13-23-6)

2021 Regular Season Game 31

Saturday, April 10, 2021 - 7 p.m. ET

PNC Arena — Raleigh, NC

Watch: Bally Sports South

Listen: 99.9 The Fan

SBN Opposition: Winging it in Motown

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The Carolina Hurricanes did exactly what was needed on Thursday, pulling out a second consecutive win over the Florida Panther to recapture the top spot in the Central Division. The race in the division is tight, and with no one truly pulling away from the pack yet, it could come down to the final few games of the season.

So every point counts, maybe even a little more than usual, given the one point separation between the Hurricanes and their Florida-based competitors. With both the Tampa Bay Lightning and Florida Panthers are in action today as well, a win today over the Red Wings is crucial to either keep pace or put some more distance between the teams.

The Hurricanes have a surprisingly mediocre record against the Red Wings this season, going 3-2-0 in five game to date. Despite being near the bottom of the league's standings, the Red Wings have managed to confound some very good teams this year, so the Hurricanes need to take tonight's game seriously. Let's see how the two teams stack up:

### Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Red Wings
Record	27-9-3	13-23-6
Goals/Game	3.18	2.17
Goals Against/Game	2.38	3.19
Shots/Game	32.10	27.52

Category	Hurricanes	Red Wings
Face Off Win %	54.3%	50.2%
Power Play % (Rank)	29.7% (1st)	11.9% (30th)
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	83.2% (7th)	75.0% (27th)
ES Corsi For %	53.65%	46.62%
ES PDO	100.73	98.94
PIM/Game	07:04	07:47

### Goaltender #1

Category	James Reimer	Thomas Greiss
Record	14-4-1	3-15-6
Save %	0.905	.897
GAA	2.71	3.14

### Goaltender #2

Category	Alex Nedeljkovic	Jonathan Bernier
Record	9-4-2	8-7-0
Save %	.928	.910
GAA	1.98	3.03

### Goaltender #3

Category	Petr Mrazek	N/A
Record	4-1-0	N/A
Save %	.962	N/A



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Category Petr Mrazek N/A

GAA 0.99 N/A

### Game Notes

- The only team that has given the Hurricanes more trouble than the Red Wings is the Tampa Bay Lightning, who they've gone 3-3-0 against to date. They've got two more chances coming up this month to solve their divisional rivals.
- The fire sale is slowly starting to kick into gear in Detroit. Patrik Nemeth was traded to the Colorado Avalanche on Friday; meanwhile, Bobby Ryan, previously on many trade boards, has been shut down for the season with an injury.
- With several players on expiring contracts — including Darren Helm, Valtteri Filppula, Sam Gagner, Marc Staal, and Jonathan Bernier — the Red Wings team the Hurricanes face today may be

very different than the one they face on Monday, post-trade deadline.

- Gagner, as well as Robby Fabbri, have already been confirmed to be out for today's game.
- The Hurricanes continue to rotate between three goaltenders, with no signs of that situation changing. With how well the trio have performed, it's unlikely that situation will change any time soon, potentially making the Hurricanes one of the rare teams who can navigate your traditional three-headed goalie monster.
- The past goalie starts against the Red Wings don't shed much light on the situation: Petr Mrazek and Alex Nedeljkovic each have two starts, James Reimer has one. Mrazek and Reimer were in net for the losses to Detroit.
- Sebastian Aho leads the Hurricanes with 37 points. Filip Hronek, the Red Wings' leading scorer, would be eighth on the Hurricanes, with 22 points.



### Wolves tamed by Wild

Cotton's goal not enough to make up for Iowa's fast start  
Iowa scored three goals in the first period to trigger a 4-1 victory over the Chicago Wolves on Friday night at Wells Fargo Arena.

Rookie forward David Cotton scored his seventh of the year for the Wolves (14-4-0-1), who couldn't convert any of their seven power-play chances and lost for the first time in five meetings with the Wild (9-9-3-0). Goaltender Connor Ingram (0-1-0) posted 32 saves in his Wolves debut.

Iowa broke on top 54 seconds into the night as defenseman Keaton Thompson ripped a shot through traffic from the left point. The Wild pushed their lead to 2-0 on Connor Dewar's power-play blast at 8:37 of the first.

Late in the first period, 2019 NHL first-round pick Matt Boldy made his pro debut memorable by rifling home a power-play goal for a 3-0 Iowa lead.

The Wolves' comeback began at 6:48 of the second when Phil Tomasino poked a shot from the goal line that Iowa goaltender Derek Baribeau deflected nearly three feet into the air. Cotton, standing just outside the crease, took a hefty left-handed baseball swing and swatted it home to cut the margin to 3-1.

Iowa regained momentum with 22 seconds left in the second as defenseman Calen Addison scored on the rush to give the Wild a 4-1 margin.

Iowa goaltender Derek Baribeau (4-1-1) rejected 24 shots to earn the win.

The Wolves stay in Des Moines to face the Wild at 6 p.m. Saturday as their five-game road trip hits the midpoint. Chicago's next home game is slated for Wednesday, April 21, against the Rockford IceHogs.



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## LaFontaine Wins Mike Richter Award, 'U' Trio Named All-Americans

Jack LaFontaine added All-America honors along with Sampo Ranta and Jackson LaCombe.

MINNEAPOLIS – Jack LaFontaine closed out one of the best statistical seasons in Gopher Hockey's 100-year history on Friday night by earning the Mike Richter Award as the top goaltender in Division I men's hockey.

Additionally, a trio of 'U' players earned CCM/AHCA Hockey All-America honors with LaFontaine and Sampo Ranta selected as First Team honorees and Jackson LaCombe picking up Second Team merits.

The trio helped the Gophers to the 2021 Big Ten Men's Ice Hockey Tournament title and a No. 1 seed in the 2021 NCAA Division I Men's Ice Hockey Tournament –earning Minnesota its 38th NCAA tournament berth (tied with Michigan for most in college hockey), its first appearance in the national tournament since 2017 and its first NCAA tournament win since 2014. The 'U' finished out the season as the NCAA leader in wins (24-7-0) while ranking in the top-10 nationally in scoring offense (fourth), scoring defense (sixth) and penalty kill (ninth).

LaFontaine's Mike Richter Award and First Team All-America accolade add to an already impressive list of honors for the senior alternate captain. The goaltender was named the Big Ten Goaltender of the Year, a First Team All-Big Ten selection and the Most Outstanding Player of the Big Ten tournament in 2020-21 while also earning recognition as a top-10 finalist for the Hobey Baker Award. A two-time Academic All-Big Ten selection majoring in English, LaFontaine was also a finalist for the Senior CLASS Award.

A native of Mississauga, Ontario, LaFontaine (22-7-0) set new school single-season records for save percentage (.934) and goals against average (1.79) while his five shutouts this year rank tied for the third most in a season by a Gopher. Among regular NCAA goaltenders this year, the Carolina Hurricanes prospect ranked first in wins, tied for first in save percentage, tied for second in shutouts, third in saves (717) and third in goals against average. In 16 games against nationally ranked opponents, he boasted an 11-5-0 record.

Already a First Team All-Big Ten and Big Ten all-tournament team selection, Ranta led the Gophers with career highs in both goals (19) and points (31) in his final season with the program while also notching a new career high for assists (12). Skating in all 31 games this season, the junior forward's 19 goals rank second in the nation while Minnesota was 20-3-0 this year when he tallied a point. A native of Naantali, Finland, Ranta signed an entry-level contract with the Colorado Avalanche after the season. He was recognized as an Academic All-Big Ten selection twice, earning the honor every year he was eligible.

Also a First Team All-Big Ten pick, LaCombe led Minnesota's defensive corps with career highs for points (21), assists (17) and goals (four) in 27 games while leading all Gophers in shorthanded goals (two) and power-play assists (six). A native of Eden Prairie, Minn., LaCombe ranks eighth among NCAA defensemen in points and fifth in assists. Minnesota was 12-1-0 this year when he tallied a point while the Anaheim Ducks prospect notched assists on the game-winning goal in seven of the team's 24 wins. LaCombe was one of three 'U' defensemen to help the U.S. National Junior Team earn a gold medal this year at the IIHF World Junior Championship.

### Noteworthy

LaFontaine is the first Gopher to win the Mike Richter Award in the honor's seven-year history...Minnesota's three All-America selections this season are tied with Boston College, North Dakota and Wisconsin for most among NCAA programs while the 'U' has now boasted three All-Americans in one season four times in program history (1954, 1996, 2014, 2021)...the two Maroon & Gold First Team honorees are tied for the NCAA lead with Boston College, and this season marks the 11th time in program history the Gophers have had multiple First Team selections (last was 2002)...LaFontaine is the sixth Gophers goaltender to earn First Team All-America honors and the first to do so since Robb Stauber in 1988.



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# SportScan

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

1208192 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes down the stretch: Who needs to step up, trade targets and how the rest of the schedule plays out

By Sara Civian

Apr 9, 2021

There hasn't been much to complain about during the Hurricanes' 2020-21 season. They're top-five leaguewide in so many metrics — first in power-play percentage, second in faceoff wins, fourth in fewest goals allowed per game — and currently sitting in first place in the Central Division with a 27-9-3 record (57 points). They just swept Florida, the former No. 1 team, decisively.

"These guys know they're never out of a game," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said after Tuesday's win. "They play hard. That's what I love about them. At the end of the day, you go up and down our lineup, everybody plays hard."

Still, there's always room for improvement when you're trying to contend for a Cup, and there's a difficult last month of the season ahead, with two more games against each of Florida, Tampa Bay and Dallas, and four more games against Nashville. And the Hurricanes do have a few developing situations that could warrant trade-deadline improvement. They have a bad problem — it doesn't seem like consistency machine Teuvo Teravainen will be back in the lineup anytime soon. They also have a good problem, with a surplus of serviceable, NHL-level goalies — one could be a trade chip.

"I mean, we're always thinking we can be better, but really I'm extremely happy with our group," Brind'Amour said Thursday. "It would really have to be something special to really tweak this lineup to make it better. We're obviously looking — Donnie (Waddell) is talking all the time — but I don't know how much is going to or needs to get done."

What do the Hurricanes need to do to not only make the playoffs but take that final step into a true contention window? The Athletic broke down how the remainder of the season needs to unfold. We'll administer a vibe check on several players, look at a few trade targets and predict how the rest of the schedule plays out. Shout out to Jeremy Rutherford for the concept.

Who has to step up?

Before you read this section (no cheating!), I want you to think about it for yourself. I can almost guarantee you're struggling to think of more than three players. What a testament to the Hurricanes' depth, eh? And as much as we might hate to admit it, I know the one person we're all really thinking: Andrei Svechnikov.

From the beginning of this season, it's been objectively noticeable that the referees seem extra hard on Svechnikov. It's something many future NHL stars go through, whether that's fair or not. I asked Brind'Amour, who is currently on probation for speaking out against the officials during the 2020 playoffs, if he was seeing what the rest of us were seeing.

"You're gonna get me in trouble," he half-joked on Jan. 31. "I just think the younger guys, they don't get the benefit of the doubt. You gotta earn that respect, that trust with the referees, over time on calls. I don't think it's just Svech in general, I think it's all young guys. That's just kind of how it works."

Since then it's only gotten worse, but so have his actual penalties — and he's not going to win the good graces of the officials like that. His 15 minor penalty minutes rank 10th highest in the league, and some of them have directly led to goals allowed. It's created this awkward chicken-or-the-egg scenario and has resulted in an underwhelming overall performance to his standards — with an emphasis on "to his standards."

Svechnikov has 10 goals and 28 points in 39 games but only got two assists in his last five. This is a delicate situation because the style of play that leads to the penalties also is what makes Svechnikov so special — why he's able to take over a game. I think this is why Brind'Amour is taking the "everyone remain calm, let him work this out himself" approach.

"He takes a lot of penalties because he's just tenacious and he's trying to go," Brind'Amour said recently. "You see he gets a lot of stick infractions, where he's on a second and third effort. It's not a lack of effort. He's still learning. ... There's a lot of learning process that's going on for him. He's still a young man."

My take? Svechnikov's "struggles" have highlighted how much depth this team has and have sort of paved the way for Martin Necas' breakout with his time next to Sebastian Aho and Nino Niederreiter. You look around the league lately and see some of these younger star players being benched or talked down to, and then you look at the stats over the next few weeks — the treatment is objectively not helping the players or their teams. You can call this generation soft all you want, but the old coaching techniques simply aren't working anymore. I've talked a lot



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about how Brind'Amour knows exactly how to walk that edge and get through to millennials/early Zoomers, and his handling of Svechnikov right now is another example of that.

I'm sure this would be a different conversation if the Canes were losing, but I'm also sure the leash would be tighter if that were the case. Regardless, we'll cross that bridge if we come to it.

Who can help?

The Canes have expressed numerous times that they're seeking a right-shot defenseman at this deadline (or some help up front if the option is intriguing enough).

This is another one of those situations that in a vacuum might seem unnecessary — and honestly without a vacuum doesn't seem incredibly urgent. But we've learned in his 2.5 years at the helm that if Waddell, the former defenseman, likes one thing, it's keeping his defense stocked.

And zooming back into why these Hurricanes in their current situation could use a right-shot defenseman: 1. They run the contemporary power play format. 2. Top defenseman Dougie Hamilton's future with the Canes is in question. 3. The expansion draft adds an element of strategy where teams are trying to preemptively make up for what they might lose in June.

So, fine, the Hurricanes might eventually need the right-shot defenseman they crave, even if Taylor Hall watch would've been more fun.

If we're staying true to the "Who can help?" question, it's sort of funny to point out that former Hurricanes Justin Faulk and Sami Vatanen fit the bill. But the Hurricanes took a rare L on Vatanen at the previous trade deadline and probably don't want to open that revolving door. So who else is out there?

Josh Manson is the hot name. As Pierre LeBrun has been reporting, the Hurricanes have been asking the Ducks about Manson, but the price is a first-round pick and a prospect. In the words of Brind'Amour, "I don't know how much needs to get done," — but definitely not that much.

As both LeBrun and I can confirm, the Hurricanes are currently doing their due diligence on everyone, as they should. You never know what might pop up.

Other than that, though, I agree with Brind'Amour: They've got to find something really special if they want to make any changes to this already special team. That's why I think virtually any other trades that could be made aren't really worth it.

Possible alternatives in the "making trades just to make trades, but ones that could eventually work out" conversation: David Savard, Erik Gudbranson or maybe a mystery box of half of the Buffalo Sabres?

As Brind'Amour has clearly been getting at, it's all about the ask. For anything worthwhile, the ask will be a lot. So what's the point?

Who wins?

Rutherford will be hearing from my lawyer later for introducing this concept, but I also sort of love it.

So, I'm going to predict the outcomes of every single Hurricanes game remaining in April, going series-by-series:

Saturday and Monday vs. Detroit: This screams trap series, and you know it — especially right after a successful series against the Panthers. The Hurricanes have dropped two of five games against the Red Wings, and both losses have come in the second game of a series. So let's call this a split: win the first game, lose the second.

Thursday and Saturday vs. Nashville: Gotta finish off the homestand strong, and the Hurricanes are undefeated against the Predators. They've found a new gear recently, though, so it won't be easy. I predict some sort of brutal overtime situation and at least one — maybe two — Hurricanes wins.

