



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2021

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Here's what new Hurricanes defenseman Jani Hakanpaa brings to the team

By Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour summed up his first impression of Jani Hakanpaa in six words: "He's a big dude out there."

Hakanpaa put in his first practice with the Canes on Wednesday at PNC Arena after his trade Monday from the Anaheim Ducks. The defenseman was paired mostly with Jake Bean and No. 58, the jersey number Hakanpaa will wear, did have a physical presence on the ice.

Bean is listed at 6-foot-1 and 186 pounds, which might be generous. Hakanpaa is listed at 6-5 and 218, which might be a little understated. He is a big dude.

For Hakanpaa, it was a blur of 48 hours since the trade. He said he was in San Jose and at a pregame meal when he got the call Monday from Anaheim general manager Bob Murray. He soon hopped a flight to Raleigh, went through COVID-19 testing and other protocols, took part in the Hurricanes official team photo taken Wednesday morning and then skated with his new team.

"Everything happened real quick," Hakanpaa said on a Wednesday media call.

The Canes traded defenseman Haydn Fleury, who was popular with his teammates, for Hakanpaa and a 2022 draft pick. He gives the Canes another right-shot D-man, which they wanted to balance the D pairings, but also a rugged stay-at-home type who can be a body-banger, much like defenseman Joel Edmundson was for Carolina last season.

"I think I'll bring the tenacity of playing hard and being hard to play against out there," Hakanpaa said. "Be really solid on the back end, get that physicality up. That's what I've been trying to do and expect of myself in games."

Brind'Amour expects it, too. Hakanpaa has 168 hits in 42 games this season, second among NHL defensemen. That's a big part of what he does.

"I want him to play the way he plays," Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "We got him here because of that. We don't need him to do anything differently. We know what he's about."

"I think we'll get to know him and maybe there's other things to his game where we can say, 'Hey, you can do this.' But he better bring what we know he brings."

The Nashville Predators will be the first opposing team to learn what Hakanpaa has added to the Canes lineup. The Preds (24-19-1) face the Canes Thursday and Saturday at PNC Arena, and will come in for the two games surging, clawing for playoff position in the Central Division, having gone 8-2-0 in their past 10 games.

Canes center Sebastian Aho expects Hakanpaa to be an easy fit for the Canes. The two played together for Karpat in Finland's Liiga in 2015-16 after Hakanpaa returned to Finland from North America, and Aho is helping his fellow Finn with the transition.

"He's a team-first guy," Aho said Wednesday. "He does everything for the team. He's a hard-working, honest player. Big, strong, fast. He's a great guy, so it's good to have him here."

Hakanpaa, 29, does face some challenges in making the move during the pandemic. He has played against just West Division teams with the Ducks, so must get a quick feel for the teams in the Central in the final 15 games of the regular season. He also must try to get a feel for his new coaches and teammates at a time when COVID restrictions prevent much bonding time.

"I've never really been in this kind of situation before," Hakanpaa said. "I think it's different, for sure. You're supposed to be on your own away from the rink but I think we're going to make it work. At least you get to see the guys around the rink and try to get to know them as fast as I can and make the transition as smooth as possible."

And make his presence felt on the ice as soon as he can. Obtaining Hakanpaa was the Canes' only move at the NHL trade deadline, which Brind'Amour liked.

"Absorbing one body, we should be able to assimilate that into this group without too much chaos," Brind'Amour said.

Carolina Hurricanes vs Nashville Predators

When: Thursday, 7 p.m.

Where: PNC Arena, Raleigh.

TV: BSSO (Bally)



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The Hurricanes' Jordan Martinook on hockey — and choosing Mark Wahlberg or Tom Brady

By Chip Alexander

Editor's note: This is one in a continuing series of profiles on the Carolina Hurricanes' players and staff designed to give people a better look at the players behind the pads. We'll be asking them about hockey, of course, but also about life — hobbies, interests, special moments — to better understand what makes them tick.

Jordan Martinook of the Hurricanes is a heart-and-soul player every good team has and needs.

The forward doesn't score a lot of goals. He's not among the team leaders in minutes played. But he's a max-effort guy with a can-do attitude, willing to give Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour everything he has during games, filling any role.

Martinook serves as an alternate captain for the Canes along with defenseman Jaccob Slavin. It's a responsibility he takes seriously as he tries to provide leadership on and off the ice.

Martinook has been called Andrei Svechnikov's cheerleader — the loud, chatty guy in the tunnel or hallway in those Canes' pregame video clips shouting "Mis-ta Svech-ni-kov." He does do that, but he also has offered advice to the young winger, especially in Svechnikov's rookie year, on how to navigate the NHL and handle the grind.

Martinook, 28, is a fan favorite, and it's easy to see why. Before a recent game at PNC Arena, he spotted a 12-year-old Caniac named Emma Izzo, who has Down syndrome, near the glass and gave her one of his hockey sticks. It was a special moment for Emma but also for Martinook, a husband and father.

In an exclusive interview with Chip Alexander of The News & Observer, Martinook talks about being an alternate captain, Mark Wahlberg and Tom Brady, how the infamous "Mista Svechnikov" ritual started, and the pop-star treatment given his dad, Mark, whose outsized personality is bigger than his son's and became a Canes tailgating favorite during the 2019 Stanley Cup playoffs.

Chip Alexander: How did the 'Mista Svechnikov' thing start?

Jordan Martinook: "It started the first year (Andrei Svechnikov) was here, the first year we both were here. It was just something to keep Svech loose. He was 18 years old and obviously it's nerve-racking. We were both new to the team, and it's something I picked up with him. It didn't start with the Mister Svechnikov thing. It started in Arizona. We had this parking attendant when you showed up he'd go with the guys I'd show up with, 'Ah, Meester Conner and, ah, Meester Toby.' I kind of used him as inspiration. He actually passed away last year so it's come full circle. Lou, the parking attendant in Arizona, he's the inspiration behind that."

CA: What's the best thing about being a father?

JM: "I think it's just watching him discover things for the first time is something you take for granted but, and this is going to be funny, but we just potty trained him. And to see how excited he gets just from that. ... I don't know, just the little

things we take for granted that they think are the biggest wins in life are something you learn to appreciate."

CA: What does it mean to be selected an alternate captain for your team?

JM: "When I found out last year, it was a big honor, especially in that I felt I had a pretty big impact on the team my first year. Then the second year here, it just shows the kind of respect I'm kind of granted. Obviously, I try to help any way I can and do anything for this team. If they told me to do anything I'd do it, so it's definitely an honor and I don't take it for granted, and I appreciate the responsibility."

CA: Reading your bio, who would you rather meet if you had to make a choice, Mark Wahlberg or Tom Brady?

JM: "I'd probably say Mark Wahlberg because anything that he touches is pretty impressive and usually makes it work. I've just seen that he has a docuseries (Wahl Street) coming out on HBO. I'm excited to watch that."

CA: Another thing from your bio says your first job was an RV detailer. Could that have been a second career for Jordan Martinook?

JM: "I don't know (smiles). It was nice at the time because I got paid pretty good. I don't know if that was for me but it was a nice summer gig and I got paid pretty good, and I liked the people I worked with. But I don't know if that was a future thing for me, that's for sure."

CA: Your dad took on rock-star status here with the tailgates and the "Marty Parties." Is that something that surprised you or is that just his personality?

JM: "No, that's just who he is. I think I turned 10 when the roles reversed and I became the father and he became the son, and it's been that way ever since. He's always the life of the party and he's always having a good time and it's rubbed off on me, that's for sure."

CA: You just played your 400th career game and Jordan Staal is hitting 1,000. Is it hard to wrap your head around that figure?

JM: "That's an unbelievable accomplishment. I haven't said this to 'Jordo,' but you see him with 1,000 and then you look at Patrick Marleau and he's going to pass Gordie Howe with more than 1,700 and you say, 'How do you do that?' You can't say enough good things about Jordan, his family, just the way they treat people. Obviously, his resume speaks for itself."

CA: Your teammates kid you about your eating habits on the road. What do you like?

JM: "I always love Italian but I like going to sushi restaurants on the road. The best meal I've had on the road was in Chicago, and it was at "Alinea." It has a Michelin star chef and it was a pretty amazing dining experience. We did that last year. That was by far my best meal ever."

CA: And your sin food?



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JM: "Ice cream. I feel like a lot of guys like ice cream. Or cookies. My wife makes unbelievable chocolate chip cookies. That's at home where I get those."

CA: If hockey had walk-up songs, what would yours be?

JM: "Rockstar,' by Nickelback."

CA: You have a well-rounded hockey team this year. What do you think is the strength of this hockey team?

JM: "I think whether it's our best player or not, the work ethic is the same for each guy. There's no letdown from any player. Everybody understands the bar that's been set, and I

think everybody for the most part usually plays to that standard. When you have a standard that's been set it's something that will make you successful. It's been a couple of years of growing that and to be able to say we have a work ethic, a standard we know we can get to and we know we need to be at it probably is our biggest strength."

CA: One last hockey question, do you get excited thinking about the day the arena will be full again, with 18,000 plus?

JM: "I've told people many times, you go back to that run we had two years ago in the playoffs and I've never, ever heard a building like that. So I'm excited for that."

The Athletic

Should the Hurricanes have done more at the NHL trade deadline?

By Sara Civian

So, the 2021 trade deadline has officially come and gone. The Canes had been hearing a litany of teams out on deals that could've potentially bolstered their forward group or added a sought-out right-handed defenseman, and that narrowed down to "10 or 12" more serious talks come Monday, according to general manager Don Waddell. Right at the deadline, they decided to swap left-handed depth defenseman Haydn Fleury for right-handed depth defenseman Jani Hakanpaa and a sixth-round pick.

CanesLand's opinions of this move have been all over the map, from sadness about parting with a homegrown first-rounder who was growing into an NHL regular role, to being underwhelmed considering the Hurricanes' position as potential Cup contenders and some of the talks they were rumored to be in on, to understanding that with several crucial contracts looming they couldn't take a big contract on, to angst looking at the moves the other contenders in the Central Division made.

Consecutive losses to the Detroit Red Wings — one being the team's worst loss of the season — didn't do much to quell anxieties around here.

And now we're in the midst of a rare two-day break in this grueling schedule, with maybe too much time on our hands to think about a pair of tough losses and an uneventful trade deadline.

There's no doubt this is some bad timing, but let's try to put all of our feelings and biases aside to answer one question honestly: Should the Hurricanes have done more?

The case for the depth deal

My golden rule of in-season trade deadlines (and life in general) is to remember that doing the most doesn't necessarily mean doing the best. Boston's Rick Nash deal and Columbus' Ryan Dzingel deal come to mind as recent examples. The Hurricanes have assembled a group they like with slow-burning tweaks over the past two years, and the worst thing would be making a move just to make a move when the market wasn't that great.

Waddell explained in late March the difficulties of the in-season trade deadline during the COVID-19 pandemic:

"It used to be you'd go to your ownership and say, 'Hey, I'm gonna add this player who is gonna cost me \$3 million.' ... But if we won the first round back then, that would have brought us in \$8 million. Well, that's out the window this year because of the way finances are working and attendance. So if you're gonna pick up a lot of money and give up assets, you gotta really believe that you're truly one of the teams that can win the Stanley Cup. The teams that are trying just to get into the playoffs — it used to be a big economic factor for them just to get in, so they were willing to pay a price. Now I don't think I don't see that happening because, you know, I'm gonna give up assets, take on money, and I still might miss the playoffs this year. The way that the setup is. So I think we're looking at this: There will be some deals made, some prices paid, but not like years before."

He was basically right, and this thought process factored into the Hurricanes' decisions at the deadline. Upcoming contract negotiations had to, as well.

Per CapFriendly, the Canes have \$2,338,353 in projected cap space this season, and that's without placing Teuvo Teravainen on long-term injured reserve. Looking forward to the offseason, they have \$29,426,417 in cap space in 2021-22, but that's only with 11 players under contract — and doesn't include substantial average annual values that will have to be paid to restricted free agent Andrei Svechnikov and unrestricted free agent Dougie Hamilton if he's re-signed, not to mention that all three of the team's goalies are set to be free agents (Alex Nedeljkovic RFA, Petr Mrazek and James Reimer UFA).

And there's non-cap money to spend, too. It'll take cash to sign head coach Rod Brind'Amour to a long-term deal, which the Hurricanes are hoping to do and say they are close to finishing up.

The wild card here is what happens with Hamilton. If the Canes manage to lock him up in the offseason, the lack of a trade deadline splash is much more understandable. If they let him walk and keep the cap space, you start to wonder.



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There's also the expansion draft — we've gone over how keeping Fleury and exposing him would've probably meant a reunion between him and Ron Francis, aka the man who drafted him. If you trade him at the deadline, at least you aren't effectively "losing him for nothing." Obviously, the Hurricanes have to expose someone good and most likely lose someone good no matter what, but this might throw a big wrench in Francis' strategy.

But ...

The Hurricanes doing a deadline doggy paddle instead of a splash isn't happening in a vacuum. Many division rivals — and contenders around the league — made bigger moves.

Around the division:

Lightning: Added David Savard, plus it appears Nikita Kucherov will be back for the playoffs

Panthers: Added Nikita Gusev, Brandon Montour and Sam Bennett

Predators: Added Erik Gudbranson and reversed course in deciding not to be sellers.

Blackhawks: Added a few intriguing depth pieces for a potential stretch run.

