



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

For the newest Canes defenseman, Jani Hakanpaa, it's 'so far, so good' in Carolina

By Chip Alexander

Jani Hakanpaa had been traded by the Anaheim Ducks. He hopped a cross-country flight and found himself in a Raleigh hotel room, alone with his thoughts.

"It was kind of a whirlwind," he said Saturday. "Everything happens fast and suddenly late, late Monday night I'm here. You're in a hotel room wondering how is this going to go."

Here's how it went:

Hakanpaa played his first two games for the Carolina Hurricanes — two victories over the Nashville Predators — and was in two postgame Storm Surge celebrations, clapping away, raising his stick.

In his second game, Saturday against the Predators, the tall, shutdown defenseman scored the go-ahead goal in the third period of a 3-1 win, was named the game's first star and had Canes fans chanting, "Jani! Jani!" when it was over.

That's how it went, but it's a funny thing: That's not quite what he was wondering about late, late this past Monday night.

"I've got to be honest, I didn't think of that," he said, smiling. "But it's nice. It's cool how the fans took me in. I'm really glad and honored by that."

The Hakanpaa deal was the only move the Canes made at the NHL trade deadline. Defenseman Haydn Fleury, a player well liked by his teammates and a former Carolina first-round draft pick who was developed in the Canes organization into an NHL-caliber player, went the other way/

But the Canes wanted another right-shot defenseman. Hakanpaa is that. They wanted a D-man with size willing to play with an edge, not shy about hitting. Hakanpaa is that, too.

Not that Hakanpaa, who is third among NHL skaters with 175 hits, runs around the ice looking to hammer people or goon it up. But when the time comes and the opportunity arises, he is 6-foot-5 and 220 pounds, and he can deliver.

He did that Thursday in his Canes debut, knocking down the Preds' Mikael Granlund with a clean open-ice hit. He did it Saturday to Calle Jarnkrok by the Nashville bench.

"He's a great addition to the team," Canes defenseman Jacob Slavin said Saturday. "He's smart, he's physical, he skates well. He fits in well with our D corps. The coaching staff has done a great job getting him up to speed on all the system stuff."

Hakanpaa, 29, was in the starting lineup Saturday and briefly paired with Brady Skjei before being moved back alongside defenseman Jake Bean. In 14:23 of ice time, all at even strength, he had four shots, four hits and blocked four shots.

"He had some big plays all over the ice," Slavin said.

The biggest was on a faceoff in the Preds' zone in the third period, the score tied 1-1 with 11:07 left in regulation. Vincent Trocheck, confident he'd win the draw, told Hakanpaa the puck would be coming back to him and to, well, rip it.

Trocheck won the draw. "Put it on a silver platter for me," Hakanpaa said.

He ripped it. Just like that, it was 2-1. Hakanpaa's first goal with the Canes also was his first of the season, leaving goalie Juuse Saros contorting his body, peering through the bodies between them to make sure he knew who had beaten him on the shot.

No. 58, Hakanpaa.

With Slavin scoring late in the first period, the Canes got two goals from D-men, and Dougie Hamilton picked up his team-leading 29th assist of the season on Andrei Svechnikov's late empty-net goal.

Needing a nickname

In a week when there was much social media debate about a nickname, and which Canes player called forward Martin Necas "Sugarboo" before Thursday's game, what about the new guy, the big guy from Finland? What to call him?

"There's a few floating around," said Slavin, who said "Hakan Dazs" might be one. "We'll come up with something and something will stick."

Hakanpaa said he was usually called "Hak" in Anaheim. That's it, just "Hak."

And with the Canes?

"They might wind up making up their own," Hakanpaa said. "Whatever the guys want to call me, I'll take it."

Carolina Hurricanes vs Tampa Bay Lightning

When: Monday, 7 p.m.

Where: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Fla.

TV: BSSO (Bally).



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

The Athletic

How the Hurricanes are handling 2021 and the tough road to come: 'Get punched in the face, just get back up'

By Sara Civian

The 2020-21 NHL season hasn't been kind to anyone, to put it mildly. And somehow it's about to get meaner to the Carolina Hurricanes, as this eight-game homestand gives way to at least a game every other day until the end of the regular season. It doesn't help that the final stretch of 2021 schedule weirdness is paired with a more familiar folly — staying focused during the last dozen or so games.

"It's definitely mentally grinding on the guys, There's no doubt about it," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said Friday of the upcoming challenges. "So you really have to guard against it. We give them lots of time off in between games. Obviously we didn't today (they practiced), but it's about trying to stay mentally sharp. That's the toughest part, I think, when you're playing every day, asking the same things of the guys every day to go out there and work, work, work and turn around the next day and do it again. That's what being a pro is."

At this point, it's obvious the Hurricanes like to play for Brind'Amour, for reasons including a running list of painful things they would do for him: "Run through hot coals" — Jordan Martinook; "Run through a brick wall," — Justin Williams and Vincent Trocheck, etc.

(Author's note: Williams is "ready to" run through a brick wall for Brind'Amour, while Brind'Amour "makes" Trocheck "want to" run through a brick wall. Zero walls were harmed in the making of this article.)

But, in my time covering the NHL, I've noticed some more subtle indications that a player actually respects a coach. A clear sign is organically dropping some of the coach's common phrases or messages into their own interviews — keyword organically. This season, Brind'Amour has constantly harped on the importance of the ability to "turn around the next day" regardless of a win or loss.

This is a simple concept bordering on cliché, but it is much easier said than done, especially after a two-game skid against the infamous Red Wings. The Canes then turned around and pulled it together for two wins and an overall 6-0-0 record over the surging Predators, and what rookie goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic said after Saturday's 3-1 win over the Predators had subliminal shades of Brind'Amour's overarching message.

"We were all over them from start to finish, then we kind of got a little bit of adversity in the second period. But we fought through and just stuck to our game," he said. "That's what's going to take us far the rest of the way is just sticking to our game. It doesn't matter what happens, if we get punched in the face, just get back up and keep grinding."

This has gotta be the most underrated strengths of the Canes this season. They've only lost more than one game in a row three times this season — three consecutive losses twice and two consecutive losses once. They responded to one three-game losing streak with an eight-game winning streak and the other with a three-game winning streak. They responded to their recent two consecutive losses against the Red Wings with their two latest wins over Nashville — including their best period of the season Saturday.

"It's probably one of the best periods I've seen ever, to be honest with you," Brind'Amour said of that first period. "We were good. We were on it with everything we were doing. It was the way it was supposed to look, and we probably should have had a few more, but it was nice to get one, at least. Sometimes we've had periods in the past like that, not quite like that, but close and we didn't get anything out of it. So at least to be up one was nice."

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Hurricanes dominated the Predators in, well, everything that first period. The overall scoring chances were 31-5 and it was 18-2 in high danger chances, 3.96-.33 in expected goals, and finally, with less than two minutes to spare, 1-0 in goals.

This first period's dominance reminded me of Brind'Amour calling himself out for "coaching a terrible game" and not being able to find the right matchups after the last loss against Detroit. He's been playing around with the lines somewhat due to necessity because of injured players coming in and out, but obviously also to customize matchups.

When the Svechnikov-Aho-Fast line was on the ice during the first period Saturday, the Canes out-chanced the Predators 12-0. If you look at the whole game, the Niederreiter-Staal-Foegele line was a force, too. In 10:34 at five-on-five, they managed a 78.57 Corsi For percentage and 1.39 expected goals (shout out to Jordan Staal). The Martinook-Trocheck-Necas line was really the only problem in terms of nitpicky matchup qualms, but hey, their defensive hustle directly factored into the Jani Hakanpaa game-winner.

You have to give Brind'Amour credit for:

1. His willingness to play around with the lines.
2. His apparent eye for finding the right matchups throughout the season and especially Saturday.

The Canes didn't play a perfect game — the middle period was rough for a second there — but the beginning was close and the ending is exactly what you want to see after some adversity. In a way, that's kind of representative of how their whole season has gone.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

And this newfound finishing touch — the ability to capitalize on those impressive efforts — has no doubt made it easier for the Canes to get punched in the face and keep going.

“It is huge,” said Jaccob Slavin, who scored the first-period goal. “Obviously there’s ebbs and flows to the game. Sometimes you play a heck of a period and you could be down 1-0. So to be up after that period was great, but as Roddy always says, you play the period, you put it behind you and you go back to work.”

DGB weekend rankings: Patrick Marleau’s record, Montreal’s struggles and a new top five entry

By Sean McIndoe

The week after the trade deadline can always feel like a bit of a letdown, in that day-after-your-birthday sort of way. You get one month of increasingly frantic trade rumors, the big day finally arrives, and then it’s over and you’re left with one more month of regular season hockey. There are still playoff races to watch, but those won’t be settled for a few weeks at least, so it might feel like there isn’t much to be excited about.

Not this year, though, because we’ve got something extremely rare to celebrate: A major record being set. Patrick Marleau has tied Gordie Howe on the all-time games played list, and will pass him Monday.