Monday and Tuesday at Tampa Bay: A back-to-back on the road against the Lightning? In this economy? Tampa Bay has been inconsistent as of late, but they're still the Lightning. Could this be the last time the Canes drop two in a row this season? Depends on which Lightning goalies are healthy.

Thursday and Saturday at Florida: My God, JR, why are we doing this?

Monday and Tuesday at Dallas: The Panthers are a little too cocky coming off a sweep of the Red Wings with their playoffs already cinched, and the Canes sweep them.

Thursday vs. Detroit: The Hurricanes have died of dysentery.

How it plays out?

Who steps up: Svechnikov is going to figure it out, and he and the Hurricanes will be better off for letting him work through this.

Who helps: I honestly don't think a significant trade will be made. I've respected Brind'Amour's steadfast belief in this group since the last offseason when he said he didn't think any changes needed to happen. I think they've got it.

I said it one month ago not knowing LabarDown herself was taking notes, but I confirm my take today.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208193 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL power rankings: Blasts from the past, disrespecting the Panthers and Hurricanes

By Dom Luszczyszyn and Sean Gentile

Apr 9, 2021

As of three weeks ago, The Athletic has weekly NHL power rankings. Yes, it happened. Yes, we're using this exact same lede in each one. It'll be 69 weeks in and we'll still say "As of 69 weeks ago." Calm down. We're back with another installment this week, and we'll be back every week until we're old and grey and tired of ranking teams every week.

Here are the basic ground rules.

- The methodology here is as simple as it gets. We each rank the teams, from 1-31, then take the average, and voila. (Dom made a dedicated spreadsheet for this because of course he did.) It's not going to be based solely on past performance, current hot streaks or future potential. Numbers will figure into it prominently, but if you want stat-model stuff, we've got you covered elsewhere. This is something different.

- From there, we'll choose 10 or so teams to go back-and-forth on; that might be because we disagree on the placement. It might be because we each have something meaningful to say. It might be because we each want to make jokes about the teams, or each other. We'll see.

- We want this to be fun, and we're not locked into a format beyond going from No. 1 to No. 31. Some rankings might have themes. Some of those themes might be unexpected. If you have ideas — or just suggestions on how to make this a destination for you, each Friday — we'd love to hear them. You're why we're doing this in the first place.

- If two teams are tied, the team with the most wins gets the nod.

It's the weekend before the trade deadline, so for each of the top 18 teams, we picked one player from their 2005-06 roster to "trade" to the current roster (with one exception from a pesky expansion team). Dom was starting his freshman year of high school that season so it's unlikely



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he will be an asset during this exercise. Sean was a sophomore in college, so he doesn't remember a ton from that stretch, albeit for different reasons. He purposefully picked a year without any analytics so that Dom would have to use points and plus-minus only.

Cue up Pennywise. It's time to go.

### 1. Colorado Avalanche

Last week: 1

Record: 26-9-4, 56 points

Dom rank: 1

Sean rank: 1

2005-06 addition: Joe Sakic. Maybe the toughest choice of all these, since Rob Blake was on the board, but "second-line center Joe Sakic" is a very funny concept. MacKinnon-Sakic-Kadri down the middle. Ding. Also, David Aebischer was the Avs starter that year with a .900 save percentage. We can't even find Philipp Grubauer a backup in fantasyland.

Sean: Not even an 8-3 loss to the Wild can slow The Shot Parade. Managing that score despite a 32-19 shots advantage is deeply impressive. Also, the Avs haven't lost a Corsi battle since Feb. 16. What were we doing on Feb. 16?

Dom: Probably wondering when the 7-4-1 Avalanche would start looking like the Juggernaut we all expected them to be. I don't think I've ever seen a team this good. It's almost as if there shouldn't even be a team ranked second, just out of respect.

### 2. Toronto Maple Leafs

Last week: 5

Record: 27-10-3, 57 points

Dom rank: 3

Sean rank: 3

2005-06 addition: Mats Sundin. Just so Sheldon Keefe could still find a way to put Wayne Simmons on the top power play. And for some sweet Mats to Matts goals, of course. But seriously, adding Sundin to a team with Auston Matthews, John Tavares, Joe Thornton and Jason Spezza just sounds fun.

Dom: We had a three-way tie for second between Toronto, Carolina and Tampa Bay and I was in charge of the tie-breaker this week. What, you think I'm not going to choose one that favours Canada's Favourite Team™? This is not the place for professionalism.

Sean: I'm OK with the xGF tiebreaker. Had to veto the first suggestion, which was "number of players named Timothy Liljegren," but this is fine.

Dom: Thank you for not mentioning the second suggestion which was "team with the best boy on it." That also obviously would've gone to the Leafs.

### 3. Carolina Hurricanes

Last week: 3

Record: 27-9-3, 57 points

Dom rank: 4

Sean rank: 2

2005-06 addition: Eric Staal. Is Don Waddell desperate enough for a right D to pass on 100-point Eric Staal for Aaron Ward? Probably not. Hopefully not. Ironic that Cam Ward isn't the pick, since the Hurricanes spent more than a decade hoping the 2006 version would magically appear.

Dom: The Hurricanes knew we would disrespect them in the power rankings by placing them third and preemptively tweeted about it.

Sean: I sincerely wonder what would have to happen for you to put them ahead of the Leafs. Is it a playoff win? It feels like it'd only happen with a playoff win. Doing this every week has really hammered home, for me, how important the concept of "playing more than six teams" is for developing opinions.

Dom: This is all a long con to bother close personal friend and Hurricanes assistant general manager Eric Tulsky.

Sean: There is, in fact, no greater sign of disrespect.

### 4. Tampa Bay Lightning

Last week: 2

Record: 27-11-2, 56 points

Dom rank: 2

Sean rank: 4

2005-06 addition: Martin St. Louis. Not his best season (31G, 30A) but an opportunity to port St. Louis into the current era of NHL Short Kings cannot be missed. Also, they may need to replace Steven Stamkos.

Even the Lightning's "slumps" are ... not really slumps. Before breaking out on Thursday against the Blue Jackets, Tampa had lost five of seven. They had an expected goals percentage under 53.8 percent in just two of those games. Lots of shots, not a lot of goals ... and then on Thursday, boom, the dam breaks. Shout out to Ross Colton, who has six goals in his first 14 career games, including four already in April. He is our Mark Donk of the week. Big Donk energy: The Lightning are now officially bringing it.

### 5. Vegas Golden Knights

Last week: 4

Record: 25-11-2, 52 points

Dom rank: 5

Sean rank: 5

2005-06 addition: Pavel Datsyuk. Welp, Vegas didn't have a team, so might as well cheat by taking a page out of the expansion draft playbook and picking one player from one of the 15 teams who don't qualify. Detroit isn't using him and Vegas desperately needs an elite first line center so Datsyuk is the easy choice. Imagine prime Datsyuk playing with prime Mark Stone? Does Corsi even go that high?

The top five teams are on lockdown every week. Maybe the Islanders can sneak in there one day, but for now it's looking like some combination of Colorado, Tampa Bay, Toronto, Carolina, and Vegas. This week, the Golden Knights get the short end of the stick as the team stuck at the bottom of the top-five pecking order.

Losing to a Blues team that forgot how to win for over a month is the main reason why, but it's also because the team has dropped four of its last five. Vegas has the lowest points percentage of the top five teams and also the lowest expected goals percentage. That should satisfy the two most vocal critics of power rankings: People who only look at the standings, and people who only look at expected goals.

### 6. New York Islanders

Last week: 8

Record: 26-10-4, 56 points

Dom rank: 6

Sean rank: 6



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2005-06 addition: General manager Mike Milbury. It's just before the trade deadline and I want to see some crazy shit. Give me Milbury for just one weekend. Please.

Sean: In the first Islanders write-up here, we begged for Lou Lamoriello to replace Anders Lee, and our guy came through. Kyle Palmieri may well wind up as the most impactful forward addition for anyone. First-line winger, replacement for the captain, blah blah — I also feel like people are underestimating what he could mean to what's been a legitimately bad Isles power play.

Dom: From 2017 to 2020, here are the top five players in terms of power-play goals-per-60: David Pastrnak, Mika Zibanejad, Steven Stamkos, Patrik Laine and Auston Matthews. Palmieri is sixth. He's a weapon. My only fear is that all his shooting power comes from his beard, which mysteriously vanished from Newark to Long Island.

### 7. Minnesota Wild

Last week: 9

Record: 24-12-2, 50 points

Dom rank: 7

Sean rank: 9

2005-06 addition: Brian Rolston. It hurts to pass on Marian Gaborik, but the Wild — good as they are — need another center. Badly. And Rolston had the best season of his career in '05-06. Stick him with Kirill Kaprizov.

Dom: Two impressive wins over the Golden Knights last week and then the Wild handed the Avalanche their first loss in 15 games, an 8-3 drubbing, no less. Minnesota is for real and for the first time ever are fun. How can you not love these guys?

Sean: Gaborik was fun! The rise of Kaprizov has led to Marian Gaborik-on-the-Wild erasure! Sad! Honestly, I think I'm finally finished thinking of them as The True Neutral NHL franchise. It happened recently, but I'm there.

### 8. Washington Capitals

Last week: 7

Record: 25-11-4, 54 points

Dom rank: 9

Sean rank: 7

2005-06 addition: Uhh, well, the 2005-06 Capitals were god awful so this is actually hard. Like, Dainius Zubrus... I guess? The Capitals could use another top nine winger and Zubrus did score 57 points that season. There isn't a defenceman on the roster worth considering.

The Capitals have lost four of their last six after rattling off an incredible midseason run. That hot stretch has given them a lot of leeway in the standings, but a loss to Boston last night combined with an Islanders win means Washington has dropped out of first place in the East. We've had some doubts regarding just how elite the Capitals are and they've had a few defensive issues over this recent lull. Washington has lost the expected goals battle at five-on-five in five straight games as a result.

### 9. Pittsburgh Penguins

Last week: 6

Record: 25-13-2, 52 points

Dom rank: 8

Sean rank: 8

2005-06 addition: Mario Lemieux. Ron Hextall is looking for size down the middle. He's pretty big. Probably can help on the (21.4 percent) power play a bit. A good excuse to remember that Lemieux had 22 points in 26 games on a demolished hip. He was 40.

Weird week for the Penguins. After going up 1-0 on the Bruins at the first intermission, they spent the ensuing five periods combining bad luck and brutal decisions. End result: A 7-5 loss to Boston and an 8-4 loss to the Rangers. A big reason they are where they are, though: zero three-game losing streaks. That's alive after a pretty decisive Thursday win over the Rangers. Their bottom-six depth could be as good as it's been in a while, and their shot-attempt and expected-goals percentage are both above 50 and trending upward. When Radim Zohorna is scoring Nathan MacKinnon goals to steady the ship, something is going right.

### 10. Florida Panthers

Last week: 10

Record: 26-11-4, 56 points

Dom rank: 11

Sean rank: 10

2005-06 addition: Jay Bouwmeester. They need a left-side replacement for Aaron Ekblad. Enter 22-year-old JayBouw. He had 46 points that season. Problem solved.

We've taken a fair amount of flack for, uh, perceived disrespect of the Panthers. Not fair — only one of us actually hates them. In any case, "they're ahead of the Hurricanes in the standings" doesn't hold water anymore. Because they're not. What we do know about the Panthers is that they're good — ninth in goals percentage, seventh in expected goals percentage — and they're trying to get better. GM Bill Zito clearing out Brett Connolly's contract ahead of the trade deadline was fun to see. Maybe they'll acquire Vincent Trocheck.

### 11. Boston Bruins

Last week: 11

Record: 21-10-6, 48 points

Dom rank: 10

Sean rank: 11

2005-06 addition: 37-year-old Brian Leetch was apparently on this team and while he was probably washed, I can only imagine he'll be a massive improvement over whatever a Jakub Zboril is.

Are the Bruins... back? They've won back-to-back games without Charlie McAvoy — dressing a defence corps that can best be described as Matt Grzelcyk plus five children in a trenchcoat — and starting some guy named Jeremy Swayman in goal. It's amazing how much crap a team playing at a 106-point pace is getting, but then you watch them, and it's completely understandable. This team needs some more scoring and at least one more top four defender. The depth just isn't there.

### 12. Winnipeg Jets

Last week: 12

Record: 24-13-3, 51 points

Dom rank: 13

Sean rank: 12

2005-06 addition: Remember the Atlanta Thrashers? Well, the 2005-06 version was basically the current version of the Jets. Superstars up front, very little depth behind them and Greg de Vries leading the way on defence, baby. Might as well lean into this team's strengths and just add another superstar forward. Ilya Kovalchuk is hard to resist, but I'm going to go with Marian Hossa to add a bit more defensive presence to the squad.

Another night, another classic Jets performance. Outshot 38-26, but won the game 4-2 anyways, capped off by an empty-netter assisted by Mark Scheifele. It doesn't get more Jets-y than that. To their credit, the scoring chance and expected goals count was much closer and Winnipeg has



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looked much better in those categories of late. Maybe one day we'll move them up from 12th where we have them every week.

13. Edmonton Oilers

Last week: 13

Record: 25-14-2, 52 points

Dom rank: 12

Sean rank: 13

2005-06 addition: Chris Pronger. Almost galaxy-brained this one because the Oilers need a left wing and third-line center so badly, and Ryan Smyth and Jarrett Stoll were both 60-plus-point guys that season, but ... it's Pronger. He almost dragged them to a Stanley Cup. Also, he'd be their third-best defenseman today, and he's 46. What am I saying?

Temp check on Mike Smith: A .922 save percentage. The 18th-best goals saved above expected in the league. Stopped 39 of 40 shots against the Senators on Thursday. Just feels like something bad is due to happen there.

14. Montreal Canadiens

Last week: 14

Record: 17-11-9, 43 points

Dom rank: 15

Sean rank: 14

2005-06 addition: Cristobal Huet. I figure this team could use a starting goaltender.

No team in the league has a better goals percentage at five-on-five than Montreal, who earn 60 percent of the goals there. On special teams, they're only minus-two thanks to a league-leading eight shorthanded goals. This should be an elite team and yet, they're not. They're average. Overtime has killed them all season where Montreal is 2-9 on the year. Lucky for them, there are no gimmicks in overtime come playoff time, and that might make them a sneaky scary team come May.

15. New York Rangers

Last week: 15

Record: 18-16-5, 41 points

Dom rank: 14

Sean rank: 15

2005-06 addition: Jaromir Jagr. The Rangers needed centers back then, too. Jagr carried Michael Nylander to 79 points and had 123 for himself. It's a Pronger situation: Don't overthink it, and enjoy a left-wing depth chart that goes Jagr, Panarin, Kreider, Lafreniere. A real "Why don't they just make the entire plane out of the black box" situation.

The Athletic NHL power rankings loves the Rangers, a lovely young team with underlying numbers better than their record suggests!

\*Five seconds later\*

We regret to inform you the Rangers controlled 37 percent of the expected goals in a 5-2 loss to Pittsburgh. Progress isn't linear, et cetera, et cetera. The Rangers are still capable of wreaking havoc in the East down the stretch.

16. Nashville Predators

Last week: 16

Record: 22-18-1, 45 points

Dom rank: 16

Sean rank: 16

2005-06 addition: Paul Kariya is the obvious choice as his 85 points that year remains a franchise record. Nashville doesn't need another winger, but maybe an elite one can finally get the most out of the team's parade of overpaid centers.

