

NEW JERSEY DEVILS
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Schneider celebrates early, shuts out Pens

By **TOM GULITTI**
STAFF WRITER

NEWARK — There's no better birthday gift for a goaltender than a shutout.

The Devils' Cory Schneider celebrated his a day early with a 35-save blanking of the Pittsburgh Penguins in a 2-0 victory Tuesday at Prudential Center.

Schneider, who turns 29 today, made Jacob Josefson's second-period goal stand up as the winner and equaled his career-high with his fifth shutout of the season. Adam Henrique's empty-net goal with 48.7 seconds left sealed it for the Devils.

"It's nice to close one of those out," Schneider said. "There's been a few where we've been up, 1-0, or we've had a tight lead in the third and it's gone to overtime or a shootout. So, it was good to hold onto this one, especially a shutout against a good team, a team that's pretty desperate right now."

Actually, the last time the Metropolitan Division rivals met Jan. 30 at The Rock, the Devils led, 1-0, until the Penguins tied it with 3:11 left in regulation and won, 2-1, in overtime. So the Devils were happy to help Schneider finish off this shutout on the eve of his birthday.

"I'm sure that's what he would ask for if he could," defenseman turned right wing Peter Harrold said.

Wearing their original red, green and white uniforms for "Retro Night", the Devils were outshot, 35-19, but did just enough beat the Penguins, who dropped their third in a row. The Devils improved to 9-3-2 in their last 14 games and 30-29-11 for the season, putting them above NHL .500 for the first time since they were 8-7-2, following a 1-0 win in Washington on Nov. 14.

They're still 12 points out of playoff spot with only 12 games remaining, making it extremely likely they won't qualify, but they are determined to finish the



DEVILS 2
PENGUINS 0

season strong, regardless.

"In spite of our record and how we've done, I know it's not good enough, but I don't think we've ever given up," Schneider said. "I don't think anybody in this room has really just packed it in when we've had reasons to or we've had the chance to."

The Devils played again without Patrik Elias, who missed his second game in a row with back spasms. In recent weeks, Elias had been playing a lot against opponent's top lines with Dainius Zubrus and Stephen Gionta. With Elias out, the Devils matched a line of Zubrus, Gionta and Harrold against the Penguins' top line of Chris Kunitz, Sidney Crosby and David Perron.

Together with the defense pairing of Andy Greene and Adam Larsson, that line — with a lot of help from Schneider — managed to keep Crosby and Co. under control much of the night. Kunitz, Crosby and Perron combined for eight shots on goal, though.

"[Crosby] still created more than I would like, but for the most part he was on the outside," Zubrus said.

Crosby's best chance came 11:15 into the game after a pass from Kunitz set him up alone in front, but Schneider made the stop with the cuff of his catching glove.

The Penguins came the closest to scoring 1:15 into the second, when Zubrus accidentally deflected a Kunitz pass from the left circle and Schneider had to make a right arm save.

The Devils didn't generate a lot of great scoring chances, but Josefson converted on one of their best with 3:35 left in the second.

Eric Gelinis carried the puck out of the Devils' zone and banked a pass off the boards that Michael Ryder chipped past defenseman Rob Scuderi to Josefson in the right circle. Josefson beat Thomas Greiss with a wrist shot off the far post for his fifth goal of the season.

Offense a priority for Devs

By **TOM GULITTI**
STAFF WRITER

NEWARK – This season is not yet over, but Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello is wisely already planning for next season.

With the Devils likely to miss the playoffs for the third consecutive season, Lamoriello has talked repeatedly over the last month about the changes he intends to make this summer to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The biggest need remains getting younger, faster and more skilled at forward.

"I think that we have to get a couple of offensive forwards," Lamoriello said Tuesday morning.

"Our role players are outstanding. Our defense, I'm extremely pleased with. Goaltending, I don't think I can say enough about it the way it's been. So we have to get a couple offensive players."

Following the March 2 NHL trade deadline, Lamoriello suggested that he tried to pull off a deal for a scoring forward, but was unable to find a trade partner willing to pull the trigger.

That might be easier to do this summer.

With a host of players on expiring contracts, the Devils will have salary cap space available for next season, while some other teams will be caught in a crunch and possibly need to move forwards they can't keep under the cap. Lamoriello has said that will be the team's area of opportunity.

Lamoriello also revealed Tuesday a little more of his thinking on how he'll approach his off-season search for a new head coach.

The Devils will finish the season with their current coaching alignment with co-coaches Adam Oates and Scott Stevens running things with Lamoriello also on the bench.

"We're going to wait until certainly the season is over, but definitely there's no hurry to doing it at this point," Lamoriello said. "So, we'll just make sure that we get every possible option available before that decision is made."

Lamoriello acknowledged that the next head coach will have to be someone who believes in the organizational philosophy.

"We certainly will look at somebody within the framework of the system that we play – defense first," Lamoriello said. "But we also have to get some offensive players too, to complement that."

HE SAID IT

“We certainly will look at somebody within the framework of the system that we play. Defense first. But we also have to get some offensive players to complement that.”

— GM Lou Lamoriello, when asked what he's looking for in the next coach of the Devils



DEVILS 2, PENGUINS 0

Schneider ties career best with 5th shutout

By Rich Chere

NJ Advance Media for The Star-Ledger

Cory Schneider matched his NHL career high by posting his fifth shutout as the Devils stopped the Pittsburgh Penguins, 2-0, Tuesday night at Prudential Center.

Schneider (35 saves) had five shutouts for the Vancouver Canucks in 2012-13. He did it in 30 games that season. This was his 61st game this season.

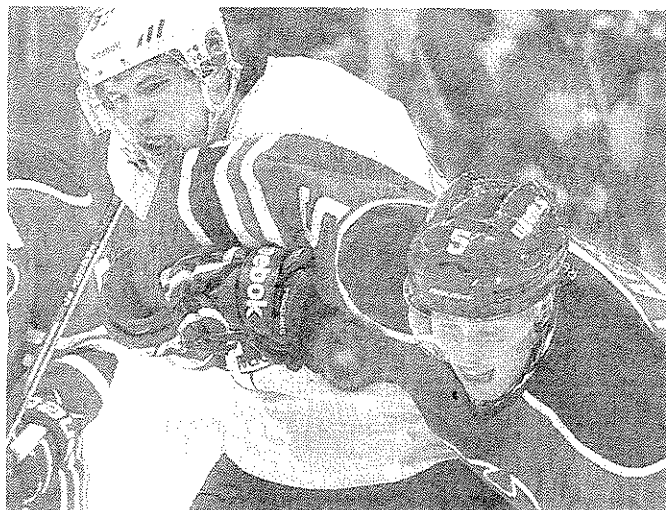
Adam Henrique scored an empty net goal with 48.7 seconds left. It was his 16th goal.

Highlights

- Adam Larsson and Andy Greene did a sensational job against the Sidney Crosby line.

- The Devils' retro uniforms. Still a great look... once a season.

- Michael Ryder's assist on Jacob Josefson's second period goal was his first point since Jan. 14 when he had a goal and an assist in Los Angeles. Of course, Ryder was



Devils defenseman Adam Larsson, right, and Penguins center Sidney Crosby get tangled as they battle for the puck Tuesday.

(SAED HINDASH / NJ ADVANCE MEDIA)

playing in only his sixth game since then.

- Schneider stopped two big point shots by defenseman Ian Cole early in the period, made a great pad save on Nick Spaling with 12 minutes to play, denied a blast by Crosby from the right circle two minutes later, and made saves through

traffic on shots by Paul Martin and David Perron before the final horn.

Lowlights

- Dainius Zubrus almost scored a goal... into his own net. Zubrus tipped a Chris Kunitz shot and Cory Schneider had to make the save at 1:15 of the second period.

DEVILS 2, Penguins 0

Pittsburgh	0	0	0-0
Devils	0	1	1-2

First Period—None. Penalties—None.

Second Period—1, New Jersey, Josefson 5 (Ryder, Gelinias), 16:25. Penalties—Winnik, Pit (embellishment), 1:26; Fraser, NJ (tripping), 1:28; Perron, Pit (holding), 10:17.

Third Period—2, New Jersey, Henrique 16, 19:11 (en). Penalties—Winnik, Pit (slashing), 4:54.

Shots on Goal—Pittsburgh 14-8-13-35. New Jersey 8-7-4-19.

Power-play opportunities—Pittsburgh 0 of 0; New Jersey 0 of 2.

Goalsies—Pittsburgh, Greiss 8-5-3 (18 shots-17 saves). New Jersey, Schneider 26-25-7 (35-35).

A—15,848 (17,625). T-2:22.

Referees—Ghislain Hebert, Dan O'Rourke. Linesmen—Derek Amell, Steve Barton.

Notable

- Patrik Elias missed his second straight game due to back spasms

- A new sheet of ice was put down in Prudential Center on Monday.

Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's Circus Xtreme was in the arena last weekend.

- Josefson's goal was his fifth. Two have come at even strength and three shorthanded.

- Good Tuesday night crowd of 15,848.

There's no quit in Devils

By TOM CANAVAN

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PENGUINS	0	Page 40

The biggest reason the Devils are hanging around in the Eastern Conference postseason race is the play of goalie Cory Schneider.

Schneider made 35 saves in earning his fifth shutout of the season, and the Devils beat Pittsburgh 2-0 on Tuesday night, sending the Penguins to their third straight loss.

"I've felt pretty good for a while now," said Schneider, who has allowed two or fewer goals in 16 of his last 20 starts. "Very few are getting away from me. I feel good in net and I'm confident.

"I think my teammates are confident in me. We have that type of synergy going right now. It's nowhere near where we want to be by any means, but it was good to beat a rival, a team that we don't like too much, and I know they don't like us."

Jacob Josefson scored in the second period for the

Devils, who are 9-3-2 in their last 14 games. Adam Henrique iced the game with an empty-net goal with 49 seconds to go.

"Having him play well gives us extra confidence," Henrique said of Schneider. "We only had to score one tonight because of him. He's been outstanding lately. We did play well defensively against one of the top guys in the league and limited their chances."

The shutout loss was the second in three games for the Penguins, who have scored only one goal in that span. This was their second straight game without star forward Evgeni Malkin, who has a lower-body injury.

Sidney Crosby missed the first game in that stretch after being unable to play following warm-ups.

"This is not a streak you want to run into at this time of year," Crosby said. "The games are tight. We have to find a way.

—AP

Remembering the high school hockey game where Cory Schneider faced off against Jonathan Quick

By: [Nate Scott](#) 20 hours ago USA Today

It was a cold morning in March 2004, and Cory Schneider was waiting for a bus. The bus was coming to pick up Schneider and his Phillips Academy (Mass.) teammates to take them to the New England prep hockey semifinal game.

Schneider, who is now the No. 1 goalie for the New Jersey Devils, had carried his team to the semifinals, dragged them really. Phillips Academy, also known as Andover, was an elite prep school, better known for its National Merit Scholars than for its hockey program. But they had Schneider, who had just finished one of the greatest seasons ever for a high school goalie.

The team was heading up to the Salem Icenter to take on the 1-seeded Avon Old Farms school, a team stocked with talent, going four lines deep of guys who were all expected to play college hockey. Andover knew from its scouting report that Avon was deep and athletic, loaded with good skaters.

Schneider and Andover didn't know much about the goalie in the other net, though. He wasn't even a part of the scouting report, as far as anyone on the team can remember. He was a junior, and his name was Jonathan Quick.

The Andover team arrived and started warming up on the ice to an empty rink. Some of the players who'd never been there were surprised by the Olympic-sized sheet of ice. Andover's coach knew the massive rink would favor Avon.

But Andover had Schneider, and they knew that gave them a chance.

Schneider had been sensational that year for Andover. The team had some talent — one of their forwards, Kyle Kucharski, would go on to win a national championship at Boston College, and stars Steve Rolecek, Mike Foley, Hunter Thunell and Jed McDonald would all play at top college programs. But they were young, and they had little depth. The team relied on Schneider to keep them in games they had no business being in.

And he did.

Schneider was otherworldly his senior year. He faced 780 shots in 24 starts that year, allowing only 33 goals for a jaw-dropping .958 save percentage, best in New England preps by a large margin.

“One of my favorite memories of that season was when Coach Boylan tried to inspire us late in the year by showing us a scene from *Seabiscuit*,” said Ben Hoerner, a third-liner on Andover who’s now an attorney in Boston. “It’s that scene where Seabiscuit is trailing the other horse, but then he makes a late surge, and the jockey says ‘So long, Charlie’ as he pulls away. It was supposed to inspire us to never give up and make a big charge at the title.” He starts laughing. “But the joke in the locker room after we watched it was that coach should have Photoshopped Cory’s face onto Seabiscuit, because we were all just riding him.”

Despite facing tons of shots every night, and losing some tight games, Schneider never got upset at his teammates.

“He was never frustrated by the fact that he got a lot of shots,” said Rolecek, who now works in finance and lives in Boston. “Or he never showed it. He was probably frustrated in games where he made 50 saves and we’d lose 1-0. But he wouldn’t show it outwardly. He wasn’t like that.”

“Cory was the greatest guy,” said Hoerner. “He was quiet. Goalies have a reputation as being weird guys, but Cory wasn’t weird. He was just a little more introverted than other guys on the team. Cory never got frustrated, never said anything. It was the coaches who would be like, ‘Hey guys, we can’t just keep having Cory make 50 saves every game.’”

He was one of the hottest young goalkeeping prospects in the country and mastered at a young age the butterfly style that was becoming more prominent in hockey. Schneider would go on to be drafted 26th overall by the Vancouver Canucks, where he would serve as a backup to Roberto Luongo, then a starter, then a backup again, before being traded to become the franchise goalie for the Devils.

On that afternoon in Salem, he didn’t know any of that yet. He just knew he had to do everything he could to keep the puck out of the net.

“It was a different kind of pressure back then [at Andover],” Schneider said. “I could almost play loose because I knew I was facing 50 shots that night, and if we lost 2-1, I knew it was OK. Then when I went on to Boston College, I might only face 15 shots in a night, but we better win. It was a different mentality.”

Over on the other side of the ice, Quick was getting ready.

Quick was a prospect, to be sure, but didn’t have the pedigree of Schneider, or the hype. He had had a strong but uneven junior year. He also could be prone to moments where he lost focus.

“I remember it was a Saturday morning and we were playing Berskhire [Academy] up at Berkshire, and Quick had a bad day,” remembers John Gardner, head coach at Avon Old Farms. “And I looked at one of the guys on the bench and said ‘What the hell’s wrong with Quickie today?’ And he goes, ‘Coach, he took the SATs today. Then he ran out and had to make the bus. He didn’t do well, either.’ And I said ‘Well make sure he never takes those goddamn SATs again.’”

Quick was great that year, allowing 36 goals on 517 shots he faced, for a very strong .930 save percentage. He just wasn't Schneider.

The two goalies' personalities were different, as well. Even as a teenager, Schneider was serious and soft-spoken. According to his teammates, Jon (as he was known then) was more of a cut-up. While he was all business on the ice, Quick was known as a comedian in the locker room.

The game was big for both teams, but the Avon guys wanted to show everyone that their goalie was just as good as Schneider.

"Cory was a little more highly touted at the time," said Sean Backman, a forward for Avon who now plays for the Manchester Monarchs in the AHL. "And Jonathan wanted to compete against a guy like that. He was always such a strong competitor."

Quick downplays how much of a motivating factor the matchup was. "I was aware of him. He had been one of the best goalies in the league for a few years at that point," Quick said in an email. "I knew he wasn't trying to score on me."

The game didn't start out well for Quick. Just 43 seconds in, Rolecek scored on a broken play in front of the net. The goal stunned the higher-seeded Avon team, and the crowd, which was predominately from Avon. Andover, which had finals the next week, had sent one bus of kids up to the game. Avon seemed to send the entire school. Most of the school's 400 boys attended the game, many of them shirtless, all of them screaming.

"Avon's one of those schools, there's such a rich hockey tradition," said Backman. "For such a big event, being in the hunt for the New England Championship, the majority of the school made it up."

Andover had the lead, but the feeling was that they scored too early. Avon regrouped, and then they went to work.

Led by a loaded junior class that featured Backman, Augie Dimarzo, and Chris Davis, Avon kept dumping the puck in and letting their faster skaters beat the Andover defenders time and time again. The Avon team wasn't known for their skill but for their size—or lack thereof. Dimarzo was 5-8, Backman 5-9 and Davis was the big man of the trio, at 5-10.

"They were small for a New England prep school team. It's usually teams that are bigger in size," said Hoerner. "But they were small, fast and good. We weren't used to seeing a team like that. And on that big open ice, we just couldn't keep up."

The entire Avon team could skate and they could skate well.

"They had three or four lines that had been rolling," said Andover coach Dean Boylan. "And we were really playing mainly two lines. They just wore us down."

After equalizing, the Avon team kept the goals pouring in, and soon built up a 3-1 lead. The loud Avon crowd was raucous. They directed most of their vitriol at Schneider, and the call of “Over-rated” echoed off the Icenter rafters for much of the third period.

“The size of that ice, it just kills you,” said Kucharski, who now works in finance in New York City. “You need to be able to run three or four lines to survive, and we went with two. It was a two period game, really. In the third they were running out the clock. By the end it felt like I was skating in sand.”

Avon wound up winning 4-1, then would go on to win the championship game the following week against Tabor Academy, a great end to a near perfect season. A few years later, Quick would develop into one of the best goalies in the country in his time at UMass Amherst, then would go on to win two Stanley Cups with the Los Angeles Kings.

For Schneider and the other Andover players, they feel good about the way their season ended.

“With our team, that’s how we were built,” Schneider said. “I told myself: *We are what we are*. I knew I was going to have a big night a lot of nights. And that’s fine. I like that responsibility. And we made it farther that year, I think, than we thought we would. We had to be happy with how hard we worked and how far we got.”

Josh Peter contributed reporting to this story. All stats via [U.S. Hockey Report](#).

What must the Devils do this summer to become contenders?

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 18, 2015 at 6:00 AM, updated March 18, 2015 at 6:02 AM

NEWARK — How far away from being legitimate Stanley Cup contenders are the **Devils** at this point?

For that matter, what kind of moves will it take this summer just to get them back into the playoffs for the first time since 2012?

General manager Lou Lamoriello has acknowledged that the franchise needs to bring in some scoring up front, whether that comes via trades or free agent signings. Quite simply, the Devils need some star power to lead a roster that has grown heavy on role players.

They must be bold in the offseason, perhaps going after someone like New Jersey native James van Riemsdyk of the Toronto Maple Leafs in a trade or convincing the Edmonton Oilers to part with Jordan Eberle.

"It seems to be trending in that you kind of have to have (star players)," goaltender Cory Schneider told NJ Advance Media. "If you look at the past champions, L.A. has had (Drew) Doughty and (Anze) Kopitar. Kopitar may still be underrated around the league.

"Chicago obviously has (Patrick) Kane, (Jonathan) Towses and (Duncan) Keith. In Boston you've got guys like (Patrice) Bergeron and (Zdeno) Chara, even (David) Krejci. It's clear that, especially in the middle and on the back end, you need to have that guy who can play the big minutes and tough minutes and still find ways to produce."