Stars: Added Sami Vatanen, kept Jamie Oleksiak

Blue Jackets: Sold

Red Wings: Sold Anthony Mantha, added Jakub Vrana, Richard Panik and a first-round pick in 2021 and a second-round pick in 2022

If there is any doubt that Teravainen will return for the playoffs, the Hurricanes should have tried to add something up front, and they should probably be operating under the assumption that he won't return if there's any doubt. They addressed a few team needs — right-handed defense, anchor for mobile defensemen, physicality — with their move. But in the big picture, it is swapping one depth defenseman for another. Meanwhile, their biggest competition in the Lightning got the best right-handed defenseman available in Savard and will regain one of the league's best forwards in Kucherov. And what happens if one of the Hurricanes' top-four defensemen gets hurt?

The Canes have also been scoring fewer goals since Teravainen's injury, and while ebbs and flows are inevitable throughout a season, this is a little thing that could turn into a big thing under the microscope of the playoffs.

I'm generally conservative when it comes to trade-deadline moves — the risk is often higher than the reward. But when you look around at the moves some of the Hurricanes' most difficult rivals made to improve, you'd better hope Teravainen's back for the playoffs.



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Hurricanes on physical Hakanpaa: 'We know what he's about'

The big Finnish defenseman joined his new team for Wednesday's practice

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — New Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Jani Hakanpaa is 29 years old and has played professional hockey for 10 seasons. But that decade as a pro — which included stops with two Liiga teams in his native Finland, time with three AHL franchises and a two-game stint in the ECHL — has amounted to just 47 NHL games, 42 of which came this season with the Anaheim Ducks.

So it was understandable that the first reaction from many when word that former first-round pick Haydn Fleury had been traded to the West Coast for Hakanpaa and a 2022 sixth-round pick was uncertainty.

With NHL teams only playing divisional opponents this year and Hakanpaa logging just five games last season with the Ducks, the 6-foot-5, 218-pound defender has played against just nine of the league's 31 teams. Even the most all-consuming NHL fan — or in my case, hockey journalist — wouldn't have much of a book on Hakanpaa.

It only took watching Hakanpaa's first two shifts of his final game with the Ducks — Sunday's 4-1 loss to the Avalanche — to witness him live up to his reputation as a punishing blueliner who ranks third in the league in hits this season.

Hakanpaa came around the back of the Anaheim net alongside Colorado's Nazim Kadri and delivered a shove that knocked the Avalanche center right off his skates and to the ice.

"I want him to play the way he plays. ... That's what he does, then you better do that here," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said following Hakanpaa's first practice with the team on Wednesday. "We got him here because of that, and we don't need him to do anything differently. We know what he's about."

The addition of Hakanpaa and the trade that brought forward Cedric Paquette to Raleigh on Feb. 13 give the Hurricanes two former fourth-round picks who have carved out a career by being physical on the ice — an element the Hurricanes have lacked.

"I'm just gonna bring a tenacity of playing hard, be hard to play against out there, be really solid on the back end," Hakanpaa said. "Get that physicality up. I guess that's what I've been trying to try to do and what I expect of myself in games. So I'll try to bring that."

One person who knows what to expect of Carolina's latest addition is countryman Sebastian Aho, who was teammates with Hakanpaa on the 2015-16 Karpas team that won the Liiga championship.

"He's a team-first guy," Aho said. "He does everything for the team. Hard-working, honest player. Big, strong, fast and a great guy. So it's great to have him here."

Aho was also able to give Hakanpaa a quick rundown of the Hurricanes.

"We used to play together back home in Finland, and he said a lot of good things about this team," Hakanpaa said. "He said it's a really good group of guys, hard-working team. So it's an honor for me to be here and be part of this great hockey club."

With Hakanpaa in the fold, the Hurricanes finally have the option of having all six defensemen playing on their natural sides, and Brind'Amour had him teamed with rookie Jake Bean on Carolina's third defense pairing during Wednesday's practice.

While Hakanpaa has never played against the Hurricanes, he said he watched them a lot during last year's postseason because of all the talent on defense.

"It's going to be nice to get to play with them and be around those guys every day," he said. "And maybe I'll even learn something from them, try to pick their brain to maybe get something going my way too and learn from those great players. It's going to be great to get out there with those guys."

He will also be jumping into a playoff race — the Ducks have the league's third-worst record; Carolina the NHL's second-best. And while the Hurricanes are all but mathematically assured of reaching the postseason, the team is still fighting for the top spot in the Central Division and preparing for the postseason.

"It gives you that little boost when you get to a great team like this that has a good chance to go a long way," Hakanpaa said. "So you know you want to make sure you come in right off the bat hot and work hard and try to help the team right off the get-go here."

"Honestly, just do anything to help the team win some hockey games down the stretch here. So it's nice. Everybody in this in this business to win, so to have that chance here, it's unreal."



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Preview: Predators vs. Hurricanes

Canes host red-hot Predators for two-game set

By Michael Smith

A two-game set against the Nashville Predators will bring an end to the Carolina Hurricanes' longest homestand of the season.

The Match-Up

Nashville Predators (24-19-1, 49 points) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (27-10-4, 58 points)

Thursday, April 15, 7 p.m.

Watch: Bally Sports South, FOX Sports GO

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

Tracking the Storylines

Here's Jani: After being acquired from Anaheim at the trade deadline on Monday, defenseman Jani Hakanpaa is set to make his debut with the Canes. He skated with Jake Bean in practice on Wednesday, providing a steady, stay-at-home complement to Bean's more offensive-minded style of play.

"He's a big dude out there. He's got a long reach and a good stick. That physical presence, that's obvious," head coach Brind'Amour said. "That's something that every team wants to have, and it's something that's going to help us, for sure."

Down the Stretch: There's just under a month left to play in the regular season. After their last two-day gap in between games in this compact schedule, the Canes will play their final 15 games over a frantic 26-day stretch, a game every 1.73 days. The Canes have maintained their position in first

place in the Central Division with a 27-10-4 record and 58 points.

The Opposition

Last five games: 4-1-0, 8 points

On the road: 11-10-1, 23 points

CAR vs. NSH: 4-0-0

Leading scorer: Filip Forsberg, 29 points (11g, 18a) in 34 games

The Predators are one of the hottest teams in the NHL, having won 13 of their last 16 games. In recording 26 points since March 15, second most in the league in that timeframe, the Predators have charged up the Central Division standings from seventh place and 10 points out of a playoff spot into fourth. In their 7-2 win against Tampa Bay on Tuesday night, Viktor Arvidsson scored twice, and Tanner Jeannot notched his first-career goal.

The Last Meeting

The Canes earned their seventh straight victory in a 5-1 win against the Predators on March 11. Beginning with a power-play goal from Morgan Geekie, the Canes tallied three goals in a 2:21 span in the first period to establish a commanding 3-0 lead. Geekie added his second of the game in the second period to stretch the lead, and Martin Necas scored the team's third power-play marker of the night in the third period to make it a 5-0 game before the Preds tacked on a goal in the last five minutes of regulation.

"We were pretty opportunistic tonight, especially early," said James Reimer, who finished with 32 saves. "Didn't really give them a sniff. That's what you want to do."



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Super 16: Avalanche remain No. 1, Blues return to NHL.com power rankings

Golden Knights, Capitals move up; Lightning, Panthers tumble

By Dan Rosen

The Colorado Avalanche are the top team in the NHL.com Super 16 power rankings for a second straight week.

Colorado is 12-0-1 in its past 13 home games, the fourth-longest home point streak in Avalanche/Quebec Nordiques history. Its record is 17, set from Jan. 20-April 6, 2003.

The Vegas Golden Knights moved up one spot to No. 2, knocking the Tampa Bay Lightning down to No. 3. The Washington Capitals jumped two places to No. 4 and the Florida Panthers tumbled three to No. 8.

The St. Louis Blues got back into the Super 16 at No. 15 after dropping out last week.

To create the NHL.com power rankings, each of the 14 participating staff members put together his or her version of what they think it should look like. Those were submitted and a point total assigned to each.

The team that was selected first was given 16 points, second got 15, third 14 and so on down to No. 16, which got one point.

Here is the Super 16:

1. Colorado Avalanche (30-9-4)
Total points: 222
Last week: No. 1

The Avalanche have won five straight games at home, the third time this season they've had a home winning streak of at least five games.

2. Vegas Golden Knights (29-11-2)
Total points: 197
Last week: No. 3

Max Pacioretty scored his 300th NHL goal in a 4-2 win against the Los Angeles Kings on Monday. The forward from New Canaan, Connecticut is the 21st United States-born player to reach the milestone.

3. Tampa Bay Lightning (28-12-2)
Total points: 179
Last week: No. 2

Steven Stamkos has missed two games with an undisclosed injury the forward sustained in a 6-4 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets last Thursday. The captain has

scored 34 points (17 goals, 17 assists) in 38 games. The Lightning have not released details on his injury.

4. Washington Capitals (28-11-4)
Total points: 177
Last week: No. 6

The Capitals have scored 18 goals in a three-game winning streak while going 6-for-10 on the power play.

5. Carolina Hurricanes (27-10-4)
Total points: 173
Last week: No. 4

Dougie Hamilton has scored at least one point in 18 of his past 22 games since Feb. 27 (22 points; five goals, 17 assists). The defenseman leads the Hurricanes with 27 assists. Vincent Trocheck didn't have a point in a 3-1 loss to the Detroit Red Wings on Monday, ending the center's personal streak of 13 straight games (18 points; seven goals, 11 assists).

6. Toronto Maple Leafs (28-11-4)
Total points: 167
Last week: No. 7

The Maple Leafs have scored one power-play goal in their past 19 games, going 2-for-43. They won nine of 10 before losing their past two games in regulation.

7. New York Islanders (27-11-4)
Total points: 146
Last week: No. 8

Five of the Islanders' seven wins since March 22 have come in overtime or the shootout. They have won seven straight games decided after regulation.

8. Florida Panthers (27-12-4)
Total points: 133
Last week: No. 5

Aleksander Barkov has scored five goals in six games since the center returned to the lineup April 3 after missing six games with an injury. The Florida captain leads the Panthers with 18 goals and 44 points.

9. Pittsburgh Penguins (27-13-2)
Total points: 116
Last week: No. 9

The Penguins have won three games in a row and are 9-2-1 since March 20. They have scored a power-play goal in five straight games (6-for-15) and eight of their past nine (11-for-27).



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10. Winnipeg Jets (26-14-3)
Total points: 92
Last week: No. 11

The Jets, second in the Scotia North Division, have one game remaining on a five-game road trip before playing six in a row at home, three against the first-place Maple Leafs and three against the third-place Edmonton Oilers. The top four teams in the seven-team division qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

11. Minnesota Wild (25-13-3)
Total points: 75
Last week: No. 10

The Wild are 3-6-3 on the road since March 1. They won four straight road games from Feb. 18-24 and seven of their first 10.

12. Boston Bruins (22-12-6)
Total points: 73
Last week: No. 12

Charlie McAvoy returned to the lineup and played a Bruins-high 25:04 in a 3-2 shootout win against the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday after the defenseman missed four games with an upper-body injury. The Bruins are without defensemen Brandon Carlo (seven games, upper body) and Matt Grzelcyk (two games, upper body), and played without McAvoy, Carlo, Grzelcyk and Kevan Miller in an 8-1 loss to the Capitals on Sunday.

13. Edmonton Oilers (25-15-2)
Total points: 60
Last week: No. 13

Mike Smith was 8-1-2 with a 2.35 goals-against average and .922 save percentage from March 6-April 8 before he allowed five goals on 32 shots in a 5-0 loss to the Calgary Flames on Saturday.

14. Nashville Predators (24-19-1)
Total points: 41
Last week: No. 15

The Predators are 13-3-0 since March 15 despite not having center Matt Duchene (upper body) for any of the games and forward Filip Forsberg (upper body) for the past 10, and defenseman Ryan Ellis (upper body) for the first 13 of the 16 games.

15. St. Louis Blues (19-17-6)
Total points: 24
Last week: NR

The Blues have played their way back into the playoff race in the eight-team Honda West Division. Ten of their remaining 14 games are against the top three teams in the division; Colorado, Vegas and Minnesota.

16. Montreal Canadiens (18-13-9)
Total points: 23
Last week: No. 14

The Canadiens won their past two games decided after regulation after losing their first nine such games.