OK, yes, “celebrate” might be a little strong for a small segment of fans. I know that some have mixed feelings about Howe’s mark being broken by Marleau, a Hall-of-Very-Good type of player who might not feel worthy of removing hockey royalty from the record book. When I wrote about the record at the start of the season, and how close Marleau was to breaking it, I heard from plenty of fans who had no idea the record would fall this year. Some of them thought it was cool, others weren’t so sure.

I’m guessing most of us have warmed up to the idea by now. Marleau is, by just about all accounts, a legitimately good guy who’s loved by his teammates and just about everyone else who isn’t Jeremy Roenick. And this is one hell of a tough record to break, which is why so many of us grew up assuming Howe’s record would stand forever. Considering how many games Marleau has lost to lockouts and COVID-shortened seasons, it’s amazing that he managed to get here.

From my perspective as a history nerd, the coolest thing about this is that it’s happening at all. Games played is, without a doubt, a major record. Do you realize how long it’s been since somebody set a major career mark for skates? Not at a specific position, or in some minor category nobody knows about. I’m talking the big stuff — games, goals, assists, points, etc.

It’s been a long time. Wayne Gretzky has owned the points record since 1989-90, goals since 1993-94, and assists since 1987-88. Larry Robinson has had the career plus/minus mark since 1984-85. Tiger Williams had held the PIM record since all the way back in 1981-82. Even some of the non-Gretzky scoring records go back a long way, like Dave

The Canes have a lot of this aforementioned work and not many breaks ahead of them in their final 13 games of the regular season, starting with a six-game road trip Monday. But they’ve shown us a new level this season that could mean everything come playoff time — the ability to get punched in the face and keep going. If all else fails, at least there’s only one more game against the Red Wings.

Andreychuk’s powerplay goal record (2002-03) or Ray Bourque’s shots on goal mark (1997-98). Most of the goalie records are more recent, since they took over the sport in mid-90s. But for skaters? It’s basically been a generation since a major career record has fallen.

Monday, it will. That’s kind of cool. Tune in to watch it happen, because it may be a while until we see something like this again. (Or it might be a warmup for Alexander Ovechkin catching Gretzky’s goal record in a few years.)

On to this week’s rankings, which won’t set any records, but do include a new team in the top five and a very old one that might be about to leave the bottom five...

Road to the Cup

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

Neither the Blues or Coyotes will be making the top five, but I’m told that making the playoffs is viewed as a decent consolation prize. If so, then the game of the weekend was Saturday’s head-to-head battle. The Coyotes came back from two goals down to take that one in regulation, a huge win that snapped a five-game losing streak.

The win caps off an emotional week in Arizona, and moved them into the fourth spot in total points (although they still trail the Blues in points percentage). The two teams don’t face each other again this year.

5. Florida Panthers (28-12-5, +21 true goals differential*) – The five-spot remains in flux, as I’ve once again ruined the Maple Leafs by including them in last week’s rankings. There are a handful of teams who have a case for this spot, including all four contenders in the East. I’m still sorting through that traffic jam — more on that in a bit — so instead I’m going to take the opportunity to finally get the Panthers into the mix. They’ve been just outside the top five almost all season long, and at some point, you have to stop calling it a hot streak and just admit a team is really good.

How good? That’s the problem since I still don’t think they’re a top-two team in their own division. By the end of the season, it really doesn’t make sense to have three teams from the same division in the top five, knowing that one of them is guaranteed a first-round exit. But we’ve still got a few weeks to sort that out and they just beat the Lightning, so the Panthers have earned this. Let’s get them a spot on the list while we can.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

4. Vegas Golden Knights (31-11-2, +51) – Good lord, guys, maybe move the difficulty sliders up a little to make it challenging.

Sunday was more competitive but still ended in another Knights win. They've now won six straight.

3. Carolina Hurricanes (29-10-4, +34) – Seriously guys, stop losing to Detroit and I'll move you higher.

Despite inheriting Red Wings kryptonite status from last year's Habs, Carolina has all but erased any gap between them and the Lightning. The off-brand power rankings have already moved them ahead of Tampa, and I'm right on the fence. Luckily, the schedule-maker delivers this week, with a Lightning/Hurricanes back-to-back showdown starting tonight that should provide some clarity.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (29-13-2, +34) – The big story this week was Steven Stamkos going on injured reserve. That led to a wave of theorizing that Nikita Kucherov was coming back early, and this was the Lightning's way of opening up the cap space for that – basically swapping one star for another, with the idea that both would be in the lineup once the playoffs started. Given how cap shenanigans work in today's NHL, it wasn't an unreasonable thought, but our Joe Smith says it's not the case. Kucherov won't be back any time soon, and Stamkos going on LTIR doesn't mean anything beyond that he's hurt and out for a while.

How long? We don't know, and that's where things get a little worrisome if you're a Lightning fan, or someone trying to forecast their Cup odds. We're used to assuming that injured stars are always miraculously healed in time for the postseason, but there's no guarantee that happens here. Maybe Stamkos gets back before then. But maybe he doesn't, and this ends up lingering like last year (although it's apparently not the same injury).

Losing Stamkos for a chunk of the playoffs wouldn't be disastrous for the Lightning's chances – they did win a Cup without him last year, after all. But combined with a stretch where they've won just five of 12, including an embarrassing blowout at the hands of the Predators, and it's fair to say that the Lightning's Cup odds look worse today than they did last time we did this. I don't think it's enough to drop them down the rankings, and I've still got them ahead of the Hurricanes by a hair. But this is the first time all year that I haven't been confident that they're the division's best Cup hope.

1. Colorado Avalanche (30-9-4, +54) – They ran their win streak to four before their schedule was paused by multiple positive COVID tests. For now, this doesn't seem to be a team-wide outbreak on the level we've seen around the league, but caution is obviously the right call. The current plan would see them back in action by Thursday, but let's see where things go.

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

Not ranked: Boston Bruins – I was really tempted to slide the Bruins into that fifth spot, especially after watching them score six on the Capitals yesterday.

Can the fourth-best team in the East be one of the five best teams in the league? Probably not, but I don't think the

Bruins are the division's fourth best team, no matter what the standings say. They lost some ground in March, largely due to inconsistent play and some injuries. But they're working their way back to full health, and had arguably the best deadline of any contender. Taylor Hall remembering how to score once he was out of Buffalo was the week's most predictable plot point, but Mike Reilly and Curtis Lazar also look like good fits. This team is good.

Are they good enough to win it all? I think they are, although there are a lot of teams in that group. They still have games like last Sunday's blowout loss to the Caps that make you wonder, and the road out of the East will be tough on everyone. But they're deep up front, including the best top line in hockey, and the blue line is good when it's healthy. As for the goaltending, I will never understand Bruins fans not trusting Tuukka Rask, who's been one of the league's most consistent goalies for well over a decade but still gets ripped on for not coming up big when it matters even though he has better numbers in the playoffs than he does in the regular season. Explain this to me, Boston fans, because I don't get it.

The schedule gets weird now, with three straight and five of seven against the Sabres, and only four games left against the East playoff teams. I think that's good – even with Buffalo having a pulse again, it should be a big chunk of easy points. But part of me wonders if the Bruins might hit the playoffs a step short of full speed because they were playing the weaklings. That's probably just looking for something to worry about, for a team where that list is getting shorter as we go.

The bottom five

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

It was very cool to see the Canucks return to action with a win last night. There are still some hard questions to ask about how and when (and if) teams should return after an outbreak, but Vancouver showed some guts in finding a comeback win after everything they've been through.

5. Detroit Red Wings (16-24-6, -42) – Fifty-two weeks, dating back to December 2018. That's how long the Red Wings have been a fixture in the bottom-five. They broke in just after the holidays in 2018-19, held that spot for the last 15 weeks of the season, then were one of three teams (with Ottawa and Los Angeles) to appear in all 23 of last season's bottom five lists. This week marks their 14th straight appearance this year.

But it's the first time they've fallen all the way to number five, which means they're on the verge of breaking the streak. Can they do it? They've got a real shot. They're just one point back of the Blue Jackets, and while this is about predicting the future more than the current standings, as we get late into the season those two things end up merging into one. Columbus just announced that Zach Werenski is out long term, and they've got four games this week against the Florida teams. Meanwhile, Detroit gets four straight with the mediocre Stars.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

This might happen. We've had our fun with the Red Wings over the years, but we might not have them to kick around much longer in the bottom five.

4. Ottawa Senators (15-26-4, -43) – A shutout for Matt Murray over the Canadiens was a nice boost for a team that doesn't have much to play for, but would still love to have an impact on a playoff race they're not part of.

The far bigger news in Ottawa is that Ian Mendes has abandoned the Senators and is now a Maple Leafs fan. I'm pretty sure that's what happened, I kind of skimmed the article, but it sounds right to me. Welcome aboard Ian, it's never too late to rectify a mistake.

3. New Jersey Devils (14-24-6, -37) – Four straight losses to the Rangers is just ugly (and unprecedented), and the Devils are now at six straight games without so much as a point. They have some injuries, as most teams do. But this is a team without much to play for that seems to be flat-lining as they run out the string.

2. Anaheim Ducks (14-25-7, -43) – Other than the Jets not adding an impact blueliner, I'm not sure any team had a more disappointing deadline than the Ducks, who were primed to be the market's key sellers and then did virtually nothing. Eric Stephens had a good piece on why that happened, and what it might mean going forward for a team that desperately needs some direction.