Mike Cammalleri offered his viewpoint.

"I don't know that there is an absolute formula. I think ultimately you do need to have top players, but the I don't know if there is one formula for the mix," Cammalleri said. "Different teams have won in different ways. The best team wins.

"Yes, the best team has to have top individuals to compete at the highest level. But it's still going to be the best team. I don't think there is a cookie cutter formula. Having said that, I do believe in today's game you need a goaltender, you need some D that can play the game both ways and push up the ice, and you need some finishers that can turn games around for you when you need them."

Despite his acknowledgement that scoring is needed, **Lamoriello will not abandon his philosophy** that defense is most important of all.

"When you build from the goaltender out, you still have to have offensive power and that's what we have to improve on," Lamoriello said. "But you win championships with defense. You still need offense, there is no question, but it's a balance. You can't do it without defense.

"And when you get into the playoffs, a lot of players are shut down because of defense. You have to have players who can play through that type of traffic. And Adam Henrique, Travis Zajac and Mike Cammalleri can do that. That's why they are playoff type of players. But we need more, no question."

Although he is the Devils' top goal-scorer, Cammalleri agrees that defense wins.

"Undoubtedly. I don't think you compromise defense for any offense," Cammalleri suggested. "But in today's game, one bleeds into the other. I don't think you need to be a less reliable defensive team to be a better offensive team. It's quite the opposite. The best defensive teams are the best offensive teams right now. It's a copout to say the opposite."

The **Devils have the goalie** in Schneider and a young defense that shows great promise. But there doesn't seem to be scoring power in the minors ready to promote. So they must act on that missing ingredient.

"It's easy to say: 'Bring in a star player.' But those guys (A) don't come around very often and (B) when they do they're usually not available. It's easier said than done," Schneider said. "Sometimes you hit a home run with a guy late in the draft, like a Jamie Benn, who becomes that guy. But it's a process.

"Obviously we'd love to bring in a couple of scorers, but it's not easy. I think you can find teams that are greater than the sum of their parts, perhaps. You can get away with a system on a team that plays the right way and plays hard. You need to have guys who produce. You can't have all role players, but in this day and age you can maybe get away without having that No. 1 bonafide star if you have enough guys that can chip in and contribute."

The Devils won three times built around the defensive trio of Martin Brodeur, Scott Stevens and Scott Niedermayer? Must the players they acquire this summer necessarily be offensive stars?

"Not at all," Schneider said. "I don't know if that's changed post-lockout where the game has opened up a little more and you need to have guys who can get up and down the ice and put the puck in the net. I'm sure if you put that blue print together and had the type of talent those (winning) Devils teams had on the back end, it would be a very difficult team to play against.

"But I don't know if there has been a team that's had that collection of talent on the blue line since then. I'd be interested to see if somebody was able to do that what might happen. The

Rangers, unfortunately, have some good defensemen back there and I think maybe they've elevated the play of their forwards a little bit."

And the Devils don't have a Stevens or Niedermayer.

So how close are these Devils? A couple of stars away?

"I don't know. We won't know until this season finishes and we're 20 games or so into next year," Cammalleri suggested. "One thing that is optimistic and exciting is that things can change quickly in this business. I do really enjoy the core group of people here who are the right type of people.

"I'll leave all that up to Lou. If I do have any opinions on that, it's probably not for public consumption. But I think there are other names who are key components to a core group that can win. Travis, Greenie (Andy Greene), Rico (Henrique). That's a solid core group who not only have on-ice skills but are the type of leaders you want.

"To me, hopefully there is a deeper foundation there than maybe you're seeing with our record right now."

So which players do they target in the offseason? Phil Kessel? New Jersey native Kyle Palmieri?

It is encouraging that Lamoriello recognizes, or at least says publicly, "I don't think you can ever have a team of mostly role players."

So bring in a few stars. The old formula was a star in each area — goalie, defenseman, scoring forward.

"Bergeron, Chara, (Tuukka) Rask. Keith, Kane, (Corey) Crawford. (Jonathan) Quick, Doughty, Kopitar," Schneider said, looking at other contenders. "But a lot of those guys went high in the draft and aren't found easily.

"It's something every team in the league is facing. Every team that doesn't win I'm sure goes back to the drawing board and says, 'How can we bring somebody in here who's going to make that impact?' "

The Devils are in those shoes right now.

Will we know if they have become contenders after this upcoming offseason?

"I don't know if we'll know or not," Cammalleri said. "One exciting thing is our defense. Even a guy like (Seth) Helgeson, who isn't even here right now, I'm a big fan. For these guys, who are 23 or 24, any year could be the year they really step it up. You're seeing a guy like Lars (**Adam Larsson**) really take it to the next level right now.

"So 20 games into next season do we see it click for three or four of these guys and all of a sudden we have one of the top D-corps in the league?"

Perhaps. But Lamoriello cannot count on it. He needs to bring in some scoring, some star power.

Another season of role players asked to sit on a 1-0 or 2-1 lead for 50 minutes every night won't cut it.

* * *

Who are the Devils' core players? See the accompanying photo gallery.

1. Cory Schneider, goalie. 29 years old.
2. Mike Cammalleri, left wing. 32 years old.
3. Adam Henrique (14), left wing. 25 years old.
4. Travis Zajac, center. 29 years old.
5. Adam Larsson, defenseman. 22 years old.
6. Andy Greene, defenseman. 32 years old.

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5 talking points from the Devils' shutout victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 11:05 PM, updated March 18, 2015 at 7:22 AM

NEWARK — Too bad it's come so late, because the **Devils' 2-0 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins** Tuesday night was one to savor.

Here are 5 talking points from the win:

1. Dainius Zubrus almost scoring into his own net.

It happened at 1:15 of the second period when Zubrus redirected a Chris Kunitz pass intended for Sidney Crosby. An alert Cory Schneider had to make the save.

"That might've been (my) best save of the night," Schneider joked. "He (Zubrus) was doing his job. That puck was heading to Crosby back door."

In fact, it probably saved Schneider's shutout.

"It scared me. Good thing Schneids was ready. That wasn't a shot. It was a pass for Crosby. I knew he was going back door and I had to take it. If I don't touch it, it might be a tap-in for Crosby."

2. No points for Sidney Crosby and his line.

How did the Devils do it? The defensive pairing of Adam Larsson and Andy Greene were most responsible, but the line of Zubrus, Stephen Gionta and Peter Harrold spent a lot of time on the ice with Pittsburgh's No 87.

"It's a group effort, all five guys out there," Greene said. "It doesn't take much for him. All he needs is a little hole and he's going to find it and exploit it. He did once or twice and Schneids did a great job."

Larsson was brilliant.

"I think the best brings out the best in someone," GM/coach Lou Lamoriello said. "Adam has gotten better and better. Certainly playing with Greenie has helped, but his confidence level is at the highest level and he's just going to allow his talent to take over from here."

3. Who dreamed up that Zubrus-Gionta-Harrold line?

"It's just a combination of all the coaches talking," Lamoriello said. "We know defensively the effort you'll get out of Peter Harrold. You know the effort you certainly get out of Gionta and Zubrus. They're players who give everything and anything you ask for."

Like Schneider, Gionta and Harrold are former Boston College teammates.

"Two BC guys propping up Zubie," Schneider joked. "Steve and Harry were best friends and roommates. Hopefully they have a little chemistry. Harry was out there in the third period playing important minutes for us. It just speaks of his versatility and his willingness to do whatever it takes to help the team."

4. Could Harrold's switch from defense to right wing the last few weeks be a career change?

"Maybe. I would embrace the role. You never know," Harrold said. "My role has always been to do whatever is necessary when my number is called. If that's what they need me to do, I'm more than happy to do that."

Lou Lamoriello praises Devils defense Lou Lamoriello, New Jersey Devils President/G.M., praises Adam Larsson's progress as a defenseman and the rest of the Devils defense after shutting out the Pittsburgh Penguins on 3.17.15. (Video by Saed Hindash | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)

5. Schneider matched his NHL career high with his fifth shutout of the season.

He also had five in 2012-13 for the Vancouver Canucks.

"It was nice to close this one out," the goalie said. "There have been a few where we were up, 1-0, or had a tight lead in the third and it's gone to overtime or a shootout. It was good to hold onto this one, especially a shutout against a good team that is pretty desperate right now."

The shutout came on retro jersey night and St. Patrick's Day, hours before Schneider turns 29 on Wednesday.

"It's not St. Patty's Day, it's Schneids Eve," Greene suggested.

The win raised the Devils' record to 30-29-11. They have more regulation victories than losses for the first time since Nov. 14 when they were 8-7-2.

Schneider is 26-25-7.

"I've felt pretty good for a while now," Schneider noted. "There have been couple that have just gotten away from me towards the end for a shutout or in a tight game for a win. I'm feeling confident. I'm trusting my teammates and I think they trust me.

"When you have that kind of synergy it makes it easier to close games out. It's just the ebbs and flows of hockey. Right now I'm feeling pretty good. But I got pulled three games ago in Minnesota. So one night you feel great and the other night you feel like you can't stop anything."

Cory Schneider and Devils shut out Pittsburgh Penguins, 2-0 | Rapid reaction

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 9:29 PM, updated March 18, 2015 at 7:19 AM

NEWARK — Cory Schneider matched his NHL career high by posting his fifth shutout as the Devils stopped the Pittsburgh Penguins, 2-0, Tuesday night at Prudential Center.

Schneider (35 saves) had five shutouts for the Vancouver Canucks in 2012-13. He did it in 30 games that season. This was his 61st game this season.

Adam Henrique scored an empty net goal with 48.7 seconds left. It was his 16th goal.

HIGHLIGHTS

Adam Larsson and Andy Greene did a sensational job against the Sidney Crosby line.

The Devils' retro uniforms. Still a great look... once a season.

Michael Ryder's assist on Jacob Josefson's second period goal was his first point since Jan. 14 when he had a goal and an assist in Los Angeles. Of course, Ryder was playing in only his sixth game since then.

LOWLIGHTS

Almost. Dainius Zubrus almost scored a goal... into his own net. Zubrus tipped a Chris Kunitz pass intended for Sidney Crosby and Schneider had to make the save at 1:15 of the second period.

Schneider and several of Zubrus' teammates acknowledged that it was actually a solid defensive play, even if it was a close call.

FIGHTS

None.

HEALTHY SCRATCHES

Devils: RW Martin Havlat

Penguins: None.

NOTABLE

A new sheet of ice was put down in Prudential Center on Monday. Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's Circus Xtreme was in the arena last weekend.

Josefson's goal was his fifth. Two have come at even strength and three shorthanded.

Good Tuesday night crowd of 15,848.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Friday: Devils vs. Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center, MSG Plus, WCBS-AM 880, 7 p.m.

Saturday: Devils vs. New York Islanders at Prudential Center, MSG Plus, WFAN-AM 66, WFAN-FM 101.9, 7 p.m.

Monday: Devils vs. Los Angeles Kings at Prudential Center, MSG Plus, WFAN-AM 66, WFAN-FM 101.9, 7 p.m.

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Greetings from the press box: Did Devils waste a chance to get back in playoff hunt?

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 5:25 PM, updated March 17, 2015 at 6:47 PM

NEWARK — It is all hindsight now.

The **Devils** have virtually run out of time for any chance at an Eastern Conference playoff spot. They are 13 points behind the 8th place Boston Bruins with 13 games remaining.

But did they waste a chance to put some pressure on the Bruins 18 days ago?

When the teams met at Prudential Center on Feb. 27, the Devils trailed Boston by 8 points. A victory in regulation would have cut the gap to six points.

So with the score tied, 2-2, after the Devils scored twice in the first 8:06 of the third period, should they have pulled goalie Cory Schneider at some point to try to win it in regulation? They didn't.

"No. That wasn't a thought process at that time with reference to the number of games that were left," Lou Lamoriello told NJ Advance Media. The Devils had 20 more games left and the Bruins 21.

As it turned out, the **Devils lost in overtime**. The Bruins got two points and the Devils one, opening the gap to nine points.

What if it had been later in the season? Would Schneider have been pulled?

"You'd have to consider it," Lamoriello said.

Had they done it on Feb. 27, their hopes might've remained alive.

Goalie matchup

Cory Schneider (25-25-7, 2.20 goals-against average, .927 save percentage) vs. Thomas Greiss (8-4-3, 2.63 GAA, .911 save percentage).

Schneider is 1-4-1, with a 2.65 GAA and .907 save percentage in six career games against the Penguins. This season he is 1-2-1 with a 2.44 goals-against average and .923 save percentage against Pittsburgh.

Although he's started all four games against the Pens this season, Schneider was replaced by Scott Clemmensen after two periods on Oct. 28.

State of the Devils address

Devils CEO Scott O'Neil and president of business operations Hugh Weber were to deliver a state of the Devils address to select season ticket holders before Tuesday night's game against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

With the Devils close to elimination, they have a challenge.

"We try to keep our fans engaged regardless. That's the challenging part right now," Weber told NJ Advance Media. "People want hope. They want to see what things look like. When you're mathematically — almost — eliminated, they want to see what is coming down the path. There are a couple of ways for us to do that.

"One is, obviously, if you look at where we do have strong suits on this team it's great. We think Cory (Schneider) has been playing spectacular. If you hear Lou talk, he feels comfortable with some of the assets we've gotten back in these trades and some of the other things in terms of cap space.

"In terms of as a fan experience, we think there is a lot of hope with the investing we're doing for our season ticket holders and ticket holders on the entertainment side of it and some other things."

The Devils have home games remaining against the Stanley Cup champion Kings, Ducks, Canadiens and Rangers — all top teams.

"What keeps people coming back?" Weber asked. "I think the challenge this team has had over the course of two generations, maybe three, is that it was all about hockey. With (former owner) Dr. McMullen as well. It was: 'We love hockey. If you love hockey, you're going to love this experience because this is a really good hockey team that will be consistently good over a long period of time.'

"The challenge is, for us to fill the building every single night even when you're okay and not spectacular, you have to make the experience about something more than just hockey. But they'll learn and become fans of the sport over time... We look at these next games as the ability for us to incubate some ways to get people at the games.

"We've sold a ton of new tickets for next year based on the premise: 'These 2 1/2 hours you can spend with your family and client is really spectacular and fun, win or lose. We have a lot of heavy lifting to do. Every game is an opportunity for us to stage and test something new.'"

Injuries

Devils: C Patrik Elias (back spasms) RW Ryane Clowe (concussion), D Bryce Salvador (lower body).

Penguins: C Evgeni Malkin (lower body), RW Patric Hornqvist (upper body), RW Pascal Dupuis (blood clot), D Ollie Maatta (upper body).

Projected lineups:

Devils' lines:

14 Adam Henrique- 21 Scott Gomez- 18 Steve Bernier
23 Mike Cammalleri- 19 Travis Zajac- 20 Jordin Tootoo
8 Dainius Zubrus- 11 Stephen Gionta- 10 Peter Harrold
15 Tuomo Ruutu- 16 Jacob Josefson- 17 Michael Ryder

Devils' defense:

6 Andy Greene- 5 Adam Larsson
7 Jon Merrill- 28 Damon Severson
32 Mark Fraser- 22 Eric Gelinas

Penguins' lines:

14 Chris Kunitz- 87 Sidney Crosby- 39 David Perron
13 Nick Spaling- 16 Brandon Sutter- 17 Blake Comeau
26 Daniel Winnik- 25 Andrew Ebbett- 19 Beau Bennett
27 Craig Adams- 40 Maxim Lapierre- 23 Steve Downie

Penguins' defense:

7 Paul Martin- 58 Kris Letang
10 Christian Ehrhoff- 12 Ben Lovejoy
4 Rob Scuderi- 28 Ian Cole

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Devils' Lou Lamoriello spells out what he's looking for in next head coach

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 11:30 AM, updated March 17, 2015 at 11:55 AM

NEWARK — Lou Lamoriello squashed any chances that he would name next season's head coach before this season is over, saying there is no hurry to make the decision at this point.

The **Devils**, guided by co-coaches Adam Oates, Scott Stevens and Lamoriello, will **host the Pittsburgh Penguins Tuesday night** at Prudential Center.

"We're going to wait until, certainly, the season is over. There is no hurry to do it at this point," Lamoriello said when asked if he had a timetable to naming a new head coach. "We'll just make sure we get every possible option available before that decision is made."

The Devils are 17-12-4 since Pete DeBoer was fired on Dec. 26. They were 12-17-7 under DeBoer.

Lamoriello said he will look for one key attribute in the next coach.

"We certainly will look at somebody within the framework of the system that we play. Defense first," he stressed. "But we also have to get some offensive players to complement that."

Offense is where the Devils, 13 points out of a playoff spot, are weakest.

"We have to get a couple of offensive forwards," Lamoriello said. "I think our role players are outstanding. I think I'm extremely pleased with our defense. I don't think we can say enough about our goaltending the way it's been. We have to get a couple of offensive players."

In the meantime, Lamoriello continues to evaluate Stevens and **Oates**, as well as his current players.

"I don't think you ever see enough," he said. "It's consistency in play and certain people kept their level of intensity where it should be. I think that's the key. That's one of the most difficult things when you play an 82-game schedule or things are not going good. If you want to have success you have to have that."

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Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Competition committee's Cory Schneider "open minded" but has concerns about coach's challenge system

As a member of a NHL's competition committee, Devils goaltender Cory Schneider will have a role in determining if the changes recommended by the league's general managers Tuesday at their meetings in Boca Raton, Fla. will indeed become rules for next season.

One recommendation concerned the implementation of some form of 3-on-3 in overtime. Still to be determined is if the NHL will adopt the current seven-minute AHL format — in which the teams play 4-on-4 until the first stoppage after the three-minute mark and then switch to 3-on-3 — or to stick with a five-minute overtime and play 3-on-3 from the start.

The competition committee will have a say in deciding that.

The GMs also recommended a new coach's challenge video replay system to be used on a limited basis. One case would involve potential goaltender interference plays, but only when a goal is scored. A team must still have its timeout to challenge the play and will keep its timeout if the challenge is successful.

The on-ice officials will use a tablet or monitor to watch the video replay at ice level and work in conjunction with hockey operations officials in the Toronto Situation Room.

There other case when a coach's challenge could be utilized is on puck over the glass/delay of game penalties (only to negate an incorrectly-called penalty). That video review will be ruled on solely by hockey operations in Toronto.

Schneider said he's already read a little about the GMs' proposed rule changes and “I'm sure we'll talk about them some more.”

“But, it's nothing surprising,” he said. “There's been rumblings about them for a while now, so we'll see.”

You might think that Schneider, as a goaltender, would be strongly in favor of the coach's challenge on potential goalie interference plays, but he actually had some concerns about it.

“I'd have to give it more thought to be honest,” Schneider said. “I'd have to hear what their arguments are and what people say about it. But, I'm pretty open-minded and if they feel it's the best for the game, then I'll have to consider it.”

Schneider noted that he is not often involved in goaltender interference plays, so the coach's challenge might not help him as much as other goalies. He also suggested that the video review might make the ruling more complicated.