Others receiving points: New York Rangers 5, Chicago Blackhawks 1

Dropped out: Coyotes (No. 16)

HERE'S HOW WE RANKED 'EM

AMALIE BENJAMIN

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Vegas Golden Knights; 3. Washington Capitals; 4. Tampa Bay Lightning; 5. Toronto Maple Leafs; 6. Carolina Hurricanes; 7. New York Islanders; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Boston Bruins; 12. Nashville Predators; 13. Minnesota Wild; 14. Edmonton Oilers; 15. New York Rangers; 16. Montreal Canadiens

TIM CAMPBELL

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Tampa Bay Lightning; 3. Vegas Golden Knights; 4. Carolina Hurricanes; 5. Washington Capitals; 6. Florida Panthers; 7. Toronto Maple Leafs; 8. Pittsburgh Penguins; 9. New York Islanders; 10. Boston Bruins; 11. Winnipeg Jets; 12. Edmonton Oilers; 13. Minnesota Wild; 14. St. Louis Blues; 15. Nashville Predators; 16. Montreal Canadiens

BRIAN COMPTON

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Vegas Golden Knights; 3. Carolina Hurricanes; 4. Washington Capitals; 5. New York Islanders; 6. Toronto Maple Leafs; 7. Florida Panthers; 8. Tampa Bay Lightning; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Minnesota Wild; 12. Edmonton Oilers; 13. Boston Bruins; 14. Nashville Predators; 15. St. Louis Blues; 16. Montreal Canadiens

NICHOLAS J. COTSONIKA

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Vegas Golden Knights; 3. Carolina Hurricanes; 4. Toronto Maple Leafs; 5. Washington Capitals; 6. Tampa Bay Lightning; 7. New York Islanders; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Minnesota Wild; 11. Winnipeg Jets; 12. Boston Bruins; 13. Edmonton Oilers; 14. Montreal Canadiens; 15. Nashville Predators; 16. St. Louis Blues

TOM GULITTI

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Vegas Golden Knights; 3. Carolina Hurricanes; 4. Toronto Maple Leafs; 5. New York Islanders; 6. Washington Capitals; 7. Tampa Bay Lightning; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Minnesota Wild; 11. Winnipeg Jets; 12. Boston Bruins; 13. Nashville Predators; 14. Edmonton Oilers; 15. Montreal Canadiens; 16. St. Louis Blues

ADAM KIMELMAN

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Washington Capitals; 3. Vegas Golden Knights; 4. Tampa Bay Lightning; 5. Carolina Hurricanes; 6. Toronto Maple Leafs; 7. New York Islanders; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Winnipeg Jets; 10. Pittsburgh Penguins; 11. Minnesota Wild; 12. Boston Bruins; 13. St. Louis Blues; 14. Edmonton Oilers; 15. Montreal Canadiens; 16. New York Rangers

ROBERT LAFLAMME

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Tampa Bay Lightning; 3. Washington Capitals; 4. Vegas Golden Knights; 5. Carolina Hurricanes; 6. Toronto Maple Leafs; 7. Florida Panthers; 8.



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New York Islanders; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Minnesota Wild; 12. Boston Bruins; 13. Edmonton Oilers; 14. Nashville Predators; 15. Montreal Canadiens; 16. St. Louis Blues

MIKE G. MORREALE

1. Vegas Golden Knights; 2. New York Islanders; 3. Colorado Avalanche; 4. Tampa Bay Lightning; 5. Toronto Maple Leafs; 6. Washington Capitals; 7. Carolina Hurricanes; 8. Pittsburgh Penguins; 9. Florida Panthers; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Edmonton Oilers; 12. Nashville Predators; 13. St. Louis Blues; 14. Boston Bruins; 15. Minnesota Wild; 16. New York Rangers

TRACEY MYERS

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Washington Capitals; 3. Toronto Maple Leafs; 4. Carolina Hurricanes; 5. Florida Panthers; 6. Tampa Bay Lightning; 7. Vegas Golden Knights; 8. New York Islanders; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Minnesota Wild; 12. Edmonton Oilers; 13. Boston Bruins; 14. Montreal Canadiens; 15. Nashville Predators; 16. St. Louis Blues

BILL PRICE

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Carolina Hurricanes; 3. Tampa Bay Lightning; 4. Vegas Golden Knights; 5. Washington Capitals; 6. Toronto Maple Leafs; 7. New York Islanders; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Minnesota Wild; 10. Pittsburgh Penguins; 11. Winnipeg Jets; 12. Boston Bruins; 13. Edmonton Oilers; 14. Montreal Canadiens; 15. Nashville Predators; 16. St. Louis Blues

SHAWN P. ROARKE

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Vegas Golden Knights; 3. Tampa Bay Lightning; 4. Carolina Hurricanes; 5. Toronto Maple Leafs; 6. Florida Panthers; 7. New York Islanders; 8. Pittsburgh Penguins; 9. Washington Capitals; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Minnesota Wild; 12. Nashville Predators; 13. Boston Bruins; 14. Edmonton Oilers; 15. St. Louis Blues; 16. Montreal Canadiens

DAN ROSEN

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Vegas Golden Knights; 3. Tampa Bay Lightning; 4. Washington Capitals; 5. Carolina Hurricanes; 6. New York Islanders; 7. Toronto Maple Leafs; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Winnipeg Jets; 11. Boston Bruins; 12. Minnesota Wild; 13. Edmonton Oilers; 14. Nashville Predators; 15. St. Louis Blues; 16. New York Rangers

DAVID SATRIANO

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Toronto Maple Leafs; 3. Vegas Golden Knights; 4. Washington Capitals; 5. Tampa Bay Lightning; 6. Pittsburgh Penguins; 7. Carolina Hurricanes; 8. New York Islanders; 9. Florida Panthers; 10. Boston Bruins; 11. Winnipeg Jets; 12. Edmonton Oilers; 13. Minnesota Wild; 14. Montreal Canadiens; 15. Nashville Predators; 16. Chicago Blackhawks

MIKE ZEISBERGER

1. Colorado Avalanche; 2. Tampa Bay Lightning; 3. Washington Capitals; 4. Vegas Golden Knights; 5. Toronto Maple Leafs; 6. New York Islanders; 7. Carolina Hurricanes; 8. Florida Panthers; 9. Pittsburgh Penguins; 10. Boston Bruins; 11. Edmonton Oilers; 12. Winnipeg Jets; 13. Minnesota Wild; 14. Nashville Predators; 15. St. Louis Blues; 16. Montreal Canadiens



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Nashville visits Carolina after Arvidsson's 2-goal game

Nashville Predators (24-19-1, fourth in the Central Division) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (27-10-4, first in the Central Division)

Raleigh, North Carolina; Thursday, 7 p.m. EDT

BOTTOM LINE: Nashville visits the Carolina Hurricanes after Viktor Arvidsson scored two goals in the Predators' 7-2 win against the Lightning.

The Hurricanes are 27-10-4 against division opponents. Carolina is 10th in the NHL averaging 3.2 goals per game, led by Sebastian Aho with 17.

The Predators are 24-19-1 against opponents in the Central Division. Nashville averages 9.5 penalty minutes per game, the fifth-most in the NHL. Mathieu Olivier leads the team serving 68 total minutes.

In their last meeting on March 11, Carolina won 5-1. Morgan Geekie recorded a team-high 2 points for the Hurricanes.

TOP PERFORMERS: Aho leads the Hurricanes with 17 goals and has 38 points. Vincent Trocheck has seven assists over the last 10 games for Carolina.

Roman Josi leads the Predators with 27 points, scoring five goals and registering 22 assists. Arvidsson has six goals over the last 10 games for Nashville.

LAST 10 GAMES: Hurricanes: 6-3-1, averaging 2.9 goals, 4.9 assists, 3.1 penalties and 6.2 penalty minutes while giving up 2.2 goals per game with a .918 save percentage.

Predators: 8-2-0, averaging 3.1 goals, 4.7 assists, 3.5 penalties and 10.3 penalty minutes while allowing 1.7 goals per game with a .943 save percentage.

INJURIES: Hurricanes: Teuvo Teravainen: out (concussion), Brock McGinn: day to day (upper body).

Predators: Dante Fabbro: out (upper body), Mathieu Olivier: out (lower body), Eeli Tolvanen: out (lower body).



NHL Playoff Watch Daily: Showdown Thursday in the Central Division

By Tim Kavanagh

After a night off for all eight teams in the Central Division on Wednesday, they'll all return to action on Thursday.

Perhaps more tantalizingly, the schedule has blessed us with a showdown among the four clubs currently in playoff position. Both contests begin at 7 p.m. ET, so you'll want to deploy two screens minimum tonight.

The Nashville Predators -- as of a few weeks ago, seemingly one of the teams likely to be most active trading players away at the trade deadline -- travel to Raleigh, North Carolina, to take on the Carolina Hurricanes. The Canes have won all four previous games in the season series, but the Preds come in hot following their 7-2 dismantling of the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday.

Speaking of the Lightning, they'll host their cross-state rival Florida Panthers at Amalie Arena tonight. This season series stands at 2-2, and they'll play again on Saturday.

As we enter the final stretch of the regular season, it's time to check in on all the playoff races -- along with the teams jockeying for position in the 2021 NHL draft lottery.

Note: Playoff chances are via Money Puck. Tragic numbers are courtesy of Damian Echevarrieta of the NHL.

East Division

Washington Capitals

Points: 60
Regulation wins: 23
Playoff position: E1
Games left: 13
Next game: vs. BUF (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 99.6%
Tragic number: N/A

New York Islanders

Points: 58
Regulation wins: 20
Playoff position: E2
Games left: 14
Next game: @ BOS (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 98.7%
Tragic number: N/A



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Pittsburgh Penguins

Points: 56
Regulation wins: 20
Playoff position: E3
Games left: 14
Next game: vs. PHI (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 98.4%
Tragic number: N/A

Boston Bruins

Points: 50
Regulation wins: 15
Playoff position: E4
Games left: 16
Next game: vs. NYI (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 77.3%
Tragic number: N/A

New York Rangers

Points: 46
Regulation wins: 17
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 14
Next game: vs. NJ (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 20%
Tragic number: 25

Philadelphia Flyers

Points: 44
Regulation wins: 13
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 14
Next game: @ PIT (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 6.3%
Tragic number: 22

New Jersey Devils

Points: 34
Regulation wins: 11
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 15
Next game: @ NYR (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: 14

Buffalo Sabres

Points: 27
Regulation wins: 7
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 14
Next game: @ WSH (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: 5

Central Division

Carolina Hurricanes

Points: 58
Regulation wins: 19
Playoff position: C1
Games left: 15
Next game: vs. NSH (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%
Tragic number: N/A

Tampa Bay Lightning

Points: 58
Regulation wins: 24
Playoff position: C2
Games left: 14
Next game: vs. FLA (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 99.9%
Tragic number: N/A

Florida Panthers

Points: 58
Regulation wins: 19
Playoff position: C3
Games left: 13
Next game: @ TB (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 99.6%
Tragic number: N/A

Nashville Predators

Points: 49
Regulation wins: 16
Playoff position: C4
Games left: 12
Next game: @ CAR (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 62.1%
Tragic number: N/A

Chicago Blackhawks

Points: 45
Regulation wins: 13
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 13
Next game: @ DET (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 9.4%
Tragic number: 22

Dallas Stars

Points: 42
Regulation wins: 13
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 15
Next game: vs. CBJ (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 29.1%
Tragic number: 23

Columbus Blue Jackets

Points: 39
Regulation wins: 11
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 12
Next game: @ DAL (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0.1%
Tragic number: 14

Detroit Red Wings

Points: 36
Regulation wins: 13
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 12



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Next game: vs. CHI (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: 11

North Division

Toronto Maple Leafs

Points: 60
Regulation wins: 22
Playoff position: N1
Games left: 13
Next game: vs. WPG (Thursday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A

Winnipeg Jets

Points: 55
Regulation wins: 20
Playoff position: N2
Games left: 13
Next game: vs. EDM (Saturday)
Playoff chances: 99.6%
Tragic number: N/A

Edmonton Oilers

Points: 52
Regulation wins: 23
Playoff position: N3
Games left: 14
Next game: @ VAN (Friday)
Playoff chances: 96.4%
Tragic number: N/A

Montreal Canadiens

Points: 45
Regulation wins: 16
Playoff position: N4
Games left: 16
Next game: vs. CGY (Friday)
Playoff chances: 80.9%
Tragic number: N/A

Calgary Flames

Points: 41
Regulation wins: 16
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 13
Next game: @ MTL (Friday)
Playoff chances: 19.6%
Tragic number: 22

Vancouver Canucks

Points: 35
Regulation wins: 11
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 19
Next game: vs. EDM (Friday)
Playoff chances: 3.5%
Tragic number: 28

Ottawa Senators

Points: 32
Regulation wins: 10
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 12
Next game: @ MTL (Saturday)
Playoff chances: 0%
Tragic number: 11

West Division

Colorado Avalanche

Points: 64
Regulation wins: 27
Playoff position: W1
Games left: 13
Next game: vs. LA (Friday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A

Vegas Golden Knights

Points: 60
Regulation wins: 23
Playoff position: W2
Games left: 14
Next game: @ ANA (Friday)
Playoff chances: 100%
Tragic number: N/A

Minnesota Wild

Points: 53
Regulation wins: 20
Playoff position: W3
Games left: 15
Next game: vs. SJ (Friday)
Playoff chances: 99.8%
Tragic number: N/A

St. Louis Blues

Points: 44
Regulation wins: 13
Playoff position: W4
Games left: 14
Next game: @ ARI (Saturday)
Playoff chances: 41.6%
Tragic number: N/A

Arizona Coyotes

Points: 43
Regulation wins: 15
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 12
Next game: vs. STL (Saturday)
Playoff chances: 33%
Tragic number: 24

San Jose Sharks

Points: 40
Regulation wins: 12
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 14
Next game: @ MIN (Friday)



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Playoff chances: 17.1%
Tragic number: 24

Los Angeles Kings

Points: 38
Regulation wins: 14
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 14
Next game: @ COL (Friday)
Playoff chances: 8.1%
Tragic number: 23

Anaheim Ducks

Points: 35
Regulation wins: 9
Playoff position: N/A
Games left: 12
Next game: vs. VGS (Friday)
Playoff chances: 0.4%
Tragic number: 15

Race for the No. 1 pick

The NHL uses a draft lottery to determine the order at the top of the first round, so the team that finishes in last place is not guaranteed the No. 1 selection. New for 2021, a team may move up a maximum of 10 spots if it wins the lottery, so only 11 teams are eligible for the draw for the No. 1 pick. Full details on the process can be found [here](#).