Sean: Still mad at the Preds for this run, man. A month ago, they were on track to move, like, five of the 10 most interesting guys. Now me and McIndoe are going to have to fill the deadline live blog by grading the TV panel's haircuts or something, and it's their fault. Stupid. Inconsiderate.

Dom: Honestly, they should still do it. Keep all those guys just to get swept by the Hurricanes or Lightning? No thanks.

Sean: Playoff gate revenue talks, and bullshit walks. We'll see.

17. Arizona Coyotes

Last week: 21

Record: 19-16-5, 43 points

Dom rank: 17

Sean rank: 17

2005-06 addition: Shane Doan. Congrats, Shane! You get to play for fringe playoff team in Arizona.

Dom: The Coyotes... did not wear their Kachina jerseys once this week? How dare they. Despite that uniform travesty, the desert dogs still moved up four spots in the rankings as it's become very clear they're the front-runner for that final playoff spot in the West. Blowing 3-1 third period leads to the Kings won't help them keep that spot for long though.

Sean: I feel like we're going to see Jacob Chychrun pop up on some Norris ballots. Also, what you said about the Preds applies doubly here. Nothing that has happened or will happen this weekend should stop them from making a single move.

18. St. Louis Blues

Last week: 17

Record: 17-16-6, 40 points

Dom rank: 18

Sean rank: 18

2005-06 addition: I was a small child in 2005, but I vaguely remember being excited for hockey being back and Keith Tkachuk being absolutely out of shape after the lockout. Is this a real thing? Is my memory making things up? Either way, he had 36 points in 41 games, a season so good that Brian Burke, in his new book, admitted he was considering trading SECOND OVERALL PICK BOBBY RYAN FOR HIM. The 2000s were different, man. Imagine the Kings trading Quinton Byfield for like, Mats Zuccarello.

Colton Parayko is back, and that's good news in theory for the Blues, except he's not quite back just yet. He's looked brutal in his first two games and in order for the Blues to crawl out of their hole, they need his consistent steady presence on the back-end. St. Louis beat Vegas Wednesday to end a seven-game losing streak, but this is still a team that's dropped 12 of its last 15. The fact they're still in the playoff race at all despite that kind of collapse speaks volumes about the West division.

19. Dallas Stars

Last week: 19

Record: 14-14-10, 38 points

Dom rank: 19

Sean rank: 19

Sean: Shapiro tweeted today that the Stars "don't view themselves as sellers," and while part of me gets it — I remember last season, and I



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know how they've dealt with injuries — their 5v5 percentages have been in a nosedive, and they're battling two other deeply mediocre teams for that last Central playoff spot. It's really tough to imagine it working out in any real way. Just one of those years.

Dom: You know who the Stars could really use: Tyler Seguin and Ben Bishop. Weren't they supposed to be ready to roll by the end of March? Also, a healthy Alex Radulov wouldn't hurt either. That's a lot of value out of the lineup right now and I could see the Stars going on a little run if those guys come back.

### 20. Chicago Blackhawks

Last week: 18

Record: 18-18-5, 41 points

Dom rank: 21

Sean rank: 20

Can't knock the Blackhawks all that much for dropping games against juggernauts like the Hurricanes and Predators. It's wild to think that Chicago, absent Nashville's recent tear, would still be in the driver's seat for the playoffs. Maybe the Preds are doing them a favor; now, there's no reason for Stan Bowman to do anything other than play cap financier and add future assets at the deadline. If they were in fourth place in the Central despite a minus-17 goal differential and underwater (and trending downward) 5v5 metrics, things could've gotten weird. But they're in fifth place, so sell away.

### 21. Philadelphia Flyers

Last week: 22

Record: 18-15-6, 42 points

Dom rank: 20

Sean rank: 22

Our weekly Carter Hart jokes were starting to feel mean, so we both appreciate his last three games. The Flyers didn't win any of them, but Hart looked competent enough to remind everyone that the last couple months are more likely to be a blip on the radar than anything else. Corey Pronman had a nice deep dive on that whole deal earlier this week. Encouraging losses are still losses, though, and the Flyers continue to have no reason to add at the trade deadline.

### 22. Calgary Flames

Last week: 20

Record: 16-21-3, 35 points

Dom rank: 24

Sean rank: 21

Dom: Every week I do the dirty work of deciding who writes about each team and which team deserves to have both of us chime in on them. This week, I felt it was necessary that we both say how we really feel about the Flames.

Here we go: They suck.

Sean, anything to add?

Sean: Hmm. Darryl Sutter had a good line this week about Johnny Gaudreau and Matthew Tkachuk: "They've played together on the power play since Christ was a child, so they should be able to do it five-on-five." Funny, and probably incorrect.

Dom: "Funny, and probably incorrect" is also how I felt about the Flames hiring Darryl Sutter.

### 23. San Jose Sharks

Last week: 25

Record: 17-17-4, 38 points

Dom rank: 22

Sean rank: 24

Sean: I really tried to do my part and keep them at 24.

Dom: The folks in the comments section got to me. I am weak, and unfortunately, they won the tie-breaker over the next team.

Sean: Plenty of things have made me wonder if we've been trapped in some sort of time loop since 2016. Hearing that Patrick Marleau would "seriously consider" a trade to a contender is one of them. Didn't we just do this? Like, a few times?

Dom: Contenders looking at Marleau's stats:

### 24. Los Angeles Kings

Last week: 23

Record: 15-17-6, 34 points

Dom rank: 23

Sean rank: 23

The Kings had lost six of seven going into Wednesday's tilt against the Coyotes, a predictable regression for a team many expected to be one of the league's worst. They had a gutsy 4-3 comeback win to stop the bleeding, but there's still a lot of work to be done if this team has any aspirations of making the playoffs. At eight percent, they remain a long shot.

### 25. Vancouver Canucks

Last week: 26

Record: 16-18-3, 35 points

Dom rank: 26

Sean rank: 25

The Canucks would save roughly \$30 million per year (this is not an exaggeration) if they had just one person in the front office who said "No, don't do that" anytime Jim Benning and Co. wanted to do that. "That" in this case is some preposterously bad signing for a bottom-of-the-lineup player that somehow puts a bottom-tier team right up against the salary cap. This time it was signing Tanner Pearson to a three-year deal worth \$3.25 million per season. Sure. Great idea.

### 26. Columbus Blue Jackets

Last week: 24

Record: 15-19-8, 38 points

Dom rank: 25

Sean rank: 26

Despite the season struggles, Columbus appeared to have found a way to live rent-free in Tampa Bay's head all season going 3-1-1 in the first five meetings including a dominant 4-2 win on Tuesday. The natural order was restored on Thursday with Tampa Bay dominating Columbus, putting up an effort that was much closer to the talent discrepancy between the two clubs. It's amazing how far the Blue Jackets have fallen since their playoff tilt against the Lightning less than a year ago. They're the worst team in the league by expected goals percentage.

### 27. New Jersey Devils

Last week: 27

Record: 14-18-6, 34 points

Dom rank: 27



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Sean rank: 27

It was an easy joke made by lazy fools.

Honestly, though, the right way to think about the Devils trade with the Islanders might be as two separate trades: A first-round pick for Kyle Palmieri, and a fourth-round pick for Travis Zajac. That sounds about right. The next step for New Jersey is re-signing Palmieri, though, because if he doesn't sign there, he's gonna stay on Long Island, and if he stays on Long Island, he's going to continue freaking everyone out with his Lou-mandated beardless look. Good work by Connor Carrick, by the way.

28. Ottawa Senators

Last week: 28

Record: 13-24-4, 30 points

Dom rank: 28

Sean rank: 28

Dumping a goalie coach in the middle of the season is a bad sign for the Senators, and a really bad sign for Matt Murray. A lot of people have tried a lot of stuff to get him right over the last few years, and he's still working on his second consecutive season with a save percentage starting in ".8." Three years left at a \$6.25 AAV, by the way. As for the rest of the team, you may be aware that they completed their 0-for-9 against the Oilers, but this was wild.

29. Detroit Red Wings

Last week: 29

Record: 13-23-6, 32 points

Dom rank: 29

Sean rank: 29

The Red Wings were on a nice little run since mid-March, going 5-6-2 which is basically elite for a team that's been a tire fire for half a decade. Last night they reminded us that they are still indeed quite awful, getting blown out 7-1 by a Predators that was missing Filip Forsberg, Matt Duchene, Eeli Tolvanen and Ryan Ellis – and is willingly playing Ben Harpur. That's the second 7-1 loss to Nashville over the last two weeks.

30. Anaheim Ducks

Last week: 30

Record: 12-21-7, 31 points

Dom rank: 30

Sean rank: 30

Can the Ducks just make a trade or something? They've lost 10 of 13 and don't have Trevor Zegras on the NHL roster anymore. Send Rickard Rakell to the Bruins or whatever and get it over with. I'm tired of writing about them. Been two straight weeks. Gotta find some different way to break it up. This is Sean, btw.

Dom: I'm sorry I keep giving you the Ducks, I promise it won't happen again next week.

31. Buffalo Sabres

Last week: 31

Record: 9-24-6, 24 points

Dom rank: 31

Sean rank: 31

Dom: The Sabres going on a five-game point streak immediately after ending an 18-game losing streak feels completely on-brand for this wacky season. It was nice to see a 6-3 loss last night to get things back

on track though. I just really hope Buffalo finds a good home for Taylor Hall. He doesn't deserve this.

Sean: The Oilers need a left wing.

Dom: I hear Ryan Smyth is available.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208213 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings' first move before NHL trade deadline: Patrick Nemeth to Avs' 4th-round pick

HELENE ST. JAMES

The Detroit Red Wings made their first move at this year's trade deadline — but it wasn't for much.

The team announced Friday evening that defenseman Patrik Nemeth had been traded to the Colorado Avalanche for a fourth-round pick in 2022.

Nemeth was in his second season with the Wings, and with the team headed for a fifth straight playoff absence, general manager Steve Yzerman's edict is to unload pending unrestricted free agents for draft picks.

Nemeth, 29, has two goals and six assists in 39 games. Yzerman added Nemeth to the organization in 2019, as a stop-gap measure to help the rebuild.

Yzerman's task during his second trade deadline in charge of the Wings is to add draft picks to the rebuild. That directive took a hit when it emerged Friday that Bobby Ryan won't be able to play again this season because of an upper-body injury. Other pending UFAs that Yzerman may flip for picks include goaltender Jonathan Bernier, forwards Luke Glendening, Darren Helm and Sam Gagner, and defensemen Marc Staal and Jon Merrill.

The deadline is 3 p.m. Monday.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208214 Detroit Red Wings

Why losing Bobby Ryan is such a blow for the Detroit Red Wings

HELENE ST. JAMES

Losing Bobby Ryan for the rest of the season is a double blow for the Detroit Red Wings.

Ryan had been an outstanding veteran leader and a top-six forward with a knack for offense. For the man tasked with stoking the rebuild — general manager Steve Yzerman — Ryan had been a moveable piece to flip at Monday's trade deadline for a draft pick.

Instead, Ryan will spend the last month on the sidelines, felled by an upper-body injury that has sidelined him since March 28. Coach Jeff Blashill would not reveal specifics, but said Ryan has been nagged by back problems and that surgery is a possibility.

It was a lousy bit of news amid a challenging season.



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"Bobby was disappointed, I was disappointed for him," coach Jeff Blashill said. "I think Bobby has been around a long time, so he can handle things. But certainly he's disappointed.

"I liked having Bobby on our team. I think he made our team better and he was a good example for our young guys. He's been a good leader in our locker room, a good example guy, and a guy who can score goals. We'll miss lots of what Bobby brings and I feel really bad for him that his season is cut short."

Ryan, 34, has seven goals and seven assists in 33 games. Those numbers are comparable to Kyle Palmieri, who had 17 points in 34 games when he was part of a package deal — along with Travis Zajac (18 points, 33 games) — earlier this week that sent the two forwards from New Jersey to the New York Islanders for a first-round pick, a fourth-round pick and two minor-leaguers. Both of those veterans have salary cap hits around \$5 million, whereas Ryan is a bargain at \$1 million. That could have led to a good deal for Yzerman from teams seeking reinforcement for a playoff run.

Ryan showed off his scoring prowess with four goals his first three games. Even when he wasn't producing, he consistently was in position to score, making smart plays and going to the net.

"Bobby came in early, did a really good job," Blashill said. "He's had a nagging back injury through much of the year. Those are ones that don't necessarily just go away. It probably hurt his ability to keep rolling."

Neither Yzerman nor Ryan were available to comment, but last month Ryan said that if he were traded at the deadline, he'd like to return.

Yzerman signed Ryan last October, seeing the discarded former second-overall pick as a good supporting cast member in the rebuild. Ryan had been bought out last season by the Ottawa Senators, and was looking for a place to reboot his career.

He wasn't willing to sign just anywhere, though, and his reaching out to Dylan Larkin before signing was part of what impressed the Wings.

"Bobby wanted to know if this was a group that had kind of thrown in the towel, or if this was a group that really wanted to get better," Blashill said. "I know when he talked with guys, he was pretty convinced this was a group that wanted to get better. One of the reasons he's liked it here is because it's a group that wants to get better. It's a group that's grinding and wants a better tomorrow. That doesn't always manifest itself in great outings, but it is a group that cares, that wants to learn. It's a group that wants to grow and Bobby has really appreciated that and being a part of the process of getting to a better tomorrow."

If recovery goes well — Blashill said the injury is not considered career-ending — Ryan could fit into the next season's process on another one-year deal in the same pay range. Younger players, including Dylan Larkin and Filip Zadina, have raved about Ryan's influence, and he's a good stop-gap measure for a team working through a rebuild.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208215 Detroit Red Wings

Bad news for Detroit Red Wings: Bobby Ryan (upper body) done for season

HELENE ST. JAMES

Already reeling, the Detroit Red Wings revealed another piece of bad news Friday: Bobby Ryan is done for the season.

That was the message delivered by coach Jeff Blashill after an energetic practice in preparation for Saturday's game at the Carolina Hurricanes.

The Wings are coming off a 7-1 loss to Nashville on Thursday, which marked the one-month countdown to the end of the season.

Ryan hasn't played since suffering an upper-body injury March 28. He had been practicing, but suffered a setback — and now he might need surgery.

ANALYSIS: Why losing Bobby Ryan is such a blow for Red Wings

"He was making progress," Blashill said. "Originally, we thought it was a minor thing. He battled a little bit of a back issue most of the season that he's never had in his career. As you get older, sometimes you get more nagging injuries.

"It's tough one."

Ryan, 34, had seven goals and seven assists in 33 games.

The Wings already have been without Tyler Bertuzzi since Jan. 30. A return hasn't been ruled out, but he has yet to practice with the team, and time is run.

At least for Saturday's game, the Wings will also be without forwards Robby Fabbri and Sam Gagner and defenseman Patrik Nemeth.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208216 Detroit Red Wings

'Stupid' loss has Detroit Red Wings wondering when 'enough is enough'

HELENE ST. JAMES

The Detroit Red Wings have been here before. Too many times, in fact.

They head into a series against the Carolina Hurricanes smarting from a rout that had one veteran wondering when the Wings will learn. They know they need to work hard to have a chance — and yet another night ended so disastrously.

"How many times are we going to have to do this," Luke Glendening said after Thursday's 7-1 loss to the Nashville Predators. "We are all frustrated with it. How many times are we going to have to do this before enough is enough.

"We can look where we are in the standings. It's embarrassing. We have to continue to battle."