1. Buffalo Sabres (12-26-7, -43) – They're still bad, but lately they haven't been embarrassingly bad, even beating the Penguins Sunday. And through all the misery of a wretched season, some nice storylines are emerging, including Dustin Tokarski getting his first win in six years. That was cool.

But there's an even bigger story starting to play out, and it's behind the bench. The Don Granato bandwagon is filling up.

Granato was supposed to be the classic interim coach, there to basically serve as cannon fodder while a terrible team racked up losses and lottery odds, inevitably to be replaced with a real coach in the offseason and be forever forgotten. Maybe it still plays out that way. But right now, Grantao has something going in Buffalo. The team isn't good, or even all that close, but they're making progress. And maybe more amazingly, they're kind of fun.

That part isn't an accident. Granato actually wants to coach a team that's entertaining to watch.

Yeah, this guy will never last. But for now, he might be my new favorite coach.

Not ranked: Montreal Canadiens – How worried should we be at this point?

First, the good news – even with six regulation losses in their last nine, they're still overwhelming favorites for the North's last playoff spot. They're six points up on the Flames and have two games in hand, so they'd have to collapse down the stretch to cough up their spot. And once they're in, the rest of the division is tough but not especially intimidating. There's still a path here.

Now the bad. They're slumping, and struggling to generate offense, scoring two or less in six of their last seven. The eye test might be worse; they've just looked listless in some games, including a 4-0 loss to the Senators that was borderline unwatchable. They clearly miss Brendan Gallagher a ton, and while he should be back eventually, it doesn't sound like it will be soon. The deadline wasn't quiet, as Marc Bergevin tinkered after making his bigger moves early, but it's feeling like a bit of a bust. Carey Price has been mostly good since returning to the lineup, but hardly great, and this increasingly looks like a team that will need the great version to do much of anything in the postseason. Is that guy even still an option?

So yeah, worry away. But probably stop just short of panic, if you can do that in this market. This week brings a crucial week-long Alberta trip, so the plan would be to get back on track against the Oilers and then at least hold serve against the Flames to protect the grip on that playoff spot. Wait for Gallagher to come back and bring some energy to the lineup, hope the new acquisitions can settle in, and cross your fingers that Price (or Jake Allen) get hot at the right time. Get ready for the inevitable Cole Caufield call-up, which should bring a spark. And then remember that you're not exactly staring down a murderer's row of playoff success with your potential first-round matchups.

Or, you know, get swept by the Flames and bring the panic. That's also an option.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021



Gold: It's not the playoffs, yet.

By Adam Gold

First, let's get this straight. When the Carolina Hurricanes meet the Tampa Bay Lightning Monday night at Amalie Arena this will not be anything like a playoff game. The Hurricanes can't fall behind 1-0 in the series or take a commanding lead or anything of that sort. But, that doesn't mean that these two games, in a 24-hour span, aren't incredibly important. They are, undoubtedly, critical towards the first goal of winning the Central Division.

With 13 games left to play, the Hurricanes take the ice two points ahead of the Lightning and with one more game left on the schedule. So, even a split of the four available points would go a long way in aiding the cause. This has also been an incredibly even series this year, so it's fair to expect these final two games in the season series to follow suit.

Let's take a thumbnail glance at the first half dozen games...

January 28, PNC Arena, Canes, 1-0 (OT)

Coming off a 10-day Covid-19 pause, and without the likes of Teuvo Teravainen, Jacob Slavin and Jesper Fast, a depleted Canes squad surprised the defending champs with a supreme defensive effort and some excellent Petr Mrazek goaltending. Martin Necas took a great feed from Jordan Staal, 1:12 into overtime for the game winner as Mrazek shut out the Bolts with 32 saves.

February 20, PNC Arena, Canes, 4-0

Carolina scored twice in the first period as Vincent Trocheck and Sebastian Aho got things rolling. Then, in the 3rd, newly acquired center Cedric Paquette's 1st goal with the Hurricanes made it 3-0 as Alex Nedeljkovic registered his first NHL shutout on 24 saves.

February 22, PNC Arena, Lightning, 4-2

Well, Tampa was going to score on Carolina at some point, right? The game was tied at 2 entering the 3rd period. But, Ondrej Palat broke the tie at 8:04 of the period as the Lightning beat the Canes for the first time this year.

February 24, Amalie Arena, Lightning, 3-0

Tampa took a 2-0 lead in the first period and just slammed the door shut on the Hurricanes, sending Carolina to their first 2-game losing streak of the season.

February 25, Amalie Arena, Lightning, 3-1

Curtis McElhinney was the difference as the Canes had plenty of scoring opportunities early, but could only muster one Brett Pesce goal. The game was even at 1 in the 3rd period when Yanni Gourde broke the deadlock at 6:22. Barclay Goodrow closed the scoring with the empty net marker and the Canes suddenly have lost three straight.

March 27, PNC Arena, Canes, 4-3

In an incredibly exciting affair, Martin Necas figured in on every Hurricanes goal, including a pair of go-ahead power play tallies, as the lads evened the season series. Tampa took a 2-0 lead after one, but the Canes exploded for three in the 2nd to take a 3-2 lead. Cedric Paquette, again, did it to his former club, getting Carolina on the board early in the frame. Sebastian Aho and Necas followed with goals of their own and then the red hot second year winger from the Czech Republic ripped home the game-winner at 16:07 of the 3rd.

If you're scoring at home, Carolina is 3-3-0 while Tampa is 3-2-1 in the season series.

Necas, mostly on the strength of that 4-point night three weeks ago, leads Carolina in scoring against the Lightning. He's got 3 goals and 7 points in the 6 games. Aho is next on the team with a pair of goals and 3 assists. Alex Nedeljkovic and Petr Mrazek have combined for two shutouts in three starts vs the Bolts.

Speaking of Nedeljkovic....

I'm not sayin', I'm just sayin'

I'm not going to suggest that he should be meriting consideration for the league's rookie of the year award. I'm fairly certain it's going to go to either Minnesota's Kirill Kaprizov (17 goals, 36 points) or Dallas forward Jason Robertson (12 goals, 20 assists). New Jersey's freshman defenseman Ty Smith also should get a hard look with 2 goals and 19 assists in his first year.

But, if a goaltender is going to crack the final three on the ballot, it's worth looking at what Ned's put on the ice this year. In 16 starts, the Parma, Ohio product has a .930 SV% and a 1.92 GAA. But, those numbers are boring and rudimentary. At 5-on-5, according to NaturalStatTrick.com, Ned has a goals saved above average (GSAA) mark of 10.95. That's 4th best in the entire NHL and it's a cumulative statistic. He also has allowed 8.40 fewer goals than expected (xGA) and has a high danger save percentage (HDSV%) of .884.

Now, none of this happens in a vacuum. There are tons of factors that go into all of this, but it's worth looking at the top rookie goalies in the league to see where Nedeljkovic stacks up.

Player (GS), SV%/GAA GSAA xGA HDSV%

Nedeljkovic, Car (16) .930/1.92 10.95 -8.40 .884

Shesterkin, NYR (26) .925/2.28 10.37 -7.55 .900

Lankinen, Chi (32) .914/2.79 11.68 -6.69 .841

Sorokin, NYI (16) .916/2.16 0.24 +2.51 .784



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

Oettinger, Dal (19) .919/2.16 5.60 -3.85 .852

Kahkonen, Min (19) .910/2.66 0.07 +5.91 .842

In terms of performance, Nedeljkovic has been the best of that 6-pack of rookies. Toss out the first few starts as it had been 11 months since he'd last played in any organized game and Ned's last 13 games have been even better. Nine wins, three shutouts and a .941 save percentage. All for a team competing to possibly win the division. Igor Shesterkin of the Rangers and Kevin Lankinen of the Blackhawks can make cases to be the best rookie goalies, but at the worst, it's a razor thin margin.

Reinforcements?

Teuvo Teravainen is dangerously close to a return to the lineup for Carolina and Rod Brind'Amour said that he would be on the trip -- which continues on to Florida and Dallas as the Canes play 6 games in 9 days. Rod rarely eases players into the mix, so other than not seeing Teuvo on the penalty

kill, and maybe not even right away on the power play, expect Turbo to slide next to his buddy Aho on Carolina's top line with Andrei Svechnikov.

Whenever he draws back in, I would expect Morgan Geekie to be returned to the taxi squad. When Brock McGinn gets back from his upper body injury the head coach will have a decision to make. Paquette, who has brought a physical element to a forward group that was lacking. Or, Steven Lorentz, who has been excellent centering the fourth line and has won nearly 54% of his face offs.

The expectation is that we'll see Mrazek in goal on Monday and Nedeljkovic Tuesday.

Storm Watch starring Alec Campbell starts at 6:30 on 99.9 the Fan. Opening face off between the Lightning and Hurricanes rolls just after 7. Don't forget to follow the Canes Corner podcast wherever you get your podcasts. There's a new offering the #MorningAfter every Hurricanes game.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021



Preview: Hurricanes at Lightning

Canes aim to defend first place on the road

By Michael Smith

A six-game road swing for the Carolina Hurricanes begins with two critical match-ups against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Match-Up

Carolina Hurricanes (29-10-4, 62 points) at Tampa Bay Lightning (29-13-2, 60 points)

Monday, April 19, 7 p.m.