1. Buffalo Sabres

Points: 27
Regulation wins: 7

2. Ottawa Senators

Points: 32
Regulation wins: 10

3. New Jersey Devils

Points: 34
Regulation wins: 11

4. Anaheim Ducks

Points: 35
Regulation wins: 9

5. Vancouver Canucks

Points: 35
Regulation wins: 11

6. Detroit Red Wings

Points: 36
Regulation wins: 13

7. Los Angeles Kings

Points: 38
Regulation wins: 14

8. Columbus Blue Jackets

Points: 39
Regulation wins: 11

9. San Jose Sharks

Points: 40
Regulation wins: 12

10. Calgary Flames

Points: 41
Regulation wins: 16

11. Dallas Stars

Points: 42
Regulation wins: 13

12. Arizona Coyotes

Points: 43
Regulation wins: 15

13. Philadelphia Flyers

Points: 44
Regulation wins: 13

14. Chicago Blackhawks

Points: 45
Regulation wins: 13

15. New York Rangers

Points: 46
Regulation wins: 17



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Central Division Weekly Roundup: Trade Deadline Aftermath

The Canes only made one move, but the rest of the division was active at the trade deadline.

By Zeke Lukow

1. Carolina Hurricanes: .707 P% (28-12-2) 58 Points

The Hurricanes' trade deadline was silent as expected. Don Waddell doesn't like making rental acquisitions and with the team playing so well, they didn't need to bring in new players and mess with any chemistry down the stretch. It certainly doesn't help that they laid two eggs against the Red Wings to give up their advantage over the Lightning and their position to possibly win the President's Trophy as the NHL's top team in the regular season.

The Hurricanes did make one move to ship out Haydn Fleury to the Anaheim Ducks for Jani Hakanpaa and a sixth-round pick. Fleury was always touted as an offensive defenseman, but was never able to get it going offensively at a consistent level outside of the bubble last season. With Jake Bean coming in and making an immediate impact, the writing was on the wall. With the Canes already having one defenseman too many, their hands were forced to move Fleury out. This also allows them to avoid losing him for free in the expansion draft and the Canes also free up salary cap space in an upcoming important offseason.

The Canes are also excited about Hakanpaa and think he could be a defenseman who would re-sign in the offseason. He is a true stay-at-home defenseman who could pair with someone like Bean to give him more freedom. He also plays an extremely physical game which reminds me of a Tim Gleason type role. Waddell also opted to keep all three goaltenders on the roster. He might be tentative to move one after a couple of seasons of injuries in crucial times, and having all three gives them greater depth heading into the playoffs. However, rolling three goaltenders in the regular season has never seemed to work.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning: .690 P% (28-12-2) 58 Points

The Tampa Bay Lightning got their guy on Saturday when they acquired defenseman David Savard from the Columbus Blue Jackets. Tampa sent a 2021 first-round pick and a 2022- third-round pick to Columbus and also had to trade a 2021 fourth-round pick to the Detroit Red Wings to retain 50% of his salary. Savard played a top four shutdown defenseman role with the Blue Jackets. He plays almost 20 minutes a night and is relied upon heavily when the team is protecting a lead. According to Dom Luszczyszyn, he rates out as a bottom pairing defenseman.

His stats have taken a bit of a hit this season with a -5.7% Corsi relative. He has also ranked second to last on the Blue Jackets with a 26.79% goals for rate. A good amount of the

decline this season could be attributed to his extremely low 936 PDO this season and his low 37% offensive zone starts under John Tortorella. He should see his PDO bounce back naturally and will also be working with better teammates in Tampa. Regardless of his downtrend this season, he becomes the leading shot blocker on the team with 20 more than their current leader in Ryan McDonagh.

3. Florida Panthers: .674 P% (27-12-4) 58 Points

The Florida Panthers had a really smart trade deadline. They were able to acquire some depth pieces at fairly low costs. They started last week when they re-acquired Lucas Wallmark from the Blackhawks for Brett Conolly, a couple of low value players, and a 2021 seventh-round pick. They then acquired Brandon Montour from the Buffalo Sabres for a 2021 third-round pick on Saturday. Their final trade was acquiring Sam Bennett and a 2022 sixth-round pick from the Calgary Flames for a 2022 second-round pick and prospect Emil Heineman. The Panthers also took a flier on Nikita Gusev, who had previously been cut by the New Jersey Devils.

Wallmark and Bennet are both flexible forwards that can play center that really improve their bottom-sixth depth. If you combine them with Gusev, it will allow the Panthers to more comfortably roll four lines if they are not relying on Mason Marchment, Eetu Luostarinen and Juho Lammikko to eat up minutes as the fourth line. Brandon Montour can immediately come in and play a top-four role and play 20 minutes a game. He can start playing on the top pairing if need be, which will help ease the loss of Aaron Ekblad. In general, the moves were fairly low risk for four depth rentals.

4. Nashville Predators: .557 P% (24-19-1) 49 Points

The Predators had the most drastic 180 in the league when it came to the trade deadline. A month ago it was reported that everyone was on the table and that GM David Poillon was listening to offers around Phillip Forsberg. Now after a heavy winning streak, the Preds basically stayed put, making only one move to bring in Erik Gudbranson for Brandon Fortunato and a 2023 seventh-round pick. Fortunato was an undrafted free-agent signing and the seventh-round pick meant that they essentially acquired Gudbranson for free.

However, that acquisition doesn't improve the defense, and he only really provides depth. He is now playing on his fifth team in three seasons and has been dealt at the deadline in each of the last three seasons. Looking at his heatmaps it's easy to see that when he is on the ice both the offense and defense impacted negatively.



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5. Chicago Blackhawks: .523 P% (20-18-5) 45 Points

The Blackhawks quietly had one of the best trade deadlines of any team. First, they avoided the temptation to add at the deadline, looked at where they are in the standings and made the right call to punt down the road for a possible playoff run. GM Stan Bowman was able to upgrade his draft position in the coming season without trading away any lasting pieces. All in all they traded a couple of expiring contracts that didn't affect their long-term plan.

The largest move was shipping Mattias Janmark to the Vegas Golden Knights for a 2021 second-round pick and a 2022 third-round pick. They also acquired a 2021 fourth-round pick for Madison Bowey from the Canucks and a couple of prospects from the Colorado Avalanche for Carl Soderberg. Both Soderberg and Janmark are on expiring one-year deals and will be unrestricted free agents. They also were able to keep Nikita Zadorov, who could be a valuable piece on the blue line moving forward.

6. Dallas Stars: .512 P% (15-14-12) 42 Points

The only move that the Dallas Stars made around the deadline was claiming former Hurricane Sami Vatanen. Vatanen was waived by the New Jersey Devils on Sunday before being claimed Monday. Vatanen provides little more than depth as a replacement level player on the blue line. The Stars have an extremely condensed schedule down the stretch and have been dealing with injuries all year, so it was a no-risk move that they could afford to bring in a right-handed defenseman. Much like Nashville, who they are fighting for the last playoff position with, the smartest decision was keeping their team together and not making a drastic move. They will still be able to compete and possibly make their way into the fourth spot in the Central without making any changes.

The Stars also have a big offseason coming up with 10 pending free agents, only two of which are restricted. They will still have Ben Bishop, Jamie Benn, Tyler Seguin, Alexander Radulov, Esa Lindell, and Joe Pavelski in their core. They are still positioned to win if they can keep some of the secondary players around. The time to make any franchise-defining move is always in the offseason, and not during the strangest trade deadline we've seen in decades. They still have every one of their original draft picks in the

next three seasons and are not forced into making moves to get back into and out of any rounds and drafts.

7. Columbus Blue Jackets: .443 P% (15-20-9) 39 Points

The Blue Jackets have to look at the trade deadline as a win for them. While they are not where they hoped to be in the standings, they acquired two first-round picks during a last-minute sell-off. Columbus didn't even have to sell off one of their goalies to get this return, just David Savard and Nick Foligno. Foligno is also a prime candidate to return to the Blue Jackets this offseason, so they could end up with a first-round pick for 12 games without their captain.

GM Jarmo Kekkonen has been in a unique position over the last few years. He has had multiple superstars on expiring contracts or demanding trades. He has done a great job at making lemonade out of lemons. First, he kept expiring stars to propel the team to its first playoff series win in 2019. Since then he has had to trade Pierre-Luc Dubois and Josh Anderson which saw him land Max Domi, Jack Roslovic and Patrik Laine, three impact players. Now he will have to navigate re-signing Laine and possibly finding a new coach which could drastically change the future of the team.

8. Detroit Red Wings: .409 P% (15-23-6) 36 Points

The Red Wings pulled off the biggest trade at the deadline when they acquired Jakub Vrana, Richard Panik, a 2021 first-round pick and a 2022 second-round pick for Anthony Mantha. Mantha and Vrana are very similar players who played very different roles. Vrana has played more sheltered minutes while Mantha has had a larger role with Detroit. Vrana is a great scoring winger who is a pending arbitration eligible restricted free agent. Vrana's development will be great to watch and see if he flourishes in a new expanded role.

Richard Panik will also serve a valuable role for the Red Wings. He is a good depth forward who has two years left at \$2.75 mil AAV. At 30 years old he will also provide some experience to a lineup that needs both depth and experience during a rebuild. With the acquired picks, Steve Yzerman now has 12 picks in the upcoming draft with seven coming in the first three rounds. While this is the trickiest draft in recent history, Yzerman has a great drafting record so Detroit fans should feel good about where they are.



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Central Division Weekly Roundup: Trade Deadline Aftermath

They said it: Hakanpaa, Aho, Brind'Amour on stretch run, trade deadline

Jani Hakanpaa, Rod Brind'Amour and Sebastian Aho spoke to the media following Wednesday's practice.

By Andrew Schnittker

When the Hurricanes hit the ice for practice Wednesday, there was a new face with them, as newly-acquired defenseman Jani Hakanpaa joined the team. There was at least one familiar face on the ice for Hakanpaa, as he and Sebastian Aho played together in Finland.

Hakanpaa, Aho and Rod Brind'Amour spoke to the media after practice, here's some highlights of what they had to say:

Rod Brind'Amour

On Jani Hakanpaa and what he brings: The obvious. He's a big dude out there. He's got long reach, a good stick and that physical presence. I think that's obvious. That is what he brings. You can see that element right away in practice today, that long reach, being able to kill rushes and that's something that I think every team wants to have and I think it's something that's going to help us for sure.

On Hakanpaa playing against new teams: Everyone's coaching almost the same. All the teams are basically playing very similar. Whether it's a team he hasn't seen or not, he's definitely seen some sort of style of play or a pre scout that looks exactly the same. It's hockey. It's playing your game. So the biggest challenge is going to be figuring out exactly how we do it to the nuances of what we do, but overall, it's not too much of a concern who you're playing.

On the Canes not making many changes at the trade deadline: Am I happy with the group not changing too much? Yes. The answer is for sure. I think a little tweak is great, especially in an area that we think will definitely help us. That's a big little thing. I'm happy that we didn't mass overhaul anything, because that wouldn't have helped us.

On the Canes' focus on the stretch run: Comfortable, we can't be that. There's zero chance of that. That's why I like what [Aho] said. Because the past, who cares. We don't know what's coming down the road. We know we've got 15 games, but we can't focus on that. Let's get back into focusing on tomorrow night. Let's play a good game tomorrow night. The rest will take care of itself. If we do that right, then when these 15 games are up, we'll be where we want to be. We're not a big-picture team. We want to just focus on what's right ahead.

On bringing in a new player during COVID times: We've all been dealing with that sort of element all year, whether it's a new player or not, just bringing that you normally do as a team. There's a lot of team bonding or team chemistry that happens away from the rink. Now, all of a sudden, that element doesn't exist. The good news is, it's the same for everyone. Everyone's kind of missing that, I'm sure. But as far as how do you do it, you value the time you have here with them. Make sure they can get up to speed, be around the guys as best we can.

It helps to have a friend. With [Aho] being here, knowing him, he can reach out if he needs something via phone call or whatever. You're not on an island. I think that's the main thing, to make sure the new guys know they're not alone. They may kind of feel like it, but just pick up the phone and we'll figure something out. I think that's basically all you can do.

On if the Canes are better equipped to handle in bringing in a new player: I really believe that, because the team bonding we've already experienced has already happened in a lot of ways. Last year, I think going through that bubble and the ups and downs of it, the majority is the same group, in a lot of ways, still here. That's important as we move forward here at a crucial time of the year. Absorbing one body, we should be able to assimilate that into this group without too much chaos, I guess, is the way to put it.

On what he's looking for from Hakanpaa: I want him to play the way he plays. If that's (bringing sandpaper) what he does, then he better do that here. We got him here because of that. We don't need him to do anything differently. We know what he's about, and I think we'll get to know him and maybe there's other things to his game that we can say 'Hey, you can do this.' But he better bring what we know he brings. That's why we got him.

Jani Hakanpaa

On when he found out about the trade, and what he heard from Aho about the Canes: The day of the trade, we flew into San Jose in the morning. I was having a pre-game meal when I got the call from Bob Murray that they traded me here. After that, everything happened real quick. I got a bunch of phone calls and tried to set everything up for me to get here as fast as possible and to sort all the things out we needed to. I got some good help with that, and it got me here fast, so that was nice.