The Wings (13-23-6) have 14 games left. What's frustrating about this latest punch in the stomach is that they seemed to be on a good track, performance-wise, if not in wins: Last weekend, they opened their series against the defending Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning with a one-goal loss, then followed up with a 5-1 victory. Tuesday's loss to the Predators came in a shootout. Thursday's game went fine for the first half, but then the Predators made it 3-1 on a blown coverage, and from there, everything deteriorated.

"It's another night when we get down we don't respond well," coach Jeff Blashill said. "The three goals in the second are breakdowns, but it's 3-1. We still have a chance."

Instead, Blashill said, "We got really stupid in the third."

It was especially unfair to Jonathan Bernier, whose goaltending has been led to eight victories and who steadfastly has given his team a chance. In his first game back after a three-week layoff, his teammates couldn't have been unkind.

"We hung him out to dry," Glendening said. "That's on all of us. Especially for a guy who has played so well for us all season, and his first game back and we don't give him any help."



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Nor did the Wings help general manager Steve Yzerman, who is trying to use Monday's trade deadline to flip players for draft picks — Glendening and linemates Darren Helm and Adam Erne were the only players to finish in the positive in plus/minus, at plus-1.

It's one thing when the Wings lose close games. Their lineup has been depleted — Tyler Bertuzzi hasn't played since Jan. 30, and Bobby Ryan and Robby Fabbri also have missed the past few. That's three top-six forwards. But there are respectable losses, and then there are sloppy losses.

"We talk about it a lot, that we have to outcompete teams to give ourselves a chance, and we didn't do that," Glendening said. "I think the most frustrating thing is that that is something we can control. There's going to be breakdowns that happen, you can live with that if the work and compete is high. Unfortunately, when it's not high and you make mistakes, you end up (with) scores like that."

So here the Wings are again, a month left in the season, and enough apparently hasn't been enough.

"This is a huge step backward, so we have to regroup on Saturday and take major steps forward," Blashill said. "This was a poor job — as we got down, we played terrible. But we have a choice to make Saturday to take steps forward."

The road, though, is getting short.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208217

Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Tigers' Akil Baddoo an omen for draft luck change for Lions, Pistons, Red Wings?

SHAWN WINDSOR

Akil Baddoo's debut would be a great story even if the Detroit Tigers were the defending champs and the other big four teams here had made recent deep playoff runs, too. Not many longshot prospects hit the first big-league pitch they ever see over the fence and follow that up with a grand slam and a walk-off single.

Heck, not many top draft picks walk onto the major league stage that way, either.

It's part of the reason we celebrated Baddoo's dramatic entrance onto Detroit's sporting scene. Yet the buzz he created says something about the state of fandom around here as well.

We are starved. For a little electricity. For more giddy. For more high-voltage youngsters to suit up for the Pistons and Red Wings and Lions.

I have no idea where Baddoo's career goes from here. He could hit the rest of the summer or stop hitting next week. Baseball is unpredictably cruel that way, and the hardest to predict future success.

But as the Lions prepare for the NFL draft and the Pistons and Wings wind down their seasons — each have roughly a month left — Baddoo's leap into our consciousness is a reminder of what we've been missing for a while.

Not that you needed one.

No, what you really need is some luck. And by you, I mean the front offices rebuilding our teams, in the draft lottery for the Wings and Pistons, in talent observation for the Lions.

The Lions' regime gets the first crack in less than three weeks. The team may or may not need a quarterback. What's indisputable, though, is that they need playmakers. Or difference-makers. And if general manager

Brad Holmes and head coach Dan Campbell find one on their first swing?

Well, it's about time, no?

Luck is the way of the world even more in the NBA and NHL, where the worst teams don't just have to study prospects as they do in the NFL, but study them and then get a shot at them only after going through a lottery.

Entering Thursday, the Pistons had the third-worst record in the NBA, which would give them a 14% chance of winning the top pick. Then again, does it matter?

Pistons fans would say no. Except that maybe this is finally the year where the team actually moves up in the lottery. It's never happened ... well, not technically.

The Memphis Grizzlies moved up three spots to the No. 2 spot in the 2003 lottery. The Pistons owned that pick. We don't need to revisit what happened.

So, yeah, a team needs a little luck picking, too. But more luck in getting the pick.

Most draft analysts consider this a five-player draft at the top. That isn't to say there won't be future stars later in the draft.

But wouldn't Cade Cunningham look dashing in a Pistons jersey? Or Jalen Suggs? Or Jalen Green? Or Evan Mobley?

Sure. Though Cunningham would look the best.

Here is a 6-foot-8 wing who handles the ball — and passes it — like a point guard while shooting like a two-guard. He plays at his own speed and, at 19, can already bend a court like few can.

The Pistons haven't landed a player in the draft this talented since Grant Hill, though Cunningham has a different kind of game. As for Suggs? Well, he can make 40-footers at the buzzer and he can defend, and he can compete.

Voraciously.

He plays with a similar wattage to Cunningham. Either would give the franchise a jolt, and give general manager Troy Weaver a leading-man prospect to toss in with the rest of his promising young players.

That kind of it-factor prospect isn't so easy to identify on the ice at the moment. The pandemic has shut down or delayed various leagues around the world and combined with the lack of travel, have made scouting nearly impossible.

Ask NHL draft analysts about the consensus No. 1 prospect this year and you'll get five different answers. This hasn't been the case lately, when the team that won the lottery could reasonably assume it was getting a crack at a transcendent player.

Like last year, when Alexis Lefrenière was everyone's top choice. The Rangers left wing hasn't lit up the league just yet, but it's early and he's playing for a middling team.

Still, you'd rather have him on your roster than not. And if the Wings had been luckier in the lottery, they would've been the franchise trying to unlock his talent.

Instead, as you well recall, the Wings' league-worst record — by a mile — netted them the fourth pick in the lottery, which was the third time in recent years they were bumped down relative to their record.

And while perhaps this is the year where it won't matter as much if the Wings don't win the top spot, they'd still rather be the ones taking the swing and betting on their own ability to scout. For that to happen, they'll have to buck Detroit's poor lottery luck.

Maybe it's time that'll happen. Maybe for both the Wings and the Pistons. Maybe the lottery is ready to bequeath its annual chance at hope to a sporting scene that hasn't had much of it.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The odds have got to break at some point, right?

Maybe Baddoo is the sign that they will, that if a Rule 5 draft pick can step to the plate and plop the first thing he sees for an opposite-field homer then the Pistons and Wings and Lions can land someone the next few months who will make similar debuts.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 04.10.2021

**1208218** Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings move Patrik Nemeth to Colorado as deadline looms

TED KULFAN

Detroit – So, the sell off begins for the Red Wings.

The Wings began dealing some of their assets leading into Monday's 3 p.m. (EST) trade deadline Friday night by moving defenseman Patrik Nemeth to the Colorado Avalanche.

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The Wings received a 2022 fourth-round draft pick. They also retained \$1.5 million of Nemeth's \$3 million salary cap charge.

Nemeth, 29, is a prospective unrestricted free agent. He signed a two-year deal worth \$6 million to join the Red Wings, coming from the Avalanche. In 39 games this season, Nemeth had two goals and six assists along with 14 penalty minutes. Last season, Nemeth had one goal and eight assists in 64 games, with 28 penalty minutes.

Nemeth (6-foot-3, 228-pounds), who will provide the Avalanche with size and a sound defensive game, has played in 353 NHL games with Dallas, Colorado and the Wings.

After drafting an NHL-high 33 players over the last three entry drafts, the Red Wings currently own 18 picks over the next two drafts, with nine selections in each.

For this summer's 2021 NHL Entry Draft, Detroit has its own pick in the first six rounds, in addition to two additional second-round choices (Edmonton and New York Rangers) and a second pick in the third round (Vegas).

In the 2022 NHL Entry Draft, the Red Wings have their own picks in all seven rounds plus two additional selections in the fourth round (Colorado and Vegas).

Nemeth is likely to be the first of several Wings who could be dealt by Monday afternoon.

Defensemen Marc Staal and Jon Merrill, forwards Sam Gagner, Luke Glendening and Darren Helm, and goaltender Jonathan Bernier are among the names who have been mentioned as possibilities to be moved.

Detroit News LOADED: 04.10.2021

**1208219** Detroit Red Wings

Revisiting Red Wings' best, worst trade deadline moves since 2000

Ted Kulfan

Detroit — Few things in life excite NHL fans like the trade deadline.

Maybe not as much these days, as the salary cap has put a crimp into just how much playoff contending teams can do and has definitely limited their options.

But for fans of teams who are dreaming of the playoffs, Monday's 3 p.m. trade deadline is like Christmas morning, not knowing exactly what gifts are headed your way.

Then again, that's part of the excitement of all this.

It could be a wonderful gift for a team, the last piece to a long playoff run or Stanley Cup. Or it could be a lump of coal in the form of a player who never really fits in or does much for a team he's moved to. Or, worse yet, a draft pick that goes to the other team that turns into a star or a longtime productive player.

The Red Wings have been involved in numerous trade deadline deals. Most of them are remembered for their attempts, by then-general manager Ken Holland, to maintain a playoff streak that reached 25 consecutive years or to find that final piece to win a Stanley Cup.

The Red Wings dealt Tomas Tatar at the 2018 trade deadline to the Golden Knights in exchange for three draft picks.

Sometimes it worked. Sometimes it didn't.

With the NHL trade deadline arriving Monday, the Red Wings have settled into the role of seller for the fifth consecutive season.

Before the possible flurry of trades begin, let's take a look at some of the notable Red Wings' trade deadline moves since 2000. Simply put, they're put into a good or bad category, as most trades can easily be judged.

The good

►2018: Tomas Tatar to Vegas for Vegas' 2018 first-round pick (Joe Veleno), 2019 second-round pick (Robert Mastro Simone) and 2021 third-round pick

The trade that keeps on giving. Tatar was supposed to be the final piece for expansion Vegas and make the Golden Knights a Stanley Cup contender. Well, they got there but didn't need Tatar, who never fit and was a frequent healthy scratch. The Wings have mined those Vegas picks (and Vegas had a lot of them that season), it appears, pretty well thus far.

►2008: 2008 second-round pick and 2009 fourth-round pick to Los Angeles for Brad Stuart

Stuart solidified the second pairing and formed a terrific tandem with Niklas Kronwall. He helped win a Stanley Cup and had four more fine seasons with the Wings.

►2020: Andreas Athanasiou and Ryan Kuffner to Edmonton for Sam Gagner, 2020 second-round pick (since traded to Los Angeles for more picks) and 2021 second-round pick

Athanasiou was a disaster in Edmonton and wasn't re-signed as a restricted free agent, while Kuffner is playing in Europe. The Wings got a useful player in Gagner and draft picks.

Andreas Athanasiou spent four-plus seasons in Detroit before he was shipped to Edmonton.

►2003: Max Kuznetsov, 2003 first-round draft pick and 2004 second-round pick to Los Angeles for Mathieu Schneider

Schneider didn't win a Stanley Cup with the Wings, but he did have three more productive seasons. The cost in return was minimal.

►2015: 2016 second-round pick to New Jersey for Marek Zidlicky

The cost didn't turn out to be substantial and Zidlicky did strengthen the Wings the rest of the season.

►2017: Brendan Smith to New York Rangers for 2017 third-round pick (traded for more picks) and 2018 second-round pick (Jonatan Berggren)



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The Wings have been able to stockpile draft capital for Smith, and Berggren is currently an exciting top prospect.

►2019: Gustav Nyquist to San Jose for 2019 second-round pick (Albert Johansson) and 2020 conditional third-round pick (traded to Minnesota)

Nyquist wasn't going to be part of the Red Wings' rebuild and Johansson is one of the Wings' top prospects going forward.

►2020: Mike Green to Edmonton for Kyle Brodziak and 2020 fourth-round pick (goaltender Jan Bednar) to Edmonton

This is basically a wash at this point, as Green only played two games in Edmonton before getting hurt and Bednar is a longer-term prospect.

The bad

►2015: Acquired Erik Cole from Dallas for prospects Mattias Backman, Mattias Jarnkrok and 2015 second-round pick (Roope Hintz)

Cole played 11 games for the Wings before getting hurt. On the flip side, Backman is still an effective NHL player and Hintz is turning into a young star. This trade hurts, as the Wings didn't win a playoff series and gave up two future NHL players for a rental.

►2014: Acquired David Legwand from Nashville for Patrick Eaves, Calle Jarnkrok and 2014 second-round pick

This is similar to the trade above. In an effort to keep the playoff streak going, Holland acquired an aging Legwand, who made minimal impact. Eaves was useful for Nashville, while Jarnkrok has played 494 games and scored 92 goals for the Predators.

David Legwand, left, recorded 11 points in the 21 games he played with the Red Wings.

►2012: Acquired Kyle Quincey from Tampa Bay for Sebastien Piche and 2012 first-round pick (Andrei Vasilevskiy)

Quincey provided depth for the Wings on defense but Steve Yzerman, then the GM in Tampa, selected Vasilevskiy, who has arguably been the NHL's best goaltender for the last several years. Ouch.

►2019: Acquired Madison Bowey and 2020 second-round pick (Cross Hanas) for Nick Jensen and 2019 fifth-round pick

Jensen has developed into a key piece for Washington — the Wings didn't feel he'd be a player to keep for the rebuild — while Bowey flamed out with the Wings and Hanas is a long-range prospect.

►2007: Acquired Kyle Calder from Chicago for Jason Williams

This trade was largely a wash, but the younger Williams may have still made an impact for the Wings going forward. Calder was a pure rental.

►2007: Acquired Todd Bertuzzi from Florida for Shawn Matthias and conditional draft pick

Bertuzzi's first stay with the Wings was derailed with injuries and ineffectiveness (Bertuzzi was much better during his second stint, signing as a free agent). Matthias went on to play 10 years in the NHL.

►2004: Acquired Robert Lang for Thomas Fleischmann and 2004 first-round pick (Mike Green) and 2005 third-round pick

Lang was fine with the Wings but never great. Green, the younger version before signing with the Wings late in his career, was one of the premier offensive defensemen in the NHL.

Detroit News LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208220

Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings expect Bobby Ryan is out for the season with upper-body injury

TED KULFAN |

Detroit — Bobby Ryan's season with the Red Wings appears to be over.

Coach Jeff Blashill confirmed Friday that Ryan is getting a second opinion on an upper-body injury, with the expectation Ryan will need surgery.

"We expect him to be done for the season," Blashill said on Zoom call after Friday's practice.

Ryan has been on the ice, and was involved in a light practice earlier this week, but wasn't able to return to competition.

"He was trying to come back from the injury and felt pretty good through most of it (practice) and felt a twinge at the end," Blashill said. "He was making progress and we thought it was going in the right direction. Originally it was thought to be a minor thing, and you try work through it. He had a setback and he just was not going to be able to get through it."

Ryan played 33 games, with seven goals, seven assists and a minus-14 rating.

Signed to a one-year contract the first day of unrestricted free agency for \$1 million, Ryan, 34, made an immediate impact.

He became the first Red Wing to score four goals in his first three games. As the season progressed, nagging injuries slowed him down.

"Bobby has battled a little bit of a back issue most of the season that he hasn't had in his career," Blashill said. "And as you get a little bit older, you get more nagging injuries and this is a tough one."

Ryan was expected to be a bargaining chip leading to Monday's NHL trade deadline. That is unlikely given the injury.

Blashill appreciates what Ryan brought to the Wings.