Watch: Bally Sports South, FOX Sports GO

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

Numbers to Know

2: Just two points separate the first-place Canes from the third-place Lightning in the Central Division.

21: After recording the primary assist on Jani Hakanpaa's game-winning goal against Nashville on Saturday night, Vincent Trocheck has recorded at least a point in 15 of his last 16 games played for a total of 21 points (8g, 13a).

4-2-0: Entering their seventh of nine back-to-backs this season, the Canes are 4-2-0 in both the first and second halves.

The Opposition

Last five games: 3-2-0, 6 points

At home: 16-5-0, 32 points

CAR vs. TB: 3-3-0

Leading scorer: Victor Hedman, 41 points (8g, 33a) in 44 games

The Bolts are in the midst of a critical six-game homestand, and after a 1-1-0 weekend against the Panthers, the Lightning welcome the Canes to town. Tampa Bay is 2-0-0 against Carolina at home this season, having landed back-to-back wins against them in late February. The Lightning now trail the Canes by two points in the Central Division standings.

The Last Meeting

Martin Necas equaled a career-best performance with four points (2g, 2a) in a 4-3 victory over the Lightning. Necas factored in on each of the Canes' four goals and tallied two power-play goals, one of which was the game winner.

"Both teams played hard, right? The games are intense. The further the season goes, every game is huge. That's the defending champs, so obviously it was quite a challenge for us. I'm proud of how we responded," said Sebastian Aho, who recorded a goal and an assist. "It was a great team effort."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tampa Bay hosts Central Division leader Carolina

Carolina Hurricanes (29-10-4, first in the Central Division) vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (29-13-2, third in the Central Division)

Tampa, Florida; Monday, 7 p.m. EDT

FANDUEL SPORTSBOOK LINE: Lightning -137, Hurricanes +114; over/under is 0

BOTTOM LINE: The Tampa Bay Lightning host the Central Division-leading Carolina Hurricanes.

The Lightning are 29-13-2 against the rest of their division. Tampa Bay ranks fourth in the NHL averaging 5.8 assists per game, led by Victor Hedman with 0.8.

The Hurricanes are 29-10-4 against opponents in the Central Division. Carolina is eighth in the NHL recording 8.8 points per game, averaging 3.2 goals and 5.6 assists.

In their last meeting on March 27, Carolina won 4-3. Martin Necas scored two goals for the Hurricanes.

TOP PERFORMERS: Hedman has 41 total points for the Lightning, eight goals and 33 assists. Ross Colton has six goals over the last 10 games for Tampa Bay.

Sebastian Aho leads the Hurricanes with 40 points, scoring 18 goals and registering 22 assists. Vincent Trocheck has four goals and nine assists over the last 10 games for Carolina.

LAST 10 GAMES: Lightning: 5-5-0, averaging 2.6 goals, 4.7 assists, 2.9 penalties and 6.9 penalty minutes while giving up 2.9 goals per game with a .901 save percentage.

Hurricanes: 6-3-1, averaging 2.8 goals, 4.7 assists, 3.1 penalties and 6.2 penalty minutes while giving up 1.8 goals per game with a .931 save percentage.

INJURIES: Lightning: None listed.

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



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Carolina Hurricanes at Tampa Bay Lighting: Game Preview and Storm Advisory

The Carolina Hurricanes look to kick off their six-game road trip with a big win against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

By Zeke Lukow

Carolina Hurricanes (29-10-4) vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (29-13-2)

2021 Regular Season Game 44
Monday, April 19, 2021 - 7 p.m. ET
AMALIE Arena — Tampa, FL

Watch: Bally Sports South
Listen: 99.9 The Fan

SBN Opposition: Raw Charge

Follow Canes Country on Social Media

Twitter @CanesCountry
Facebook Canes Country
Instagram @canescountrypix

The Carolina Hurricanes head to Tampa Bay to kick off their longest remaining road trip. The Canes' six-game road trip will see them play two games against the Lightning, Florida Panthers and the Dallas Stars. With just 13 games left and the next two being the last against the Lightning, these could prove to be the most pivotal games for the Hurricanes.

Win both and their chances to win the division skyrocket and would keep them on pace with the Avalanche for the Presidents Trophy. Lose both, and the Canes look to have to have a tough first-round battle with the Panthers. With the Canes' three-headed monster in net, it could be back to James Reimer, who hasn't started since Monday, for this one.

Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Lightning
Record	29-10-4	29-13-2
Goals/Game	3.16	3.36
Goals Against/Game	2.37	2.59
Shots/Game	32.58	30.18
Face Off Win %	54.2%	49.8%
Power Play % (Rank)	27.9% (1st)	25.2% (5th)

Category	Hurricanes	Lightning
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	84.1% (5th)	82.8% (8th)
ES Corsi For %	54.14%	52.30%
ES PDO	100.72	101.28
PIM/Game	07:07	09:35

Goaltender #1

Category	James Reimer	Andrei Vasilevskiy
Record	14-5-1	26-7-1
Save %	0.907	.930
GAA	2.68	2.06

Goaltender #2

Category	Alex Nedeljkovic	Curtis McElhinney
Record	10-4-2	3-5-1
Save %	.930	.862
GAA	1.92	3.48

Goaltender #3

Category	Petr Mrazek	Christopher Gibson
Record	5-1-1	0-1-0
Save %	.944	.765
GAA	1.41	4.41



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

Game Notes:

- With two games remaining in the season series, the Canes have a 3-3-0 record against the Lightning. However, they have won the most recent matchup
- Teuvo Teravainen is traveling with the team for this road trip, Brock McGinn was left at home to recover from his injury. Teravainen has not played since March 4.
- Andrei Vasilevskiy dropped his first home start on Saturday; his record is 14-1-0 at home this season. Vaskilevskiy leads the league in wins (26) and save percentage (.930), and also ranks third in goals-against average (2.06).
- Victor Hedman's two assists on Saturday marked his 11th multi-point game of the season. He currently ranks second in NHL scoring for defensemen with 41 points, just one behind the Washington Capitals John Carlson.
- Andrei Svechnikov hopes the monkey is all the way off of his back. With a goal in his last game, he now has five points in his last six games. He is just two points behind Jeff Skinner for most points scored in his first three seasons in team history.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article250763469.html>
<https://theathletic.com/2526276/2021/04/18/how-the-hurricanes-are-handling-2021-and-the-tough-road-to-come-get-punched-in-the-face-just-get-back-up/>
<https://theathletic.com/2528067/2021/04/19/dgb-weekend-rankings-patrick-marleaus-record-montreals-struggles-and-a-new-top-five-entry/>
<https://www.wralsportsfan.com/gold-it-s-not-the-playoffs-yet/19633698/>
<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-carolina-hurricanes-tampa-bay-lightning/c-323793776>
<https://apnews.com/article/ross-colton-martin-necas-carolina-hurricanes-nhl-florida-1bf557aefce3464da6206169af77f2b6>
<https://www.canescountry.com/2021/4/19/22391312/carolina-hurricanes-at-tampa-bay-lightning-game-preview-4-19-20>

SportScan

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

1209547

Carolina Hurricanes

How the Hurricanes are handling 2021 and the tough road to come: 'Get punched in the face, just get back up'

By Sara Civian Apr 18, 2021

The 2020-21 NHL season hasn't been kind to anyone, to put it mildly. And somehow it's about to get meaner to the Carolina Hurricanes, as this eight-game homestand gives way to at least a game every other day until the end of the regular season. It doesn't help that the final stretch of 2021 schedule weirdness is paired with a more familiar folly — staying focused during the last dozen or so games.

"It's definitely mentally grinding on the guys, There's no doubt about it," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said Friday of the upcoming challenges. "So you really have to guard against it. We give them lots of time off in between games. Obviously we didn't today (they practiced), but it's about trying to stay mentally sharp. That's the toughest part, I think, when you're playing every day, asking the same things of the guys every day to go out there and work, work, work and turn around the next day and do it again. That's what being a pro is."

At this point, it's obvious the Hurricanes like to play for Brind'Amour, for reasons including a running list of painful things they would do for him: "Run through hot coals" — Jordan Martinook; "Run through a brick wall," — Justin Williams and Vincent Trocheck, etc.

(Author's note: Williams is "ready to" run through a brick wall for Brind'Amour, while Brind'Amour "makes" Trocheck "want to" run through a brick wall. Zero walls were harmed in the making of this article.)

But, in my time covering the NHL, I've noticed some more subtle indications that a player actually respects a coach. A clear sign is organically dropping some of the coach's common phrases or messages



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

into their own interviews — keyword organically. This season, Brind'Amour has constantly harped on the importance of the ability to "turn around the next day" regardless of a win or loss.