“It doesn't affect me as much, I don't think,” he said. “I try to stay out of there. I don't think there's many instances when I get involved because I play a little bit deeper, but there are some times when you scratch your head when you watch other games and you think that's clearly interference or definitely not interference. It's tough because goalies are trying to do their job and players and defensemen are doing their job and sometimes they overlap and it's really a tough call. It's a tough call for the officials, so who knows if this is going to make it clearer or sometimes it makes it murkier when one person can interpret something completely different than another and when you add a review it almost stirs a controversy even more if no one agrees upon it.”

There was an incident during the Devils' 3-2 overtime loss to Boston on Feb. 27 in which forward Chris Kelly appeared to accidentally hit Schneider in the face with his stick blade and impede his ability to stop a David Pastrnak shot that went in for the Bruins' second goal.

At the time, Schneider felt that, though it didn't merit a penalty, the goal should have been waived off for incidental contact. Perhaps with a coach's challenge that Devils could have gotten the goal disallowed.

“But, I think it's part of the game, too,” Schneider said of such plays. “You've got to be careful. It's kind of like baseball. If you introduce this, where does it stop or what can you and can't you review? Who knows? But, I've been OK with it. I'm fine with it. People have lived with it for a while now. But, anything to make the game better.”

Devils GM Lou Lamoriello, who sent son/senior vice president of hockey operations Chris Lamoriello to the meetings in his place, has been an advocate of 3-on-3 being used in overtime to cut down on the number of shootouts. He also said he is in favor of a limited coach's challenge system, but wants to be sure that that rules governing it are clear so that it doesn't create any additional confusion.

“I support it,” Lamoriello said. “We'll have to see more of it. In other words, it has to be defined as to exactly what it means and what you can and can't do. A timeout is important with icings these days, so you have to make sure of what you're doing and that's the key.”

The challenge system will create additional decisions for coaches such as when to use a challenge or whether to hold on to a timeout until later in the game in case a challenge is needed.

“It's going to also give you an opportunity to rectify something that four people didn't see or two people didn't see, which I think is good for the game,” Lamoriello said. “But, I think we have to be very careful how far we go.”

Lamoriello on why he decided to remain with the team in New Jersey rather than go to the GM meetings:

“It's my feeling that this is the most important thing for me and the commitment that you give and I didn't feel anything was missed at the GM meetings. Chris went and he's on the

competition committee in the American Hockey League and things were discussed that we already knew in advance and we communicated throughout the last two days.”

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/18 at 09:15 AM

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Josefson showing offensive potential; Ryder chips in; Devils stay out of the box, keep Pens off PP

The Devils didn't have a lot of high quality scoring chances among their 19 shots on goal in tonight's 2-0 win over Pittsburgh, but Jason Josefson converted on one of their best to break a scoreless tie with 3:35 left in the second period.

"It was a close game through the first two periods and it's always nice to get that first goal for the team," said Josefson, who ended up with his first game-winning goal since March 15, 2011 vs. Atlanta and just the second of his career. "I think we're pretty good with the lead, so it was nice to get one and then Cory (Schneider) played a tremendous game for us. He made some huge saves."

Defenseman Eric Gelinas started the play by carrying the puck out of the Devils' zone and banking a pass off the right wing boards that Michael Ryder chipped past defenseman Rob Scuderi to Josefson in the right circle.

That created a mini 2-on-1 for Josefson with Tuomo Ruutu on his left. He kept the puck and fired a wrist shot past goaltender Thomas Greiss that went in off the far post for his fifth goal of the season.

"Gelly skated the puck up real well and passed to (Ryder), who made a nice little tip in to me," Josefson said. "Me and (Ruutu) kind of came in 2-on-1. The puck was bouncing, so I just tried to settle it down and by that time it was too late to pass it, so I just shot it and it went in."

It was the fifth goal of the season for Josefson, 24, and just his second at even-strength, but he now has five goals and five assists for 10 points in 50 games this season. The five goals are a career-high and his 10 points equal his career-high from his rookie season of 2010-11 (three goals, seven assists).

"He's playing well, getting better and better each and every night," Devils GM and interim coach Lou Lamoriello said. "Confidence plays a role in it, but just feeling good about himself is the most important thing."

Josefson, who has two goals in his last five games, is enjoying getting more offensive responsibility, such as time on the power play, and is showing there is some scoring potential there beyond his success on shootouts (4-for-7 for the season).

"It's a lot of fun," said Josefson, who played 12:14 tonight. "I've known the whole time that I have it in me. I'm really, really appreciating that I'm getting the opportunity to play here now and just trying to make the best of it every time I'm on the ice and trying to show everyone I deserved to play."

The more confidence Josefson gets the more he believes there is even more he can contribute offensively.

“You get more comfortable,” he said. “There's always a time and place when you're allowed to make plays, so you just have to be comfortable with that and just go at the net.”

Lamoriello was happy again with the way Ryder played in his second game in a row in place of the injured Patrik Elias (back spasms). Ryder's assist on Josefson's goal was his first point since Jan. 14 in Los Angeles, but he has played only six games over that time.

Ryder also made a key play to force a turnover that led to the team's fourth goal in Saturday's 4-1 win in Arizona.

“I think that's what you have to get out of your players when you have a team,” Lamoriello said.

The Devils did not face a power play for the first time this season. The only penalty called against them was a tripping minor on defenseman Mark Fraser 1:26 into the second period, but Pittsburgh's Daniel Winnik was also called for embellishment on the playoff, resulting in a 4-on-4 situation for two minutes.

“I thought it was a relatively clean game on both sides,” Lamoriello said. “There were what, two penalties called all night? There was a lot of open ice, but certainly there was a lot of traffic at different times.”

Before tonight, the last time the Devils went an entire game without being shorthanded was a 4-3 shootout loss to Toronto on March 23, 2012. Although the Penguins have been struggling on the power play of late (1-for-22 over the last eight games), preventing their skilled players from having a man advantage opportunity is always beneficial.

“We didn't have any PK, so that means we were disciplined when we didn't have the puck and we were moving our feet enough and that's good,” defenseman Andy Greene said.

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/18 at 01:51 AM

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Schneider celebrates birthday early by blanking Pens; Zubrus, Gionta, Harrold help contain Crosby

Cory Schneider began his 29th birthday celebration a day early with the best way a goaltender can.

Schneider once again was the Devils' best player, making 35 saves in a 2-0 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins tonight at Prudential Center. Schneider made Jacob Josefson's second period goal stand up as the winner and equaled his career-high with his fifth shutout of the season.

Adam Henrique's empty-net goal with 48.7 seconds left sealed it for the Devils.

"It's nice to close one of those out," Schneider said. "There's been a few where we've been up 1-0 or we've had a tight lead in the third and it's gone to overtime or a shootout. So, it was good to hold onto this one, especially a shutout against a good team, a team that's pretty desperate right now."

Actually, the last time the Metropolitan Division rivals met on Jan. 30 at The Rock, the Devils led 1-0 until the Penguins tied it with just 3:11 left in regulation and went on to win 2-1 in overtime. So the Devils were happy to help Schneider finish off this shutout on the eve of his birthday.

"I'm sure that's what he would ask for if he could," defenseman turned right wing Peter Harrold said.

Wearing their original red, green and white uniforms for "Retro Night", the Devils were outshot 35-19, including 13-4 in the third period, but did just enough to beat the Penguins, who dropped their third in a row.

Schneider, now 26-25-7, thought it was "up there" with his best performances of the season.

"That's a good team over there," he said. "I know they're missing some key guys, but they still have some very dangerous players and they're playing desperate right now. I know they've dropped their past few, so we knew they'd come out hard tonight and they did. They played a good game. I thought as a group we did a pretty good job, especially in the second period and in third they're going to press and we did enough to keep them at bay and get that empty netter, so that was huge."

Schneider, who made his 60th start of the season tonight, has three shutouts in his last 10. His 26 wins are the most in a season by a Devils goaltender not named Martin Brodeur, surpassing Scott Clemmensen's 25 in 2008-09 (25-13-1). His five shutouts are also the most in the season by a Devils goaltender not named Brodeur, surpassing Johan Hedberg's four (in 27 games) in 2011-12.

"I've felt pretty good for a while now and there's been a couple that just got away from me towards the end there for a shutout or a tight game or a win," Schneider said. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling confident. I'm trusting my teammates. I think they trust me and when you have that kind of synergy I think it makes it easier to close games out and not give one up or give them many good looks. It's just the ebbs and flows of hockey and right I'm feeling pretty good, but I got pulled in Minnesota three games ago. So, one night you feel great and another night you feel like you can't stop anything. So, you've got to just focus on the next one and not spend too much time thinking about the present."

Schneider has played so well in the second half of the season – he now ranks fourth in the NHL in goals-against average (2.16) and third in save percentage (.929) – its something his team no longer surprised by.

"I don't know if we can say what game is his best," Devils GM and interim coach Lou Lamoriello said. "As we all know, he's played extremely well recently and throughout the whole year."

"There's no words to explain how good he's been for us and how good he continues to play," center Stephen Gionta said. "He gives us a chance to win every night. Tonight, 35 saves, he was unbelievable."

The Devils improved to 9-3-2 in their last 14 games and 30-29-11 for the season, putting them above NHL .500 for the first time since they were 8-7-2 following a 1-0 win in Washington on Nov. 14. They're still 12 points out of playoff spot with only 12 games remaining, making it extremely likely they won't qualify, but they are determined to finish the season strong regardless.

"In spite of our record and how we've done, I know it's not good enough, but I don't think we've ever given up," Schneider said. "I don't think anybody in this room has really just packed it in when we've had reasons to or we've had the chance to. Everyone works hard. We're not where we want to be by any means and we can definitely improve upon that, but overall as a group we put an honest effort in most nights and, tonight, this is a team, a rival, a team that we don't like very much. They don't like us. It's fun to beat them, especially at home."

Recently, the Devils had been using a line of Dainius Zubrus, Patrik Elias and Gionta to play on most nights against the opponent's top line. With Elias missing his second game in a row with back spasms, the Devils put together a makeshift checking line of Zubrus, Gionta and Harrold to play against the Penguins' top line of Chris Kunitz, Sidney Crosby and David Perron.

Lamoriello said the decision to put that line together was made by "just a combination of all the coaches talking."

"We know defensively the effort you get out Peter Harrold and we know certainly what you get out of Gionta and Zubrus," Lamoriello said. "They're players who just give you everything and anything you ask of them."

Together with the defense pair of Andy Greene and Adam Larsson, that line – with a lot of help from Schneider – managed to keep Crosby and co. under control much of the night. Kunitz, Crosby and Perron did combine for eight shots on goal, though.

“That's a line that's going to get their chances no matter what you do,” Gionta said. “It's trying to limit the quality chances that they get and, obviously, Schneids played a huge role in stopping those chances when we did give them up.”

Crosby's best chance 11:15 into the game after a pass from Kunitz set him up alone in front, but Schneider made the stop with the cuff of his catching glove.

“It just got a piece of the glove. I know he's got a quick release and I felt I was able to get a good spot. I was able to get out a little bit and meet him there and just got enough of it. He's a dangerous player. He comes with speed – I think his speed is underrated – and all the sudden he's coming at you real quick so I had to get there and be ready for it.”

The Penguins came the closest to scoring 1:15 into the second when Zubrus accidentally deflected a Kunitz pass from the left circle on net and Schneider had to make a right arm save.

“That might have been the best save of the night,” Schneider said. “(Zubrus) was doing his job. That puck was headed to Crosby backdoor, so, obviously, he's going to put a stick on it and, fortunately I was able to squeeze it off there and not let it in. Sometimes those are the ones that find a way in, but you can't fault him. He's just making a good defensive play.”

Zubrus was grateful that Schneider was there to bail him out, though.

“He had to make a great save because, honestly, I thought I put it in my own net,” Zubrus said. “He was really sharp the whole night, not just that one. Any chances that we gave up, he stopped them and he saw the puck really well tonight.”

Schneider jokingly called the line of Zubrus, Gionta and Harrold, “Two BC guys propping Zubie up.”

Schneider was also teammates with Gionta and Harrold at Boston College, so he knows very well what they're capable of.

“Steve and Harry were roommates and best friends, so, hopefully, they have a little chemistry,” Schneider said. “They looked good tonight. Harry was out there in the third period playing important minutes for us, so it just speaks to his versatility and his willingness to do whatever it takes to help the team and play. Obviously, with Zubie out there he gives them a little size and I think it's a good combination. We leaned on them tonight and they played some good minutes for us.”

Harrold hasn't played a lot of right wing until recently (he's played there the last seven games), but viewed being matched against Crosby's line as “a good challenge.

“As a player you want those kind of challenges,” he said. “You want to prove the coaches right when they think they can put you in those situations. They got some chances tonight and, fortunately, Schneids bailed us out, but I thought all in all we did OK and, hopefully, we'll get chances to do that going forward.”

Schneider also recognized the importance of Greene and Larsson, who play against the opponent's top line most nights.

“Those two, you look at our division and one night it's (Claude) Giroux and then (John) Tavares and then (Nicklas) Backstrom, (Alex) Ovechkin, (Ryan) Johansen, Crosby. It doesn't matter,” Schneider said. “It seems like every night in this division we're playing an elite player and often times Greenie and Lars get that assignment and I think us more so than any other team – I don't know how many points we give up to those elite players, but I think we're probably one of the better teams in the league (holding them in check) and they're a big reason why. They do a great job and they put in a lot of hard minutes and they get overlooked around the league, I believe.”

Greene played a team-high 22:56 and Larsson was right behind him in ice time with 22:23.

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/18 at 12:01 AM

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

NHL GMs recommend 3-on-3 in OT, limited coach's challenge system; Devils' Kinkaid a fan of 3-on-3

Reports out of the NHL general managers meetings in Boca Raton, Fla. today indicate the GMs will recommend changing to some form of 3-on-3 in overtime for next season.

What is still to be decided is if the NHL will adopt the current seven-minute AHL format – in which the teams play 4-on-4 until the first stoppage after the three-minute mark and then switch to 3-on-3 – or to stick with a five-minute overtime and play 3-on-3 from the start. The concern apparently is adding extra playing time and wear and tear for the players.

The NHLPA membership and the competition committee will be consulted before the GMs move forward on a final recommendation.

Devils rookie backup goaltender Keith Kinkaid was in the AHL for most of the first two months of the season and, after seeing how the 3-on-3 worked there (though not to Albany's advantage while he was there), is in favor of the change.

“Obviously, there's an impact,” he said. “I've heard the stat that a lot more games end in overtime now (shootouts are down 12 percent). That's not good for the goalies. It drops the save percentage a little bit. But, I think it's good. There will be fewer shootouts.”

Kinkaid said he was “only in a few” overtimes that reached 3-on-3 while he was in Albany.

“Once it gets to 3-on-3 it's a lot more wide open,” Kinkaid said. “The 4-on-4 is a regular 4-on-4 that you already see. Then, 3-on-3 you see a lot of two forwards and maybe three forwards out there, so it's different. If you get an odd-man rush the other way, it comes right back at you if you miss the net or whatnot. It will create a lot more opportunities to win in overtime, so it might be good for some teams.”

Kinkaid said the Albany Devils did not win any games in overtime this season while he was there. They are 4-5 for the season now in games decided in overtime (and 1-6 in shootouts).

“When we I was there, we hadn't won in overtime in maybe two or three years,” Kinkaid said. “They've been doing well since I've left. They've won a few overtime games, so that's good to see.”

Among the other recommendations the GMs will reportedly make is for a coach's challenge system on potential goaltender interference plays – only when a goal is scored.

A team must still have its timeout to challenge the play and will keep its timeout if the challenge is successful.

The on-ice officials will use a tablet or monitor to watch the video replay at ice level and work in conjunction with hockey operations in the Toronto situation room.

A coach's challenge will also be recommended for puck over the glass/delay of game penalties (only to negate an incorrectly-called penalty). That will be ruled on solely by hockey operations in Toronto.

Devils GM Lou Lamoriello decided to skip the meetings to remain with the team in New Jersey and sent son/senior vice president of hockey operations, Chris Lamoriello, in his place partially because of Chris' involvement with the AHL's competition committee and familiarity with the overtime format.

Lou Lamoriello said Chris is keeping him well informed on everything that is going on at the GM meetings.

"They're going well," Lou Lamoriello said "I've been in constant contact with him, knowing exactly what the discussions are and that's the good part about emails today. You can be talking without anybody knowing you're talking. But, so I'm aware of what's happening."

The Penguins will apparently start backup Thomas Greiss in net tonight against the Devils, but head coach Mike Johnston would not commit to that this morning.

Cory Schneider will start his fourth in a row for the Devils.

Here is the Devils' complete lineup for tonight with the expected line combinations and defense pairs:

Forwards: Adam Henrique-Scott Gomez-Steve Bernier; Mike Cammalleri-Travis Zajac-Jordin Tootoo; Dainius Zubrus-Stephen Gionta-Michael Ryder; Tuomo Ruutu-Jacob Josefson-Peter Harrold.

Defensemen: Andy Greene-Adam Larsson; Jon Merrill-Damon Severson; Mark Fraser-Eric Gelinas.

Goaltender: Cory Schneider.

Injured: C/LW Patrik Elias (back spasms), D Bryce Salvador (back), LW Ryane Clowe (concussion).

Healthy scratch: RW Martin Havlat.

TV: MSG Plus.

Radio: WFAN-AM 660, 101.9 FM.

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/17 at 01:12 PM

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Lou Lamoriello: Devils need to add two scoring forwards; Won't rush on coaching search after season

Devils GM and interim coach Lou Lamoriello continued to stress the organization's need to add scoring help for next season.

Lamoriello listed that as the team's biggest need personnel-wise to get back in the playoffs in 2015-16 with the team headed toward its third consecutive postseason-less spring this season.

"I think that we have to get a couple of offensive forwards," Lamoriello said after today's morning skate. "Our role players are outstanding. Our defense, I'm extremely pleased with. Goaltending, I don't think say enough about it the way it's been. So we have to get a couple offensive players."

Lamoriello has talked for a few weeks now about wanting to add scoring forwards for next season. In fact, he hinted that he tried to complete a deal for one before the March 2 trade deadline, but was unable to find a trade partner willing to pull the trigger at that time.

With a host of players on expiring contracts, the Devils will have salary cap space available for next season while some other teams will be caught in a crunch. The cap has been projected at \$71 million for 2015-16 (it's \$69 million for this season), but with the Canadian Dollar (currently worth 78 U.S. cents) continuing to struggle that number could end up lower than some expect, which could be an advantage for the Devils.

Lamoriello has already stated that will be the team's area of opportunity.

The unrestricted free agent market is expected to be thin this summer, so Lamoriello will likely have to pull off a trade or two to add the top six forwards this team needs (from teams that can't afford to pay them). No one expects that to be easy and the most important thing will be finding the right forwards.

Still, with Cory Schneider in net and a young defense that gained valuable experience this season, the Devils feel they have a core in place to build upon. And adding two top six forwards to the mix – if they are able to do that – will put some of their current forwards in a better position to succeed.

"Me and (Mike Cammalleri) were sitting on the bus talking about this and the nucleus is good," said center Scott Gomez, who is eligible to become an unrestricted free agent this summer. "It starts with defense. It always has. This is a young group and how much have they improved? Besides that Minnesota game (a 6-2 loss a week ago), we've been in every game. If you really see the inside of what's going on here, it's a good make-up of a team."