"He's a great person and a good leader in our locker room, he's been a good example," Blashill said. "He's a guy who can score goals. We'll miss what he brings, and I feel bad for him that his season is cut short."

"He came in and did a real good job and obviously scored early. Again, he's had a nagging back injury through enough parts of the year and those are ones that don't necessarily go away. It probably hurt his ability to just keep rolling, and obviously scoring is one of those things that fluctuated."

"I liked having him on our team. He made our team better and he was a good example for our young guys."

Good lesson

The top two Red Wings' forward lines had tough times against Nashville, not getting on the scoresheet or making much of an impact offensively against a strong defensive team.

When those lines don't produce, it makes things more difficult.

Many of the young impact players the Wings have are on those lines. They have learned and are continuing to learn, lessons and gain experience through tough times.

"We don't have a lot of guys that have some of the ability that those guys have, and there's more pressure on those guys," Blashill said. "I don't know anyone who is at their best every night. What we've been through the last few years was good experience. If it's always easy you don't learn much and you get fooled."

"It's when you go through hard stretches and hard times. Anyone who thought this was going to be easy and miraculously you'd show up and start winning games every single night is crazy. It's not how that happens."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2021

Ice chips

Blashill said forwards Robby Fabbri and Sam Gagner, and defenseman Patrik Nemeth are out for Saturday's game in Carolina.

... The Wings' minor-league affiliate in Grand Rapids had to postpone games this weekend (Friday, Saturday) due to American League COVID-19 protocols. Make-up dates have not yet been determined.

Red Wings at Hurricanes

► Faceoff: 7 p.m. Saturday, PNC Arena, Raleigh, N.C.

► TV/radio: BSD-plus/97.1

► Outlook: The Red Wings (13-23-6) and Carolina (27-9-3) open a two-game series in Raleigh. ... The Hurricanes have the best win percentage in the NHL (.731), have won three consecutive games, and are 7-2-1 over their last 10 games.

Detroit News LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208221 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' trading chip Bobby Ryan done for season due to injury

Updated Apr 09, 2021; Posted Apr 09, 2021

By Ansar Khan

DETROIT – Bobby Ryan was one of the Detroit Red Wings' top scoring threats, a team leader and positive influence in the dressing room, and a key trade chip at the deadline.

Now he is out for the season due to an upper-body injury.

"We expect him to be done for the season," coach Jeff Blashill said Friday. "He's going to get a second opinion, but I don't think that will change. That's more a decision based on surgery and some other things."

The Red Wings were hoping to move Ryan, 34, to a playoff-contending club for a draft pick by Monday's trade deadline.

Ryan had missed the past six games after leaving the March 28 contest against Columbus in the first period.

"He practiced a couple days ago and felt pretty good through most of it, felt a twinge at the end," Blashill said.

"He was making progress. I think he thought it was going in the right direction. Originally, we thought it was a minor thing. As it's gone, you try to work your way back, sometimes you have setbacks, and he had a setback."

Ryan got off to a hot start, the first player to score four goals in his first three games as a Red Wing, but scored only three goals in the next 30 games.

"He battled a little bit of a back issue most of the season that he never had in his career," Blashill said. "As you get a little bit older, sometimes you get some more nagging injuries, and obviously this is a tough one."

"Bobby is a great person. He's been a great leader in our locker room. I think he's been a good example guy and he's a guy who can score goals. We'll miss a lot of what Bobby brings and I feel real bad for him."

Blashill said it is not career-threatening. Ryan indicated last month that he would consider re-signing with the Red Wings in the summer even if traded at the deadline.

"When we talked to him in the summer he wanted to know if this was a group that had kind of thrown in the towel or if this was a group that really

wanted to get better," Blashill said. "When he talked to guys, he was pretty convinced this was a group that wanted to get better. That's one of the reasons he's liked it here. That doesn't always manifest itself into great outings, but it is a group that cares, a group that wants to learn, grow, doesn't want to be in this spot. Bobby has really appreciated that."

Still hopeful for Bertuzzi

Tyler Bertuzzi hasn't practiced since being idled on Jan. 30 with an upper-body injury. He has skated many times on his own and the club is holding out hope he can return this season, even though only four weeks remain.

"I think there's progress," Blashill said. "I don't know what that means, when he'll be ready to play, if he'll play. We're getting closer to having a better plan of starting to work towards getting him game-ready, but I don't know what amount of time that is. I don't think you will know until you go through it."

"Up to now it's been more if he can continue to consistently do the rehab without taking a setback. We've gotten past that point to where let's start getting him into practice. I don't know when that's going to be, but at least there's direction where we can foresee him hopefully getting ready at some point before the end of the season."

Robby Fabbri remains out for Saturday's game in Carolina and might miss Monday's game as well, but Blashill expects him back in the next week.

Sam Gagner and Patrik Nemeth are out Saturday.

Michigan Live LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208222 Detroit Red Wings

'Stupid' third period in 'embarrassing' loss forces Red Wings to regroup again

Updated Apr 09, 2021; Posted Apr 09, 2021

By Ansar Khan

DETROIT – Every time the Detroit Red Wings string together a solid stretch of games and think they are making progress they experience a meltdown that leaves doubts about the direction they are headed.

A 7-1 loss to the Nashville Predators Thursday at Little Caesars Arena left the Red Wings once again short on answers and searching for solutions.

"We talked about it before the game, we talk about it a lot, that we have to outwork and out-compete teams on a nightly basis to give ourselves a chance, and tonight we didn't do that," Luke Glendening said. "Because of that, there were easy opportunities for them to score goals."

The Red Wings made similar remarks following a 7-1 loss at Nashville on March 25. They responded with a pair of strong performances in victories over Columbus and had played well for the most part during a 3-2-2 stretch.

But after the Predators scored three times in the second period to take a 3-1 lead, the Red Wings essentially rolled over in the third in goaltender Jonathan Bernier's first game since suffering a lower-body injury on March 18.

"We were really, really stupid in the third, things that we hadn't done the rest of the game," coach Jeff Blashill said. "We had those three lapses in the second, but in the third I thought we just played stupid. At that point you have to play the right way and we stopped playing the right way."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Nashville (22-18-1), battling for the fourth and final playoff spot in the Central Division, is 9-1 in its past 10, a stretch that includes four wins against Detroit.

The Red Wings dropped to 13-23-6.

"You can look where we are in the standings, it's embarrassing," Glendening said. "We have to continue to battle. We didn't have that sense of urgency. We got outworked, out-competed and embarrassed."

Glendening said the most frustrating part is they can control their effort and work ethic.

"There's going to be breakdowns. You can live with that if the work and compete are fine," he said. "Unfortunately, when it's not high, you make mistakes like that and end up with a score like that."

The Red Wings have 14 games remaining – one-quarter of this abbreviated 56-game schedule.

"I thought we were moving in the right direction," Glendening said. "I'm not saying we still can't move in the right direction, but it's tough to take steps back.

"We have to show up tomorrow. I'm sure we're going to have a hard practice again. We have to get back at it, forget about this as quickly as we can and move forward."

Blashill and players cited a good, hard practice the day after their previous blowout loss to Nashville for helping them get back on track. They could be in for another one on Friday before traveling to Carolina for games on Saturday and Monday.

"It's a loss tonight, but (their momentum) doesn't have to be gone," Blashill said. "Through the course of a season, you're going to take steps forwards and you're going to take steps backwards. This is obviously a huge step backwards, so we have to regroup on Saturday and play way better and take steps forward."

Michigan Live LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208223 Detroit Red Wings

Sloppy Red Wings routed by Nashville in Jonathan Bernier's return

Updated Apr 08, 10:05 PM; Posted Apr 08, 10:05 PM

By Ansar Khan

DETROIT – Jonathan Bernier was back in net Thursday after missing 10 games with an injury, but he was rusty in the third period, after his defense disappeared on him in the second.

The Nashville Predators scored seven unanswered goals on the way to a 7-1 victory over the Detroit Red Wings at Little Caesars Arena.

Viktor Arvidsson scored on a penalty shot in the third period to cap his third career hat trick.

Nashville (22-18-1) is battling for the fourth and final playoff spot in the Central Division and played with urgency after falling behind early in the second period on a goal by Darren Helm. The Predators are 9-1 in their past 10, a stretch that includes four wins against Detroit.

The Red Wings (13-23-6), who also lost 7-1 at Nashville on March 25, had played well defensively in six of their past seven games.

Helm opened the scoring at 1:48 of the second with his third goal of the season, a deflection in the slot from a shot by Troy Stecher.

The Predators responded quickly, at 2:28, when Arvidsson took advantage of blown coverage by skating into the slot area and scoring on a shot that deflected off of Bernier and bounced in off Jon Merrill's skate.

Nashville owned the area in front of the Detroit net for much of this period.

Erik Haula cruised into the slot with no resistance and scored on a backhand shot at 6:36, after Christian Djoos couldn't control the puck as it was rimmed along the boards.

Nick Cousins capped the rally at 16:10, again, left wide open in the slot as the Red Wings were doing too much puck-watching following a turnover by Marc Staal behind the net.

The Predators poured it on in the third period, scoring on several shots that exposed Bernier's lack of sharpness.

Mikael Granlund made it 4-1 at 7:06. Arvidsson his second goal of the game at the 10-minute mark and then converted on the penalty shot at 11:06.

Yakov Trenin finished the scoring at 15:55.

Michigan Live LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208224 Detroit Red Wings

How injuries could affect Red Wings' trade deadline activity

Updated Apr 08, 12:37 PM; Posted Apr 08, 12:37 PM

By Ansar Khan

Bobby Ryan tops the Detroit Red Wings' lost list of potential trade candidates, for multiple reasons.

He is a proven goal-scorer who can step into a playoff-contending team's top-two lines and a power-play unit and provide offense. He is a right-handed shooter, a quality that is often in demand. He has a low cap hit (\$1 million), which will be vital to buyers during this pandemic-affected season in which revenues are down significantly due to limited or a lack of fans in attendance.

But an upper-body injury could impact the Red Wings' ability to move him by Monday's 3 p.m. deadline.

Ryan will miss his sixth consecutive game tonight when Detroit faces the Nashville Predators at Little Caesars Arena (7:30, Bally Sports Detroit), coach Jeff Blashill said.

Ryan hasn't played since March 28, when he was injured in the first period against Columbus. He has been skating, however, and practiced with the team on Wednesday.

The Red Wings have one more game before the deadline, Saturday at Carolina.

Ryan, 34, one of the club's many impending unrestricted free agents, has seven goals and seven assists in 33 games.

He said recently that this is the first time in his career he believes he is more likely to be traded than not at the deadline.

However, it appears there might be limited movement at the deadline due to clubs' economic concerns.

"It'll be really interesting," Blashill said on Wednesday. "I think (the trade deadline) is going to be way different than what we've seen in the past. I don't think there will be anywhere near the same amount of movement."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Health could also impact the Red Wings' ability to move other impending UFAs.

Goaltender Jonathan Bernier is available tonight, Blashill said, though that doesn't necessarily mean he will start. He has been out since March 18 with a lower-body injury.

Bernier has strung together back-to-back strong seasons but having missed significant time with two separate injuries this season might affect interest from the handful of teams in the market for a goalie.

Defenseman Patrick Nemeth is out tonight. Right wing Sam Gagner will return after missing five games. They, too, are potential trade candidates.

Blashill said forward Robby Fabbri (upper-body injury) will miss his third game in a row tonight.

Michigan Live LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208225 Detroit Red Wings

NHL grapples with vaccine inequity between U.S. and Canada

By Stephen Whyno and Larry Lage AP Sports Writers Apr 9, 2021  
Updated 19 hrs ago

His smile covered by a light blue surgical mask, Jacob Trouba's eyes shined as the needle went into his left arm.

The New York Rangers gave players, coaches and staff a day off this week so they could get vaccinated against COVID-19.

"We're very fortunate to be able to get that vaccine," Trouba said.

As vaccinations ramp up past a pace of 3 million a day in the U.S., the NHL is in a tougher spot than the other three major North American professional sports leagues because seven of its 31 teams are based in Canada. While the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball are relaxing virus protocols when a certain percentage of each team is fully vaccinated, the top hockey league in the world is facing a severe outbreak with the Vancouver Canucks and grappling with vaccine inequity on opposite sides of the border.

"It all comes down to the government guidelines, and it's out of our control," U.S.-born Winnipeg Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck said. "You definitely see the States getting out the vaccinations well and it's very good, very nice, and it'd be nice to see that in Canada, but I don't know the logistics of it all."

Canada has lagged in vaccinations because, like many other countries, it lacks the ability to manufacture vaccines and has had to rely on the global supply chain. While hope is on the way with 45 million doses expected to be available by July for the nation of 38 million people, cases in Canada are surging, and the NHL is not immune.

The Canucks reported 21 players and four staff members tested positive for the virus and another is considered a close contact. Team physician Jim Bovard called the outbreak "a stark reminder of how quickly the virus can spread and its serious impact, even among healthy, young athletes."

The NHL got around the U.S.-Canada border being closed to nonessential travel by making this 56-game season divisional play only, with the seven Canadian teams only facing each other.

And because of that split, hockey has mirrored the evolving virus situations in the U.S. and Canada. From Jan. 13-March 31, players on Canadian teams accounted for just 103 of the 1,361 appearances on the NHL COVID protocol list — with just one of a season-high 59 players Feb. 12.

Since April 1, players on Canadian teams have accounted for 138 of 160 instances, including 23 of 25 Thursday.

As of Thursday, over a third of the U.S. general population had received at least one dose and 19.9% was fully vaccinated, compared to 16.5% with one shot and 1.98% fully vaccinated in Canada.

"There's two different countries, different roles, different situations," Sweden-born Calgary Flames forward Mikael Backlund said. "Nothing we can do about it, really. So, we just have to wait for our turn."

The Associated Press asked all 31 NHL teams how many players, coaches and staff had been partially or fully vaccinated and if any had refused a vaccine, and none would provide specific details. Among the responses, the Tampa Bay Lightning said some players and staff had been vaccinated, the Rangers said many were getting a shot, the Detroit Red Wings said a majority and the Columbus Blue Jackets a vast majority of players and coaches had received at least one dose.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said the league is "monitoring, but (the) vaccination process is very much team by team and market by market." Along with the league, the Players' Association sent a memo to members and is working to educate them and answer questions about vaccination, which is being handled by individual teams.

With U.S. President Joe Biden setting an April 19 deadline for all 50 states and the District of Columbia to open up vaccine eligibility to everyone age 16 and up, the NFL, NBA and MLB — with all teams currently playing in the U.S. — instituted incentives that relax masking and other protocols based on a certain level of personnel being fully vaccinated. Memos were sent to players and teams last week reminding them to adhere to protocols — even if fully vaccinated.

University of California-San Francisco epidemiology professor and infectious diseases expert George Rutherford believes incentives work to convince people to get vaccinated but added it doesn't help when it's an unlevel playing field.

"It's an equity issue because some people don't have access to vaccine, like all of Canada, so that becomes a problem," Rutherford said.

Edmonton coach Dave Tippett, who has not yet been vaccinated, said the team doctor this week reiterated the importance of adhering to protocols, especially because of Vancouver's outbreak.

"We've been concerned since the start of the year," Tippett said. "We want to try to keep the virus out if we can if all possible, so you recognize when other teams are going through it, you want to try and do whatever you can to stay away from it."