This is a simple concept bordering on cliché, but it is much easier said than done, especially after a two-game skid against the infamous Red Wings. The Canes then turned around and pulled it together for two wins and an overall 6-0-0 record over the surging Predators, and what rookie goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic said after Saturday's 3-1 win over the Predators had subliminal shades of Brind'Amour's overarching message.

"We were all over them from start to finish, then we kind of got a little bit of adversity in the second period. But we fought through and just stuck to our game," he said. "That's what's going to take us far the rest of the way is just sticking to our game. It doesn't matter what happens, if we get punched in the face, just get back up and keep grinding."

This has gotta be the most underrated strengths of the Canes this season. They've only lost more than one game in a row three times this season — three consecutive losses twice and two consecutive losses once. They responded to one three-game losing streak with an eight-game winning streak and the other with a three-game winning streak. They responded to their recent two consecutive losses against the Red Wings with their two latest wins over Nashville — including their best period of the season Saturday.

"It's probably one of the best periods I've seen ever, to be honest with you," Brind'Amour said of that first period. "We were good. We were on it with everything we were doing. It was the way it was supposed to look, and we probably should have had a few more, but it was nice to get one, at least. Sometimes we've had periods in the past like that, not quite like that, but close and we didn't get anything out of it. So at least to be up one was nice."

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Hurricanes dominated the Predators in, well, everything that first period. The overall scoring chances were 31-5 and it was 18-2 in high danger chances, 3.96-.33 in expected goals, and finally, with less than two minutes to spare, 1-0 in goals.

This first period's dominance reminded me of Brind'Amour calling himself out for "coaching a terrible game" and not being able to find the right matchups after the last loss against Detroit. He's been playing around with the lines somewhat due to necessity because of injured players coming in and out, but obviously also to customize matchups.

When the Svechnikov-Aho-Fast line was on the ice during the first period Saturday, the Canes out-chanced the Predators 12-0. If you look at the whole game, the Niederreiter-Staal-Foegele line was a force, too. In 10:34 at five-on-five, they managed a 78.57 Corsi For percentage and 1.39 expected goals (shout out to Jordan Staal). The Martinook-Trocheck-Necas line was really the only problem in terms of nitpicky matchup qualms, but hey, their defensive hustle directly factored into the Jani Hakanpaa game-winner.

You have to give Brind'Amour credit for:

1. His willingness to play around with the lines.
2. His apparent eye for finding the right matchups throughout the season and especially Saturday.

The Canes didn't play a perfect game — the middle period was rough for a second there — but the beginning was close and the ending is exactly what you want to see after some adversity. In a way, that's kind of representative of how their whole season has gone.

And this newfound finishing touch — the ability to capitalize on those impressive efforts — has no doubt made it easier for the Canes to get punched in the face and keep going.

"It is huge," said Jacob Slavin, who scored the first-period goal. "Obviously there's ebbs and flows to the game. Sometimes you play a heck of a period and you could be down 1-0. So to be up after that period was great, but as Roddy always says, you play the period, you put it behind you and you go back to work."

The Canes have a lot of this aforementioned work and not many breaks ahead of them in their final 13 games of the regular season, starting with a six-game road trip Monday. But they've shown us a new level this season that could mean everything come playoff time — the ability to get punched in the face and keep going. If all else fails, at least there's only one more game against the Red Wings.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209617 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning face tight race with Carolina, Florida in Central Division

By Mari Faiello

Published Yesterday

Updated Yesterday

TAMPA — The Lightning's 56-game regular season has 12 games remaining, ending with back-to-back matchups against the Panthers on May 8 and 10.

Tampa Bay (60 points) is in third place in the Central Division after Saturday night's loss to Florida, while a Carolina win Saturday left it alone in first, one point ahead of the Panthers and two ahead of the Lightning.

The Predators are in the fourth and final playoff spot in the division with 49 points.

With the divisions realigned for this season because of coronavirus issues, the playoff format was changed, too. The top four teams in each of the four divisions make the playoffs. The first two rounds are intradivision. In the first round, the first-place team meets the fourth, and the second meets the third. The winners of those series meet in the second round.

The winners of each division playoff advance to league semifinals, where teams will be reseeded based on their regular-season points. The semifinal winners make the Stanley Cup final.

So the standings are something the Lightning are watching closely.

"I'm checking the standings all the time," defenseman Erik Cernak said after Saturday's loss. "I know this year is really tight, especially in our division. Those two upcoming games against Carolina are going to be really big ones for us, and we just have to be ready for them."

The Lightning are 3-2-1 against the Hurricanes heading into Monday's matchup at Amalie Arena, the first of back-to-back games between the teams in their season series finale. Carolina is 6-3-1 over its past 10 games.

"(The games against Florida and Carolina) are big games, for sure, but we can't look too far ahead," defenseman Victor Hedman said after Thursday's 3-2 overtime win against the Panthers. "We have to narrow down our game, and we just have to take it game by game. There's not a whole lot left in the regular season, so we want to get our game back on track."

After Saturday's loss, center Brayden Point pinpointed the areas of concern for the Lightning.

"I think that's a big one, giving up odd-man rushes and kind of those high-percentage scoring chances," he said. "I think that's something every team's striving to be better at and definitely something we can work on."

On Thursday, Tampa Bay gave up eight high-percentage scoring chances, three each in the first and third periods.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

Those chances were reduced Saturday to five, including three in the second period. But a breakaway led to Florida center Frank Vatrano extending the Panthers' lead to 4-1 in the second with less than three minutes remaining.

Coach Jon Cooper said he hopes the next two games will provide a better idea of how his team is shaping up with 79 percent of the season completed.

"We want to finish in the top four (in the division)," Cooper said, "so we like our spot in that situation. ... Now we have Carolina coming up in a back-to-back, so it'll give us a little feel of where we are at."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209566 Florida Panthers

Panthers Beat Lightning 5-3 To Move Into 2nd In Central

By CBSMiami.com TeamApril 18, 2021 at 12:51 pm

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Brandon Montour, Patric Hornqvist and Jonathan Huberdeau scored in the first period, and the Florida Panthers beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 5-3 Saturday night.

Frank Vatrano and Anthony Duclair also scored, and Sam Bennett had two assists to help Florida jump one point ahead of Tampa Bay for second place in the Central Division. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 shots.

"I feel like it's a fun game, it's a lot of emotions and two good teams battling for points," Florida defenseman Markus Nutivaara said. "I love to play in these games."

Brayden Point, Erik Cernak and Mathieu Joseph scored for the Lightning. Victor Hedman had two assists to top 400 for his career. Andrei Vasilevsky had 27 saves in his first loss on home ice this season in 15 starts.

The Panthers grabbed a 2-0 lead in the opening period on Montour's first goal with Florida at 8:41 and Barkov's rebound chance off his own shot on the power play that went in off Hornqvist at 12:31.

Point answered with his 18th of the season 1:09 later when Mikhail Sergachev's shot grazed off Point at the right post.

In the final minute of the period, Tyler Johnson turned the puck over to Bennett in the neutral zone and missed his check on Huberdeau who pounced on a rebound of Markus Nutivaara's shot with 7.8 seconds left for a 3-1 lead.

"We turned it over, and when you turn it over, bad things can happen," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Then we got beat back to the net and missed our check . . . that was a tough one."

Vatrano converted a breakaway at 17:34 of the second for a three-goal lead, but Cernak answered with 45 seconds left in the period.

"I had so much time and so much space I could pick where I could shoot it and luckily it went in," Cernak said. "I thought it was great for momentum going into the third period."

Joseph tipped a Hedman shot to make it 4-3 at the 1:53 of the third period, but Duclair's empty-netter with 50 seconds left sealed the win.

"I thought we were really good after they made it 4-3," Florida head coach Joel Quenneville said. "The second was good but they scored late, they got excited. They scored early in the third. I liked how we played in that response for the rest of the game. We did what we had to do."

STAMKOS UPDATE

Two days after the Lightning placed captain Steven Stamkos on long-term injured reserve with an unspecified lower body injury, the team confirmed the current injury is unrelated to the core muscle surgery he underwent last season.

"We are extremely optimistic that after he comes off the required time amount he'll be in really good shape to continue playing for us," Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said. "We'll see how he rests and how his body mends a little bit and hopefully he'll be back on the ice in a week-to-10 days, get him back going again and make a push for the playoffs."

LOOKING FOR FITS

Bennett made his Panthers debut, five days after being acquired from the Calgary Flames at the trade deadline. Bennett worked the middle on Florida's second line between Huberdeau and Duclair, as Panthers coach Joel Quenneville tinkers with his lineups with an eye on the start of next month's playoffs.

"We're looking for some balance," Quenneville said. "We've got a little more depth, we've got some more options with guys who can potentially play in the middle, so having versatility with wingers and centers and now we have some options in making our lines."

UP NEXT

Panthers: Host Columbus on Monday night.

Lightning: Host Carolina on Monday night.

LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209556 Dallas Stars

'He drives the bus here': Stars' recent turnaround goes hand-in-hand with resurgence of Jamie Benn

By Matthew DeFranks2:12 PM on Apr 18, 2021 CDT

As the Stars have surged with a six-game points streak, they've done so thanks, in part, to the play of captain Jamie Benn.