“Obviously, you can't have enough scoring.”

Adding two top six forwards would slot other forwards back into roles for which they are better suited and also complement the skills of forwards who have shown in the past they are capable of playing top six roles, but haven't lived up to expectations this season.

And it all starts with Schneids. When you've got one of the best goaltenders in the world, you can really do well.”

The Devils will finish the season with their current coaching alignment with co-coaches Adam Oates and Scott Stevens running things with Lamoriello also on the bench. Lamoriello has said the team will have one head coach to begin next season, but is in no rush to hire anyone for that job, yet.

“We're going to wait until certainly the season is over, but definitely there's no hurry to doing it at this point,” Lamoriello said. “So, we'll just make sure that we get every possible option available before that decision is made.”

Lamoriello acknowledged that the next head coach will have to be someone who believes in the organizational philosophy.

“We certainly will look at somebody within the framework of the system that we play – defense first,” Lamoriello said. “But we also have to get some offensive players too to complement that.”

It would appear that Oates and Stevens will both be candidates for the head coaching job. Lamoriello has been highly complimentary of the work both have done since rejoining the organization – Oates working with the forwards and Stevens the defensemen – after head coach Pete DeBoer was fired on Dec. 26.

It would be hard to imagine both being back on the coaching staff next season with one as the head coach and the other remaining as an assistant, but, with Lamoriello, you never know.

The players have responded well to both, though.

“I think that's been the credit with Oatsie and Scotty – they're finding each guys potential,” Gomez said. “It's actually sitting down and talking to the guy. That's not taking away from Pete. Pete was awesome. But, I've been around other coaches who don't even get to know the guy. It's, 'This is what I think. This is how I think it should work.' The one thing about Scotty and Oatsie is they're getting to know the person. They're getting to know the human being. It's 'My job is to get the potential out of each guy.'”

“Like I said, I'm 35 and with Oatsie I give him credit. I used to think I had to take it up all the time. I used to love doing that. But he's right. Why waste energy doing that? We want to be taught. It's just little things like that. That's a guy sitting you down and talking to you, showing

you. I won't stress it enough: If you show a pro athlete how to be better or anyone how to be better in any job, they're going to follow you."

Gomez points to right wing Jordin Tootoo as an example. After playing a fourth-line role at the start of the season and for most of his career – and being in the AHL for most of last season – the Devils have made him an effective offensive player by moving him up to play on a line with Cammalleri and Travis Zajac.

"Toots was almost out of the league," Gomez said. "Are you kidding me? He's one of our better players (on the ice) and in the locker room. This guy provides so much. That's to show a guy taking the time to find out the potential of the players. He doesn't need to fight. He's a spark plug. You look at other guys too. Go around this room. Look at Jacob (Josefson). There's a lot of young guys that are starting to realize that.

"They tell you a role that this is where you're going to excel at and it works. So, I love the make up of the team."

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/17 at 12:09 PM

Devils' Scott Gomez: No one will beat Kentucky in NCAA tournament

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 12:00 PM, updated March 17, 2015 at 12:24 PM

NEWARK — No one is going to beat **Kentucky** in the **NCAA tournament**.

That's the feeling of **Devils'** center Scott Gomez, who would rather see Duke win the championship but doesn't see it happening.

"I think Kentucky will win. They're almost an NBA team," Gomez said Tuesday. "I can't really see anybody beating them with the defense they play and the fact they've got two starting lineups."

Gomez is pulling for Duke.

"I'm a Duke fan. I never like them. Then a couple of Alaska guys went to Duke," Gomez said. "Trajan Langdon played there. And Carlos Boozer."

Langdon, from Gomez' hometown of Anchorage, was at Duke 1994-99. Boozer, who grew up in Juneau, was at Duke 1999-2002.

"I can't see **Kentucky** getting touched. It's kind of unfair," Gomez said. "It would be neat to see an upset.

"There is always some team that comes out of nowhere."

Rich Chere may be reached at rchere@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on Twitter @Ledger_NJDevils. Find NJ.com on Facebook.

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Live post: Devils vs. Pittsburgh Penguins, 3/17/15 -- Retro Night

The Devils lead the Pittsburgh Penguins 1-0 in the third period of tonight's game at Prudential Center.

The Devils are wearing their original red, green and white uniforms for "Retro Night." The Devils are 1-4-0 wearing their retro jerseys since they first brought them back on March 17, 2010 (5-2 win over Pittsburgh).

SECOND PERIOD

Cory Schneider had to make a good right arm save when Dainius Zubrus accidentally deflected Chris Kunitz's pass on net at 1:15.

The teams skated 4-on-4 for two minutes after Mark Fraser was called for tripping and Daniel Winnik was called for embellishment at 1:26.

Back at 5-on-5, Penguins goalie Thomas Greiss had to keep his pads together to stop Tuomo Ruutu's shot from in front off a feed from Michael Ryder behind the net at 4:17.

Greiss made a blocker save on Eric Gelinas' straight-on wrister at 9:44.

The Devils received the first power play of the game when David Perron was called for holding Andy Greene in the offensive zone at 10:17. They did nothing with it, though, failing to register any shots on goal or generate much offensive zone pressure.

The Devils grabbed the lead on a goal by Jacob Josefson with 3:35 remaining in the period. Defenseman Eric Gelinas carried the puck out of the Devils' zone to center ice and then banked a pass off the right wing boards that Michael Ryder chipped past defenseman Rob Scuderi to Josefson in the right circle.

Josefson beat Greiss with a shot in off the far post for his fifth goal of the season and just his second at even strength. Ryder's assist was his first point since Jan. 14 in Los Angeles, but this is only his sixth game since then.

FIRST PERIOD

The Penguins outshot the Devils 14-8 in the first period.

The Devils have been using the line of Dainius Zubrus, Stephen Gionta and Peter Harrold quite a bit against the Penguins' top line of Chris Kunitz, Sidney Crosby and David Perron.

The Devils tested Penguins goalie Thomas Greiss early on a 3-on-2 rush with Jordin Tootoo taking a left circle shot that Greiss stopped with his left pad at 26 seconds.

Cory Schneider made a pad save on Perron off a left circle draw 48 seconds.

Greiss made a left pad save on Dainius Zubrus' right circle shot on a 2-on-1 with Stephen Gionta at 4:21.

Schneider made a glove save on Rob Scuderi's left point shot at 4:47, but dropped the puck behind him in the crease and had to dive to his left to make a left arm save on Craig Adams' rebound effort.

Schneider robbed Crosby, who took a Kuntiz pass to get behind the defense on the left side, with a left arm save at 11:15.

Tootoo's shot from the right circle that was partially blocked and barely reached Greiss with 3:29 left in the period was the Devils' first shot on goal in 7:31.

Schneider came up big again with a stick save on Ben Lovejoy's blast from the top of the left circle and then a left pad save on Steve Downie's rebound effort from the right side of the net before covering up with 1:02 left in the period.

The Devils return home following a three-game road trip in which they went 1-1-1. They are 8-3-2 in their last 13 games overall and 13-4-4 in their last 21 games at Prudential Center.

The Penguins have lost their two games and have won only one of their last four (1-2-1).

Cory Schneider started in net for the Devils against Thomas Greiss for the Penguins.

The Devils are again without forward Patrik Elias, who is missing his second game in a row due to back spasms. Michael Ryder is again playing in Elias' place.

Right wing Martin Havlat is a healthy scratch for the eighth consecutive game.

The Penguins are without center Evgeni Malkin (lower-body) and right wing Patric Hornqvist (unspecified) due to injury.

There is one change in the combinations with Ryder and Peter Harrold flopping spots at right wing on the bottom two lines. Ryder is with Tuomo Ruutu and Jacob Josefson and Harrold is with Dainius Zubrus and Stephen Gionta.

Here were the starting lineups:

DEVILS

Forwards: Mike Cammalleri-Travis Zajac-Jordin Tootoo. Defensemen: Jon Merrill-Damon Severson. Goaltender: Cory Schneider.

PENGUINS

Forwards: Blake Comeau-Brandon Sutter-Beau Bennett. Defensemen: Paul Martin-Kris Letang. Goaltender: Thomas Greiss.

Here is the Devils' complete lineup for tonight with the line combinations and defense pairs from warm-ups.:

Forwards: Adam Henrique-Scott Gomez-Steve Bernier; Mike Cammalleri-Travis Zajac-Jordin Tootoo; Tuomo Ruutu-Jacob Josefson-Michael Ryder; Dainius Zubrus-Stephen Gionta-Peter Harrold.

Defensemen: Andy Greene-Adam Larsson; Jon Merrill-Damon Severson; Mark Fraser-Eric Gelinas.

Goaltender: Cory Schneider.

Injured: C/LW Patrik Elias (back spasms), D Bryce Salvador (back), LW Ryane Clowe (concussion).

Healthy scratch: RW Martin Havlat.

TV: MSG Plus.

Radio: WFAN-AM 660, 101.9 FM.

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/17 at 06:29 PM

Penguins vs. Devils: LIVE analysis and fan chat (and a chance to win Devils vs. Rangers VIP tickets)

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 7:00 PM, updated March 17, 2015 at 10:05 PM

NEWARK — Cory Schneider was in goal as the **Devils** hosted the Pittsburgh Penguins Tuesday night at Prudential Center.

Backup Thomas Greiss started for the Penguins.

Evgeni Malkin and Patric Hornqvist were both out of the Pittsburgh lineup because of injuries.

Devils' lines:

14 Adam Henrique- 21 Scott Gomez- 18 Steve Bernier
23 Mike Cammalleri- 19 Travis Zajac- 20 Jordin Tootoo
8 Dainius Zubrus- 11 Stephen Gionta- 10 Peter Harrold
15 Tuomo Ruutu- 16 Jacob Josefson- 17 Michael Ryder

Devils' defense:

6 Andy Greene- 5 Adam Larsson
7 Jon Merrill- 28 Damon Severson
32 Mark Fraser- 22 Eric Gelinas

THIRD PERIOD

Winnik was sent off at 4:54 for slashing the stick out of Bernier's hands.

SECOND PERIOD

Fraser tripped Daniel Winnik at 1:26, but the Penguins lost their power play when Winnik was issued a minor for embellishment.

The Devils took a 1-0 lead at 16:25 when Gelinas banked a pass off the right wing boards and Ryder tipped it to Josefson. The Swedish centerman scored from the right circle for his fifth goal (two even strength, three shorthanded) as he snapped a shot in off the left post.

Ryder's assist was his first point since he scored a goal with an assist in Los Angeles on Jan. 14. Of course, this was only his sixth game since then.

End of period: Devils 1, Penguins 0

Shots were 22-15 Penguins

FIRST PERIOD

The Devils started Merrill and Severson on defense along with the Cammalleri-Zajac-Tootoo line.

Pittsburgh's starters were Paul Martin and Kris Letang on defense with Blake Comeau, Brandon Sutter and Beau Bennett up front.

Greiss made a skate save on Tootoo's chance 30 seconds into the game.

Schneider stopped a Rob Scuderi shot and then denied Craig Adams on the rebound at the right side of the crease at 4:50.

Ruutu threw the puck on net at 6:40 and it almost went in at the right post as Greiss struggled on his glove side.

The Devils have matched the Zubrus-Gionta-Harrold line against Pittsburgh's Chris Kunitz-Sidney Crosby-David Perron line.

Schneider stopped a Ben Lovejoy blast with 1:05 left.

End of period: Devils 0, Penguins 0

Shots were 14-8 Penguins

What forwards should be on the Devils' radar this summer?

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 18, 2015 at 6:20 AM

NEWARK — The **Devils** need forwards who can score, so which players should be on general manager Lou Lamoriello's radar this summer?

Should he try to sign Matt Beleskey, a potential unrestricted free agent? Do the Devils have enough to offer the Toronto Maple Leafs in a trade for Middletown, N.J., left winger James van Riemsdyk? What about a deal with the Ducks for Montvale, N.J., native Kyle Palmieri?

Here are some forwards who could help the Devils. Whether Lamoriello can get one or two is another matter.

1. James Van Riemsdyk (21), Toronto Maple Leafs. 25 years old. Signed through 2017-18, cap hit \$4.5 million.
2. Matt Beleskey (39), Anaheim Ducks. 27 years old in June. Unrestricted free agent.
3. Jordan Eberle (14), Edmonton Oilers. 24 years old. Signed through 2018-19, \$6 million cap hit.
4. Phil Kessel (81), Toronto Maple Leafs. 27 years old. Signed through 2018-19, \$8 million cap hit.
5. Kyle Palmieri, Anaheim Ducks. 24 years old. One season left at \$1.6 million, restricted free agent in 2016.
6. Sean Monahan, Calgary Flames. 21 years old. One season left at \$925,000, restricted free agent in 2016.
7. Sam Gagner (9), Arizona Coyotes. 25 years old. One season left at \$5 million, unrestricted free agent in 2016.

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What channel is the Devils-Pittsburgh Penguins game on?

Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By Rich Chere | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

on March 17, 2015 at 11:20 AM, updated March 17, 2015 at 11:50 AM

NEWARK — The **Devils** will not have Patrik Elias in their lineup when they host the Pittsburgh Penguins Tuesday night at Prudential Center.

Elias **will miss his second game** because of back spasms.

"He will be out. He says he feels better but he's not ready," GM/coach Lou Lamoriello said after the Devils' optional morning skate.

Martin Havlat stayed on the ice long after and was worked hard, so it appeared Michael Ryder would remain in the lineup.

"We'll make a decision at game time," Lamoriello said.

This will be the fifth and final meeting between the Devils and Penguins this season. Pittsburgh leads the season series 3-1-0, including a 2-1 OT victory at Prudential Center on Jan. 30.

Staying in touch

Lamoriello said he has remained in touch with his son, Chris Lamoriello, who is representing him at the NHL **GM meetings** in Boca Raton, Fla.

"They're going well. I've been in constant contact with him, knowing exactly what the discussions are," Lamoriello said. "That's the good part about emails today. You can be talking without anybody knowing you're talking. I'm aware of what is happening."

Chris Lamoriello, general manager of the Devils' Albany minor league affiliate, is on the AHL's competition committee and is well-versed in 3-on-3 overtime play.

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Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Not St. Patrik's Day: Elias still out with back spasms; Ryder to replace him in lineup again

Devils center Patrik Elias will miss his second game in a row tonight against the Pittsburgh Penguins due to back spasms.

“He says he feels better, but he's not ready,” Devils GM and interim coach Lou Lamoriello said.

The Devils have another two days off after tonight before their next game in Buffalo on Friday, so that will give Elias some additional time to recover.

“We'll see how he is,” Lamoriello said.

Elias, who will turn 39 on April 13, has been bothered by the back spasms for more than a week now. He also missed six games in November of last season due to back spasms.

Although Lamoriello said it will be a “game-time” decision who will take Elias' place in the lineup, it will be Michael Ryder again and Martin Havlat will be a healthy scratch for the eighth consecutive game.

Lamoriello talked Monday about the effort he sees from his players over their final 13 games – with the team all but mathematically eliminated from playoff contention – will factor into personnel decisions for next season.

Although effort hasn't been question on most nights even when the team has struggled to win, Lamoriello said, “I don't think you ever see enough.”

“It's consistency in play and certain people keeping their level of intensity where it should be That's the key,” Lamoriello said. “That's the one of the most difficult things when you play an 82-game schedule or things are not going good and you have to keep that. If you want to have success you have to have that.”

The American Hockey League announced today that Albany Devils left wing Joe Whitney has been suspended for two games for a cross checking match penalty Saturday against Syracuse.

Whitney already sat out Albany's game Sunday against Springfield. He will also sit out Wednesday vs. Norfolk to complete his suspension.

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/17 at 11:36 AM

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

No Patrik Elias for Devils' morning skate

Patrik Elias is not on the ice for the Devils' optional morning skate today at Prudential Center and it appears he will sit out again tonight against the Pittsburgh Penguins because of back spasms.

Elias also missed Saturday's 4-1 win in Arizona and did not practice Monday.

Elias, who will turn 39 on April 13, missed six games in November of last season because of back spasms, as well.

The Penguins will be without center Evgeni Malkin (lower-body) and right wing Patric Hornqvist (unspecified) due to injury.

Cory Schneider will start in net for the Devils.

The Devils will wear their original red, green and white uniforms tonight for "Retro Night", which they hold each season on or around St. Patrick's Day.

Here is the breakdown of the players skating for the Devils this morning:

Forwards: Steve Bernier, Jordin Tootoo, Stephen Gionta, Martin Havlat, Michael Ryder, Jacob Josefson, Peter Harrold.

Defenseman: Adam Larsson, Jon Merrill, Damon Severson, Mark Fraser, Eric Gelinas.

Goaltender: Keith Kinkaid.

Posted by Tom Gulitti on 03/17 at 10:30 AM

Schneider, Devils hand Penguins third straight loss

Tuesday, 03.17.2015 / 11:42 PM

Mike G. Morreale - NHL.com Staff Writer

NEWARK, N.J. -- Cory Schneider made 35 saves for his fifth shutout to give the New Jersey Devils a 2-0 win against the Pittsburgh Penguins at Prudential Center on Tuesday.

Jacob Josefson scored in the second period and Adam Henrique scored into an empty net for the Devils. Schneider, who was making his fourth straight start and 60th of the season, is 26-25-7.

Penguins goaltender Thomas Greiss made 17 saves.

The put the Devils (30-29-11) above .500 for the first time since Nov. 14 (8-7-2).

"I've said from beginning that despite our record and how we've done, I don't think we've ever given up," Schneider said. "This is not where we want to be by any means [in the standings], but as a group we put the effort in most nights. [Pittsburgh] is a rival team and we don't like them and they don't like us. It's nice to beat [them] at home."

Pittsburgh (39-21-10), which has 12 games remaining, is in third place in the Metropolitan Division with 88 points, two points ahead of the Washington Capitals and two points behind the New York Islanders. The Penguins, who have lost three straight games, have two games in hand on the Islanders and one on the Capitals.

"The frustrating part is that we still are creating offense and getting a lot of pucks to the net but we haven't been able to finish," Penguins defenseman Paul Martin said. "That's the toughest part. When you're missing some key guys, that's when you still need to make plays and get to the net and execute."

Pittsburgh, which entered with 283 man games lost to injury, was without center Evgeni Malkin (lower body) for a second straight game and right wing Patric Hornqvist (undisclosed). Malkin could miss another 1-2 weeks and Hornqvist is expected to be out one week. Penguins coach Mike Johnston said Malkin could join the team at some point during its three-game road trip, which continues against the Dallas Stars on Thursday and the Arizona Coyotes on Saturday.

Schneider, who made 41 saves in a 2-1 overtime loss against the Penguins on Jan. 30, made 13 saves in the third period, including a right-pad stop on Nick Spaling off a quick one-timer from in the crease at 7:42. Schneider also denied a point-blank slap shot from the right hash by Blake Comeau at 13:09.

"I've felt pretty good for a while now; there's a couple that maybe got away from me toward the end of a few games for a shutout or a win, but I'm feeling confident, trusting my teammates and they trust me," Schneider said. "When you have that synergy it makes it easy to close games out and not give one up or give them any good looks. It's ebbs and flows of hockey and I'm feeling pretty good."