As far as it goes with Sebastian, I know him. We used to play together back home in Finland. He said a lot of good things about this team. He said it's a really good group of guys, a hard-working team. It's an honor for me to be here and be part of this great hockey club.

On what he feels like he can add: I think I'm just going to bring the tenacity of being hard to play against. Be really solid on the back end, get that physicality up. That's what I've been trying to do and what I expect of myself in games. So I'm trying to bring that.

On playing with the Hurricanes' defensemen: It's going to be really nice. They have a really good D corps here. Last year in the playoffs, I actually watched a lot of the Hurricanes' game just because of the D corps, so it's going to be nice to get to play with them and then get to be around those guys every day and maybe I even learn something from them. Maybe I try to pick their brain to try and get something going my way to and learn from those great players. It's going to be fun to get out there with those guys.

On going from a team at the bottom of the standings to a Cup Contender: It gives you that little boost when you get to a great team like this that has a good chance to go a long



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way. You want to make sure you come in hot off the bat, work hard and try to help the team right off the get go here. Just do anything to help the team win some hockey games down the stretch here. Obviously everybody is in this business to win, so to have that chance here, it's unreal.

On getting a sense for how the team plays: You get the sense that these guys are working really hard together, working as a group of five out there all the time, trying to be aggressive and fast. So those are things that I picked up right off the bat, and I think that's pretty accurate about this team. So I'm looking forward to getting some games under me.

On his role and adjustments for the Hurricanes' system: System wise, I think it's going to be a really aggressive system, just high-paced, get the puck going up ice. There's a few adjustments in the D zone we went through this morning with the coaches that's a little different here than what we were used to doing back in Anaheim. There's a few different things I've got to work on there, but other than that, I don't really talk about the role yet. I just try to come here, be myself, play the game I play, and I think that's why I'm here. So just like I said, bring that physical part in there, be tenacious, work hard for the guy next to me, that's what I expect from myself, and I think that's what everybody expects from me too here.

On integrating during COVID times: I've never really been in this kind of situation before, but I think it's different, for sure. You're supposed to be on your own away from the rink, but I think we're going to make it work, and at least you get to see

the guys around the rink here and try to get to know them as fast as I can and make the transition as smooth as possible.

Sebastian Aho

On Jani Hakanpaa: First off, he's a team-first guy. He does everything for the team. He's a hard-working, honest player. Big, strong, fast. He's a great guy, so it's good to have him here.

On the Hurricanes' stretch run coming off two losses: We had a good meeting this morning about the last couple games and stuff like that. But that's history now. There's nothing we can do about it anymore. The way we look at it, we don't watch the standings, we don't watch what happened in the past, what's going to happen in the future. We want to look to tomorrow night against Nashville and we want to win that game. That's the main goal. We haven't and we won't look behind or past us.

On if he's given Hakanpaa any pointers: Yeah, I told him a couple places. I'm sure whenever he needs, he can ask me and I'll try to help him any way I can. I'm more than happy to help him.

On helping a new teammate in COVID times: Usually when we're on the road, you can go have dinner outside and you can't do that stuff right now. So obviously maybe that's a little bit harder, but then again, we practice a lot, we spend a lot of time at the rink together, so I'm sure he'll get into the team and everyone will welcome him in. Obviously I'll do everything I can do to help him out.

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Nashville Predators: Game Preview

Coming off of a less than stellar two games against the Red Wings, the Hurricanes look to bounce back against the Predators.

By Johnathan Kirkland

Carolina Hurricanes (27-10-4) vs. Nashville Predators (24-19-1)

2021 Regular Season Game 42
Thursday, April 15, 2021 - 7 p.m. ET
PNC Arena — Raleigh, NC

Watch: Bally Sports South
Listen: 99.9 The Fan

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The Carolina Hurricanes enter Thursday night's game against the Nashville Predators needing to get some much needed momentum back after two disappointing losses on Saturday and Monday to the last place Detroit Red Wings. The Hurricanes had the chance to separate themselves at the top of the Central Division, but instead find themselves once again in a three-way tie with the Tampa Bay Lightning and the Florida Panthers.

The Predators are coming off a 7-2 victory over the Lightning on Tuesday night, the worst loss of the season for the Lightning. Nashville is holding on to the fourth and final playoff spot in the Central by four points over the Chicago Blackhawks. They are only nine points back of the top three teams, including the Hurricanes.

Thursday night will also be the Hurricanes debut for defenseman Jani Hakanpaa, who Carolina acquired from the Anaheim Ducks at the trade deadline in exchange for Haydn Fleury. The Canes also received a 2022 sixth-round pick from Anaheim. Head coach Rod Brind'Amour and Don Waddell were both excited to bring in the 6-foot-5, 218-pound Finn into Raleigh for a variety of reasons. He is a physical, shutdown defenseman with a right-handed shot which the Hurricanes needed to shore up the back end of the defensive pairings alongside either Jake Bean or Jake Gardiner.

While it isn't time to panic, the Canes will hope to come out and take care of business and forget about the last two games quickly as they finish up their eight-game homestand on a high note.

Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Predators
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Category	Hurricanes	Predators
Record	27-10-4	24-19-1
Goals/Game	3.15	2.59
Goals Against/Game	2.44	2.79
Shots/Game	32.29	29.89
Face Off Win %	54.3%	51.8%
Power Play % (Rank)	28.2% (1st)	19.8% (17th)
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	83.3% (7th)	74.6% (28th)
ES Corsi For %	54.09%	50.99%
ES PDO	100.57	100.41
PIM/Game	07:04	09:28

Goaltender #1

Category	James Reimer	Juuse Saros
Record	14-5-1	15-7-0
Save %	0.907	.929
GAA	2.68	2.16

Goaltender #2

Category	Alex Nedeljkovic	Pekka Rinne
Record	9-4-2	9-12-1

•

Category	Alex Nedeljkovic	Pekka Rinne
Save %	.928	.902
GAA	1.98	2.97

Goaltender #3

Category	Petr Mrazek	Kasimir Kaskisuo
Record	4-1-1	0-0-0
Save %	.943	.000
GAA	1.47	0.00

Game Notes

- The Hurricanes are 4-0-0 against the Predators this season and have won 11 of their last 12 against them.
- Nino Niederreiter extended his point streak to three games on Monday with a goal against the Red Wings. He is third on the team with 15 goals this season.
- The Hurricanes are 3-2-1 on the current homestand. The next two games against Nashville will wrap up what is now tied for the second-longest homestand in franchise history of eight games. They had a nine game homestand back in 2002.
- Despite the two losses to the Red Wings, the Hurricanes are tied with Vegas for the second highest win percentage in the NHL (.707) behind only Colorado's .738.
- Steven Lorentz scored his first NHL goal against Nashville in a 4-2 win at Bridgestone Arena on March 2.
- Brett Pesce is one assist shy of 100 career assists.



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SportScan

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

1187076 Carolina Hurricanes

Here's what new Hurricanes defenseman Jani Hakanpaa brings to the team

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

APRIL 14, 2021 03:22 PM

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour summed up his first impression of Jani Hakanpaa in six words: "He's a big dude out there."

Hakanpaa put in his first practice with the Canes on Wednesday at PNC Arena after his trade Monday from the Anaheim Ducks. The defenseman was paired mostly with Jake Bean and No. 58, the jersey number Hakanpaa will wear, did have a physical presence on the ice.

Bean is listed at 6-foot-1 and 186 pounds, which might be generous. Hakanpaa is listed at 6-5 and 218, which might be a little understated. He is a big dude.

For Hakanpaa, it was a blur of 48 hours since the trade. He said he was in San Jose and at a pregame meal when he got the call Monday from Anaheim general manager Bob Murray. He soon hopped a flight to Raleigh, went through COVID-19 testing and other protocols, took part in the Hurricanes official team photo taken Wednesday morning and then skated with his new team.

"Everything happened real quick," Hakanpaa said on a Wednesday media call.

The Canes traded defenseman Haydn Fleury, who was popular with his teammates, for Hakanpaa and a 2022 draft pick. He gives the Canes another right-shot D-man, which they wanted to balance the D pairings, but also a rugged stay-at-home type who can be a body-banger, much like defenseman Joel Edmundson was for Carolina last season.

"I think I'll bring the tenacity of playing hard and being hard to play against out there," Hakanpaa said. "Be really solid on the back end, get

that physicality up. That's what I've been trying to do and expect of myself in games."

Brind'Amour expects it, too. Hakanpaa has 168 hits in 42 games this season, second among NHL defensemen. That's a big part of what he does.

"I want him to play the way he plays," Brind'Amour said Wednesday. "We got him here because of that. We don't need him to do anything differently. We know what he's about.

"I think we'll get to know him and maybe there's other things to his game where we can say, 'Hey, you can do this.' But he better bring what we know he brings."

The Nashville Predators will be the first opposing team to learn what Hakanpaa has added to the Canes lineup. The Preds (24-19-1) face the Canes Thursday and Saturday at PNC Arena, and will come in for the two games surging, clawing for playoff position in the Central Division, having gone 8-2-0 in their past 10 games.

Canes center Sebastian Aho expects Hakanpaa to be an easy fit for the Canes. The two played together for Karpat in Finland's Liiga in 2015-16 after Hakanpaa returned to Finland from North America, and Aho is helping his fellow Finn with the transition.

"He's a team-first guy," Aho said Wednesday. "He does everything for the team. He's a hard-working, honest player. Big, strong, fast. He's a great guy, so it's good to have him here."

Hakanpaa, 29, does face some challenges in making the move during the pandemic. He has played against just West Division teams with the Ducks, so must get a quick feel for the teams in the Central in the final 15 games of the regular season. He also must try to get a feel for his new coaches and teammates at a time when COVID restrictions prevent much bonding time.

"I've never really been in this kind of situation before," Hakanpaa said. "I think it's different, for sure. You're supposed to be on your own away from the rink but I think we're going to make it work. At least you get to see the guys around the rink and try to get to know them as fast as I can and make the transition as smooth as possible."



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And make his presence felt on the ice as soon as he can. Obtaining Hakanpaa was the Canes' only move at the NHL trade deadline, which Brind'Amour liked.

"Absorbing one body, we should be able to assimilate that into this group without too much chaos," Brind'Amour said.

News Observer LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187077 Carolina Hurricanes

Should the Hurricanes have done more at the NHL trade deadline?

By Sara Civian

Apr 14, 2021

So, the 2021 trade deadline has officially come and gone. The Canes had been hearing a litany of teams out on deals that could've potentially bolstered their forward group or added a sought-out right-handed defenseman, and that narrowed down to "10 or 12" more serious talks come Monday, according to general manager Don Waddell. Right at the deadline, they decided to swap left-handed depth defenseman Haydn Fleury for right-handed depth defenseman Jani Hakanpaa and a sixth-round pick.

CanesLand's opinions of this move have been all over the map, from sadness about parting with a homegrown first-rounder who was growing into an NHL regular role, to being underwhelmed considering the Hurricanes' position as potential Cup contenders and some of the talks they were rumored to be in on, to understanding that with several crucial contracts looming they couldn't take a big contract on, to angst looking at the moves the other contenders in the Central Division made.

Consecutive losses to the Detroit Red Wings — one being the team's worst loss of the season — didn't do much to quell anxieties around here.

And now we're in the midst of a rare two-day break in this grueling schedule, with maybe too much time on our hands to think about a pair of tough losses and an uneventful trade deadline.

There's no doubt this is some bad timing, but let's try to put all of our feelings and biases aside to answer one question honestly: Should the Hurricanes have done more?

The case for the depth deal

My golden rule of in-season trade deadlines (and life in general) is to remember that doing the most doesn't necessarily mean doing the best. Boston's Rick Nash deal and Columbus' Ryan Dzingel deal come to mind as recent examples. The Hurricanes have assembled a group they like with slow-burning tweaks over the past two years, and the worst thing would be making a move just to make a move when the market wasn't that great.

Waddell explained in late March the difficulties of the in-season trade deadline during the COVID-19 pandemic:

"It used to be you'd go to your ownership and say, 'Hey, I'm gonna add this player who is gonna cost me \$3 million.' ... But if we won the first round back then, that would have brought us in \$8 million. Well, that's out the window this year because of the way finances are working and attendance. So if you're gonna pick up a lot of money and give up assets, you gotta really believe that you're truly one of the teams that can win the Stanley Cup. The teams that are trying just to get into the playoffs — it used to be a big economic factor for them just to get in, so they were willing to pay a price. Now I don't think I don't see that happening because, you know, I'm gonna give up assets, take on money, and I still might miss the playoffs this year. The way that the setup is. So I think

we're looking at this: There will be some deals made, some prices paid, but not like years before."

He was basically right, and this thought process factored into the Hurricanes' decisions at the deadline. Upcoming contract negotiations had to, as well.

Per CapFriendly, the Canes have \$2,338,353 in projected cap space this season, and that's without placing Teuvo Teravainen on long-term injured reserve. Looking forward to the offseason, they have \$29,426,417 in cap space in 2021-22, but that's only with 11 players under contract — and doesn't include substantial average annual values that will have to be paid to restricted free agent Andrei Svechnikov and unrestricted free agent Dougie Hamilton if he's re-signed, not to mention that all three of the team's goalies are set to be free agents (Alex Nedeljkovic RFA, Petr Mrazek and James Reimer UFA).

And there's non-cap money to spend, too. It'll take cash to sign head coach Rod Brind'Amour to a long-term deal, which the Hurricanes are hoping to do and say they are close to finishing up.