Benn seems to have snapped out of his lengthy slump with seven points in the last six games, a stretch that has coincided with his move to center on the Stars' second line. Benn has three multi-point games in the last six, including a two-point effort during Saturday night's 5-1 win over Columbus.

On Saturday, Benn scored when Columbus goaltender Joonas Korpisalo gave up a big rebound, with Benn batting the puck out of midair past Korpisalo. He also played a key part in Denis Gurianov's goal, first winning a board battle in his own zone to spring the rush and then hanging on to the puck long enough to set up Gurianov's one-timer into a gaping net.

"Jamie's been playing fantastic. He's been playing his heart out," Stars coach Rick Bowness said Thursday night. "It all starts, to me, with Jamie. He drives the bus here. When he's playing as hard as he has at center, then everyone else has to feed off of that."

In the two-game series against Columbus, Benn's line with Jason Dickinson and Gurianov was dominant, as was Benn's performance in the faceoff circle. In the last six games, Benn is 60-31 at the dot.

The Stars have controlled the game whenever Benn is on the ice in the last six games, outscoring teams 10-0 and holding a 51-33 edge in shots on goal and 114-71 in shot attempts at all strengths.

Earlier this season, Benn endured a stretch in which he scored just two goals in 25 games before his recent turnaround.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

"I think he's been playing pretty good for a while now, like I talked about the team," defenseman John Klingberg said. "I think it shows the way Jamie plays, that's how our team is going to play. He's the engine of this team. Obviously, it's great to see that he's creating a little bit more, but I think he's getting some bounces as well, which he deserves. He's stuck with it for a while now, and it's nice to see that the puck is bouncing a little bit his way as well this time."

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209557 Dallas Stars

Stars notebook: Blowouts minimizing wear on Hintz; Robertson closing rookie scoring gap

By Matthew DeFranks 2:03 PM on Apr 18, 2021 CDT

Stars head coach Bowness has had the luxury of resting winger Roope Hintz during recent blowout wins over Columbus this weekend.

Hintz did not play the final 4:52 of the third period during Thursday night's 4-1 win, and Bowness rested him for the last 9:27 of the third period during Saturday night's 5-1 win. Hintz has been dealing with a nagging lower-body injury for two months now, rendering him a game-time decision for every game.

"We all know what he's going through, and we all admire what he's doing to help the team win and play when he can," Bowness said. "When we have a lead and I can let him sit for a while, we're going to do that."

Robertson gaining ground: The rookie scoring race continues to tighten due to Jason Robertson's stellar play since the beginning of March. Robertson has 32 points in 38 games, while Minnesota's Kirill Kaprizov has 36 points in 43 games.

Kaprizov is considered the favorite to win the Calder Trophy as the NHL's Rookie of the Year, but Robertson has more assists, points, shots, shot attempts, scoring chances and high-danger chances per 60 minutes of 5 on 5 than Kaprizov, according to Natural Stat Trick. Kaprizov has more goals.

With Robertson on the ice at 5 on 5, the Stars have scored 4.05 goals per 50 minutes, which ranks third in the league among forwards with at least 500 minutes at 5 on 5.

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209648 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks embark on unprecedented journey with 'gutsy' win over Maple Leafs

Iain MacIntyre April 19, 2021, 12:28 AM

VANCOUVER — This has never been tried.

Nobody has done what the Vancouver Canucks are trying to do because no major professional sports team in North America has been attacked the way the Canucks were the last three weeks by COVID-19's vicious P.1 variant.

There is no precedent. Finishing the National Hockey League season with nearly an entire roster of coronavirus survivors is a monumental challenge that seems almost impossible to conclude with any competitive success. It seems the Canucks are playing for degrees of failure,

because how could any team thrive over 19 games in 32 days after a 24-day layoff in which many players were sicker than they've ever been?

This isn't a schedule — it's an experiment.

Nothing should surprise us. But Sunday, at the start of the experiment, the Canucks stunned everyone, including the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Out-skated, out-chanced, and looking close to exhaustion whenever the fast and formidable Leafs extended shifts in the Vancouver zone, the Canucks rallied from two goals down to beat the best team in Canada 3-2 in overtime when captain Bo Horvat rattled a shot through Toronto goalie Jack Campbell.

From where they were just a few days ago to where the Canucks were Sunday evening was astonishing.

"This isn't just your regular win during the regular season," Vancouver coach Travis Green, who was so ill himself he admitted Saturday he hadn't been sure he could return when his players did, told reporters on Zoom. "It's a special win. We've gone through a lot here with our group over the last few weeks. I'm proud of our group.

"I don't want to start getting ahead of tonight's win (but) you would hope that it would give them some belief. Our group is a competitive group. They love winning, and they're resilient, and you hope that this win can obviously give them some belief in what they can do. Coming off COVID and being off the ice for so long, there's going to be some doubt for sure within your mind. And a win like this will go a long way to help."

Horvat said: "I couldn't be prouder of our guys in that room, the way they manned up tonight and stuck to the process and willed their way to that win. To score that goal to get the win for the guys -- but not only the guys but our organization, our families -- it definitely felt great."

The way the Canucks competed, they were headed towards a moral victory even when Auston Matthews' power-play goal made it 2-0 for Toronto at 14:57 of the second period, just under five minutes after Vancouver defenceman Alex Edler was assessed a major penalty and game misconduct for a knee-on-knee hit that injured Zach Hyman.

But on his next shift, Matthews turned over the puck in the offensive zone and Vancouver rookie Nils Hoglander spotted Horvat behind the Leafs' defence. Horvat beat Campbell cleanly with a near-post wrist shot at 16:23 that got the Canucks within a goal in a game in which they were outshot 27-13 through two periods.

Hoglander tied it 2-2 at 12:03 of the third when Jalen Chatfield's pass fell to him for a gimme after another Toronto turnover up ice. Horvat scored at 1:19 of overtime from close to the same spot he beat Campbell in the second period.

The Canucks barely made it to OT, surviving Matthews' shot off the crossbar and post in the final minute of regulation, and the ensuing video review of a Mitch Marner bank-shot that the Maple Leaf believed was in.

Mostly, they survived because goalie Braden Holtby had his biggest game of a season that had been dismal for the former Vezina Trophy winner even before he got COVID and, like so many players, passed the virus on to his wife.

With No. 1 goalie (and team MVP) Thatcher Demko still too ill to play, Holtby started and won for the first time since Feb. 17 by stopping 37 of 39 shots. He made a pile of point-blank saves, but his most spectacular was a whirling, scissor-kick stop in the third period against Wayne Simmonds. Holtby looked like a synchronized swimmer as he extended his legs above his torso.

"Those ones are fun to make sometimes," Holtby said. "I think it was just a gutsy effort from our group. I think it was just one where we all just decided to go out there and give it absolutely all you have. Stick together and we believed we were going to have a chance to win. It was a fun one to be part of."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

"I was happy for Holts tonight," Green said. "He's such a good person. He has had a bit of a rough year this year, probably not the year he wanted. But we've tried to stand by him and believe in him and we do. He was one of the first guys I talked to after the game tonight. I was proud of him tonight the way he played."

"To beat a team like Toronto, with how long we've been out, you're going to need a performance from your goalie, and he gave us an All-Star Holtby performance tonight."

Emotional energy carried the Canucks through whatever physical energy they lacked. In a season when so much had gone wrong even before the pandemic flattened and frightened them, the Canucks on Sunday brought sunlight back into their world and made players feel good.

When was the last time these players felt good?

"Under the circumstances, with kind of what we went through, I think it gives our group a lot of confidence," Horvat said. "I think we needed something like this to kind of drive us here for this next schedule coming up."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209649 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 'Scary' hit on Zach Hyman a bigger concern than Maple Leafs' slump

Luke Fox

April 18, 2021, 11:49 PM

When Alex Edler stuck out his knee Sunday night, he didn't just clip Zach Hyman. He triggered the panic button in Leafs Nation.

Hyman is throwing down a career performance, in a contract year to boot. He's a tough, excuse-free customer who once grinded through half of a playoff series on a torn ACL.

So, to watch Hyman hit the deck and eventually hobble off the ice following Edler's knee-on-knee collision — "a pretty dirty hit," in teammate William Nylander's evaluation — is to send a fright through Toronto's grand ambitions one month out from the post-season.

"We just hope he is OK," said captain John Tavares, speaking for team and fan base alike.

"Such an integral part of our group. The elements that he brings to our team, you can't replace that. Hopefully, it's nothing too serious. He's battled through so many things since my time being here. The competitor that he is, it's impressive. He obviously plays such a key role for us. I know he was really positive in the room, very optimistic. Hopefully, nothing too serious."

There was no immediate update on Hyman's condition.

The dog-tired Edler was dealt a five-minute major penalty plus a game misconduct for his clip, which took place as the defenceman chugged to Vancouver's bench at the end of hemmed-in, three-minute shift.

That Auston Matthews tucked a beautiful and long-awaited Leafs power-play goal on the ensuing man-advantage provided little respite in the big picture.

Who cares if the Maple Leafs blew a 2-0 lead and lost 3-2 in overtime to a COVID-weakened Vancouver Canucks squad?