Not that there isn't concern among the 24 U.S. teams, such as in Detroit where cases are surging, but high levels of vaccination among players and staff provide some comfort. While Red Wings forward Darren Helm was still on the fence, citing recent recovery from COVID-19, coach Jeff Blashill got his shot and is a vaccination advocate, along with many around the league who have spoken out to encourage it.

"The more people that can get vaccinated, the better chance we can get to all living as closer to normal," Blashill said.

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour drives past a mass vaccination site outside the arena each day on the way to work and called it a sign of progress. Grateful to get his shot, the Canada-born Brind'Amour knows the situation isn't the same back home and is hoping for the best.

"It's a little slower up there," he said. "You're just hopeful that we can get it into everybody as quickly as possible."

Macomb Daily LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208226 Detroit Red Wings



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 10, 2021

The Avalanche acquire Patrik Nemeth from the Red Wings. Here's what it means

By Peter Baugh and Max Bultman Apr 9, 2021

The Avalanche found Nemo once again.

Colorado general manager Joe Sakic traded for Red Wings defenseman Patrik Nemeth on Friday, sending Detroit a fourth-round pick. Nemeth previously played with the Avalanche from 2017-19 and has eight points in 39 games with Detroit this season, though his profile is more as a shutdown shot suppressor than a scorer.

Nemeth's style fits well with Colorado, which allows the fewest shots per game in the NHL. He's a big body at 6-foot-3 and has been among the most effective defensive defensemen on the Red Wings the past two seasons.

The Avalanche are excited to add someone who can help on the penalty kill, which has been one of Nemeth's specialties in Detroit. He's third among the team's defensemen in penalty-kill minutes, logging 83:12, per Natural Stat Trick.

Detroit will retain 50 percent of Nemeth's salary. He has a \$3 million cap hit.

The Avalanche have a loaded defensive group featuring reigning Calder Trophy winner Cale Makar, Samuel Girard and Devon Toews. Ryan Graves led the league in plus-minus in 2019-20, and Jacob MacDonald has emerged as a reliable option. Rookie Bowen Byram has shown promise, though his season has been interrupted by injuries, and he's now on the COVID-19 protocol list. So with quality, top-end blueliners, coach Jared Bednar recently said the team doesn't need heavy minutes from its sixth-defenseman slot.

"We just need them to be steady," he said.

Nemeth should be able to do that, if not more, considering his penalty-killing skills. The 29-year-old brings a layer of depth to the Colorado blue line, and he was well-liked in the dressing room during his previous Avalanche tenure.

"I think Patrik does a good job of being Patrik," Detroit coach Jeff Blashill said last month. "He plays hard, he's extremely physical, I think he creates stalls in the D-zone so that we don't have to run around and chase people around. He blocks shots. He's good, actually, at keeping pucks alive in the O-zone, and he's good at jumping in the play. He doesn't probably get as much production from some of that because I don't think he's got an unreal stick for passing or shooting, but he's good at those things. So I just think Patrik brings a competitiveness every day, and he's continued to do that every day this year."

The Red Wings now have three fourth-round picks in the 2022 draft.

Avalanche defenseman Erik Johnson has missed all but four games this season with an upper-body injury, and Bednar has continued to refer to his injury as long term. Johnson has a \$6 million cap hit, and the Avalanche can use that money elsewhere if he stays on long-term injured reserve for the remainder of the season. The same is true for No. 2 goalie Pavel Francouz (\$2 million cap hit), who has yet to play this year because of a lower-body injury.

If adding Nemeth is an indication that Johnson won't be back before the playoffs, the Avalanche will have even more cap space to use before Monday's trade deadline. PuckPedia projects them to have \$5.4 million of cap space with their long-term-injured-reserve pool.

Hailing from Stockholm, Nemeth joins captain Gabriel Landeskog, forward Andre Burakovsky and reserve goaltender Jonas Johansson as the Swedish players on the roster. Nemeth and Landeskog played youth hockey together in Sweden.

Nemeth is an unrestricted free agent after this season. That's important for the Avalanche, who will be in a tight cap situation this offseason. Makar will enter restricted free agency, and Landeskog and goalie Philipp Grubauer are set to become unrestricted free agents.

Friday marked the first trade between Colorado and Detroit with Sakic and Red Wings general manager Steve Yzerman in their current positions. The two are plenty familiar with each other from their playing days, though. Sakic captained the Avalanche to two Stanley Cups, and Yzerman was the captain for three of Detroit's championships.

The Avalanche are still in need of a No. 2 goaltender before the trade deadline, which could open the door to another trade with the Red Wings, who could part with Jonathan Bernier, another former Avalanche player. Calgary's David Rittich and San Jose's Devan Dubnyk could also be options.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208256 Nashville Predators

Keep an eye on Nashville Predators' Mikael Granlund, Mattias Ekholm and Erik Haula as trade deadline approaches

MIKE ORGAN

The likelihood of the Nashville Predators letting go of any players by Monday's NHL trade deadline has dropped during the turnaround they have made since mid-March.

The Predators jumped into the Central Division playoff race by winning 11 of 13 games, so they probably won't make the kind of player moves they were expected to when they were struggling and in need of help for the future.

Still, anything is possible when it comes to trades in the NHL. As for Nashville, much depends on how badly another team might be interested in one of the players who has helped the Predators get back on track.

With that in mind, here are three Predators who could be traded before the deadline:

Mikael Granlund

In his third year with the Predators, Granlund has 17 points (10 goals, seven assists), which has him on about the same pace as last season when he had 30 points (17 goals, 13 assists) in 63 games.

The versatile 29-year-old Finnish forward is a pending free agent and the highest Predator on TSN Hockey's Trade Bait List at No. 7 with a \$3.75 million salary cap hit.

Speculation has swirled since mid-March that Toronto is interested in Granlund but might be discouraged by a high-asking price.

Granlund has been a key factor in the Predators' recent success, which makes him attractive to potential suitors. But he also is a key piece Nashville might want to hold onto as it continues its playoff push.

Mattias Ekholm

Ekholm, 30, with one year left on his contract, probably would command the highest price of any Predator who might be traded.

He is one of the top available two-way defensemen in the league in his 10th season in Nashville.

Ekholm is No. 10 on the TSN Hockey Trade Bait List with a \$3.75 million salary cap hit.

The Predators probably would get more in return for Ekholm than any other player on the trading block, but they also would lose a lot.



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"According to people around the league that I've talked to the last couple days, it is a three-asset ask to get in on the bidding for Mattias Ekholm, which is a first-round pick, an elite prospect and a third asset, which can take on different forms," TSN's Pierre LeBrun said recently on "Insider Trading."

"That's a lot, and part of that is the Nashville Predators don't have to trade Mattias Ekholm at this deadline," LeBrun said. "He's signed through next season, and really, I think there's also the internal debate for Nashville is their best offer at this deadline when contending teams believe they can get Ekholm for two playoff runs?"

Erik Haula

Haula, 30, is in his eighth NHL season and first with the Predators.

He has 13 points (four goals, nine assists) and could be a nice piece for a team interested in adding some depth.

Haula signed a one-year, \$1.75 million deal with Nashville on Dec. 23. He was traded away from Carolina at the 2019-20 trade deadline to Florida.

He is two seasons removed from being with Vegas, where he helped lead the expansion Golden Knights to the Stanley Cup final.

Like Granlund, Haula's versatility makes him attractive to other teams as a fourth line center. He has been sidelined with some injury issues this season.

Tennessean LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208257 Nashville Predators

How did Viktor Arvidsson celebrate his birthday? With an 'awesome' hat trick for Predators

Will Backus

Viktor Arvidsson has had a more eventful week than most people.

On April 1, the Nashville Predators wing became a father. Two days later against the Chicago Blackhawks, he took a gruesome looking blow to the head that kept him sidelined for Tuesday's win against the Detroit Red Wings.

Arvidsson returned to the ice on Thursday on his 28th birthday to lead Nashville to a dominant 7-1 victory against Detroit with a hat trick. The Predators will return home with a 2-0 road sweep over the Red Wings in Little Caesars Arena.

Two of his goals came in the third period in just over a minute, extending Nashville's lead to 6-1 with 8:54 to play.

"Having a baby, it was the best moment of my life," Arvidsson said. "It's been eventful. Having a birthday today and scoring a hat trick, it's awesome."

The Preds have now won three games in a row, and 11 of their last 13. They're firmly in the race for a playoff berth, holding down fourth place in the Central Division with 45 points.

The Chicago Blackhawks aren't too far behind with 41, while the Dallas Stars and the Columbus Blue Jackets each have 38.

And the Predators won Thursday despite being shorthanded — 13 players were ruled out due to injury — and falling behind 1-0 after Darren Helm scored two minutes into the second period.

Arvidsson was quick to follow about a minute later with a goal, which opened the floodgates.

"His shot selection was good, he's working well with the puck, he's responsible defensively," Nashville coach John Hynes said. "That's the type of game that we need for him. It was nice to see him come back... He was hungry, I'll give him a lot of credit."

While Arvidsson's performance didn't necessarily push the game either way, it could mean a lot for his personal game. Prior to Thursday, he had just five goals this season.

That's well off his typical pace of a 23.4 goals per season average over the past six years.

A return to his typical form would certainly be a boon for Nashville. Despite being one of the hottest teams in the NHL, there's still a fierce battle for that fourth spot with just over five weeks to go in the regular season.

"I almost missed the first one, but it went in," Arvidsson said. "I've been around the net a lot, trying to create chances and had bounces not going my way. I think today they did and I think I played well. Just got to keep it going."

Tennessean LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208258 Nashville Predators

Arvidsson's birthday hat trick keeps Predators surging

Cory Woodroof

Viktor Arvidsson couldn't have planned a better birthday present for himself.

Back in the lineup after sustaining an injury in Saturday's 3-0 win over the Chicago Blackhawks, the Nashville Predators star right winger scored his third career hat trick Thursday night as the Predators blanked the Detroit Red Wings 7-1.

"Oh absolutely, it was awesome; it's up there for birthdays, I guess," Arvidsson said with a smile after the win. "I think we played well...we worked hard and got rewarded for it."

After struggling with injuries and a goal drought that reached as many as 15 games, Arvidsson has been red-hot for Nashville lately, tallying six goals and 10 points over his last 17 games.

Arvidsson's resurgence is a sight for sore eyes as the Predators have desperately needed more production from everyone with the team's injury list nearing double digits.

"I've been around the net a lot and trying to create chances," Arvidsson said. "I've had bounces not going my way, and I think today, they did. I think I played well, and I've just got to keep it going."

Mikael Granlund, Eric Haula, Nick Cousins and Yakov Trenin all chipped in with goals as well, as the Predators pushed their win streak to three with wins in 11 of their last 13 overall.

Nashville (45 points) extended its lead over the Chicago Blackhawks (41 points) for fourth place in the Central Division with 15 games left -- a far cry from three weeks ago when the Predators looked dead in the water and teetering near the bottom of the division.

"We realized we're not consistent enough with our effort, and now we are" Arvidsson said. "We bring it every single night...we work for each other...we work for the guy next to us. I think that's a huge thing to do in the NHL. You've got to outwork the opponents to win games."

Added Predators coach John Hynes: "I think the road trip was definitely a turning point. Part of being a really good team is getting to know each other, and enjoying time together away from the rink, and building trust,



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building relationships [with the players and families] ...you never really had an opportunity to do that [before the road trip]."

What makes Nashville's recent run even more impressive is the rookie-heavy lineup the Predators have been rolling with for the better part of a month. The team has been without Filip Forsberg, Matt Duchene, Ryan Ellis, Mark Borowiecki and Brad Richardson for some time, and recently added Alex Carrier, Dante Fabbro and Eeli Tolvanen to the injury list as well.

The Predators have played an NHL-high 12 rookies this year and have shuffled around 13 defensemen as well. Tyler Lewington made his Predators debut on Thursday, while newly-signed defenseman David Farrance made his NHL debut as well.

"It's a tight race all the way to the end, but you've got to give kudos to all the guys stepping in," Haula added. "We have a lot of first this year and a lot of young guys, and they're all stepping in and playing well and contributing, so it's been awesome to watch."

With the NHL trade deadline coming up on Monday, general manager David Poile has some tough decisions to make. The 71-year-old GM has to gauge how much of his run is a flash in the pan and if his team is better served selling off some players and stockpiling future assets.

Defenseman Mattias Ekholm is likely to stay put now, whereas a month ago the 30-year-old was linked to at least a half-dozen teams in trade talks. Others such as Haula, Cousins and Granlund, who's been one of the Predators' best players under Hynes, are the likeliest candidates to be traded, if the team makes any moves.

Granlund has been mentioned in trade talks with the Toronto Maple Leafs, who will be without star forward William Nylander for another seven days.

Nashville Post LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208259 Nashville Predators

It's All Your Fault: Injuries, trades and the cap

Staff Reports

We're bringing you a very special edition this week as Justin Bradford of Penalty Box Radio joins co-hosts Michael Gallagher and Geert De Lombaerde to talk about all things Predators. Not only is Bradford the editor-in-chief at Penalty Box, but he's also the Commissioner of SECHC Hockey and the author of the book *The Making of Smashville*. If it's Nashville hockey, Bradford knows all there is to know.

The trio discusses how the Preds will absorb the latest set of injuries, what they should do as the trade deadline nears and peek at their salary cap status to muse on what might happen this summer and beyond. To listen along, click right here.

You can listen along to the conversation here. And you can subscribe to *It's All Your Fault* on iTunes, Stitcher or wherever your favorite podcasts are available. If you like what you hear, please take a minute to leave us a good review and then tell a friend or two (or 10!) about us. You can also follow the podcast on Twitter and Instagram.

Nashville Post LOADED: 04.10.2021

1208325 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's Steven Stamkos questionable for Saturday's game

By Eduardo A. Encina

Published Yesterday

TAMPA — Steven Stamkos' injury status remained uncertain Friday, a day after he skated off the ice in obvious pain during Thursday's game against the Blue Jackets in Columbus.

But in the short term, he appears unlikely to play in the Lightning's next game Saturday in Nashville.

Stamkos did not participate in Tampa Bay's full practice on Friday afternoon in Nashville. During his post-practice media availability, Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said only that Stamkos was being evaluated.

"I will hopefully have something (Saturday)," Cooper said. "I would sit here and say he is questionable for tomorrow's game though."

Asked whether he believed Stamkos' injury is connected to the core muscle issues that sidelined him for the end of last season and most of the Lightning's Stanley Cup run, Cooper said it was too early to speculate.

"I'm the hockey coach, not the doctor," he said.

Stamkos skated off the ice in the third period of Thursday's 6-4 win over Columbus and didn't return. Before departing, he reached out to corral a puck, spun toward the boards and backhanded the puck up ice. He then hunched over in clear discomfort and leaned back against the board for a few seconds before slowly skating off.

There was no contact on the play.

Stamkos, 31, has been one of the Lightning's most durable players this season. He has played in 38 of their 40 regular-season games, missing two in mid-February while in COVID-19 protocol due to what was later determined to be a false-positive test. Stamkos' 18:16 average ice time this season is tied for second-most among Lightning forwards.

Last season, Stamkos had a first core muscle surgery in March, missing the final seven regular-season games before the season was paused due to the pandemic. Stamkos played in just one postseason game, seven months after his last regular-season game, and delivered a critical goal in just 2:47 of ice time during Tampa Bay's Game 3 win over Dallas in the Stanley Cup final.