The wild card here is what happens with Hamilton. If the Canes manage to lock him up in the offseason, the lack of a trade deadline splash is much more understandable. If they let him walk and keep the cap space, you start to wonder.

There's also the expansion draft — we've gone over how keeping Fleury and exposing him would've probably meant a reunion between him and Ron Francis, aka the man who drafted him. If you trade him at the deadline, at least you aren't effectively "losing him for nothing." Obviously, the Hurricanes have to expose someone good and most likely lose someone good no matter what, but this might throw a big wrench in Francis' strategy.

But ...

The Hurricanes doing a deadline doggy paddle instead of a splash isn't happening in a vacuum. Many division rivals — and contenders around the league — made bigger moves.

If there is any doubt that Teravainen will return for the playoffs, the Hurricanes should have tried to add something up front, and they should probably be operating under the assumption that he won't return if there's any doubt. They addressed a few team needs — right-handed defense, anchor for mobile defensemen, physicality — with their move. But in the big picture, it is swapping one depth defenseman for another. Meanwhile, their biggest competition in the Lightning got the best right-handed defenseman available in Savard and will regain one of the league's best forwards in Kucherov. And what happens if one of the Hurricanes' top-four defensemen gets hurt?

The Canes have also been scoring fewer goals since Teravainen's injury, and while ebbs and flows are inevitable throughout a season, this is a little thing that could turn into a big thing under the microscope of the playoffs.

I'm generally conservative when it comes to trade-deadline moves — the risk is often higher than the reward. But when you look around at the moves some of the Hurricanes' most difficult rivals made to improve, you'd better hope Teravainen's back for the playoffs.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187122 Nashville Predators

Why Fox Sports Tennessee is now Bally Sports Tennessee: What Predators, Grizzlies fans need to know

WILL BACKUS | Nashville Tennessean



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2021

Looking for Fox Sports Tennessee?

You may have a tough time, given that it doesn't technically exist anymore. It's now known as Bally Sports Tennessee.

All that means is the name is different — the channel listings, dependent upon the television provider, are still the same as before. Bally Sports is included on AT&T Now regional channels, while Dish Network and Direct TV offer it via satellite.

The change comes after Sinclair Broadcast Group, the owner of the 19 regional sports networks, reached an agreement in November with casino operator Bally's for \$88 million, according to Forbes. Under the 10-year agreement, Bally's gets the naming rights to the regional channels.

The Fox Sports GO App will update to the Bally Sports app. You may need to re-verify your television provider when this happens. If you had Fox Sports before, you'll have Bally Sports now.

This is the primary way to watch Nashville Predators and Memphis Grizzlies games, unless they're otherwise broadcast on a national network like NBC or ESPN.

Tennessean LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187123 Nashville Predators

How Nashville Predators veered from path toward rebuild to become hottest team in NHL

WILL BACKUS | Nashville Tennessean

No one would have blamed the Nashville Predators for giving up.

Their start to the season was listless. They'd fall behind early in games, just to come back and make it interesting — and in most cases only to lose.

That pattern led Nashville to an 11-17 record, and the idea of making the NHL playoffs was a mere pipe dream. Instead, there was talk about a complete rebuild and which players were expendable at the trade deadline, not even four years after the franchise had played for a Stanley Cup.

But by late March, the dynamic began to shift. The Preds started to pick up win after win, closing out the month with seven victories in eight games.

Now, they might be the hottest team in the NHL.

On Tuesday night, the Predators demolished the Tampa Bay Lightning — the defending Stanley Cup champions who are tied with Carolina for the top spot in the Central Division — in a 7-2 rout in Bridgestone Arena.

It was their 13th win in the past 16 games.

The Predators are firmly in the postseason hunt with a 24-19-1 record, 49 points and the fourth-place spot in the Central — four points ahead of the Chicago Blackhawks and eight points ahead of the Dallas Stars.

"There's a lot to play for," Nashville coach John Hynes said. "We're in a fight for the fourth playoff spot. You're seeing games where teams have a lot to play for."

With 12 games to go in the regular season, Nashville is far from a lock for the postseason. The top four teams from each of the four divisions make

it, which means if the season ended today the Predators would have a shot at the Stanley Cup.

Here's a look at how the Preds turned their season around:

No pressure

Nashville hasn't exorcised all its issues during its hot streak.

The same problems of struggling to put teams away, or falling behind early, still persist. But the difference now is the Preds are pushing past some mental barriers.

Six of those 13 wins have been by one goal. In that same span, Nashville is 4-0 in games that have gone to overtime or shootout.

"When you win, it's a little easier, it's a lot more fun," Nashville captain Roman Josi said on Tuesday. "You've got to put in the work, and that's when you get the bounces. That's when the confidence gets bigger and bigger ... I think our work ethic is the biggest part."

Juuse Saros' incredible pace

A big part of Nashville's success in clutch moments has been the play of goalie Juuse Saros.

The 25-year-old has appeared in 12 games since Nashville started its current run with a 4-1 win against Tampa Bay on March 15.

He has allowed two or fewer goals in 14 out of his last 15 starts, with a 12-2 record and 95.5% save percentage during the streak — the top mark in the NHL.

"He makes very difficult saves, but they don't look as hard," Hynes said earlier this month. "A guy like Juuse, he's smart, he's cerebral, he understands, he reads the play. He makes big-time saves for us."

Youth movement

Nashville's resurgence is more impressive when considering the injury problems.

Take Tuesday's win against Tampa Bay, in which 14 players were out due to injury. General manager David Poile said Monday that Nashville has 34 players on the roster, but has struggled to get 20 healthy for each game.

While this could have been a handicap, the Preds have found a few younger players who have stepped up.

Eeli Tolvanen, a 21-year-old wing, has seen his time on ice increase significantly, playing at least 15 minutes in every game but two since March 15. He has missed Nashville's last three games with a lower body injury.

It's no coincidence that during Nashville's six-game win streak from March 21-30, Tolvanen had at least one point in each game.

Tanner Jeannot played just under 11 minutes against Dallas on April 11 in his second career NHL appearance. He made several checks that helped Nashville gain crucial possession time.

In the win against Tampa Bay on Tuesday, the 23-year-old left wing scored his first NHL goal.

"Every night, I just try to do everything I can to help the team win," Jeannot said. "If that's make some hits or get in on that forecheck and be first on the puck and just be hard to play against, that's what I'm going to do. ... Team's rolling right now. We're having fun and we're doing good."

"We've just got to keep going."

Tennessean LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187124 Nashville Predators



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Predators post-trade deadline expansion draft outlook: Would the Kraken want Ryan Johansen or Matt Duchene?

By Adam Vingan and Ryan S. Clark

Apr 14, 2021

David Poile sounded annoyed. For months, the Predators general manager heard defenseman Mattias Ekholm's name thrown around in trade rumors, which he claimed Monday were unfounded.

"My next conversation with Mattias will be after this year about how he thinks he fits into the future of this hockey club and whether he would like to be here longer, not whether we want to trade him," Poile said after the NHL trade deadline passed.

Poile was even more unambiguous about his plan for Ekholm in the upcoming Seattle Kraken expansion draft.

"I'm not losing Mattias Ekholm in expansion, if that's what you're asking me," he said. "I've got that covered."

If we take Poile at his word, then we know of two defensemen who will be safe from the Kraken's clutches July 21. Captain Roman Josi has a no-movement clause. Juuse Saros, a restricted free agent this summer, will fill the goaltender requirement.

From there, it is assumed that Poile will also protect defensemen Ryan Ellis and Dante Fabbro, meaning that the Predators would opt for the eight-skater protection plan, just as they did ahead of the Vegas Golden Knights expansion draft in 2017.

Poile loves Ellis, whose contract, which carries a manageable \$6.25 million cap hit, runs through 2027. Although Ellis has been prone to injury in recent seasons, the Predators value him too much to lose him for nothing in return. Ellis' name popped up in the rumor mill as the deadline approached, but a trade seems unlikely.

That leaves four spots for forwards. Viktor Arvidsson and Filip Forsberg are no-brainers at this point. Prospects Eeli Tolvanen and Philip Tomasino are exempt, according to CapFriendly.

Another forward who does not need to be factored into the Predators' expansion plans is pending free agent Mikael Granlund. Free agency opens July 28, so the Predators can wait until after the expansion draft to re-sign him.

"If he's interested, we're interested," Poile said. "He's certainly played really, really well. There's a lot of things in the offseason, starting with expansion, that we all have to deal with. Once again, he's going to be an unrestricted free agent, but I would have to say that where we stand in terms of our relationship, his performance with our team, our happiness with him, his happiness with us, without exactly asking him, I would say it's probably at an all-time high."

Now comes the intriguing part: deciding what to do with \$8 million centers Matt Duchene and Ryan Johansen.

The Kraken are required to put together a roster with a minimum cap hit of \$48.9 million, which is 60 percent of the upper limit. Four years ago, when the Golden Knights had to reach \$43.8 million, their largest individual cap hit was Marc-Andre Fleury's \$5.75 million.

Duchene and Johansen have struggled to live up to their expensive contracts, so the Kraken would need to be incentivized to take one of them.

Here is where things get complicated for Poile should he go that route. How does he, or any other GM, go about mending fences with two of his highest-paid players if he exposes them?

More importantly, is Poile confident that the Kraken would be willing to absorb either contract given the projected top-six forward market ahead of the expansion draft?

Poile is not going to be the only GM who will attempt to use the expansion draft as a means to offload a larger contract. For instance, CapFriendly projects that the Tampa Bay Lightning will be \$3.5 million over the cap ahead of next season. That will force Lightning GM Julien BriseBois to shed salary. One way to do that would be exposing Tyler Johnson, which would allow the Lightning to save \$5 million annually over the next three years.

Kraken GM Ron Francis knows that, which gives him leverage. He could take Johnson with the understanding that it is going to cost BriseBois something of value — a roster player, draft pick, prospect or some combination of those assets. Is Poile willing to do the same if it means removing such a substantial cap figure from their ledger?

Other top-six options will be available. Johnson joins New York Islanders winger Jordan Eberle (\$5.5 million) and Philadelphia Flyers winger James van Riemsdyk (\$7 million) as potential expansion candidates who can play on the Kraken's top two lines and cost less than Duchene and Johansen.

The landscape is ever-changing. The Pittsburgh Penguins, for example, will soon have to consider new contracts for Kasperii Kapanen, Kris Letang and Evgeni Malkin. Would they protect Jared McCann (\$2.94 million) instead of Jason Zucker (\$5.5 million) in order to save toward those negotiations?

And those are just the expansion-draft options. The Kraken will approach the draft with free agency in mind. Last year, the flat cap required most prominent free agents to accept reduced salaries. Those parameters are going to stay in place this summer, which could allow the Kraken to offer contracts that might not be available elsewhere to forwards such as Mike Hoffman, Zach Hyman, David Krejci and Kyle Palmieri, among others.

Francis was asked Tuesday what it would take for the Kraken to consider taking on a contract with a high annual average value.

"It's situation by situation," he told reporters. "It's going to depend on the player. It's going to depend on the dollar amount of the contract, the AAV, the term of the contract. It's going to depend upon what that price is. We're certainly open to having those discussions, but it's almost a case-by-case evaluation as to whether it makes sense for us or not, short-term or long-term."

The Predators forwards who will be most appealing to the Kraken are Calle Jarnkrok (\$2 million), Luke Kunin (\$2.3 million) and Colton Sissons (\$2,857,143), all of whom are versatile and cost-effective.

At 23, Kunin, acquired in an October 2020 trade, is the youngest and under team control. Jarnkrok, who has had four 30-point seasons, is more productive than Sissons, but Sissons, signed through 2026, comes with cost certainty. Between Jarnkrok and Sissons, the former has more overall impact.

The Predators would be wise to protect two of those three and expose Duchene and Johansen in the hope that the Kraken would see value in one of them. Poile will have to be prepared to sweeten the deal with a draft pick and/or prospect and possibly retain salary.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187167 Tampa Bay Lightning

With critical stretch ahead, Lightning look to rebound

Frustrated by its effort Tuesday against Nashville, Tampa Bay prepares to face division heavyweights Florida and Carolina.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2021

Coming off their worst loss of the year Tuesday night in Nashville, forward Tyler Johnson and the Lightning hope to get back to form Thursday as they open a four-game stretch against division rivals Florida and Carolina. Johnson is in the middle of an 11-game goal drought.

By Eduardo A. Encina

TAMPA — Whether the Lightning's 7-2 loss Tuesday in Nashville will represent rock bottom for them remains to be seen, but Tampa Bay has little time to sit on its worst effort of the season.

Head coach Jon Cooper chalked the game up as a one-off. Take a book, open to a page, and turn it, he said afterward. "That's how you do it."

The Lightning still entered Wednesday tied for the Central Division lead with the Carolina Hurricanes and Florida Panthers (all with 58 points) with 14 games remaining in the regular season. But the struggles Tampa Bay has experienced over its past 10 games come as it enters a critical part of its schedule.

The Lightning return home to play the Panthers and Hurricanes the next four games, pivotal head-to-head matchups against teams jockeying for the division lead.

The Lightning lost just six times in their first 32 games but have fallen six times in their last 10. Tuesday marked the second time in five games they lost by four goals or more and the fourth time in five games they've allowed four goals or more.

But the loss to the Predators was different, because the Lightning questioned their effort — and rightfully so. On a night they should have been rejuvenated by the acquisition of David Savard and the return of Mitchell Stephens after a two-month injury absence, there was too much sloppy play and too many idle feet.