It's Hyman's health that is of paramount importance. The right knee Edler took out is the same one that required ACL surgery and months of recovery in 2019.

"He's a critical part of this team, and those kind of plays — the knee-on-knee hits — I mean, they're scary," Matthews said.

Added Tavares: "I didn't love the hit. Obviously, he got a five and the game misconduct for a reason."

Hyman improves every line he's thrown on, which, more nights than most, ends up being more than one. He contributes to both special teams.

When he's jolted to the top unit with Matthews and Mitch Marner, the three form arguably the most complete 200-foot line in hockey. When he's bumped down to a checking line, as he was Sunday, Hyman can drive play and seize hard matchups.

His versatility and relentlessness is tailor-made for playoff hockey. That's why GM Kyle Dubas went out and brought in a similar mould of forward in Nick Foligno at the trade deadline.

Hyman ranks first on his club in plus/minus (plus-19); second in goals (15) and game-winners (four); and third in points (33) and average ice time among forwards (19:41).

"He's a warrior," Jack Campbell said. "He kind of does it all for us every single night, and he's just such a valuable player on our team and in the dressing room. We love him."

"It's obviously a huge loss anytime he leaves the lineup, but I thought our guys pushed hard and we could've won the game."

Indeed.

The Leafs severely outplayed the Canucks, who built their emotional comeback on the strength of Bo Horvat's game-breaking plays and Braden Holtby's windmilling, 37-save gem.

Toronto generated 21 high-danger chances to the Vancouver's five and out-attempted the home side 81-44. Posts and crossbars were pinged at close range, and Marner might've even jammed home the winning puck with 20 seconds left in regulation had Holtby's positioning not rendered a video review inconclusive.

Asked what the underdog Canucks did to hand his top-seed Leafs their fourth consecutive loss, coach Sheldon Keefe said, flatly, "I don't know. Their goalie made 10 point-blank saves."

Campbell, on the other hand, did not.

The affable goalie's record-snapping 11-game win streak felt weeks old when he let Horvat's clincher leak under his short-side armpit, marking a third straight defeat. Campbell has posted a sub-.900 save percentage in five of his past six starts.

"Yeah, it's a little bit of a slump for us and myself personally," Campbell said. "We had a lot of chances. Holtby was sensational for them, and he just outplayed me tonight. But I thought our guys deserved the two points."

As Clint Eastwood's character in Unforgiven famously said: "Deserve's got nothing to do with it."

Hyman didn't deserve to get his knee thwacked. Nor did the Canucks deserve to lose three weeks of their lives to a viral outbreak.

All you can do is hold your hope, push forward and see what tomorrow brings.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209650 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' growth an extension of McDavid, Draisaitl's own on-ice transformation



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

Mark Spector

April 18, 2021, 12:15 AM

Mike Smith has been through these playoff runs before, backstopping how many teams over the last 15 seasons down how many stretch runs? He's seen every version of a contender there is, and the one he's playing behind now played like a serious one on Saturday night in Winnipeg.

"We're building something here. Building for something more important than a regular-season game," Smith said after a 3-0 win, an Oilers performance that was rock solid from the goal line out.

Edmonton played 60 minutes in Winnipeg Saturday and likely won more than 50 of them, grinding past a Jets team that simply could not muster what it would have taken to beat a determined Oilers side playing perhaps its most complete game of the season.

"It's a massive win," Connor McDavid said, his Oilers now three points back of Winnipeg with two games in hand. "You're coming down the stretch playing teams ahead of you, you want to beat them."

This was your classic meeting between a team playing its first game at home after a gruelling 22-game stretch in 42 days — 17 of those on the road — against an Oilers club that hadn't played in a week. Instead, the Oilers went to school, cramming daily as the coaching staff drove home the principles of how they must play to win playoff rounds.

"Our guys, I'll give them credit. They worked hard this week," head coach Dave Tippett said. "We had 14 games left before tonight to earn a playoff spot, and make sure of we get that spot that we're playing well going in. Tonight was a good first step."

The Jets are now 1-1 in their six-game run of games against either Toronto or Edmonton. Of their final 13 games, Edmonton has five against Vancouver, four against Montreal and two each against Winnipeg and Calgary.

Sitting six back of North-leading Toronto with a game in hand, the Division title may be a reach for the Oilers. But being the team playing its best hockey when the playoffs start?

That's a definite possibility.

Edmonton is the best team in the North since Jan. 3, playing .700 hockey (23-9-2), while the Oilers power play has quietly climbed up to the third spot in the NHL with their 10th multi-goal effort Saturday. No other team has more than nine.

Also, Edmonton's penalty kill has allowed just one goal in its last 22 attempts. That's the best in the NHL since March 27.

"Very connected," was how Smith reviewed his team's work in front of his Saturday. "We've been talking about that this last week. It's nice when it gets talked about, you practice it, and it carries over into the game. What we're building here is something worth noting. Guys have really grasped on to playing important hockey games."

Tyson Barrie blasted one through an Alex Chiasson screen to break a scoreless tie at 12:00 of the second period, and Chiasson deflected home a Barrie shot to ice the game late — both power play goals. In between, Jesse Puljujarvi proved a perfect complement to linemates McDavid and Leon Draisaitl when he found the soft spot to bury a McDavid pass, after the two superstars had ground out a shift along the wall in their best impersonation of the Sedin twins.

It was a turnover producing, wall-working shift for McDavid and Draisaitl (two assists each). The kind of shift they didn't always produce, but now an example of just how complete their games have become.

"You've got to battle out there," McDavid said. "A lot of times, you get into the offensive zone, you take your foot off the gas and you think it's going to be easy. You've got to outwork guys sometimes. Work for your chances."

With Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (concussion) on the shelf, Tippett stayed with McDavid and Draisaitl on the same line. They rewarded him with a gritty defensive effort, and some tough offensive minutes. Not to mention two power-play goals and an even-strength winner.

They're maturing and improving, both one-two atop the scoring race and 200-foot players.

"You have to recognize that it's going to be hard," Tippett said. "Winning in the playoffs is hard. To get a playoff spot is hard. It's not going to be all pretty passes and breakaways. You have to work for your goals."

"Our whole team's mindset was there, and they're the leaders of that."

On Saturday, the Oilers took a vulnerable Jets team and never gave them a breath. The Oilers' effort wasn't perfect, but you won't come much closer than this.

"There's no such thing as a perfect game," said Smith, now 15-4-2, with a save percentage that just jumped to .922. All three of his shutouts this year were 3-0 road wins. "Tonight we did so many good things that it made up for the mistakes that we made. And the ones we did make? They were covered up by other players."

"That's one thing we've been talking about, playing a playoff style of game that can withstand getting into the deep rounds where it really matters. It's not something you just flick on and off. It's something that's built, and the team put out a tremendous amount of hard work this week."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.19.2021

1209651 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: The mysterious value of finishing No. 1 in Canada

Luke Fox

April 17, 2021, 10:53 AM

A quick mix of the things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep. Nikita Kucherov will go down as the best trade deadline acquisition of 2021.

1. The funny thing about the race for the No. 1 seed in Canada is, be careful what you wish for.

The Toronto Maple Leafs have held pole position for three months now and essentially could run the 56-game sprint/marathon wire to wire. But they're a better road team (14-5-1) than they are a home team (14-7-3).

And we're not sure the hard-checking, defensively staunch Montreal Canadiens (the presumed 4 seed) would provide a more favourable matchup for the Leafs than the Edmonton Oilers (the likely 3 seed), whom Toronto has already beat six times.

The only NHL team with more road wins than Toronto?

The Winnipeg Jets, who rolls home to host the Oilers after amassing a 16-8-1 away record.

"I'd take that," Jets coach Paul Maurice said Thursday, when it was suggested his group performs better outside of Manitoba. "The road game is the game that's played in the playoffs."

Smart. Hard. Patient. Low-scoring. Opportunistic on special teams.

Multiple times Maurice has brought up that the Jets have been dished 17 road games in a 22-game span. Someone told the coach no club has been dealt such a schedule since 1980.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

"Everybody's a little edgy right now. It's 17 in 22. We don't have a road game in our time zone," Maurice said, after his latest road win.

Maurice keeps bringing it up because he wants outsiders -- fans, critics, media -- to appreciate his players' grind, their accomplishment.

The Jets are within striking distance and, frankly, could swipe that No. 1 spot from Toronto with three home games against the Leafs next week.

Ironic: two elite road warriors battling to play at home.

What's more, Edmonton has earned just as many points on the road as it has at home (26), and Montreal has gained more ground skating away from the Bell Centre.

Toronto coach Sheldon Keefe wonders if the value of home ice may be "overblown" this May.

On one hand, holding last change can give the home coach some advantage when it comes to line matchups. But on the other: "I think there's also some advantages to being on the road and just rolling your lines and forcing your opposition to adjust to you," Keefe said.

"All of that said... you're competing to put yourself in the best position possible. And for us, we've been in first for a good portion of the season, and that's something we've wanted because it shows we're doing good things."

The question remains: How much is the top seed even worth in a pandemic? In a country stuck in various states of lockdown?

"I'm not sure anybody can give you an answer that has any substance to it, because nobody knows. There's no fans. There's no people in the building," Leafs veteran Jason Spezza says.