It was Schneider's first shutout since a 33-save, 2-0 victory against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Feb. 28.

"It's nice to close it out because we've had tight leads in the third before and it went to a shootout," Schneider said. "It was good to hold onto this, especially a shutout against a good team that is desperate right now."

Josefson scored his fifth goal after gathering a pass from Michael Ryder at the blue line and skating to the right hash before firing a shot that ricocheted off the left post into the right corner of the net at 16:25. The assist by Ryder was his first point since Jan. 14.

Johnston pulled Greiss with 1:45 left in the third, and Henrique scored his 16th goal into the empty net with 48 seconds left.

Devils co-coach Lou Lamoriello used the final line change to match his third line of Dainius Zubrus, Stephen Gionta and Peter Harrold throughout the game against Sidney Crosby's line with Chris Kunitz and David Perron. The defense pairing of Adam Larsson and Andy Greene also was on the ice against the Penguins top line, which generated eight shots, four by Crosby.

"[Crosby is] a really skilled player, one of the best in the world, so you have to stay close to him, and I thought everyone did a good job," Larsson said. "You can't be too aggressive on him because he's so fast with his turns and stuff, so you have to play him pretty smart. Just keep him on the outside, and I thought we did that."

Schneider said, "If you look at our division, one night it's Claude Giroux (of the Philadelphia Flyers), the next it's John Tavares (of the Islanders) and the next it's Alex Ovechkin (of the Capitals); every night it seems we're playing an elite player and oftentimes Greene and Larsson get that assignment.

"I don't know how many points we give up to those players, but it's not a lot, and they're a big reason why. They play a lot of hard minutes and I believe get overlooked around the League."

Schneider, who turns 29 Wednesday, made 14 saves in the first period. He stopped Crosby with his glove off a 1-on-1 attempt on a quick rush down the middle at 11:19. Schneider later denied a slap shot by Ben Lovejoy before turning away the rebound by Daniel Winnik while stretching his pad at 18:57.

The Penguins, who did not have a power play, have been shut out in two of the past three games and have been outscored 9-1.

"I thought we did a pretty good job all game, but we still left a lot of chances out there," Crosby said. "This is not a streak you want to run into at this time of year. The games are tight. We have to find a way. We had 35 shots. You think one might get through, but that wasn't the case tonight. [Schneider] did make good saves when he had to, but we could have given him more. We don't want to settle for games like this. We're guilty of getting sucked into playing their game and that's not our style."

The Devils were without forward Patrik Elias (back spasms) for a second straight game. He is listed as day-to-day and is questionable against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center on Friday. New Jersey trails the Boston Bruins by 12 points for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference with 12 games remaining.

Scoring touch goes absent again for Pens

March 18, 2015 12:18 AM

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

NEWARK, N.J. — It was a Throwback Night at Tuesday Prudential Center, and all concerned did their part.

New Jersey wore its vintage red-and-green uniforms. The Penguins struggled to score.

And lost.

As they have here so many times, for so many seasons.

But the 2-0 loss — the second time they have been shut out in their past three games, and the eighth this season — was not quite like so many they have absorbed over the years in New Jersey.

This time, the Penguins generated a decent number of shots, 35, and a fair amount of scoring chances.

That none of those translated to goals can be attributed to Devils goalie Cory Schneider and, according to coach Mike Johnston, the Penguins' failure to fight ferociously enough for pucks around the New Jersey net.

“In order to score, you have to compete in the scoring areas, and I just didn't like our desperation around the net,” Johnston said. “I didn't like our ‘compete’ around the net, battling for loose pucks.

“And there were some there. Schneider did suck some in and keep them tight, but there were other pucks that were there. We just have to battle.”

The Penguins [39-21-10] have lost three consecutive games in regulation for the second time this season and remain in third place in the Metropolitan Division, two points ahead of fourth-place Washington.

They played without two of their top goal-scorers, center Evgeni Malkin and winger Patric Hornqvist, both of whom sustained undisclosed injuries over the weekend. Still, they managed to spend a considerable portion of the game in the New Jersey end and forced Schneider to play a flawless game.

While Schneider was perfect, Penguins goalie Thomas Greiss wasn't far behind.

He turned aside 17 of 18 shots, being beaten only when the Devils got a two-on-one break and Jacob Josefson scored from inside the right circle at 16:25 of the second period.

New Jersey's other goal came when Adam Henrique hit an empty net with 48.7 seconds left.

That means Greiss has allowed a total of two goals in his past two starts — he played in the 2-0 loss Saturday to Boston — and has nothing but a couple of losses to show for it.

“That’s just sometimes how it bounces,” he said.

Greiss also acknowledged that a goaltender’s margin for error virtually disappears when his teammates are struggling to score.

“When it’s 0-0, you have to keep that thing out of the net,” he said.

Center Sidney Crosby said the Penguins “did get some Grade-A chances” against Schneider, particularly in the first and third periods.

“When you get your chances, you have to bury them,” he said. “Usually, when you get 35 shots, you have a pretty good chance of at least getting one.”

The Penguins power play entered the game in a 1-for-22 funk. Left it the same way, too, because they didn’t get a chance with the man-advantage.

The only possibility was wiped out when winger Daniel Winnik was called for embellishing a trip by Devils defenseman Mark Fraser early in the second .

Penguins defenseman Paul Martin said that, “usually, you see one or two” power plays over the course of a game, but added that, “I didn’t see too much to get upset about, as far as bad calls one way or the other.

“We need to be a little better around the net. There are some pucks laying there that we don’t get to.”

And that never get a chance to reach the back of the net.

Dave Molinari: Dmolinari@Post-Gazette.com and Twitter [@MolinariPG](https://twitter.com/MolinariPG). First Published March 17, 2015 9:41 PM

Penguins notebook: Timetable for Evgeni Malkin's return from latest injury not certain

March 18, 2015 12:00 AM

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

NEWARK, N.J. — Coach Mike Johnston isn't ruling out the possibility of Evgeni Malkin joining the Penguins at some point on their three-game road trip.

But Tuesday, he sounded a lot less upbeat about the chances than he had a day earlier.

"I was hoping originally [he] might be able to come on the road," Johnston said. "Right now, it doesn't look like that, but we'll see after four or five days.

"The one thing about [Malkin] with injuries is, it seems like when he's had injuries ... he does come back quicker than you anticipate. Somehow, he's willing to push through it and he wants to come back earlier than usual.

"So we're always optimistic with [Malkin] that he might cut a few days off that."

Malkin missed his second game in a row when the Penguins played New Jersey Tuesday night at Prudential Center. He got an unspecified injury when checked by Boston center Chris Kelly in the first period of a 2-0 loss Saturday.

The Penguins also were without right winger Patric Hornqvist, who is expected to miss at least another two games because of an undisclosed injury late in a 5-1 loss against Detroit Sunday.

3-on-3 OTs coming soon

The NHL's general managers have recommended the league add three-on-three play to its overtime format.

Penguins star Sidney Crosby wonders what took them so long.

"I've been ready for it for years," he said.

Three-on-three appears to have strong and widespread support, at least among non-goalies, with much of it among players who have experienced it in the American Hockey League.

"I think it's a really good idea," said Penguins forward Andrew Ebbett, who has spent 34 games with their AHL team in Wilkes-Barre this season. "It adds a different dynamic to the game, and I think the crowd really gets into it."

The general managers, meeting in Boca Raton, Fla., favor either five minutes of three-on-three play or the same format as the AHL, which goes four-on-four until the first whistle after the three-minute mark and then three-on-three for the balance of overtime.

No surprises in Devils' future

New Jersey general manager Lou Lamoriello, who has overseen the Devils coaching staff since he fired Peter DeBoer earlier this season, says he won't name a new coach until after the season.

That's no surprise, since New Jersey has just a dozen games left.

The primary quality Lamoriello will seek in his next coach isn't exactly a shocker, either.

"We certainly will look at someone within the framework of the system that we play," he said. "Defense first."

Even though the Devils have emphasized team defense since Lamoriello took over as general manager in 1987, he recognizes that their scoring must be upgraded if they are to make a serious run at a playoff berth in 2015-16.

"Our role players are outstanding," Lamoriello said. "Our defense, I'm extremely pleased with. Our goaltending, I don't think we can say enough about it. We have to get a couple of offensive players."

New Jersey, which has Scott Stevens and Adam Oates as co-coaches, was 12-7-7 under DeBoer and was 17-12-4 since his departure before facing the Penguins.

Tip-ins

New Jersey center Patrik Elias [back spasms] missed his second consecutive game. He has 24 goals and 46 assists in 87 career games against the Penguins. ... The Penguins are scheduled to practice today in Newark before flying to Dallas, where they will face the Stars Thursday night.

Dave Molinari: Dmolinari@Post-Gazette.com and Twitter @MolinariPG,

Devils compound Penguins' woes with 2-0 victory

By [Jason Mackey](#)

Tuesday, March 17, 2015, 9:40 p.m.

Updated 8 hours ago

NEWARK, N.J. — Call it a red-zone issue, an inability to finish.

The Penguins flung 35 shots at Devils goaltender Cory Schneider on Tuesday and finished with a 49-21 edge in shot attempts.

Still, the inability to convert those chances drove Penguins coach Mike Johnston nuts, and he didn't hide his irritation after a 2-0 loss at Prudential Center.

“In order to score, you've got to compete in the scoring areas,” Johnston said. “I didn't like our desperation around the net. I didn't like our compete around the net.”

Johnston's Penguins (39-21-10) have lost three in a row, scoring one goal during that stretch. They've scored 36 goals over their past 15, an average of 2.4 per contest.

Though that number already ranks in the bottom fifth of the league, it gets worse when considering the Penguins have been held to one goal or none in nine of their past 15 games. They've lost seven of those nine.

“We need to be a little bit better around the net,” defenseman Paul Martin said. “We just haven't been able to finish. I think that's the toughest part.”

The situation is not a pretty one for the Penguins, who are saddled with a three-game losing streak for the third time this season.

Forward Patric Hornqvist won't play at least through Saturday because of an injury suffered late in Sunday's 5-1 loss to the Red Wings. Hornqvist is unequivocally the Penguins' best net-front player, their top finisher.

The Penguins pressured Schneider in the first and third periods, forcing him to make 27 saves, but his biggest challenge in the second was staying awake long enough as the Devils lulled the Penguins' into their trap — literally.

The Penguins finished with eight shots during the second period.

“In the second, we probably could have generated more and didn't,” Penguins captain Sidney Crosby said. “They play a certain way. It's one thing to be patient. You don't want to also accept not getting chances and be OK with that.”

New Jersey's Jacob Josefson scored from the inner edge of the right circle in the second, and Adam Henrique added an empty-net goal late.

Great for the Devils (30-29-11), who are 9-3-2 over their past 14.

Not so much for the Penguins, who are built to win games by scoring goals.

The power play failed to score for the seventh time in eight games, but for once it couldn't be blamed.

The Penguins didn't have a power-play opportunity for just the third game all season.

That lumped the importance on five-on-five play and, as Johnston said, pouncing on second-chance opportunities. The Penguins weren't tenacious enough, their coach said.

The same guy, don't forget, that general manager Jim Rutherford brought here because of his track record of producing offensively strong teams.

“When we go through scoring droughts, it's that compete that I see in our team offensively that's not there,” said Johnston, whose team has been shut out five times since the all-star break and eight overall.

“We have to have it there. If it's a 1-1 game or a 1-0 game like (Tuesday), I thought that area there we were 60 percent. That's not near good enough.”

Jason Mackey is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. Reach him at jmackey@tribweb.com or via Twitter [@Mackey_Trib](https://twitter.com/Mackey_Trib).

Penguins notebook: Timeline for Malkin return unclear

By [Jason Mackey](#)

Tuesday, March 17, 2015, 4:36 p.m.

Updated 7 hours ago

NEWARK, N.J. — Evgeni Malkin is a quick healer.

That was Penguins coach Mike Johnston's explanation for the contrasting timelines given for Malkin's return from a lower-body by himself and general manager Jim Rutherford on Monday.

Johnston said he hoped Malkin, who was hurt 85 seconds into Saturday's 2-0 loss to the Boston Bruins and didn't play Sunday, might join the Penguins on their current three-game, six-day road trip.

Speaking at the NHL's GM meetings in Florida, Rutherford told reporters Malkin would miss seven to 14 days.

"I was hoping originally he might be able to come on the road," Johnston said Tuesday at Prudential Center. "Right now it doesn't look like that, but we'll see after four or five days.

"The one thing with Geno and injuries is it seems like when he's had injuries, at least from my perspective, he does come back quicker than you anticipate. Somehow he's willing to push through it, and he wants to come back earlier than usual. We're always optimistic with Geno that he might cut a few days off that."

Patric Hornqvist (undisclosed) was hurt Sunday and is not expected to play on the road trip.

- When Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello fired coach Pete DeBoer on Dec. 26 and created a coaching triumvirate that included himself as interim coach and Adam Oates and Scott Stevens as assistants, the plan was not for Lamoriello to be behind the New Jersey bench all season. Yet the Devils have just a dozen games left after Tuesday, and there still is no new coach. "We're going to wait until the season's over," Lamoriello said. "There's no hurry to (hire a coach) at this point." Lamoriello said the new guy would have to fit "within the framework of the system that we play: defense first." A bigger concern for Lamoriello is adding offensive pop to a group whose 158 goals scored entering Tuesday ranked 12th in the 16-team Eastern Conference. "We have to get a couple of offensive forwards," Lamoriello said. "Our role players are outstanding. I'm extremely pleased with our defense. I don't think we can say enough about how our goaltending has been. We have to get a couple of offensive players."

- One of the things the league's GMs are discussing includes incorporating three-on-three play as a way of avoiding shootouts as much as possible. Count Sidney Crosby in. "I've been ready for it for years," he said. "Whenever they want to go for it, I'm all for it."

Lundqvist cleared to practice with Rangers

By BRETT CYRGAJIS

The King is back — well, almost.

The Rangers announced Tuesday afternoon their franchise cornerstone, goalie Henrik Lundqvist, was cleared by doctors to resume practicing with the team. Lundqvist was originally injured Jan. 31 after taking a puck in the throat, and has missed the past 20 games with an injured blood vessel in the back of his neck.

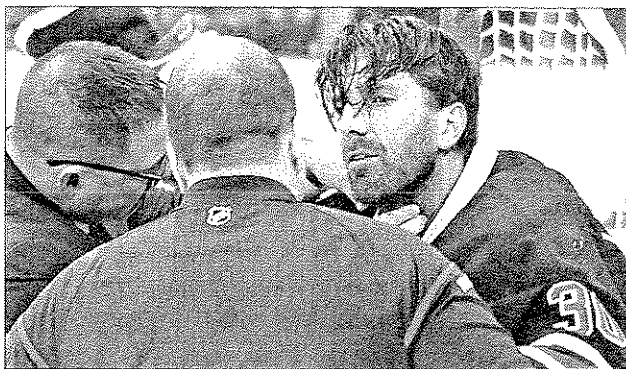
Yet his return is not imminent.

According to what coach Alain Vigneault has said over the past week or so — and then reiterated Tuesday afternoon when he went on "The Michael Kay Show" on ESPN Radio — is the team would like Lundqvist to have "more than a couple" practices before he plays. So at the very least, that rules out Wednesday night's Garden match against the Blackhawks, as well as this weekend's back-to-back — Saturday against the Hurricanes in Raleigh, N.C., and Sunday at home against the Ducks.

"Our challenge right now is to find adequate practice time to get him back up to speed," Vigneault said on the radio, with his press meeting after Tuesday's practice held before Lundqvist's meeting with the doctors.

"We've got one practice Friday and then our next practice is the following Wednesday. It's going to take him more than a couple of team practices to get him up to speed."

After the Ducks game, the Rangers



play host Tuesday night to the Kings — remember them, the team that bounced the Blueshirts in five games in last summer's Stanley Cup final? Goodness knows Lundqvist would like to play that game, but who knows how much sway he would have over the coaches in talking himself into that spot?

"He'll be skating, but our goaltender needs to be able to track the puck, practice with bodies in front of him," Vigneault said. "We don't have the time to give Hank a lot of practice. We'll talk to him, see how he feels."

So that would mean Cam Talbot remains the starter for the time being — which hardly has been a bad thing.

Since Lundqvist went down, Talbot is 13-2-3, and his team has added on

another two wins with 20-year-old rookie Mackenzie Skapski in nets — both of those coming in Buffalo against the sad-sack Sabres. Since Dec. 8, the Rangers have gone a ridiculous 33-7-3, putting them right into the mix for the Presidents' Trophy, going into Tuesday's play atop the Metropolitan Division with 95 points, tied with the Ducks for most in the league, while still having 14 games left, more than all of the top contenders.

"Before Hank went down, we were building the identity, and this team was coming and it was playing well," Vigneault said after practice. "When he went down, obviously, first thoughts from everybody is, 'This is going to be a challenge.' But I've always felt that this group of players, it's

Wednesday
**BLACKHAWKS
AT RANGERS**
8 p.m.
NBCSN
ESPN Radio
(98.7 FM)

about the group, it's not about one guy. We play a team game. We play a smart game, with and without the puck. And that has permitted us to go through the adversity we have gone through."

In the 20 games prior to Lundqvist getting hurt, he went 16-4-0, with a 1.82 goals against average and .938 save percentage. For the season, the 31-year-old franchise leader in wins and shutouts, had gone 25-11-3, along with a 2.25 goals against average and .922 save percentage, including five shutouts.

Whenever he does come back, rest assured he will be the starter and will get game action in before the postseason, no matter the results. Good news for the team is they've already solidified themselves for the playoffs, and are now only looking toward another long run into the spring.

"It's always about the team," Vigneault said. "If a team's expectation is to play hockey in June, then they have to play the right way before that."

— Additional reporting by John DeMarzo.

bcyrjalis@nypost.com

Nash reunited with Stepan, Kreider

By BRETT CYRGAJIS

Alternate captain Martin St. Louis will begin his 10-day to two-week absence due to an assumed right-knee injury with Wednesday night's Garden match against the Blackhawks. And moving into St. Louis' spot on the line with Derek Stepan and Chris Kreider will be Rick Nash, reuniting that dynamic trio from last season's Stanley Cup final run.

"Me, Kreids and Nash, we know how we have success as a line," Stepan said after Tuesday's practice in Westchester. "It's important that we find that."

Coach Alain Vigneault had been

RANGERS NOTES

rather set in his lines throughout most of this season, and with the success of the first-place Blueshirts, why wouldn't he be?

"I think with the way our team has been playing, it's tough to switch when we've been having so much success," Stepan said. "We have Marty go down, and now we have to make some movements around, and that's part of a season."

The trickle-down effect results in putting trade-deadline acquisition Jimmy Sheppard back to the middle, where he played for most of his ca-

reer with the Wild and the Sharks. Sheppard was relegated to a fourth-line winger role since coming over on March 1 — in the games he wasn't a healthy scratch — and now he'll be between speedster Carl Hagelin and the skilled J.T. Miller.

That was the spot occupied by Kevin Hayes, who will be moving up to the left side on the line with Derrick Brassard and Mats Zuccarello.