"There was only one team playing (Tuesday)," Lightning defenseman Ryan McDonagh said. "And (the Predators) were quicker than us and more detailed in their structure. That was one of the worst performances I've seen in a Lightning uniform by our group. Tough time of the year to do that when we get a lot of excitement there with a new addition and guys coming back.

"But at the end of the day, we've got to understand that we've got a lot of work to do if we want to at least give ourselves a chance to make anything special out of this year. Not to say I don't have a lot of belief in this group. There's no question what we're capable of. But (Tuesday), it was an absolute embarrassment."

The Lightning allowed five first-period rushes, and three resulted in Nashville goals against backup goaltender Curtis McElhinney. The Lightning are just 3-6-1 this season without starter Andrei Vasilevskiy (25-6-1) in net.

The Lightning's lapses — turnovers leading to odd-man rushes and other scoring opportunities — continued. Combine that with a season-worst 31-percent faceoff percentage that had them chasing possessions much of the game and the continued goal droughts of Anthony Cirelli (12 games), Tyler Johnson (11 games), Ondrej Palat (nine games) and Alex Killorn (eight games without a point), and the Lightning had a lot to work through after the game.

"It's pretty quiet in there," said McDonagh, who foreshadowed a presumptive team meeting after the game. "I think guys need to realize and understand that we're missing some two big pieces there with Stammer (Steven Stamkos, out the past two games with an injury) and Kuch (Nikita Kucherov, who has missed the entire regular season following hip surgery), but this is our group. This is the group that's going to take us as far as it's going to take us.

"... There's no more additions gonna be made. There's no more moves to be made. It's up to this group to find its identity back again and

understand what made us successful last year. There's no question we've got the pieces to do it, but we need to slowly start building our game here and get it back to where it needs to be to at least give ourselves a chance."

All will be forgotten with a strong week against the Panthers and Hurricanes, and Cooper has always had faith in his team's resolve. Its resiliency will be tested, as well, as it tries to rebound from its lowest point of the season.

"It doesn't happen all that frequently to us, and this team's growing together," Cooper said. "We've done a lot of good things together. A lot of bad came out (Tuesday)... But I love our group, I love our team.

"We're going to be okay. We've just got to move on from this, and it's often times when you stumble like this and (make) a lot of mental mistakes, which is what it was, sometimes it flips on the urgency switch. So, hopefully that switch gets flipped on (Thursday against Florida)."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187104

Florida Panthers

FHN+Frank Vatrano building reputation as 'Mr. Clutch' for Florida Panthers

Published 15 hours ago on April 14, 2021

By George Richards

Joel Quenneville was on the Joe Rose Show Wednesday morning and the Florida Panthers coach was asked what nickname he would give Frank Vatrano.

He said he likes "Frank The Tank," from the Will Farrell character in 'Old School,' but there is one which really seems to fit.

"You can call him 'Mr. Overtime' or 'Mr. Clutch'," Quenneville said.

"That was a great shot and he has scored some big goals for us. Those extra points add up and he has helped keep us in that race we're in right now."

This season, Vatrano has indeed been 'Mr. Clutch' for the Panthers.

On Tuesday night, Vatrano got his fifth game-winning goal and third in overtime as he teed off on a pass from Gus Forsling to beat the Stars 3-2.

Of his 14 goals this season — which is third-best on the team — 11 of them have come in the latter stages of games.

Vatrano's 11 goals scored in the third period or OT is tied for the league league.

The guy digs scoring goals, especially meaningful ones.

"I love scoring goals," said Vatrano, who joined Olli Jokinen and Mike Hoffman as the only Florida players to have three OT goals in the same season.

"It's nice to been put in some of those opportunities sometimes, it's just luck of the draw with me putting them in at the right times right now. I'll take them when I can get them."

When the Panthers traded for Vatrano in 2018, it was a deal looking toward the future and not necessarily to help the team right away.

Vatrano, at the time of the trade, had an injured ankle and could not play for a few weeks after arriving in South Florida.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Regardless, the Panthers were looking further down the road when it came to a talented winger with a great shot who couldn't find a spot with his hometown Bruins.

It's a trade which has paid off handsomely for the Panthers.

"He's a young player who is still improving," Dale Tallon said at the time of the trade. "He has the ability to support our core group right now and for many years to come."

Indeed.

A former UMass standout who went undrafted but signed with the Bruins, Vatrano came to the Panthers with a bit of a chip on his shoulder.

The Panthers were going to give his career a new lease on life after he spent a lot of time with the Bruins either moving between the AHL and Boston or being a healthy scratch.

"Boston is a team that took a chance on me. I went undrafted, was a free agent, but got a chance to play in the NHL right away," Vatrano said the season after the trade.

"Sometimes things don't work out, and I knew there was a chance I would have to move. Florida has been great to me ever since I got there.

"I have had the chance to play with some great players, and the style we play fits me perfectly. It's been a great move all around."

Vatrano knows he can play, he knows his shot is as dangerous as they come.

The Panthers saw that dangerous shot soon after his arrival.

"Spending time in practice with him every day, seeing his knack around the net and his shot and release — it's high-end," then-coach Bob Boughner said in 2019.

Working on the other parts of his game, however, has taken some time.

Vatrano has moved throughout the lineup, Florida loving his speed and his shot.

On Tuesday, he was put up on the top power play unit and he will get even more opportunity as the season rolls on.

Right now, everything seems to be coming together.

When the Panthers play at Tampa Bay Thursday, it will be a battle for first place as Florida, the Lightning and Carolina are all tied with 58 points.

Those three points in overtime from Vatrano's goals have certainly helped.

"He does have the flare," Quenneville said. "He does make some nice shots, we want to shoot a lot and Frankie's got a great shot.

"He moved up on that power-play unit, so he's getting even more of an opportunity to play and use that weapon of his. I thought he had a good game overall and I thought that line was very effective."

Florida Hockey Now LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187195 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Miller stands up for Canucks with brave, honest concern for team's safety

Iain MacIntyre April 14, 2021, 9:21 PM

VANCOUVER – Professional hockey is hard. Players all say that.

They lose teeth and break bones and literally bleed for the game. It takes bravery to play in the National Hockey League.

As brave as J.T. Miller is, so willing to be first to the corner, to crash the net, slide in front of a slapshot or even fight for a teammate, the most courageous thing the Vancouver Canucks forward has done was speak truth to power on Wednesday when he said his team's post-COVID schedule is dangerous and counter to the NHL's stated objective of making players' safety and their families' safety the top priority.

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Many will frame his 15 minutes of blunt honesty and human fear during a virtual press conference as a blast at the NHL for handing the Canucks, hounded by the worst COVID-19 outbreak of the pandemic season, a revised schedule of 19 games in 31 nights starting Friday against the Edmonton Oilers.

Don't be naïve.

The blame for this schedule is shared jointly by the NHL and its Players' Association, which through its financial partnership with the league also benefits from seeing all contracts fulfilled by the completion of a 56-game schedule by all 31 teams.

And the Canucks, or at least their owners who will lose millions in this season without fans in Canada, are also a third party to the revised schedule that asks Vancouver players to open the hardest month of their careers with five games in seven nights, led off by back-to-back sacrifices against Connor McDavid and Auston Matthews.

Remaining Time -1:55

Canucks return to action but don't expect players to be at full strength

As NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Hockey News' Ken Campbell in a Wednesday email: "The team wants to finish its season. We aren't twisting arms here. Everything — including resumption date and various other critical aspects of their remaining schedule — was done entirely collaboratively and with Club input and consent."

It's business. But it doesn't make it right.

"It's kind of frustrating if I'm being 100 per cent honest with you," Miller told reporters in a Zoom call. "We've tried to talk about the number one priority is players' health and their families' safety, and it's almost impossible to achieve that with what they have asked us to do here on our return.

"I talk to my teammates a lot, and this hasn't been, obviously, that easy. For them to try to come back and play... it's going to be very challenging and not very safe, if you're asking me. And I'm sure there are other people that would agree with that."

Remaining Time -1:28

Miller says Canucks remaining schedule is 'a little bit crazy'

Twenty-five members of the organization, including head coach Travis Green and 19 players from the NHL roster, were ambushed by COVID-19, starting with winger Adam Gaudette's initial positive result on March 30 near the end of what was supposed to be a six-day schedule break for the Canucks.

All but three of these players — Nils Hoglander, Nate Schmidt and Jake Virtanen — come out of protocol this week and should be available to play Friday against Edmonton and Saturday against the Toronto Maple Leafs, pending mandatory cardiac screening and ramped-up physical activity.

But the team will have only one full practice, on Thursday, before being thrown back into the Canadian Division playoff race against healthy teams already sprinting for the regular-season finish line. The Canucks last played on March 24.

The few players, like Miller, who didn't get sick have been isolating at home with Rogers Arena closed until two days ago.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"Even for me, skating a couple of times, my lungs are screaming and definitely not in game shape at all right now from sitting around and not doing much," Miller said. "I couldn't imagine what these guys (who have had COVID) are going to have to go through to get back and be ready to play at a high level. We're playing two of the best players in the entire world on Friday another one of the best teams in the league on Saturday. I never thought I'd be in this scenario in my career.

"I think it's just a little kind of crazy. I know that everybody's got a job to do, but to expect pretty much our entire team to be ready to play on one practice and a pre-game skate is a little bit hard to comprehend. This is going to be a really tough challenge.

"It's unfortunate that we're even in a scenario like this but, like I keep alluding to in my mind, I guess it is our job. We have to be prepared to play. But at the same time. . . guys coming off of three weeks of rest and two weeks of having COVID, one practice isn't even close to near enough time to come back and perform at a high level. Brutally honestly, I think that we're going to need more time than this to come back and play hockey. Even the guys that didn't get it, we're not ready to play."

But play they will. Daly pointed out to The Hockey News that the Canucks' schedule is "challenging but certainly not unprecedented."

Remaining Time -1:15

How condensed schedule will affect Pearson & Canucks

The New Jersey Devils and Buffalo Sabres, who suffered outbreaks nearly as big as the Canucks' after playing each other in a super-spreader doubleheader at the end of January, emerged from similar shutdowns with similar schedules. Buffalo played 19 games in its first 32 days back, while New Jersey had 18 games in 31 days. Of course, the Sabres also then went on an 18-game losing streak while the Devils won their first two games back before going 2-10-2.

The Canucks are planning for attrition. They know that although players will recover from COVID-19 and be well enough to play, some will be unable in their weakened condition to withstand the brutal intensity of the schedule.

Stuck at 16-18-3, the Canucks were 10 points out of playoff spot Wednesday but now have games in hand on the five teams above them in the North Division.

"I hope that people won't take this the wrong way because I'm a very competitive guy and when I go on the ice, I really want to win," Miller said. "But at the same time, this doesn't have to do with hockey right now for our team. I'm beating a dead horse for saying this so many times, but it's about the health and safety of our players and our players' families and their children. This isn't about making the playoffs for us at this point.

"This doesn't have to do with me not wanting to play there (in the playoffs) or not believing in our team. This is a very extreme scenario, and it's dangerous to a lot of our players, so I want to make sure that our priorities are in the right spot."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187196 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Ducharme facing tough decisions to spark Canadiens' team speed

Eric Engels April 15, 2021, 12:58 AM

MONTREAL — It took a game like this one to confirm one of the biggest issues the Montreal Canadiens have had for the better part of this season. A game that saw the Calgary Flames, playing the second half of a back-to-back that involved travel, come to the Bell Centre and beat the rested Canadiens to nearly every loose puck.

They beat them in the corners, they beat them in front of both nets and beat them 4-1 on the scoreboard to reduce Montreal's lead on that fourth and final playoff spot in the North Division to just four points.

Granted, the Canadiens have three games in hand and four more games to play against the Flames, and just one or two wins would all but nullify any hope Calgary gained with this resounding win.

But we digress.

Prior to the game, we asked Flames coach Darryl Sutter what challenge the Canadiens posed to his group, and his answer was extremely revealing in what he did and didn't say.

"They're a real veteran team," Sutter started. "A lot of savvy and experience, and that in itself is a challenge for us. So that's what we'll try and handle tonight."

But not Montreal's speed, which used to be at the heart of this team's system but was so obviously lacking in this loss to a Flames team that's done anything but burn up the North this season. A Flames team skating on tired legs, no less.

Canadiens coach Dominique Ducharme was absolutely right in his recognition that the DNA has been altered — with the addition of slower players like Joel Edmundson, Corey Perry and Eric Staal among others — and doubly so when he said the team is still faster than it showed in this game.

But it's impossible to miss the connection between the general inconsistency of the Canadiens throughout this entire season and this change at the heart of their identity. Because opposing coaches used to talk about the team the way Brett Kulak did following this loss, and no one is saying this now.

"We're a fast team," said Kulak. "We're in your face, we don't give you any time and space and we're not a fun team to play against. We don't let you make plays, we make it a hard night on you and we pretty much skate you up and down the rink and we capitalize on our chances when other teams turn the puck over because we're good positionally, we have good sticks and we have guys who can put the puck in the net."

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

Sutter hit it on the head with his pre-game comments. The Canadiens are a veteran group, filled with Stanley Cup winners and key players over the age of 33, and that is a blessing in many ways but also a curse in one specific way.

They haven't handled the compacted schedule particularly well, even if it would present a challenge to a younger, faster team. And their ability to consistently execute Ducharme's system, which demands five guys playing in close support in all three zones — and Claude Julien's system before it, which largely depended on a lot of the same things — has certainly been hampered by their affected energy level.