Stamkos had a second surgery in October and was a full participant when the Lightning opened training camp on Jan. 3.

The Lightning have played well this season without last season's top scorer, Nikita Kucherov, and Stamkos' return helped compensate for Kucherov's absence. But with Kucherov on long-term injury reserve and not slated to return from hip surgery until the postseason, the Lightning could be without two of their top players down the stretch.

Entering Saturday's game in Nashville, Stamkos leads the Lightning with 17 goals. He ended a seven-game goal drought Thursday with a first-period power-play goal. His 10 power-play goals also lead the team and have opened up other opportunities for first team power-play teammates Ondrej Palat and Brayden Point.

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1208326 Tampa Bay Lightning

For pro athletes, WWE belt and titles go hand in hand

By Eduardo A. Encina



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TAMPA — As a 14-time WWE champion, Paul “Triple H” Levesque has had his share of time with the professional wrestling federation’s title belt. And for as big as he was in his heyday, he realized that sometimes the belt itself was a bigger star — especially around other athletes.

“If you had the championship belt, they couldn’t get enough of holding it and taking a picture with it, walking around with it, putting it on, putting it over their shoulder, everything that they had seen on TV was such a huge thing to them,” said Levesque, now WWE’s executive vice president of global talent strategy and development.

“If you’re a champion in your league, you don’t have this sort of badge that says you’re the best. The belt is that.”

Several years ago, Levesque began sending custom-made belts to pro teams that won championships, and they became commonplace in the celebrations and parades that followed. WWE delivered belts to both the Lightning and Bucs after their recent Stanley Cup and Super Bowl titles.

When the Bucs won Super Bowl 55 at Raymond James Stadium — the site of this weekend’s WrestleMania 37 — a belt was delivered to the stadium with changeable plates on the side, one for the Bucs and one for the Chiefs, and ready to go into the winning locker room right after the game.

Bucs rookie safety Antoine Winfield, Jr. quickly swiped the belt and made it his own. He wore it over his shoulder during his postgame news conference and took it to the team’s boat parade celebration.

“This right here is basically saying that we’re world champions,” Winfield said, his eyes glowing, when asked about the belt after the Super Bowl win. “It’s got the Bucs logo on the side, you know? Heavyweight champions right here, baby.”

The tradition began in 2013, when Levesque sent a belt to David Ortiz after the Red Sox won the World Series. Ortiz wore it everywhere he went as Boston celebrated its championship. More teams asked for belts after winning titles, and eventually WWE started distributing them before the requests arrived. When the Cavaliers won the NBA title in 2016, LeBron James asked for multiple belts so every player could get one, offering to foot the bill himself, Levesque said.

WNBA star Sue Bird sported a belt over each shoulder after the Seattle Storm won their second title in three years in 2020. Belts were given to the World Cup-winning U.S. women’s soccer team, as well as winners of the Premier League and Bundesliga in European soccer. The 2019 Cricket World Cup championship team from England also received one.

The adoration other athletes have for pro wrestling goes deep. Before the pandemic, they were front-row fixtures at WWE shows, sometimes even participating in storylines. When the New World Order (nWo) was the most popular faction of World Championship Wrestling (WCW), NBA stars Dennis Rodman and Karl Malone called Hulk Hogan begging to join.

Numerous WWE stars have football roots, from current WWE Universal title holder Roman Reigns to Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson and Goldberg. The NBA’s Milwaukee Bucks sometimes simulate Battle Royal matches in the halls. And the way they go after opposing mascots in visiting arenas is straight out of a WWE production.

“It’s funny, because in some ways with professional athletes, there’s so many rules and restrictions around what you can and cannot do,” Levesque said. “The freedom and the nature of what we do is being larger than life, and that’s what everybody wants to be in some manner holding that championship belt.”

Like anyone else who grew up watching pro wrestling, there’s a combination of fanaticism and fantasy for pro athletes.

“Like a lot of guys, I grew up a wrestling fan,” Lightning forward Alex Killorn said. “My mom wouldn’t let me watch, but I loved watching ‘Stone Cold’ Steve Austin and ‘The Rock.’”

The Lightning’s WWE belt is in the possession of general manager Julien BriseBois, according to the team. But when it won the Stanley Cup in September, two non-WWE championship wrestling belts with NHL logos on them were in the locker room. Killorn swiped one, wore it during the celebratory boat parade and draped it over owner Jeff Vinik’s shoulder during the victory celebration at Raymond James Stadium.

Levesque said the belt probably lets you get away with things you might not otherwise.

“Guys win the Super Bowl, they have the parade, and there’s always one guy with that title belt, holding that title, and he’s in full-on wrestler mode drinking beer and spitting in the air and just doing craziness that if somebody was to criticize him, he could just be like, ‘Nah, I was just doing the WWE thing.’” Levesque said. “It’s like a license to go be larger than life and be crazy and people laugh at it, where if you did it that another time they might go, ‘That guy’s just a jerk.’”

Now, almost every time Levesque encounters a professional athlete, they’re telling him to prepare a belt.

“It’s kind of the ultimate symbol of you are the best and you’re the champion,” Levesque said. “There are so many athletes who come to me during the year and go, ‘Hey dude, get my belt ready, because we’re going all the way this year.’”

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1208327 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning trade deadline possibilities, lineup decisions looming, toughest playoff matchup: Mailbag

By Joe Smith

Apr 9, 2021

Mitchell Stephens is getting close to returning to the Lightning.

And creating an interesting lineup decision for coach Jon Cooper.

Stephens, on a conditioning assignment for AHL Syracuse, has five points in his last three games for the Crunch. After missing two months due to knee surgery, Stephens is still trying to get his timing back.

But when Stephens rejoins the Lightning, he knows a spot isn’t guaranteed. With the emergence of rookie Ross Colton, who has been anchoring the fourth line, and Mathieu Joseph’s career rejuvenation, Stephens has a battle on his hands.

“It’s a good healthy competition,” Stephens said. “Any one of us can help the team win. Whoever is going in is going to have to show they can stay in. For me, it’s about coming back, helping the team as much as I can, skate hard and prepare.

“And let the chips fall where they may.”

A good chunk of your questions in our latest mailbag surrounded the debate over the Lightning’s forward lines once they’re fully healthy. Sure, there was some trade deadline talk, and thoughts on the recent “slump,” which seemed to end with Thursday’s four-goal first period. But how Cooper handles his group up front will be a fascinating, complicated and layered decision.



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The Stephens addition will end up being the easier part. While I think Colton has earned his spot on the fourth line and should get an extended look, I wouldn't be surprised if Cooper ended up mixing in Stephens down there down the stretch to get him some games. Colton has been a revelation, with five goals and eight points in his first 13 games. He's a perfect fit in the middle on the fourth line, winning 56 percent of his draws, playing the kind of game below the circles that meshes well with Joseph and Pat Maroon. Maroon said everyone in the room "loves" Colton, which speaks highly of the kid's maturity and personality. Tampa Bay is playing Colton just 9:40 per game, and giving him 57.7 percent offensive zone starts, so they are easing him in (by comparison, Stephens had 43 percent offensive zone starts as a rookie).

But let's not forget Stephens' ability. There's a reason he became a regular for a good part of last season and saw action in the playoffs. He's also strong in the faceoff circle and can kill penalties. His skating is his strength, though Colton can match him there. The Lightning are going to want Stephens to get a little playing time to be ready in case he'll be needed in the playoffs.

The tougher call will be when Nikita Kucherov is ready to return, and that is expected to be for the beginning of the playoffs. When Kucherov is back, I would think the top two lines would look something like this:

Palat-Point-Kucherov

Killorn-Cirelli-Stamkos.

I can't see why the Lightning would change from the dynamic third line that played such a big role in the playoffs, so Blake Coleman, Yanni Gourde and Barclay Goodrow. They combined for six points in the first period Thursday. At the very least, none of them is coming out of the lineup.

Maroon isn't going anywhere, as he's been a key force on the fourth line and in the room.

So that leaves two spots for four players: Tyler Johnson, Stephens, Colton and Joseph.

Now, coaches will always tell you that decisions usually work themselves out. Why make a call three weeks in advance when another injury could impact something? (Steven Stamkos, for example, left Thursday's game with an injury). Let's see how Colton's play holds up over a larger sample size, etc.

But this leaves us with the question you all are asking:

Would Cooper actually make Johnson a healthy scratch?

With Jan Rutta (lower body) hurt, Johnson has been the Lightning fans' biggest punching bag on social media. I understand some of the frustration, from his turnover in Dallas that led to the go-ahead goal, the missed coverage on the David Savard goal last week and the admitted "messed up play" in Tuesday's loss. Johnson has made some defensive mistakes this season, he's got just two more goals (7) than Colton in 25 more games, the same number of points as fourth-line winger Maroon (18). Fair or not, Johnson's contract (\$5 million AAV the next three years) will always follow him, and it's why he was shopped (and put through waivers) in the offseason. This hasn't been quite the career rejuvenation we all thought. (For what it's worth, the team hasn't reached out to Johnson's camp regarding his no-trade clause leading up to the deadline.)

But the only opinion that matters here is of the Lightning coaches and Cooper. Cooper knows Johnson as well as anyone, having had him for a decade since their Calder Cup title in 2012. They've won two championships together. He trusts the former All-Star. People forget about Johnson's remarkable run in the 2015 playoffs, including sparking a comeback against the Wings that might have changed the course of the franchise (and the coaching staff).

All that being said, Cooper calls this a "meritocracy" and if Johnson is getting outplayed, he should sit. You have to believe that if Cooper feels Colton or Stephens or Joseph give him a better chance to win, he'll play

them. But Johnson, even though he's averaging a career-low 13:58, also has a career-best 54 Corsi For Percentage. The coaching staff has still given him a top-six role, either on the top line or second line, and got the best hockey out of him by playing Johnson in the middle between Goodrow and Coleman.

While Johnson has been moved to the fourth line on occasion this season (and started there Thursday), I feel Colton and Joseph are better suited for that role. But the main question is, who does Cooper trust more in the playoffs? At the very least, Colton, Joseph's play and Stephens' return should light a fire under someone like Johnson to play some of his best hockey.

And if not, he'll make the decision an easier one.

Editor's note: Questions edited for clarity and style.

Should we be concerned about Stamkos' injury? — Joe B.

It's hard to say. Stamkos left Thursday's game in the third period on a seemingly innocent play. He collected the puck at the boards on the left side of the blue line and chipped it in. But something must have gotten tweaked as he skated gingerly to the bench after that.

Stamkos left the game and didn't return. I asked Cooper if there was any concern or update on Stamkos postgame and he said, "If there's anything, I'll fill you in tomorrow. Nothing right now." That doesn't scream "no worries," but it also doesn't mean you should worry, either.

Stamkos, who overcame core surgery last year to deliver an iconic playoff moment, had a second related surgery in the offseason, but has been one of the team's top offensive producers (17 goals). He's had no issues this season, other than missing two games while on the COVID-protocol list (false positive). It did remind some of when Stamkos got hurt in Detroit a few years back, when it looked like a nondescript play and he ended up tearing a meniscus in his knee. No need to think the worst yet, let's wait until Friday's update.

Joe, excellent work. I originally joined The Athletic to keep up with the Bolts, and you have made it worthwhile but the site keeps getting better and better. Thank you.

Now for a question: Can we find any room and/or takers and get a backup goalie? The good news is Vasy will play every playoff game but if he doesn't play a game, count it as an L. McElhinney and now Gibson are not going to be claimed by Seattle or anyone for that matter — and I wanted to believe the team has a bit of a letdown when the backup plays — but I finally believe they just aren't good NHL caliber backup goalies. We need help, anyone with a .900 SV% available? — John M.

Thank you for the kind words! Glad you've enjoyed the coverage.

I don't believe the Lightning are actively shopping for a backup goalie. They still have confidence in Curtis McElhinney, who hasn't had great numbers this year but has played better than fans give him credit. He's got experience, is comfortable in the role and is capable of winning games.

Now if Vasilevskiy goes down for a length of time in the playoffs, there's no question Tampa Bay is going to have a significant challenge to win the Cup. He's a league MVP candidate for a reason. But that goes for most teams losing their No. 1 (look what happened with Boston last year when Tuukka Rask left the bubble, and they had an experienced backup in Jaroslav Halak).

But where was the call to arms from fans last year in replacing McElhinney before the playoffs? It's the same guy. He went from playing zero games in a year to spending a few weeks on the COVID-protocol list and has had an uneven start to the season numbers-wise. He likely won't be in Tampa Bay next year, but I'd bet he's their backup for the playoffs. When Vasilevskiy leads the league in goals saved above expectation (16.96) and is the best goalie in the world, it's an impossible standard to follow.



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There aren't a ton of options on the trade market, unless they snag Jonathan Bernier from the Wings and Detroit retains half the salary.

If I were the Lightning, the priority would be depth on the blue line before backup goalie in McElhinney, who played zero games in the bubble last year.

That being said, for what it's worth, the Lightning had two scouts, including goalie scout Jared Waimon, in Buffalo on Thursday for the Sabres-Devils game, and Buffalo goalie Linus Ullmark could be moved by Monday.

Which prospect not in Syracuse has the best chance at stealing a roster spot at camp next year? — Brandon M.

Initially some thought it might be Sammy Walker, but the University of Minnesota captain decided to stay in school for his senior year. One wild card I think could be a candidate is Cole Koepke, who is playing in the Frozen Four for the University of Minnesota-Duluth this weekend. Koepke, a sixth-rounder in 2018, has the size (6-foot-1, 194 pounds) and ability up front to be able to plug some potential holes in the forward group. Former GM Craig Button, TSN's director of scouting, is really high on Koepke and believes he has the ability to play at the NHL level, and in the not too distant future. The only question is whether Koepke will sign and go pro after his junior year. Defenseman Nick Perbix, a defenseman with St. Cloud State, is in a similar boat and could provide a real big boost to the system.

If not, perhaps Gage Goncalves could be a sneaky pick to make a case at camp.

What are the odds that any Lightning assistant coaches interview/get offered a head coaching gig this offseason? Which coaches are most prominent on other teams radars? — Brandon O.

I think the Lightning have a talented staff, and a few of them could be head coaches in the future. I just don't think we'll see it this offseason. Jeff Halpern, the former NHL center, has the ability and mind for it. I wouldn't be surprised if he is a head coach in the coming years. Derek Lalonde has head coaching experience in the AHL and USHL. Rob Zettler has previous head coaching experience too. I'm still surprised that AHL coach Ben Groulx hasn't gotten more of a look in recent years.

Why does the team look like trash out there? We would be on the playoff bubble if it weren't for Vasy. The team wasn't ever pushed to an elimination game all of last playoffs, now we don't look as good as Florida/Carolina in my opinion — Jacob J.

Hey Joe! I feel like we're all in "wait and see mode" until the trade deadline and something could happen any day now. Since we don't know who comes and who goes in a possible trade, what is your take on how the team as a whole can tighten up and be ready for another Cup run? They've had Vasy snatch wins out of tight games all season and lately there has been a production slump. What do you think Cooper or the team as a whole does to get back to being dominant for 60 minutes? — Adam M.

The Lightning broke out of their slump in a big way Thursday, scoring four goals in the first period against Columbus in a 6-4 win. Tampa Bay hadn't scored more than three goals in their previous eight games. They felt it was a matter of time, and they got some "puck luck" on their side. (It did help that their top right-shot defenseman Erik Cernak returned after missing seven games with a lower-body injury).