► Vigneault seems to be going with the four-forward look on his struggling power play, which is 4-for-43 in the past 17 games — with the four goals being an empty-netter from Nash, two Kreider break-

aways and a doorstep jam-shot from **Dan Girardi** — and of 0-for-14 in the past five games.

The first unit at Tuesday's practice consisted of trade-deadline acquisition **Keith Yandle** at the point — the lone defenseman, who is not exactly a defensive stalwart — along with Nash, Kreider, Brassard and Stepan up front.

"These guys are so responsible — a lot of forwards, you don't have that," Yandle said. "These guys, you see them back there, they're going to be there to help you out. I don't think it's much of a risk having those guys back there."

Rangers' King gets clearance

Lundqvist able to practice with team

By **ANDREW GROSS**
STAFF WRITER

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — Alain Vigneault surveyed the crowded press conference room at the Madison Square Garden Training Center, packed with more television cameras than usual for a practice, and correctly surmised, "You guys were expecting Hank today. Not a chance."

Hawks at Rangers

Today, 8 p.m.
TV: NBCSN

Only because the media throng was off by just one practice in staking out Henrik Lundqvist.

The Rangers announced later on Tuesday their franchise goalie, who has not played since Feb. 2 because of a damaged blood vessel in his neck, had been cleared to return to practice following an examination and consultation with medical specialists.

Shortly after the Rangers' announcement, Lundqvist said via his

See **RANGERS** Page S-5

Rangers: Lundqvist cleared to practice with team

From Page S-1

Twitter account, "1 step closer. It's been 6 long weeks, look forward to start practicing with the boys," ending that with a thumbs-up emoji.

So it won't be too long before Lundqvist plays in a game, though there's no indication how quickly that will come.

The NHL-leading Rangers, who have won five straight and are 15-2-3 in Lundqvist's absence, face the Blackhawks tonight at the Garden. The Rangers have allowed one goal or fewer in a team record seven straight games and Cam Talbot will start for the 19th time in the last 21 games.

"When [Lundqvist] went down, the first thoughts coming out from everybody was this was going to be a challenge," Vigneault said. "It's about the group. It's not about one guy."

With no morning skate today and a scheduled off day Thursday, Lundqvist's first chance to practice with teammates will come Friday.

Including tonight, the Rangers have 14 regular-season games remaining. They are at Carolina on Saturday and host the Ducks on Sunday. Realistically, a home game against the Kings on March 24 might be the most likely for Lundqvist's return.

Lundqvist has been skating on his own for a little more than a month, working with goalie coach Benoit

Blackhawks at Rangers

Today, 8 p.m.

TV: NBC Sports Network

Radio: ESPN-FM 98.7

Story line: The NHL-leading Rangers (44-17-7) won, 1-0, in overtime at Chicago on March 8 with Cam Talbot (17-6-4, 2.19 GAA) stopping 29 shots. This is Brad Richards' first game at Madison Square Garden after the Rangers bought out the final six seasons of his nine-year, \$60 million deal.

Allaire and Vigneault has said the reports on Lundqvist's conditioning have been excellent. However, Lundqvist has only been allowed to face low shots and a Rangers spokesman repeated Tuesday he still was not taking any high shots. Vigneault said previously he doesn't expect Lundqvist to need many practices before he can resume playing.

"Hank's one of the best goalies in the league, he's proven that," Vigneault said on Tuesday. "The fact that this extended rest period, if you want to call it that way even though he's been working out quite a lot, I think he'll be fresh physically and mentally and be ready for

a real strong push."

Lundqvist, who turned 33 on March 2, is 25-11 with a 2.25 goals-against average, five shutouts, and .922 save percentage. Lundqvist, of course, is not the only injured Ranger.

Defenseman Kevin Klein broke his left arm in the past Wednesday's 3-1 win at Washington and is expected to miss two to three weeks. Right wing Marty St. Louis is out 10-14 days with a lower-body injury — believed to be his right knee — suffered in Sunday's 2-1 win over the Panthers.

With St. Louis sidelined, Vigneault was forced to juggle his line combinations and power play units Tuesday.

He put Rick Nash back with center Derek Stepan and Chris Kreider, reuniting last season's top line, while moving rookie Kevin Hayes from third line center to Nash's former spot on Derick Brassard's left wing with Mats Zuccarello. James Sheppard will center the third line with Carl Hagelin and J.T. Miller.

On the power play, which is 1-for-21 over the past eight games, quarterback Keith Yandle will play with four forwards — Nash, Stepan, Brassard and Kreider on the top unit. Hayes joins defensemen Ryan McDonagh and Dan Boyle, plus Zuccarello and Miller on the second unit.

Email: grossa@northjersey.com

Injuries Leave Rangers Reduced but Not Diminished

By PAT PICKENS

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — The list of Rangers who have played in every game this season is short, and it will shrink by one on Wednesday, as Martin St. Louis will not suit up against the Chicago Blackhawks because of a lower-body injury.

Still, the Rangers, who have won five in a row, continue to roll.

St. Louis, who is expected to miss 10 to 14 days, joins Henrik Lundqvist, Kevin Klein, Derek Stepan, Ryan McDonagh and Dan Boyle on the list of Rangers who have missed an extended length of time because of an injury.

St. Louis had played in all 68 games this season, amassing 29 goals and 27 assists, including three points in the club's last three games.

"It's kind of been the nature of our team since the first game, when Boyley went down," McDonagh said, referring to the broken hand Boyle sustained in the season opener. "This is nothing new for us. The way we prepare for practice and in meetings, our approach to games, it doesn't matter who is in the lineup. You know what your role is, you know what is expected of you, and Coach

puts you out there in situations where he expects you to make plays and play strong, whoever it is."

The Rangers may get a very important piece back soon. After practice Tuesday, the team announced that Lundqvist had been cleared by doctors to return to practice after missing six and a half weeks and 20 games with a blood vessel injury in his neck.

The resilient Rangers have found a way to navigate without him, soaring to the top of the N.H.L. standings. They have lost only twice in regulation, posting a 15-2-3 record, since Lundqvist was placed on injured reserve Feb. 6.

The backup, Cam Talbot, has been exceptional, particularly this month, in which he has compiled a .967 save percentage and allowed six goals in six starts.

"He's always been one who trusts his skills, trusts his positioning, trusts his instincts," McDonagh said of Talbot. "He's out playing the puck. He isn't afraid even late in the game to go outside his crease and make plays. That's when we know he is just playing to his strengths."

In the wake of St. Louis's injury, Coach Alain Vigneault experi-

mented with new lines in practice, moving Rick Nash to right wing on the line with Chris Kreider and Stepan. Kevin Hayes was moved to left wing with Derick Brassard and Mats Zuccarello.

"When Nasher missed one game, we used Kevin up with Zuke and Brass, and that line played well that game," Vigneault said, referring to the club's Feb. 24 victory over the Calgary Flames. "Last year, obviously, a lot of the season we used Kreids with Step and Nasher, so we just went back to that. We'll see how it works out tomorrow."

James Sheppard will play center on the team's third line, taking Hayes's spot there with Carl Hagelin on left wing and J.T. Miller on the right. Sheppard has played only three games since joining the team in a trade on March 2 but looked especially strong in Sunday's 2-1 victory over the Panthers.

"It's kind of what I expected from him," Boyle said of Sheppard, his former teammate in San Jose. "He's a big body — holds onto pucks, very tough to knock off the puck once he has it. He can play anywhere from first line to fourth line."

Vigneault also tinkered with

the power-play units, trying four forwards — Nash, Brassard, Kreider and Stepan — with the offensive-minded Keith Yandle in the first group. The power play is one of the few facets in which the team is scuffling, scoring just once in its last 21 chances.

"Our power play, even though in my estimation has gotten some good looks and real good opportunities, hasn't produced for the last little while here," Vigneault said. "With Marty out, I just felt it was time to take a look at different things."

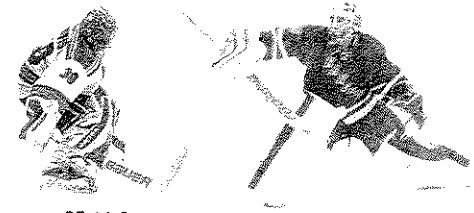
In recent games, the Rangers have gotten offensive contributions from a variety of sources. Last weekend, Yandle and Sheppard each scored for the first time since joining the Rangers in separate deals near the deadline. Yandle netted the first goal in Saturday night's 2-0 win at Buffalo, and Sheppard scored his first on Sunday against Florida. Matt Hunwick, who returned to the lineup after Klein was sidelined last week with an upper-body injury, scored the game-winning goal Sunday.

Yandle has only one point in seven games since being picked up from the Arizona Coyotes, but fitting in with the Rangers has

With No King, Rangers Rule

Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist has not played since Feb. 1, because of a blood vessel injury in his neck. He was cleared Tuesday to get in practice, but his absence has not slowed the team down. Talbot has made up Cam Talbot in net for 15 of the past 20 games, the Rangers and on Tuesday's action atop the N.H.L.

ON FEB. 2	RECORD	SINCE FEB.
29-15-4		15-2-
6th in East, 10th in N.H.L.	STANDING	Tied for 1st in N.H.L. (95 points)
2.98	GOALS PER GAME	3.0
2.31	GOALS AGAINST PER GAME	2.1
Henrik Lundqvist	STARTING GOALIE	Cam Talbot
25-11-3	7.25 goals-against average 92.2 save percentage	13-2-3 2.70 goals-against average 92.7 save percentage



been seamless.

"You have a mixture of older guys and younger guys, and great leadership from a guy like Mac," Yandle said, referring to

McDonagh. "The easy part to me has been fitting in, and these guys have just helped me get that point and it's been awesome."

Floundering Isles drop 4th in row

By MATT CARLSON

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CHICAGO — Jonathan Toews scored twice and assisted on both of Marian Hossa's goals to lead the Blackhawks past the slumping Islanders 4-1 on Tuesday night.

Toews recorded his first four-point game this season as the Blackhawks won their third straight and improved to 7-1-1 since Feb. 24 when leading scorer Patrick Kane broke his collarbone against Florida.

Nikolay Kulemin scored at 5:29 of third period to

end Corey Crawford's shutout bid, but the Islanders lost their season-worst fourth straight.

Although Crawford made 38 saves, he wasn't tested heavily by the goal-starved Islanders, who have scored only one goal in each of their four consecutive defeats.

The Islanders remain five points behind the Atlantic Division-leading Rangers, who have played four fewer games.

—AP

Top line, Crawford help Blackhawks handle Islanders

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 2:05 AM

Brian Hedger - NHL.com Correspondent

CHICAGO -- The Chicago Blackhawks won the battle of top lines and it led to a 4-1 victory against the New York Islanders at United Center on Tuesday.

Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville hadn't played left wing Patrick Sharp with Jonathan Toews and Marian Hossa since the sixth game of the season, but they showed why it can be a dangerous combination.

The line scored the four goals for the Blackhawks (42-21-6), with Toews and Hossa each scoring twice and Sharp getting two assists. Toews had two assists for a four-point game.

"It was certainly fun to watch," Quenneville said. "They made some nice plays, be it off the rush, in zone, in quickness, and strength in the puck area influencing [turnovers]. Transitionally they were really effective and dangerous all game long. It was nice to see them have a big night like that."

They were as effective on the defensive end against New York's top line of Josh Bailey, John Tavares and Kyle Okposo. Tavares and Bailey each finished minus-4, and Okposo was minus-2.

"That's always one of our top goals, is to frustrate whatever line we're up against," Toews said. "We did that, and I think the better we played defensively, we just seemed to create offense. We had time with the puck tonight."

The Islanders (43-25-5) didn't until midway through the second period, when the Blackhawks were ahead 2-0. Hossa made it 3-0 with his first goal 13:55 into the second.

"First half of the game was just ... I don't know why we're not engaged," Tavares said. "We just did not do anything well. Didn't execute. Looked slow, watching them play and make plays. Losing battles. It's just not good enough."

Chicago goalie Corey Crawford made 38 saves. He's 6-0-1 in his past seven starts.

The Islanders kept him busy in the second and third periods by outshooting the Blackhawks 29-14. Nikolay Kulemin had a blocked shot come right to him in the low slot and he redirected it into the net at 5:29 of the third for New York's goal.

"He's been really good," Sharp said of Crawford. "It's disappointing that they were able to put one in there to break the shutout, but he played really well. It was nice to hear the crowd

chanting his name in the second period (when the Blackhawks killed a five-minute power play). Corey feeds off that and seems to make bigger saves as he goes along."

The victory was the third straight for Chicago, which hadn't won more than two in a row since an eight-game streak that ended Dec. 13. The Blackhawks play at the New York Rangers on Wednesday (8 p.m. ET; NBCSN, TVA SN1).

The Islanders have lost a season-high four games in a row. They're dealing with some injuries, including the most recent that kept goalie Jaroslav Halak from making the trip.

They've also been without defenseman Nick Leddy the past four games and didn't have defenseman Lubomir Visnovsky or forward Mikhail Grabovski. Michal Neuvirth started in Halak's place and made 26 saves.

The Islanders, who outshot the Blackhawks 39-30, are 1-4-1 in their past six games, despite outshooting each opponent.

"We had a defenseman turn the puck over, it goes in the net," Islanders coach Jack Capuano said. "We had a defenseman get outside of the dots, [Neuvirth] probably should've had the puck [on Toews' second goal]. It's 2-0. We had a five-minute power play, we didn't score. We didn't give them anything in the second or third period. End of story."

Toews gave the Blackhawks an early lead with his two goals in the first, something they've lacked in recent home games. His 22nd and 23rd goals, each scored with a backhand, made it 2-0 16:04 into the first period. Hossa scored 57 seconds into the third to make it 4-0.

Sharp's pass went off Hossa's left skate into the net for that one, which was the eighth combined point of the game for Chicago's top line.

"We've been together here for six years in this dressing room and we've had lots of games together," Hossa said. "Maybe there is a chemistry there. [Sharp] played really well tonight and he created lots of chances for us."

Burrows' two goals lead Canucks past Flyers

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 1:51 AM

Kevin Woodley - NHL.com Correspondent

VANCOUVER -- Alexandre Burrows took advantage of some time off and a reunion with Daniel and Henrik Sedin on the Vancouver Canucks' top line.

Burrows missed Vancouver's previous game with a groin injury, but scored two goals 17 seconds apart in the third period to lead the Canucks to a 4-1 win against the Philadelphia Flyers at Rogers Arena on Tuesday.

Burrows was healthy enough to play Saturday, but with extra forwards available, Canucks coach Willie Desjardins decided to give the 33-year-old a couple of extra days off.

"Burr took a little bit of time off and it paid off today. It paid off big," Desjardins said. "If we have guys banged up a little bit, and even if we don't, guys can use it to get the rest they need so they can come back fresher. It's really disappointing when you're not going to get to play, but I think if we use it right it can help us down the stretch."

Burrows took the place of Zack Kassian, who was injured during the morning skate, and put the Canucks ahead to stay on a wrist shot through goaltender Steve Mason's legs off the rush 6:44 into the third period.

It was Burrows' first goal in 11 games, covering more than a month; he didn't need long to add another one.

On the next shift, Mason stopped Daniel Sedin on another rush, but the rebound bounced right to Burrows on the far side and he slid his 14th goal of the season into a wide-open net.

"The first one I completely missed it," Burrows said. "It found a way to go five-hole, and the other one was a just a good rebound."

After spending most of the season apart from his old linemates, Burrows said it was nice to be back with the Sedins and back on the scoresheet.

"It's been a long time, for sure," he said. "I wanted to make some plays and get some offence. Lucky enough the twins are great players and they were able to find some open space, find me in shooting areas."

Defenseman Alexander Edler scored in the second period to get Vancouver even at 1-1, and Radim Vrbata scored into an empty net with 10 seconds left for the Canucks (40-25-4), who have won four of their past five. Eddie Lack made 27 saves for Vancouver, which moved three

points ahead of the Los Angeles Kings and Calgary Flames for second place in the Pacific Division.

"There was a couple real big saves in there," Desjardins said of Lack's performance. "He saved us. They have a high-offensive machine and if they get a couple they'll get excited."

Michael Raffl opened the scoring midway through the second period and Mason made 32 saves for the Flyers (29-28-15), who have one win in their past seven games and nine on the road all season, the fourth-fewest in the NHL.

"We haven't got it done on the road and that's why we are in the position we are," said Mason, who has one win in 18 road games. "It's something we have to address."

So is the letdown after Burrows' first goal.

"We make a couple mistakes and they take advantage of it," Raffl said. "You can't do that on the road, especially against a team like this. It comes down to two bad shifts, two bounces they take advantage of right away. That's what a good team does."

The game was preceded by a ceremony to honor the late Pat Quinn, who coached the Flyers and was coach, general manager and president of the Canucks.

"The Pat Quinn ceremony definitely got us going," Lack said.

Philadelphia opened the scoring just after the midway point of the second period.

With top-line right wing Jakub Voracek in the penalty box after a rare but spirited fight with Canucks defenseman Dan Hamhuis, Wayne Simmonds took his spot alongside Claude Giroux and Raffl and set up the first goal. Simmonds shook a check in the corner before passing cross-ice to Giroux inside the left circle; Giroux held the puck briefly before sending the puck back the other way for Raffl to tip past Lack from the top of the crease.

Voracek, who is fifth in NHL scoring with 69 points, downplayed sparking the team with his fight.

"I got hooked, I cross-checked him, emotional game, it happens," said Voracek, who had a welt over his left eye. "It was a square fight, we moved on right after."

Told he got in some good punches, Voracek said, "He got me pretty good too. It was a good one."

Edler tied it a little less than four minutes later after a nice play by center Brad Richardson at the side of the net. Richardson used the heel of his skate to redirect Derek Dorsett's centering pass through the crease to Edler, who waited patiently before lifting a backhand shot up and over a prone Mason from a sharp angle.

Hammond ties record, Senators defeat Hurricanes

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 12:41 AM

Kurt Dusterberg - NHL.com Correspondent

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The Ottawa Senators continued their improbable late-season run at the Stanley Cup Playoffs with a 2-1 overtime win against the Carolina Hurricanes at PNC Arena on Tuesday.

Andrew Hammond made 35 saves to push his record to 11-0-1, tying Hall of Fame member Frank Brimsek as the only NHL goaltenders to start his career with 12 straight games allowing fewer than three goals. Brimsek accomplished the feat with the Boston Bruins in 1938-39.

Hammond was spectacular, keeping the Senators in the game. After each team had quality chances in overtime, Kyle Turriss set up Mark Stone for the game-winner with 13.4 seconds remaining.

The Senators are four points behind the Boston Bruins for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference. The Bruins lost 2-1 to the Buffalo Sabres in a shootout.

"That was as good an effort as he's had for us," Ottawa coach Dave Cameron said about his goaltender. "He's just been awesome. His play speaks for itself."

After a third period when the teams traded scoring chances, Turriss made a dazzling move to set up the overtime goal. He brought the puck between his legs and skated around Hurricanes defenseman Ryan Murphy before leaving a drop pass for Stone in the slot with 13.4 seconds remaining.