But it's also unquestionably been hindered by the Canadiens' lack of speed.

It's not the main feature of leading goal scorer Tyler Toffoli's game.

Ditto for Nick Suzuki, who finished minus-3 against the Flames and said that even though he likes his game better now than he did over a recent rough patch, it's "not at where I think it should be."

Jesper Kotkaniemi has been flying. Tomas Tatar and Phillip Danault, too. But it takes more than that, and as Ducharme said, the Canadiens don't have enough players "playing their way and to their potential," including some of the faster ones.

"We have to dictate the pace," said Jeff Petry, who has been great for most the season but currently qualifies as one of those players. "They're a team that wants to get in and cycle the forecheck. We need to do a better job at getting picks, holding guys up and outnumbering them down low. I think tonight we were slow to support and slow to be the second guy in, and they had numbers and they sustained pressure on the forecheck. It's all over the ice — we need to work better as a group of five."

And Ducharme needs to help the Canadiens do that, and not just by drawing things up on the white board.

He has some hard choices to make. Choices that are particularly challenging for an interim rookie head coach who's in charge of a veteran group.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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31 Thoughts: The Podcast

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

But Ducharme's future with the Canadiens will depend on his ability to assert his authority to help mitigate the issue at hand. Because even if the Canadiens didn't compete well against Calgary, even if they didn't execute well, there were personnel decisions that exacerbated why it looked like such a mismatch.

Ducharme needs to be able to see the Canadiens aren't faster with Shea Weber playing a team-high 26 shifts.

We know the captain shows up to play every night, that he puts in the work on every single shift and that he said the other day, when he was asked about load management, that he'd play double the amount if they let him. But we also know he'll need to be leaned on when the chips are down and the whistles are put away, when his skill set will shine through most, and there are 16 games to go before we get there.

Weber has struggled for much of this season while averaging only two seconds less per game than team leader Petry. He's an old 35 considering what he's put his body through over the years and the injuries he's dealt with since he joined the Canadiens in 2016, and being overtaxed in this condensed schedule is not bringing out the best in him.

That much has been clear since February, and it was strikingly clear in the third period of this game, when Weber first tried to clear the zone with a cross-ice pass to no one and then planted one right on Josh Leivo's stick for the 3-1 goal that broke his team's back with just over seven minutes to play.

Meanwhile, Weber's not the only veteran contributing to the speed deficit.

Staal was acquired to bring some much-needed experience to the young centre line of the Canadiens, but this team doesn't become faster playing him for a full minute more than speedster Paul Byron and four minutes more than Artturi Lehkonen, as was the case against the Flames. The Canadiens don't become faster with Joel Armia subbing in for Jake Evans. And they're most certainly not a faster team when a bullet like Kulak is playing just eight seconds more than Xavier Ouellet, who was so clearly behind the pace of play against Calgary.

These are things within Ducharme's control. He'll have to decide where to place Armia and whether or not Staal should be dressing instead of Evans. He'll have an equally tough choice to make on Kulak when Jon Merrill and Erik Gustafsson — depth defencemen acquired at the trade deadline who are both slower than Kulak — emerge from their mandatory quarantines next week.

The other stuff will sort itself out with some key players coming back from injury both soon and down the line, and perhaps also with another one coming up from the Laval Rocket.

Ben Chiarot may be known for his brute strength and physicality, but he's an excellent skater who will make the Canadiens faster when he returns from a fractured hand and replaces Ouellet (perhaps as early as Friday). Brendan Gallagher, who's nursing a broken thumb, will hopefully be well enough to help the team's speed significantly once the playoffs roll around. And 20-year-old Cole Caufield is just waiting for an opportunity to provide a spark this team desperately needs.

The rest boils down to effort and execution.

"We're good when we're fast, when we move our feet, when we're quickly on the puck, when we kill plays quickly and win our battles," said Ducharme.

The Canadiens weren't doing any of that in this game and they got what they deserved, as Ducharme also noted.

He can't change the composition of the roster, but he's going to have to do more to get what he wants out of it.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187197

Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jacob Markstrom keeps momentum going as Flames chase playoff hopes

Eric Francis

Minutes after playing his second game in as many nights, Jacob Markstrom sat at the podium without the aid of medical assistance or an IV.

A small miracle in the eyes of many in the hockey world who have come to somehow believe it's simply far too taxing to ask a netminder to play twice in 24 hours.

"I feel pretty good," confirmed Markstrom when asked if he was exhausted after posting back-to-back wins in Toronto and Montreal on consecutive nights.

Good thing, as the 31-year-old veteran almost certainly has 13 more consecutive starts ahead.

As long as the Calgary Flames are playing meaningful hockey games, you can bet Darryl Sutter will turn to the team's prized free agent every single night.

Remaining Time -3:51

How Flames kept playoff hopes alive with win over Canadiens

He essentially did it with Miikka Kiprusoff in his last go-round in Calgary, he did it with Jonathan Quick in L.A. and he'll do it again to round out this season.

Not only is it the right thing to do, it's the only thing to do given the departure of David Rittich and the magnitude of the games ahead.

"Well, we only have what, 13 games, you look at our schedule, it's not that hard," said Sutter, confirming an obvious theory while careful not to commit to anything.

"Even if he did play every game, put it this way, he'd still be the same as what he played last year. That's not a big deal."

Given the fact the \$36 million man has allowed just three goals in his last three outings, things may get a little more interesting for those Flames fans still clinging to faint hope of a playoff position.

A 4-1 win over the Montreal Canadiens at the Bell Centre on Wednesday gives Markstrom three wins in a row after losing seven of his previous nine.

He followed a shutout on Saturday against Edmonton with wins over two more playoff teams. Or are the Canadiens, who've lost four of their last five, a playoff team?

We'll soon find out.

With the Flames' fourth win in five tries against the Canadiens, it sure makes for appointment viewing with the Flames slated to face them in four of their next six games, including Friday's rematch.

The Flames now sit four back of the fourth place Habs, who have three games in hand.

"We have some ground to make up," Noah Hanifin said. "This division, you're going to get those head-to-head games where you can really climb back in and this is the team we're chasing. We know how important these games are."

Remaining Time -1:37

Flames know playing desperate is key to keeping up in playoff race

It's a steep climb from where the Flames are, to where they need to be.

But for the first time in a long time, they're starting to feel like they're moving in the right direction.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2021

"You've got to start somewhere," said Markstrom, who made 26 saves including several big ones early in a close game.

"Obviously so far, it hasn't been the season we want it to be. The way we played today and the previous two games... we played really unselfish and it's huge for our team. I personally was in a little bit of a slump that was longer than I wanted. Myself and the team are playing really good right now. We had a big game in Toronto and got away with an overtime win and everybody was feeling good. For me as a goalie, you just have to keep the momentum going."

He'll certainly get that chance, especially since the team only has one more set of back-to-backs left, and it's unfathomable to consider putting backup Louis Domingue in for his first NHL start of the year.

"I don't mind back-to-backs and the body feels good," said Markstrom when asked if he was prepared to carry the load.

"I love playing the game and there's nothing I love more than stepping on the ice with 20 other guys who want to win a hockey game."

The Flames certainly wanted it Wednesday, playing with a desperation they sure could have used starting ten games earlier.

Prolonged offensive forays by the Elias Lindholm, Johnny Gaudreau and Matthew Tkachuk line marked a first period in which the visitors led 1-0 thanks to a Hanifin point blast.

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

Mark Giordano and former teammate Brett Kulak traded second period goals before a rare Josh Leivo finish salted the game away with seven minutes remaining in the third.

On two occasions Markstrom was aided by the iron behind him at critical times.

"Today I got help with the post and that helps too," he smiled. "When you get one or two bounces in the games, it helps confidence."

Asked if he was one to kiss or tap his posts like Rittich was famous for, Markstrom chuckled.

"No, not really, just more I'll thank it inside my helmet," he said.

"I don't think I ever tapped it. It feels good for sure when you hear the cling and the red light doesn't come on. That's always a good feeling."

The chance to keep that good feeling going, not to mention the team's playoff hopes, comes Friday against the same team they're chasing.

And you-know-who will be getting the starting nod.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2021

1187198 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers Notebook: COVID schedule challenges, Bouchard plays waiting game

Mark Spector

EDMONTON — For a team that has not had a legit COVID-19 scare of its own all season, the Edmonton Oilers have been touched by the pandemic schedule more than anyone.

Now, it's another make-up game in Vancouver Friday night, a game we are still not sure the Canucks will be able to field a team for.

"We are anticipating it is on," head coach Dave Tippett said. "Our travel plans, our practice schedule are set up like we're going. We're scheduled to go there (Thursday) afternoon."

Edmonton landed in Montreal last month just as the Canadiens COVID scare began, with two players landing on the NHL's list. So the Oilers sat for five days on the road without a game, then had one added at the tail

end of their trip, a 4-0 loss to the Habs, a back-to-back on the 10th day of their road trip.

Then, when Vancouver's caseload arrived and the Canucks missed a pair of games in Edmonton on Monday and Wednesday of this week, the Oilers got the double whammy. The league gave them a game in Calgary that fell at the end of a week-long road trip out East — and also landed on the same day as the previously scheduled Colby Cave celebration of life — and now they get a back-to-back in Vancouver and Winnipeg on Friday-Saturday.

"It's not ideal, we know that," Leon Draisaitl said of the schedule changes. "I think it hit our team pretty bad, especially since we've been so good and haven't had any cases. You just hope that, through this last little stretch here, the NHL is going to help us out a bit."

Those two games were scheduled losses for Edmonton, plain and simple.

"You're talking about a couple of games where it looked like we were emotionally drained — the Montreal game and the Calgary game (5-0 loss)," Tippett said. "As a coach, you're around your team every day. You know when they look tired or emotionally drained. The Calgary game, that was a hard day. You're dealing with a funeral for a teammate, trying to get the emotions up to play a game, I understand where the players are coming from there."

McDavid took the league to task after the 5-0 loss, saying, "You're asking a lot from guys, to sit through something like that, remember your teammate, see what the whole family is going through, and be expected to perform that night. I'm not sure what the league was really thinking there."

"You'd like the NHL to maybe think that one through a little bit."

On Tuesday defenceman Adam Larsson weighed in.

"The league should know better," Larson said. "I support Connor's comment. It was just a tough day for everyone involved."

On Friday Edmonton will lose two hours flying from Vancouver to Winnipeg after the Friday game, where the Jets will be coming off a day off in their schedule.

"That's the hand we've been dealt here. It's not an ideal situation, but there are no excuses," Tippett said. "We've got an early game (6:00 p.m. PT start) on Friday, and the game in Winnipeg on Saturday is not 'til 9 o'clock (Central time)."

Right To Play

It's public knowledge that Edmonton was — and is still — looking for a top-six left winger. They're light on the left side, an issue GM Ken Holland will address in the offseason.

But what about the right side?

If you want a window into why Holland didn't think this was a year to spend assets at the trade deadline, consider the fact that Edmonton will need considerable improvement on the right side as well before it can call itself a Cup contender. Hopefully, that improvement comes from within.

Jesse Puljujarvi has spent most of the season on the right flank of the NHL's runaway points leader, McDavid, yet sports the humble totals of nine goals and 15 points. Puljujarvi has one goal and just three points in his last 10 games, and just six points in his past 20.

Plain and simple: Puljujarvi is not yet a first-line player. Until he grows into the position the Oilers remain light in their top-six.

"You hope that comes," Tippett said of the big Finn's production. "We chart a lot of the scoring chances and stuff like that, and he's still productive in those regards. Hopefully, that turns into results here, at some point."

"Pure production-wise? It's probably not what you'd like to see. But he's growing into that, so we'll continue to push him along."

Below him is Kailer Yamamoto, who was almost a point per game player with 26 points in 27 games last season. This year Yamamoto, who has



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just 55 shots on goal despite a season spent next to one of the NHL's premier passers in Draisaitl, has just 18 points in 40 games.

Somehow though, those are the only two players in the top-six who haven't been switched out.

"As much as we're moving some pieces around, you've got to have some consistency in some places," Tippett said. He likes Yamamoto with Draisaitl, and has been relatively happy with Puljujarvi, "a hard forechecking guy who creates a lot of loose pucks," with McDavid.

If Tippett is going to continue to play his top two players on the same line, we'd flip right wingers and get some size on the second line by adding Puljujarvi to Ryan Nugent-Hopkins' unit. It can't hurt Puljujarvi's production.

31 Thoughts: The Podcast

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

Sitting Pretty

Evan Bouchard has not played a game since March 1, mired on the taxi squad as the fourth right-shot defenceman while the top-three guys have all remained healthy.

He's been deemed too good for Bakersfield, but isn't getting a shot to show he can play in Edmonton, not ideal for a top prospect. In a normal season, he's waiting his turn in the AHL. But with quarantine issues, he's had to tough it out on the taxi squad, waiting for a turn that never comes.

"Evan is going to be a big part of this organization, unfortunately for Evan, it's not right now," said Holland. "He'll be on the ice playing in '21-'22 and I can't tell you what will happen now, maybe there will be injuries. It's up to the coaching staff (when he plays)."

Now that the deadline has passed, and the Oilers strengthened their blue line by acquiring Dmitry Kulikov, do they farm out Bouchard?

"I don't anticipate that will happen," Holland said. "but if we go another two weeks and he doesn't play, maybe we'll reassess that. Right now? No."

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