They felt it was a step forward, but Ryan McDonagh said they weren't happy with the four goals against, "We've got better in us."

I honestly didn't think the Lightning had been playing as bad as their record indicates in the past week, when they had lost five of seven games. Their 5-on-5 shooting percentage was down the last seven games (7.66 percent) from the rest of the season (8.68 percent) and their save percentage is pretty close (.921 in last seven as opposed to .935 before), according to Evolving-Hockey. Their expected goals against was better over the last seven but their expected goals is worse. So,

essentially, they've got a little less shooting luck, a little worse goaltending, but not that much of a difference.

The Lightning like their process and structure, but have talked about the need to go to the dirty areas offensively and put traffic in front of the opposing goaltender. Coach Jon Cooper said the key is improving their play and habits in their own zone, and that'll lead to more offense.

So if I had to pick an area to improve before playoffs, it's shoring up play in the defensive zone and limiting opposing team's rush and high danger chances, which are typically sparked by being too aggressive offensively. "We play better defense, that's how you break the funk," Cooper said. "When you play better D, and look after your own end, usually get the puck more and it gives you better opportunities to score. It's all about your own end, it's not about the other end. If we shore up that up, we'll be totally fine."

That doesn't mean the scoring slump wasn't frustrating to the team.

"It's tough to put into words unless you've been through it," Johnson said. "It's frustrating. Guys are gripping their stick too much. You get out of your game. You get upset and mad and angry. When things are that way, results don't usually follow. You have to try to get it out of your head, have some fun with it, but it's very difficult when things aren't going your way."

Aside from Tyler Johnson or Alex Killorn who are other names that could be trade candidates to help TB get under the cap this offseason? Also is there a chance one of our big guys could be trade candidates like Point, Kucherov, Hedman, Stamkos, etc.? — Kaleb F.

Core guys like Point, Kucherov, Hedman or Stamkos aren't going to be dealt (and three of the four have a no-move clause). Sergachev, Cernak and Cirelli are considered the next wave of the core. I would think that the rest, from Killorn to Palat, Johnson, Gourde and perhaps Ryan McDonagh might be players they'd have to consider looking at moving or discussing with Seattle in a side deal.

Is there any way that Jan Rutta lands on LTIR to help with cap flexibility at the deadline? — John S.

There is a chance. Cooper has said Rutta is more "week to week," though we don't know how long that actually means. There's still a month left in the regular season. If the Lightning did put Rutta on LTIR, they would gain an additional \$1.3 million in cap space for Monday's deadline, adding to the \$370,500 they currently have, according to CapFriendly. But if they used that \$1.6 million-plus on a trade, they wouldn't be able to activate Rutta until the playoffs in mid-May.

I think the Lightning would rather have a healthy Rutta, as he's played better than fans give him credit for. But if this is a longer-term injury for Rutta, or one that might make it difficult for him to be back to his game when the playoffs start, they could put him on LTIR and give them some much-needed room to add at the deadline.

Has this condensed schedule led to any fatigue for the players? I would think it has been hard on their bodies, especially for players like Stamkos who didn't play much last year. — Ryan P.

The players and staff won't use it as an excuse, but there definitely has to be a little fatigue at play. Anytime you play eight games in 13 days, then four in six, it all adds up. These guys aren't machines. As assistant coach Derek Lalonde said the other day, there's some fatigue and exhaustion at play. Some of it is mental, some of it is physical. Where you see the impact of that the most is in the team's puck management, some sloppy plays. But every team is going through the same thing, and I don't think it'll be a major impact going forward.

Hey Joe! Keep up the great work, and go Bolts! My question is: Who would the Lightning's best and worst matchups be for the first round of the playoffs? Of course, the postseason isn't set in stone, but I thought it would be a fun topic to discuss! Thanks again! — Micah S.

I believe the Hurricanes are the toughest matchup for the Lightning in the Central Division. If their goaltending is in order, and Petr Mrazek is



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looking darn good in his return from injury, they have all the pieces to make life difficult for Tampa Bay. I broke this down a bit with my The Athletic colleague Sara Civian earlier this year, showing how similar the teams are and why they're an intriguing playoff series.

The Panthers have come on strong with a breakout season. The Aaron Ekblad injury is a big blow, but they are certainly buying into Joel Quenneville's coaching. They'd be a "tough out," as Cooper put it, but the Hurricanes are a little better in my opinion.

As for best matchups, the Lightning have been really successful against the Stars and Blackhawks this season, along with the Predators. The one team on the fourth seed bubble that's given them the most trouble, ironically, is the Blue Jackets. Go figure.

Do you have any insight into the fight for the last D spot and whether they're going to try and keep rolling with Borgman or get Thomas more involved? — Wesley P.

The Lightning got a better look at Andreas Borgman the past month due to injury, and Cooper said he liked the Swede's poise, ability to move the puck and his skill. Borgman isn't the biggest defenseman, and it appeared like he struggled in some battles, so that would be a little concern to me come playoff time. I think this will be a great chance for Ben Thomas to get a few games and they can see where he is. Coaches have been impressed so far with Thomas' skating ability, how he manages the game and his passing. He's got size and is a right shot. Considering Thomas has the experience of 285 AHL games, you can see how ready he is after all that seasoning. Thomas played 18:28 on Thursday, another indication he's earned the coaches' trust (Luke Schenn was scratched).

With three Czechs on the team (as of now), think we could get a Prague Global Series game? — Jeff B.

I don't see the team getting a Prague game anytime soon. Tampa Bay was just in Sweden a year and a half ago for the Global Series, which was a wild success, but the league typically spreads out invites to such games. It's hard to tell when there will be another international game due to the pandemic and related impact on borders. If anything, I could see Tampa Bay being a candidate if there's a Global Series game in Russia in years to come, with guys like Vasilevskiy, Kucherov and Sergachev.

Alex Barre-Boulet and a third for David Savard. Who says no? — Robert M.

I wouldn't say no, Robert. I've written about how David Savard could be a great fit on the blue line for the Lightning at the deadline, though there could be several suitors (and higher price) for the pending UFA defenseman. Savard was a healthy scratch Thursday against Tampa, an injury prevention move in case he's traded (and Lightning assistant GM Jamie Pushor was at another Blue Jackets game). Tampa Bay would have to make the money work on the cap hit, as they only have \$370,500 space left. I think a mid-round pick and a prospect would be enough. I really like Barre-Boulet, though, so maybe I'd offer a third-rounder and another forward prospect to Columbus.

Hey Mr. Smith. Do you think Kucherov will be back slightly before the playoffs, and how effective do you see him playing this postseason compared to his 2018-19 MVP year? — Alex. S

Hey Alex — just call me Joe! I do believe Kucherov will be back in time for the playoffs, which should begin in mid-May. But we've written on why you shouldn't necessarily expect Hart Trophy level right away, as players we spoke to who had similar hip surgery say they didn't feel back to normal for a year or so. Considering Kucherov will have not played a game for eight months, it'll take some time for him to get his timing back. That being said, Kucherov will still provide a major impact to Tampa Bay's lineup, specifically the power play, which runs through him.

Hi Joe. Bolts look to be just to be kinda fried and maybe bored. This is a totally different situation than the bubble and finding a way to stay fresh and motivated. Do you think teams are getting sick of seeing the same six opponents over 56 games? I know there's the talk of creating new

rivalries but I also wonder if it has this side effect. For some teams I could see this be inspiring ... hey we know these six teams and if we can win two of every three games we are in the playoffs against them again, that reduces a ton of variables for teams like the Panthers.

I am going to be intrigued to see what it is like with the final four that advance since there's a good chance those teams haven't faced each other in nearly a year and maybe longer. Should be fascinating! —Todd K.

Hey Todd. I have to believe teams are getting sick of playing each other — eight times is a lot in a short season, and it could be seven more in a potential playoff series! Another element, too, is how teams in these three- or four-game series make really good adjustments. It makes things more difficult on the Lightning, and the intensity/animosity between the division opponents jumps up.

Personally, I miss seeing more teams like we would in a normal season. As Mathieu Joseph put it, it feels like there are four different leagues in the NHL with all the divisions. It makes it challenging to know how a team like the Lightning matches up against, let's say, Toronto.

Those last few games against the Panthers could decide the division title and playoff seeding.

How is Ben Groulx not a head coach in the NHL? I'm glad he's with TBL, but why isn't he? — Jeff B.

That's a good question. I wrote a few years back why Groulx would be a great NHL coaching candidate, and you can't argue with the success he's had with AHL Syracuse. He's a key part of the club's development program. I don't get a sense Groulx has had a lot of interviews with NHL teams in recent years, and that surprises me. I know a lot of NHL teams recycle old coaches, or trust more guys from their system (and Jon Cooper isn't going anywhere). Groulx has experience in junior, with Team Canada and now in the AHL. Several Lightning players have sworn by his impact, from Yannick Gourde to Ross Colton, who said he wouldn't have been able to make the NHL jump without him. Here's what GM Julien BriseBois has told me on Groulx's NHL ability:

"His knowledge of the game, of players and how to get the most out of them. How he manages the game behind the bench, the exertion level and quality he demands from players in practice. He's going to get the most out of them."

If you want to learn more about Groulx, this a piece I did where I watched a Lightning game with him in his office in Syracuse.

How is Kuch's return looking at this point? — Andrew S.

Nikita Kucherov's recovery is going well, and he's right on track to return for the playoffs in May. As I detailed recently, the rehab from hip surgery like this is a lengthy process, and even the best players aren't playing at their top level right away. Some say it's taken them a year to feel like their old selves, but the Lightning will be happy to get their Hart Trophy winner back.

I've been loving Ross Colton's play, but do you think he's trade bait at all? Similar to how Cory Conacher was used back in the day. Sell while he's high to get a much needed right shot defenseman for the playoff run? — Tayllor B.

Colton has been quite a revelation for the Lightning, and it's not just his five goals. He's come a long way in the past few years and seems really ready for a regular role. That's an interesting comparison with Conacher, who was sold high at the time of his strong rookie year. The difference, however, is team needs. Tampa Bay was desperate for a No. 1 goalie back then and Ben Bishop turned out to be the answer. I know the Lightning could use a depth defenseman now, but they're also going to need young, cheaper players next season and beyond with the cap crunch. I don't think Colton is going anywhere. He's really filled out the fourth line, which has an identity.

The right side of the defence is weak, especially with Cernak out. The loss of Shattenkirk and Bogosian is tangible. 1) Can the Bolts win the



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Stanley Cup with Schenn and Foote in the lineup? 2) Will McDonagh be let go to Seattle this summer to open up space to re-sign Coleman? — Elnar T.

Well, I think in an ideal world, the Lightning aren't playing both Schenn and Foote in the top six. But if Cernak is back, and eventually Rutta too, they won't be. Foote has definitely progressed well in his rookie year, and I thought Schenn has held up well of late, especially for spending the first couple months on and off the taxi squad. I think Schenn could be used as a seventh defenseman in the playoffs, like he was last year, and we all saw how his physical presence played a role, including his standoff at center ice in the Islanders series.

You've got to give Foote credit, however, for how he stood up for Mikhail Sergachev Thursday night and getting in a fight after Steffan Matteau delivered a high hit (Sergachev stayed in the game and was okay). Foote endeared himself to teammates with the gesture.

"Unbelievable move by Footer to stand up for his teammate," McDonagh said. "He's a young guy trying to find his way into the league. He makes a great statement for our group. His commitment and willingness to step up and stand up for a teammate goes a long way, and it doesn't go unnoticed. I'm happy Sergy is okay, but more importantly, Footer made a big statement."

Said Gourde: "I absolutely loved it."

As for McDonagh and expansion, I wouldn't be surprised if he's not one of the three defensemen protected in the 7-3-1 format. I feel Hedman, Sergachev and Cernak are the locks, and if there's a fourth (in eight skaters), they might prefer to keep a young right-shot in Foote. The idea is that either McDonagh contract comes off the books or his cap hit (\$6.75 million AAV through 2025-26) is prohibitive for Seattle and he remains with Tampa Bay.

Any idea who at Bally's we can send our collective \*ahem\* love toward? I just want to send a thoughtful email to someone down there asking why they hate fans. To continue with my Bally's/Sinclair theme, is the contract that allows Bally's Sun/FL to carry Lightning games between the station and the team, or is the league also involved?

What are the odds of a different network covering the Lightning in the future? I promise that's my last broadcast question! ... for now... — Chris L.

Hi Joe. As someone else mentioned the new television graphics since the change to Bally's leave a lot to be desired. It honestly looks like they designed a display for baseball and just forced it onto hockey as well. I have scoured the internet for contact information to provide feedback and have come up empty. Do you have any phone numbers or emails we could reach out to voice our displeasure? Thanks. — Brent. C

No problem guys! There's an email address you can use for feedback, questions, comments, complaints or praise. It's [email protected].

I believe the Bally's/Fox Sports deal with the Lightning goes through the 2021-22 season. As we've written before, the local television deal is a great source of revenue for the team, between \$10-\$15 million a year. So while the Lightning can encourage and hope Bally's and other streaming services negotiate a new deal so more fans can watch, they're not going to get directly involved. The Lightning have a longstanding relationship with the company, from Fox Sports to Sinclair to Bally's, so it's hard to say if they would make a change after the next contract is up.

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team, told TSN. "Her leadership and the leadership group is essential to our success, and having her healthy and all our athletes healthy is something that's a priority for us here moving forward, and hopefully will benefit us in the end."

Poulin also missed time in the 2019-2020 Rivalry Series with an undisclosed injury. She was preparing for the 2020 women's worlds

when the pandemic hit. Not only was the tournament cancelled, but training became difficult, especially finding time on the ice.

"It was hard at first. Obviously you want to be on the ice every day," she said.

But the unexpected layoff did provide a silver lining for Poulin.

"To be honest, it was nice for me personally to take a little time off," she said. "I think from the knee injury, taking that time off and actually taking care of it, adjusting your training, you can't be in the weight room as much as you want. You're in your apartment doing different things, doing more yoga — I think it was a nice thing in a way. I had the chance to take care of myself."

Poulin is a member of Team Bauer in the Montreal region of the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association, an organization dedicated to forming a viable women's pro league in North America. While some showcase games involving American-based PWHPA teams have been able to take place over the past few months, the squads in Montreal, Toronto and Calgary have not been able to play due to government restrictions.

"It makes you realize how much you miss it, when you don't play as much as you want. It's a great reminder of why you're doing all of this — because you love the game so much," she said.

Although Poulin has not seen much competitive game action, she has at least been able to hit the ice.

"In Montreal, we're lucky enough. We had an exemption from the government of Québec where we were able to skate as a group here," she said. "We've been very lucky here. Some groups in Toronto, Calgary have been a little harder."

At this year's women's worlds, Poulin and Canada will be looking to end the country's gold-medal drought, which is almost at the decade-mark. The Canadians last took home the top prize in 2012, with the Americans winning the last five consecutive tournaments.

The United States are also the most recent Olympic champions, winning gold at the 2018 PyeongChang Games.

Canada has also lost eight straight games to the U.S. at the worlds, and their North American rivals won four of the five games at the 2019-2020 Rivalry Series.

"We've been struggling a little bit. We're all aware of that," Poulin said. "We're not first right now in the world. We all know that. For us, it's going to be a statement at the world championship for us to go one game at a time, put our best product on the ice and be ready. I think the pressure is going to be there, but we've got to take that pressure and turn it into motivation and go for it."

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