"I've done that move before and had some success in the past," Turriss said. "It was a nice play by [defenseman Erik Karlsson] to spring Stone and I to give us a 2-on-2 in the neutral zone. I knew there wasn't much time left, so I figure I'd try to do something like that. [Hurricanes goalie Anton] Khudobin was good all night, so you had to get him going side to side."

Hammond played 25 games with the Binghamton Senators in the American Hockey League before leading Ottawa on its late-season run.

"It couldn't happen to a better guy," said defenseman Patrick Wiercioch, whose power-play goal tied the game in the second period. "I know everyone says that, but he's such a humble guy. He doesn't say much, just comes in and does his work. I think the guys appreciate a [goalie] who is quiet back there and just instills that confidence in our group right now."

Carolina put pressure on Hammond by scoring first. Elias Lindholm drove the right faceoff circle and corralled a long cross-ice pass from Jeff Skinner to score at 12:59 of the first period. It was Skinner's 100th NHL assist.

The Senators controlled play in the second period, quickly running up an 8-1 advantage in shots, but Khudobin made a series of saves to preserve Carolina's 1-0 lead. Ottawa tied the game at 13:22 when Karlsson set up Wiercioch for a one-timer in the right circle.

Hammond saved his best for the third period. In the opening minutes, he came across the crease to glove a one-timer from Jordan Staal that left the Carolina center with slumped shoulders, staring at the ice in disbelief. Then with less than four minutes left, Hammond stopped a bad-angle shot by Lindholm before denying rebound chances by Victor Rask and Skinner on the back door.

"I'm playing a little bit deeper on those plays, where it's scambly," said Hammond, who lowered his goals-against average to 1.35 and raised his save percentage to .956. "I'm just letting the play come back to me. That's something that in the past has been a bit of an issue; I'd find myself chasing the puck a little bit. Now I know the puck has to get past me to get in the net, so I can play a little deeper and it's eventually going to have to come to you still. It buys you just a little more time to react."

Much of the focus has been on Hammond during his unbeaten streak to start his career, but he has not been fazed by any of it. He engaged the media after the morning skate and fielded questions graciously after the win. He said he doesn't feel much pressure because the Senators have a pretty big hill to climb.

"In the big picture, it's a tall task, so when you focus one day at a time, you don't get overwhelmed by anything," Hammond said. "When you just focus on winning each game each night, it makes it seem a lot easier. That's something that's helped me with the streak maybe because it doesn't really bother me. I'm just worrying about each game each night."

The Hurricanes are 2-5-1 in their past eight games, but with quality scoring chances, coach Bill Peters liked what saw against the Senators.

"I thought it was an excellent game," Peters said. "That's one of the most exciting overtimes I've ever been a part of. I thought we were good early, I thought they dominated the second, and I thought we recovered in the third and had a good push back. [Ottawa] played very well, played very tight, and I thought we played the same way."

The Senators will continue their pursuit of the playoffs when they host the Bruins on Thursday. They will do it with the hottest goaltender in the NHL.

"He's on fire," Turriss said. "I don't think I've ever seen anything like it. Some of the saves he made tonight were unbelievable."

GMs propose 3-on-3 overtime for regular season

Tuesday, 03.17.2015 / 3:36 PM / [News](#)

By [Shawn Roarke](#) - Director, Editorial

BOCA RATON, Fla. -- NHL general managers recommended Tuesday that the League go to a 3-on-3 format for regular-season overtime, starting as early as next season.

The overtime format now is 4-on-4 play for five minutes. If no goal is scored, the game is decided by a shootout.

The general managers also recommended the addition of a limited video-replay challenge, which would be issued by a coach, for scoring plays involving the potential presence of goaltender interference, and to remove delay-of-game penalties assessed for a player shooting the puck from the defensive zone directly out of play.

Any potential changes to the rules need to be reviewed and approved by the NHL-NHLPA Competition Committee, comprised of representatives from the League, the NHL Players' Association, and the Board of Governors. The Competition Committee and the BOG each traditionally meet in June.

The managers want to see 3-on-3 overtime instituted in an attempt to decrease the number of overtime games that reach the shootout.

"The consensus in the room, overwhelmingly, is we're not getting rid of the shootout. It was, how do you reduce the number of games that go to the shootout, keep the shootout special?" NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said.

The format of the new-look overtime is undetermined with two being considered.

One option would have overtime start 3-on-3 and continue for five minutes, unless a goal is scored, before going to the shootout.

The other would mimic the model instituted by the American Hockey League this season, with 4-on-4 play for the first three minutes of a seven-minute overtime, followed by 3-on-3 play after the first whistle past the three-minute mark.

"We're going to look at both variables and figure out which one, collectively with the Competition Committee, we think makes the most sense. And then, ultimately, it's subject to Board of Governor approval," Commissioner Bettman said.

Though the general managers remain divided on what format will be the best to adopt for the new-look overtime, they are united in their call for a change to the current system.

"I think in the American League it's gone great," said Joe Sakic, executive vice president and GM of the Colorado Avalanche. "It's very exciting and I think it will add even more excitement to the game, so it's a good thing. We'll see where it goes, but I know the fans have great love of shootouts. But if you can make it even more exciting by adding a 3-on-3, everybody benefits."

Of the 922 games played in the AHL through Monday, 224 were extended to overtime. Of those 224 games, 171 were decided in overtime, a 76.3 percent rate; last season, 35.3 percent of the overtime games in the AHL were decided before the shootout. Of the 171 goals scored in overtime this season, 73 of them were scored during the time allotted for 3-on-3 play.

Also through Tuesday, the AHL had 18.6 percent of its games decided in overtime, up from 8.5 percent last season. It had 5.6 percent of its games decided in a shootout, down from 15.6 percent last season.

In the NHL this season, 257 games have reached overtime; 110 have been decided by 4-on-4 play, 147 in the shootout. Last season, 307 games extended past regulation with 128 decided in overtime and 179 in the shootout.

The general managers were hoping that minor tweaks instituted last season, including the dry scrape before the start of overtime and the adoption of the long-change rule, would add to the scoring in 4-on-4 play. As the numbers show, that has not happened, so other alternatives have been discussed informally among the GMs throughout the season.

Detroit general manager Ken Holland said another example of overtime was the model used in the Swedish Hockey League, the top professional league in Sweden. That league switched its five-minute overtime format from 4-on-4 to 3-on-3 in December because not enough goals were being scored 4-on-4. Holland said the amount of games decided in overtime went from approximately 35 percent to approximately 75 percent after the change was made.

"I'm good with both," Holland said. "I think in both cases what we're trying to accomplish is, take where 40 percent of our games are decided in overtime and 60 percent in shootouts, ideally we'd like to switch those numbers. We still want shootouts; we think fans like shootouts. But we're trying to get more games decided playing hockey in overtime. I think whether you do five minutes of 3-on-3 or whether you do the AHL format, the statistics obviously tried in the Swedish league and tried in the American Hockey League show that it works."

Video challenge considered for goalie interference

Tuesday, 03.17.2015 / 3:58 PM / [News](#)

By [Shawn Roarke](#) - Director, Editorial

BOCA RATON, Fla. -- The recommendation to adopt 3-on-3 play in regular-season overtime next season dominated the news Tuesday at the meeting of NHL general managers here, but the suggestion that a limited video-replay challenge be instituted for next season could be as important.

The replay challenge, as proposed, would be used to rule on goals that involve the question of goaltender interference, or on delay-of-game penalties for players in the defensive zone shooting the puck directly over the glass and out of play.

"What we're going to do, which is different, is we're going to create access for the officials on the ice to actually see video in consultation with the Situation Room in Toronto and they're going to look at it and they're going to see if, with the benefit of review, after a coach's challenge, whether or not there was a better call to make," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said.

The NHL-NHLPA Competition Committee and the Board of Governors will have to approve each of the recommendations before they can be enacted. Each group traditionally meets in June.

The mechanics of the coach's challenge are in the discussion stage but a general blueprint has been agreed upon by the general managers.

For goaltender interference, the challenged play will be reviewed by on-ice officials, with the aid of a tablet or other device, to determine if the call should stand or be changed because of the presence of clear-cut interference with the goaltender. The on-ice officials will be able to discuss the play with the Hockey Operations Department in the NHL Situation Room in Toronto, but the call will remain a judgment call by the on-ice officials. Puck-out-of-play reviews will be conducted solely by the Situation Room, which is the process used for standard reviews.

A team must possess its timeout in order to be able to make a challenge, according to the recommendation being made. A challenge which does not result in the reversal of the call on the ice will cost the challenging team its timeout and the ability to challenge for the remainder the game. During overtime, on-ice officials will make the call but review can be initiated by the Situation Room without a coach's challenge.

The concept of expanded video replay has been broached several times at these meetings, but the impetus to make such a sweeping change to what the managers view as a highly successful video-replay system had been lacking.

"It's about time," said Florida Panthers general manager Dale Tallon, who first championed the idea of a coach's challenge. "I got voted down 28-2 four years ago and today it was 29-1 in favor."

The thorny issues of goaltender interference and pucks out of play resulting in a delay-of-game penalty moved the needle.

"We want to make sure goalie interference is addressed, and the way to do that is to address it through a coach's challenge," St. Louis Blues general manager Doug Armstrong said.

In the case of goaltender interference, the judgment nature of the call makes a video review in Toronto problematic. The on-ice officials might see something completely different than members of the Hockey Operations Department monitoring the game in the Situation Room.

"We would show [goalie interference] video in this room and 17 managers would think it was goaltender interference and 13 would say it wasn't and the level of conclusiveness if you were going to create a standard would have been so narrow that there would be one or two instances that you could review," Commissioner Bettman said. "Now having said that, we've had 140 instances involving goaltender interference this season and maybe -- maybe -- there are a dozen that were controversial. So the officials have a pretty good record of that. And of that dozen, maybe four or five should've been reversed. There were probably two or three in last year's [Stanley Cup] Playoffs that got a lot of attention."

Lindback's 44 saves help Sabres defeat Bruins

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 1:03 AM

Matt Kalman - NHL.com Correspondent

BOSTON -- Buffalo Sabres goaltender Anders Lindback started each game of a back-to-back because coach Ted Nolan said Lindback had been hot.

Lindback didn't cool off against the Boston Bruins on Tuesday.

One night after he lost in a shootout to the Washington Capitals, Lindback made a career-high 44 saves on 45 shots and stopped three Bruins in the shootout for a 2-1 win at TD Garden.

The win was Lindback's first for the Sabres. He was traded by the Dallas Stars to Buffalo on Feb. 11 for a third-round pick in the 2016 NHL Draft. In seven games for Buffalo, which is 29th in the NHL in goals allowed per game, Lindback has a .934 save percentage and 2.41 goals-against average.

"It feels good obviously," Lindback said. "I think we as a team deserve it. We have been working so hard, and where we are it's a tough situation to be in for everyone that is here. I've got to say that I have been impressed with everybody to just keep battling and keep buying in on a day like this, so it feels good."

Buffalo forward Tyler Ennis scored the only goal of the shootout, and the Sabres (20-43-7) got their first win in five games this season against the Bruins (36-23-11). Boston had 95 shot attempts to 47 for Buffalo.

"We were talking about it in-between periods. It was almost like the 'Thrilla in Manila.' We just rope-a-doped them," Nolan said. "I think they got tired going in our offensive zone for the whole period, but they almost seemed like they were in there for 19 minutes, and Lindback played great. I thought we were in pretty good position defensively for a vast majority of the game. We have to be, and to luck it out at the end was good for this group."

Boston leads the Ottawa Senators by four points for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference. Considering the circumstances of the playoff race, the Bruins felt they let the 30th-place Sabres off the hook.

"I thought we had a lot of chances today to score more goals and win the game," Bruins forward Loui Eriksson said. "But, yeah, we need to find ways to score those goals too. We create a lot of chances, but when we get that chance we have to really focus to put it in too. That cost us the game. I thought we were the much better team today, and we just need to get better on that. We know we have a tough road trip coming up here."

Bruins backup goaltender Niklas Svedberg made 23 saves. Although Tuukka Rask was scheduled to get a night off, it was still a surprise he was scratched because of what the Bruins called general soreness. Rask was replaced by Jeremy Smith, who was an emergency call-up from the Providence Bruins of the American Hockey League.

Boston coach Claude Julien shed little light on Rask's absence after the game.

"I'm not going to comment on that. I don't know," Julien said.

Eriksson gave Boston a 1-0 lead at 9:55 of the first period when he retrieved a loose puck near the right post and flipped it past Lindback. Center Carl Soderberg won a faceoff back to defenseman Adam McQuaid, whose shot was blocked, hit the end wall and then the side of the net before landing on Eriksson's stick.

The Bruins outshot the Sabres 14-3 in the first.

Boston outshot Buffalo 12-7 in the second period but wasn't able to extend its lead. The Sabres missed two chances to tie the game early in the second when Nicolas Deslauriers and Matt Moulson each hit the post less than a minute apart.

But the Sabres had a power play that carried over to the third period and they scored.

Ristolainen beat Svedberg with a wrist shot from the blue line that deflected twice and entered the net at 1:23 to tie the game 1-1.

The Bruins start a three-game road trip Thursday against the Senators, Boston's closest competitor for the second wild card.

"Well, we know what's at stake," Julien said. "So it's up to us to bounce back here and win. That next game's going to be as important as it's ever been so far this year. And we know that, so we've got to pick up our socks here and not feel sorry for ourselves because we feel we got shortchanged here tonight and understand what's at stake."

The Sabres host the New Jersey Devils on Friday.

Tokarski (41 saves) helps Canadiens top Panthers

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 12:42 AM

Alain Poupart - NHL.com Correspondent

SUNRISE, Fla. -- Montreal Canadiens backup goalie Dustin Tokarski got his first victory in exactly two months, making 41 saves, including 21 in the third period, when the Canadiens defeated the Florida Panthers 3-2 at BB&T Center on Tuesday.

"He's a kid who likes to compete," Canadiens coach Michel Therrien said. "And the way that he played, Tokarski deserved the win tonight. He was just phenomenal. He made key save after key save, especially in the third period."

Tokarski had lost four decisions (0-2-2) since a 6-4 victory against the New York Islanders on Jan. 17. He got his first start in six games Tuesday because the Canadiens (44-19-7) played Monday against the Tampa Bay Lightning, with Carey Price in goal.

"It's my job to give the team a chance to win, whether it's 15 shots or 50 shots," Tokarski said. "The guys rallied hard. The only thing that matters is the two points."

All the scoring took place in the second period, with Montreal defenseman P.K. Subban breaking a 2-2 tie at 15:26 when he took a pass from Brandon Prust inside the top of the right circle and beat goalie Dan Ellis with a low wrist shot to the stick side.

The Panthers had the first 15 shots on goal in the third period and a 21-4 advantage in the period but could not solve Tokarski.

"It seemed like we threw everything at them," said forward Brandon Pirri, who scored the second Florida goal, his 13th in 18 games. "You have to give [Tokarski] credit; he made some saves. We can't leave it until the third [period]."

Jacob De La Rose had a goal and an assist, and Alexei Emelin scored for Montreal, which won for the third time in nine games (3-4-2). Prust had two assists.

The Canadiens regained possession of first place in the Atlantic Division with 95 points, two more than the Lightning, who defeated them 4-2 on Monday. Each team has played 71 games.

"We played [Monday], a really emotional game," Therrien said. "I could tell in the third period that the energy level was pretty low. And when the energy is not quite there, the execution is not there. But [the Panthers] played really well, they pressed really hard, they were tough to play against. But Tokarski was phenomenal."

Aleksander Barkov scored for the Panthers (31-25-14), who have lost consecutive games since matching their season high three-game winning streak.

Ellis, making his sixth consecutive start for the Panthers with Roberto Luongo and Al Montoya injured, made 22 saves.

Luongo took part in the morning skate Tuesday for the first time since sustaining a shoulder injury in a 3-2 loss against the Toronto Maple Leafs March 3.

The Panthers fell seven points behind the Boston Bruins, who lost 2-1 in a shootout to the Buffalo Sabres, for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference. The Panthers fell three points behind the Ottawa Senators, 2-1 overtime winners against the Carolina Hurricanes.

"We're losing opportunities to get points, but you can't worry about that," Ellis said. "You have to move on to the next one and get ready for [the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday] because things can change in a matter of weeks. People can go on slumps or they can go on streaks. You just have to hope that we hit that streak and get some help from other places."

Montreal won for the second time in three games against Florida this season, with the road team winning each game. The Panthers and Canadiens play each other two more times, March 28 at Montreal and April 5 at Florida.

The Canadiens have won five of their past six games at BB&T Center.

Montreal received offense from its third and fourth lines.

"Those guys were great," Therrien said. "We need contributions from different players. I thought Brandon Prust made some quality plays to get two goals from it. I thought De La Rose was really good. He was really dependable on the ice. Lars Eller competed really hard. It's nice to see some contributions from different players."

Barkov opened the scoring at 4:20 of the second period. After Jonathan Huberdeau's pass across the front of the net was deflected, Barkov lifted the stick of defenseman Jeff Petry before spinning around and putting a shot between the legs of Tokarski.

Emelin, who returned Monday after missing 12 games with an upper-body injury, tied the score 1:24 later with a wrist shot from the point through traffic.

De La Rose gave the Canadiens the lead at 8:23 of the second period with their sixth shorthanded goal of the season. Prust chased down a clear from the defensive zone and came in alone with De La Rose, who one-timed a pass across the ice into an open net.

"I don't know where their [defense] was there; 2-on-0 on a PK is pretty rare," De La Rose said.

Pirri tied it 2-2 at 13:25 when his wrist shot from inside the right circle bounced in off the far post.

The Panthers took 24 more shots on goal, including three in the final 6:35 of the second period, without getting a puck past Tokarski.

"We wanted to get a win for him big time," Prust said. "We haven't played that great in front of him the last few starts he's had. We wanted to make sure we played good in front of him, and we did for the most part. He held the fort when he needed to."

Jets defeat Sharks, move back into wild card

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 2:08 AM

Patrick Williams - NHL.com Correspondent

WINNIPEG -- Before playing the Winnipeg Jets on Tuesday, the San Jose Sharks emphasized the need for a strong start to their seven-game road trip.

However, by 13:01 of the first period at MTS Centre, the Sharks trailed 3-0 and starting goaltender Antti Niemi was on the bench in an eventual 5-2 loss.

"The start was not what we needed in a building that just seems to build with energy," San Jose coach Todd McLellan said.

The win began a three-game homestand for the Jets (35-23-12) and moved them one point ahead of the Calgary Flames for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Western Conference.

San Jose (34-28-8) is six points behind Winnipeg, with nine of the Sharks' final 12 games against teams below the playoff line.

"It's a little setback, but it's far from over," Sharks defenseman Marc-Edouard Vlasic said.

Adam Lowry's eighth goal gave Winnipeg a 1-0 lead before power-play goals by Mark Scheifele and Andrew Ladd.

Winnipeg forward Blake Wheeler had two goals and an assist, and linemates Scheifele and Drew Stafford each had two assists.

"[Scheifele and Stafford] are buzzing right now," Wheeler said. "When [Scheifele] is skating like he is right now, he's great to play with. [Stafford] is just so strong on the puck. He makes such smart, simple plays; I think he makes a good complement for the two of us."