"Most importantly, we just want to win games just to be feeling good about ourselves and also be playing the right way with good habits. If you have good habits and you play the right way, the results follow. If we're playing the right way, it's important.

"So, I'm not sure how it will play out in playoffs. This is a unique year. But regardless, we want to be playing good hockey heading down the stretch."

2. As if the Taylor Hall debacle in Buffalo couldn't look worse, multiple reports have surfaced that Kevyn Adams was offered at least one package that included a first-rounder for his \$8-million man.

"I know for a fact a team that offered a first-round pick. And there's more than one," GM-turned-analyst Brian Lawton said Wednesday on the Real Kypers at Noon podcast. "It cost the Buffalo Sabres millions of dollars."

Hall confirmed that his no-move clause helped steer him to Boston, a preferred destination.

Lawton argues that Adams should've insisted Hall give him a list of five teams he'd be willing to accept a trade before the season began.

"I doubt that happened. If it did happen, Kevyn Adams should say that," Lawton said. "If the player says, 'I'll go to one team,' say, 'Good luck in the summer, dude. It ain't happening—because I can't trade you to one team without embarrassing this organization.'"

Adams hired associate GM Jason Karmanos hours after the deadline passed.

3. Is there an NHL general manager acting with more job security than Steve Yzerman?

Blessed with salary cap space and loaded with draft picks, the Hall of Famer had ownership's blessing to spend money at the deadline to help push along this slow, smart rebuild in Detroit.

Not only was Yzerman able to pry first- and second-round picks from Washington for taking Jacob Vrana in exchange for Anthony Mantha, he scored a fourth-rounder from Tampa for eating some of David Savard's

salary, and another fourth from Colorado for retaining money in the Patrick Nemeth deal.

When so many GMs either tighten up (Arizona and Nashville's refusal to sell could hurt them in the long run, for example) or scramble, Yzerman's patient plan sticks out.

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

4. "I'm excited to get back to all the crazy Canadian fans," Ben Hutton, a former Canuck, said in the wake of his deadline trade to Toronto. "The Leafs are a top team in the NHL."

Hutton, 27, was recruited as an inexpensive depth rental to support a six-man D corps that has (knock wood) endured a busy regular season largely unscathed.

He won't chip in much offence (he posted one goal and four assists for the Ducks this season), but he eats minutes (18:31 TOI/GP, which would rank him fifth in Toronto), kills penalties and has been driving play forward despite starting most shifts in his own zone.

"Finally get to come back east, so it's not as late for my parents to stay up and watch the games," the Brockville, Ont., native said from quarantine. "My dad used to be a Habs fan. He's now a Leafs fan. So, we'd get to a lot of the Habs-versus-Leafs games growing up."

Kyle Dubas explored signing Hutton when he was a UFA in 2019 but opted instead to bring in Cody Ceci and Tyson Barrie. The Leafs continued scouting him since that time.

"In terms of depth, we have a lot of guys that can come in and play on the power-play and play more offensive minutes. We just wanted to bolster what we had defensively, and we feel that over his career he's done that. So that was what led us to Ben," Dubas said.

"I would expect that Ben will compete with the group, and if he wins the [playoff lineup] spot, that's great for him and great for our depth."

Expect Marlies Timothy Liljegren and Rasmus Sandin to get another big-league look down the stretch as the Leafs rest bodies and evaluate their options ahead of the postseason.

"No matter who you are," Hutton says, "you have to earn your ice."

5. If it's true Marc Bergevin made a pitch to acquire Tony DeAngelo, Montreal's general manager may be more desperate than originally thought.

And DeAngelo, who reportedly rebuffed a move to Montreal, may be less desperate to get back in the game.

After the Rangers buy out DeAngelo's contract this summer, it'll be fascinating to see which team takes a chance on the offensive puck-mover. Such a signing won't come without a PR hurdle.

6. Dallas Stars rookie phenom Jason Robertson, 21, is two years younger, skates two fewer minutes a night, and has played four fewer games than Kirill Kaprizov — the man he's hunting down for the Calder Trophy.

Each has tallied the same number of goals (11) and points (27) at even-strength. Each has scored two game-winners. Kaprizov has made more hay on the power-play, but the red-hot Robertson leads all freshmen with a plus-13 rating.

Younger brother Nick, who registered his first regular-season point this week, lights up when you ask him about his big brother.

"I get so fired up when I wake up and I see he's got a point or two, or his team's doing well, or that he's doing well," Nick says. "I know he's putting in the work, and people are starting to see what he can really do."

"But I've seen it since Day One, training with him all the time. It's just great to get the recognition he deserves, and I love him."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 19, 2021

Nick, 19, says he and Jason talk all the time. Jason got excited when Nick told him he'd be back in the Leafs lineup Monday and gave him a little brotherly advice.

"I look forward for him to continue succeeding in his career," Nick says. "I just hope I can do it with him, too."

7. Non-trades don't make waves. But props to Philly GM Chuck Fletcher and L.A. GM Rob Blake for locking up impending UFAs Scott Laughton and Alex Lafallo, respectively, on Monday.

Hate to harp on Adams in Buffalo, but Linus Ullmark — the most attractive potential rent-a-goalie — was neither traded nor signed.

The Sabres don't have an NHL-level goalie under contract for 2021-22.

If the injured Ullmark walks for nothing in July, after the Sabres spent nine years developing him, it'll be a disaster. Not sure why Adams doesn't have Ullmark's signature on a piece of paper already.

"We said all along we want Linus to be a Buffalo Sabre," Adams said Monday. "We've had great conversations. Been ongoing. Continue to talk right now. I've spent time with Linus just one-on-one having conversations about, philosophically, where we're at and where we're looking to get to and what he's looking for. That's my style."

"That's an important relationship to have with your players. It's not about dollars and cents. It's more about vision and where are we headed and why. We've had those conversations, and we'll continue to work at it, but priority for us is absolutely to sign Linus and he and his agent both know that."

8. What's interesting about the Lafallo and Laughton deals is that both mid-tier forwards secured decent term (four and five years, respectively) when compared to the commitments other UFA forwards have been getting under this pandemic-crushed flat salary cap.

Seems clear that the valuable, versatile Laughton took a lower AAV (\$3 million) in exchange for extra term. Ditto Adam Lowry and his extension in Winnipeg — five years times \$3.25 million.

I wonder if this is the path Kyle Dubas and the Maple Leafs should take with their own pending UFA, Zach Hyman, this summer.

Hyman will be more in demand and command a richer payday than Laughton's \$15 million due to his uptick in production. Heck, Hyman just recorded his fourth consecutive 15-goal season.

Imagine how much Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel could benefit from such a wingman.

But the blueprint of handing out extra years to lower Hyman's cap hit could be the path to keeping him in Blue and White.

Jeff Marek and Elliott 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.

9. Quote of the Week!

"I don't think anyone had to sell him on coming here. We're the Pittsburgh Penguins, and we're not here to kiss anyone's butt to play here." —Brian Burke, on the notion that Jeff Carter needed convincing to leave the beach

10. Last Saturday's Marlies-Rocket AHL game was all about the Cole Caufield coming-out party.

But we can only imagine what it must've been like for injury-plagued Maple Leafs goalie prospect Ian Scott. Difficult to blame the 22-year-old for the 4-3 loss. It marked Scott's long-deferred pro debut and his first hockey game since May 19, 2019, tending the Prince Albert net at the Memorial Cup.

"Ian did a great job. If you take into consideration how long it's been for him to get into a live action game like that against an opponent like that, you could tell in the first period he had some nervous energy and

movement, but he settled right in, made some big saves," coach Greg Moore said.

"In the second period, he looked very comfortable. It's incredible just how poised and calm he looks back there. Kind of mirrors his personality. For his first game, he should be really proud of that."

Scott admitted to the nerves and had difficulty finding the words to describe being in the crease after a nearly two-year hiatus.

"Just to be out there again, in the atmosphere and competing out there with the team, there's no better feeling," Scott said. "A lot of work went on behind the scenes, and after a while coming back, I was able just to roll with things."

The ability to roll with things is a necessity for all of us these days. Scott has no clue when his next start will come, now that the Marlies' season has been put on hold due to COVID protocol.

11. Auston Matthews has been quick to follow friend Matthew Tkachuk's lead into the NFT game.

"Just something that I'm looking to kind of explore and just have fun with," Matthews says.

On Wednesday, the Rocket Richard Trophy front-runner released his own officially minted non-fungible token (NFT) collection, 107 pieces of unique digital art memorabilia, like the ones found on NBA Top Shot.

Tkachuk became the first NHL star to do so last month. Matthews' items are available via Open Sea, the world's largest NFT marketplace. The auction closes tonight.

A portion of proceeds will be donated to Sick Kids Foundation and the fight against cystic fibrosis.

"I've always been a fan of art, so it's cool to be able to release my own that tells a bit about my story," Matthews wrote during an AMA he conducted with fans to celebrate the drop.

"The fight against cystic fibrosis is very important to us based on the loss of my uncle. He was who introduced me to the game of hockey."

12. Teamwork makes the dream work...

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.19.2021