Jets goaltender Ondrej Pavelec started for the second consecutive game, the first time since Nov. 20-23, and made 38 saves.

"We got some really good goaltending," Jets coach Paul Maurice said. "He was just aggressive trying to find pucks. He was fighting."

Niemi made five saves on eight shots before he was pulled with 6:59 remaining in the first period. Alex Stalock finished the game and made 12 saves. Joe Pavelski scored twice for the Sharks.

Lowry scored 1:10 into the game when he muscled past San Jose defenseman Brent Burns in the left corner and banked a shot off the back of Niemi's right leg from behind the goal line.

San Jose defenseman Justin Braun's slashing penalty helped create Winnipeg's second goal. Scheifele took Toby Enstrom's cross-ice pass to the left circle and beat Niemi over the left shoulder at 9:39.

The Jets took a 3-0 lead 3:22 after Scheifele's goal. With Sharks forward Melker Karlsson off for high-sticking, Ladd tipped a point shot by defenseman Jacob Trouba past Niemi at 13:01 for his 24th goal.

Pavelski's goal off a long rebound from Pavelec 1:06 into the second period made it 3-1. Pavelski, who had one goal in his previous 12 games, made it 5-2 with 2:25 left in the third.

"Every game right now, if you don't win it, it's a setback, bottom line," Pavelski said. "Nobody in here can hang their heads right now. We've got to get ready for the next game."

Winnipeg led 4-1 7:05 into the second period when Wheeler jabbed a loose puck between Stalock's pads for his 21st goal. Wheeler made it 5-1 with 10:48 left in the game when he batted a puck past Stalock.

Stafford, since coming to the Jets in a trade with the Buffalo Sabres on Feb. 11, has five goals and five assists in 14 games. Scheifele has four goals and six assists in his past 10 games, and Wheeler has a five-game point streak (five goals, four assists).

"I'm just trying to ride this wave as much as I can playing with guys like [Wheeler] and Scheifele," said Stafford, who is a right-handed shooter playing on his off wing. "I feel as though we have some great chemistry."

Scheifele said, "I think we're just getting more comfortable playing with each other. I think we all just want to go out and make plays. We all want to play a hard game, we want to be fast, we want to take an opportunity when we get it."

Jets center Bryan Little missed his fifth consecutive game because of an upper-body injury. His absence placed more burden on Scheifele, who is in his second full NHL season, and Lowry, a 21-year-old rookie.

Scheifele and Lowry took 35 of the 58 faceoffs; Lowry had a Jets-high seven hits.

"I think every line is clicking," Scheifele said. "Every line is getting its chances, every line is creating offensive pressure, and that's what we want. We want a well-balanced attack."

Pavelec has bounced back after rookie goaltender Michael Hutchinson started eight consecutive games. Pavelec defeated the Tampa Bay Lightning 2-1 on Saturday.

"I don't care what happened before," Pavelec said. "Now is now. My job is to be ready whenever I have a chance to play, so that's my job."

San Jose plays at the Toronto Maple Leafs on Thursday. McLellan reiterated his message from the morning skate that the Sharks will need to bounce back quickly from adversity.

"We're moving on," McLellan said. "We've got to go to Toronto. By the time we [get on] the plane, we should be recharging our batteries and getting ready to play in Toronto."

"Now we get on the plane, we eat, we review the game, we have a good skate [Wednesday], we practice and away we go. There is nothing else we can do. We could sit in the corner and cry if we wanted to, but that's not going to help us one bit."

"If something negative happens, we've got to park it and move on. We have no other options."

The Jets host the St. Louis Blues on Thursday. With 82 points, Winnipeg is trying to catch the Minnesota Wild (85) for the first wild card while attempting to fend off Calgary (81), the Los Angeles Kings (81) and San Jose (76).

Winnipeg could have defenseman Dustin Byfuglien back against St. Louis. He participated in the morning skate Tuesday but missed his fifth game because of an upper-body injury.

"[Byfuglien] was ready to go, and he got through the morning skate," Maurice said. "But sometimes you have to pull a guy back a little bit, and I just didn't think it was the right time for him to come in."

"We want to be sure with [Byfuglien] that when he comes back in, he doesn't go back out again."

Dumba's goal pushes Wild past Predators

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 12:42 AM

Robby Stanley - NHL.com Correspondent

NASHVILLE -- Matt Dumba scored 22 into overtime to give the Minnesota Wild a 3-2 win against the Nashville Predators at Bridgestone Arena on Tuesday.

Wild defenseman Ryan Suter fought off two Predators to spring the lead pass to forward Zach Parise, who drop passed to Dumba for the goal.

"Great individual effort," Wild coach Mike Yeo said. "I thought [Suter's] third period was outstanding. I thought that he was good all game. I thought that our leaders really stepped up in the third period. That was a great effort."

Dumba's goal was his seventh. He was paired with Jonas Brodin, played 21:08, and led the Wild with three shots on goal.

"The whole game was so much fun to play in," Dumba said. "We stayed resilient like we have been, just working. It's fun in these games, man. When we're all working towards a common goal and we get rewarded for that by just sticking to it."

Minnesota (39-24-7) is 20-14-2 on the road and has won two road games against Nashville this season. The Wild have won eight straight on the road.

"It's huge, especially against a team like this that's ahead of us in the standings," Wild forward Charlie Coyle said. "It definitely helps us confidence-wise, especially on the road too. It gives us so much confidence going forward. We can still learn from these games which is huge, and we get two points too."

Nashville (43-21-8) is 26-7-2 at home but has lost its past five.

Coyle tied the game 2-2 with 6:41 remaining in the third period on a slap shot from the right faceoff circle that got past Nashville goaltender Pekka Rinne. Chris Stewart passed the puck to Coyle, who was trailing the play, and Coyle scored his second goal of the game, 10th of the season.

"That was awesome," Dumba said. "We had three guys crashing the net there, hit Charlie late and he just snipes it short side. That's what you ask of him and he did it. It was awesome."

Minnesota had 11 shots on goal in the third period after having nine shots in the first two.

"We never feel we're out," Coyle said. "We always feel like we're in the game, especially a one-goal game we never feel like that. It's nice to get that one right before overtime and kind of get a little momentum heading into it. It definitely felt good."

Coyle gave Minnesota a 1-0 lead with 57.4 seconds remaining in the first period. He drove to the net and tipped the rebound of a shot by forward Kyle Brodziak past Rinne for his ninth goal.

Nashville defenseman Roman Josi tied the game 1-1 at 13:41 of the second on a one-timer from the slot. Josi took the pass from rookie forward Filip Forsberg and shot it past Minnesota goaltender Devan Dubnyk for his 13th goal.

Josi scored again 45 seconds later to give the Predators a 2-1 lead on a wrist shot from the point that went through traffic and past Dubnyk. Josi took the pass from forward Viktor Stalberg and his shot got under Dubnyk's glove.

"I thought we had some good pressure in the second period and they didn't have much, maybe three shots, so we tried to get a lot of shots through," Josi said. "Filip made a great play on the first [goal], and Stalberg on the second. We got those two and we played well. We still have to be better in the third."

Nashville had 53 seconds of a two-man advantage in the second period but was unable to score.

"Probably have to point to the 5-on-3 as the turning point in the game," Yeo said. "I think if they made it 3-1 there, it makes it extremely difficult for us, but that kill was enormous. We felt pretty good going into the third still."

Dubnyk made his 28th consecutive start for the Wild after being traded from the Arizona Coyotes on Jan. 14.

"It's crazy, he's been awesome," Coyle said. "Coming up huge with a number of big saves each game, and he gives us a chance every game to win. He puts us in great position so it's nice to have a guy like that."

Forsberg's assist was his 55th point, which leads NHL rookies. It was his fifth point in his past 16 games.

Nashville forward James Neal missed his third consecutive game with an upper-body injury and is listed as day-to-day.

Steen, Elliott lead surging Blues past Flames

Wednesday, 03.18.2015 / 12:31 AM

Aaron Vickers - NHL.com Correspondent

CALGARY -- The St. Louis Blues' latest hot streak has carried them to the top of the Western Conference.

Alexander Steen scored twice and Brian Elliott made 25 saves to lift the Blues to a 4-0 victory against the Calgary Flames at Scotiabank Saddledome on Tuesday. Jori Lehtera and David Backes also scored for the Blues (45-20-5), who have won five of their past six games, including two straight and three of the past four via shutout, to jump into first place in the West. The Blues and Anaheim Ducks each have 95 points, but the Blues have played one fewer game.

One year ago, St. Louis limped into the Stanley Cup Playoffs having lost six straight games to close out the regular season, then lost in the conference quarterfinals to the Chicago Blackhawks in six games. They want to make sure there's no repeat

"[Coach Ken Hitchcock] talks a lot about 'I don't care if you win or lose, it's how you win or lose,' " said Elliott, who improved to 24-11-2. "If you play your game, the wins will take care of themselves eventually. We definitely want to be playing that St. Louis Blues hockey, grinding down low, really taking care of business in the offensive zone, and that's usually our best defense. We potted some goals tonight, so that's an example of how you kind of wear teams down."

The shutout was Elliott's 21st with the Blues, breaking a tie with Jaroslav Halak for the franchise record. The Blues haven't allowed a goal in 126 minutes, 16 seconds.

"It's pretty cool," Elliott said. "Looking back right now on my career ... I'm not here for that long and I never thought I'd be in St. Louis. It's pretty cool to be at the top there right now. It has a lot to do with how our team plays the past four years. Great attention to detail and guys sacrificing in front of me, blocking shots like you saw tonight."

The second straight regulation loss for the Flames (38-27-5), coupled with a win by the Winnipeg Jets, knocked Calgary from the third place in the Pacific Division to the outside looking in. They are one point behind the Jets for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the West. The Flames and Los Angeles Kings each have 81 points, but the Kings own third place in the division because they've played one fewer game.

"At the end, all you can do is win as many games as you can until the end," said Flames goaltender Jonas Hiller, who made 22 saves. "I think that has to be the goal, no matter if you look at the standings or not. We know if you want to have a chance to be in, we have to win our fair share. I don't think the answer is looking at the standings every day and worrying about it."

We have to come and be ready to play. I thought we played an OK game, but they were just better."

After a tight-checking first period that featured a combined 14 shots, including six in the final 11 minutes, Steen put the Blues on the board midway through the second.

After taking a pass from T.J. Oshie in the neutral zone, Steen weaved his way over the Calgary blue line before firing a shot from the top of the faceoff circle that went past the glove of Hiller at 11:32 to give St. Louis a 1-0 lead.

"I kind of made up my mind when I cut behind [Oshie]," Steen said. "I was going to let it go right after I cut behind him, use him as a little bit of a screen."

Elliott ensured that lead would make it to the third period thanks in part to some luck. On a scramble in the crease one shift after Steen's goal, TJ Brodie couldn't poke a loose puck in the slot by the downed Blues goalie and, with 5:39 remaining, Elliott stopped David Jones' initial slap shot and a trio of attempts from Mikael Backlund on the doorstep.

The Blues, now 28-2-2 when leading after 40 minutes, went up by two early in the third when Brodie's behind-the-net pass was picked off by Jaden Schwartz to start a tic-tac-toe play that featured Vladimir Tarasenko before Lehtera beat a surprised Hiller at 1:18.

Steen made it 3-0 at 9:38. Oshie tapped a faceoff win by Backes back to Steen, who stepped into a shot that beat Hiller to the stick side for his second of the night and 22nd of the season.

Steen had a shot to complete the hat trick with 7:35 remaining in regulation with Calgary on the power play and Hiller on the bench for the extra attacker, but he couldn't get his shot past Kris Russell, who leads the NHL with 241 blocked shots.

But with Hiller on the bench a second time, Backes found the back of the empty net from his own zone at 14:25 to complete the scoring.

Each goaltender made a handful of great saves, and each got a break when the opposition hit the post on a good chance.

Flyers defenseman Carlo Colaiacovo hit the crossbar from the point six minutes into the game, and Canucks forward Jannik Hansen did the same on a hard one-timer 4:40 into the second period.

Lack made his best save with his glove when he stopped Nick Cousins, who was making his NHL debut, alone in the low slot with six minutes left in the second period. Vancouver tied the game 30 seconds later.

"[I was] just trying to shoot it over his glove, but he made a pretty good save," Cousins said.

Mason made a great stop off Bo Horvat late in the second period and stopped Shawn Matthias two minutes into the third. His best save was a gloved robbery of Vrbata from in close 5:30 into the third; however, Burrows, who also missed six games through early March, put Vancouver ahead to stay just over a minute later.

"I needed to make the save there and unfortunately he made the shot through the five-hole," Mason said, adding it "kind of looked like" the shot hit a stick. "Regardless you have to make the save."

Flyers coach Craig Berube seemed to agree.

"Second goal I'm sure [Mason] would like it back but we find a way to lose the game rather than win," Berube said. "We out-chanced them."

Panthers get two goalies when contest ends in tie

Tuesday, 03.17.2015 / 10:06 PM / [News](#)

By [Alain Poupart](#) - **NHL.com Correspondent**

SUNRISE, Fla. -- The [Florida Panthers](#) will have two new backup practice goaltenders Wednesday after their "Goal of a Lifetime" competition ended in a tie.

[Bill Ruggiero](#) and Dustin Smith, who were chosen as finalists after 65 participants went through drills and shootouts Monday, were declared co-winners after each stopped three of four shootout attempts during the first intermission of the Panthers game against the [Montreal Canadiens](#) at BB&T Center on Tuesday.

Ruggiero and Smith will be on hand when the Panthers practice Wednesday at the arena.

"Gonna get a good night's sleep and do our best tomorrow," Ruggiero said during the second intermission. "Just being out there on the ice, it's a great feeling. Practices, you've had so many in your life, but to be out there at an NHL practice and that next step that they all have and that level of professional attitude, I'm definitely going to enjoy that."

Ruggiero and Smith faced two shootout attempts each from former Panthers players [Radek](#) [Dvorak](#) and [Marco Sturm](#).

"It was so much fun, being on the ice and being able to try out," Smith said. "Obviously exhausting. They put us through the wringer. Today, during the shootout, [there was] so much energy, huge crowd. It was over pretty quick, but a lot of fun and obviously a great experience came out of it."

Ruggiero and Smith were presented Panthers jerseys during a break in the second period, each with his name and number on it: 29 for Ruggiero, 58 for Smith.

Ruggiero, 34, is a former professional/semi-pro goaltender who played for the Johnstown Chiefs of the East Coast Hockey League (2001-02), the Tulsa Oilers of the Central Hockey League (2004-05, 2006-07), and the Flint Generals of the International Hockey League (2007-08). Ruggiero lives in Melbourne, Fla.

"I went to [Nashville] Predators camp out of major junior," Ruggiero said. "I was always shooting for the NHL. Obviously this isn't an NHL roster, but I'm going to get the experience and you never know what could come out of it. I might start playing again. I might inspire some kids to keep going. You never know what can happen."

Smith, 27, played for Middle Tennessee State University (2006-09) and has experience practicing with the Predators (2012-13). Smith lives in Nashville.

The Panthers received more than 1,500 applications for the contest, from 42 states and 15 countries, before inviting 65 to compete Monday at BB&T Center. The participants came from various locations, including 48 from Florida and five from Canada.

The contest was announced March 5, two nights after Panthers goalies Roberto Luongo and Al Montoya were injured in a 3-2 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs. Luongo was at the hospital when Montoya was injured in the first minute of the third period; Montoya stayed in the game for more than 10 minutes while the Panthers tried to get clearance from the NHL to allow goaltending coach Robb Tallas to play. Luongo made his way back to BB&T Center, replaced Montoya, and finished the game.

The competition Monday included two 90-minute sessions, run by Florida goaltending coach Robb Tallas, and former Panthers participated as shooters.

"[The best part was] getting to meet a lot of the alumni guys," Smith said. "Getting to hang out with Tomas Vokoun yesterday, and obviously getting shot on by these guys out here was such a great experience."

Road outside Rogers Arena renamed Pat Quinn Way

Tuesday, 03.17.2015 / 11:16 PM / [News](#)

By [Kevin Woodley](#) - **NHL.com Correspondent**

VANCOUVER -- The road fans take to watch the [Vancouver Canucks](#) play at Rogers Arena will now be known as [Pat Quinn Way](#).

The City of Vancouver renamed a section of the street adjacent to the arena as [Pat Quinn Way](#) in a ceremony before the Canucks played the [Philadelphia Flyers](#) on Tuesday.

It was a fitting honor, not only because many believe Quinn saved a floundering franchise when he arrived as team president and general manager in 1987, paving the way for Rogers Arena to be built and open in 1995.

It was fitting because the road runs in front of Gate 16, which was named after [Trevor Linden](#), who was Quinn's first draft pick for the Canucks in 1988 and is now the team's president of hockey operations.

It was also fitting because it came before a game against the Flyers, the team with which Quinn began his coaching career after 606 NHL games as a rugged defenseman with the [Toronto Maple Leafs](#), Canucks and [Atlanta Flames](#).

It was fitting because it came on St. Patrick's Day and the imposing 6-foot-3 Quinn was known to many simply as "The Big Irishman."

"I can't think of a better day to do this," Linden said.

It was also fitting because [Pat Quinn Way](#) will always be more than a road.

The [Pat Quinn way](#) was a style of building teams as a general manager, and running them as a coach. Perhaps more than that, the Quinn way was about how he dealt with people, whether it was a star player like [Pavel Bure](#), who traveled to Vancouver to be part of the pregame ceremony, or a fan he met in the airport.

"He treated everybody like his next-door neighbor," [Calgary Flames](#) president [Brian Burke](#), who started his under Quinn as the Canucks director of hockey operations in 1987, told NHL.com earlier.

The relationships Quinn built were evident as the celebration moved inside Rogers Arena for a 20-minute pregame ceremony at center ice that included friends and family from a life in hockey.

After Canucks players took warm-ups wearing green jerseys with "Quinn" and his No. 3 on the back and three-leaf clovers on the shoulders, former teammates and managers were led to center ice by a pipe band and joined Mark Donnelly in singing "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" while images of Quinn appeared on the video screens.

"He changed hockey in Vancouver," Linden said.

Quinn's impact reached further than that.

Joining Quinn's wife Sandra, daughters Valeria and Kalli, and granddaughter Kate were special guests from his career, each wearing a jersey from the team he represented with Quinn.

Teammates included original Canucks captain Orland Kurtenbach, Cliff Fletcher from the Atlanta Flames and Rick Lee, who played and coached with Quinn in Toronto.

Philadelphia was represented by executive Bob Clarke, who played for the Quinn-coached Flyers team that set an NHL record with a 35-game unbeaten streak in 1979-80. They were joined by Bob Nicholson, who ran Hockey Canada when Quinn coached his country to a gold medal at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, ending a 50-year drought.

Vancouver was represented by past captains Stan Smyl and Markus Naslund, as well as three key members of the 1994 team that Quinn coached to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final, where they lost to the New York Rangers: Linden, Bure and goalie Kirk McLean.

"He loved this city and he would be humbled by what is happening here tonight," daughter Kalli said during the street renaming ceremony before the game. "He would be humbled and he would say 'it wasn't me that did this, it was all of us that did this.'"

That was the Pat Quinn way.