

## CAPITALS DEFEAT MAPLE LEAFS, PREDATORS BEAT BLACKHAWKS

**WASHINGTON:** Toronto native Tom Wilson scored his first NHL playoff goal 5:15 into overtime as the Washington Capitals survived a scare to beat the Maple Leafs 3-2 on Thursday night in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series. The top-seeded Capitals came back from a two-goal deficit to take the early lead in the series and at least momentarily stop the panic about a slip-up. Justin Williams scored twice in regulation as Washington showed it could handle the adversity of falling behind. Braden Holtby was up to the

task in goal, stopping 35 of the 37 shots he faced. Toronto counterpart Frederik Andersen was arguably the best player on the ice with 41 saves before being beaten by Wilson with an absurd shot on the winner. Mitch Marner and Jake Gardiner scored in the first period for Toronto, back in the playoffs for the first time since 2013. Game 2 is Saturday night in Washington.

**PREDATORS 1, BLACKHAWKS 0**  
Pekka Rinne made 29 saves after

Viktor Arvidsson scored in the first period as Nashville beat Chicago in Game 1 of their series. Rinne's second career postseason shutout sent Nashville to just its second playoff win in Chicago in seven tries. The Predators did not have a 1-0 victory during the regular season. Corey Crawford had 19 saves for Chicago. Game 2 is Saturday night at the United Center.

**DUCKS 3, FLAMES 2**  
Jakob Silfverberg scored the tiebreaking power-play goal late in

the second period while captain Ryan Getzlaf had a goal and an assist to lead Anaheim in the series opener. Rickard Rakell scored the tying goal after Calgary made a horrendous line change in the second period while John Gibson made 30 saves for the Ducks. Sean Monahan and Sam Bennett scored and Brian Elliott stopped 38 shots for the wild-card Flames. Calgary is winless in Anaheim since 2006, when the Flames won a playoff game in a series won by the Ducks. — AP



**SUZUKA:** This is a Friday Oct 7, 2016 file photo of McLaren driver's Jenson Button, left, of Britain and Fernando Alonso of Spain as they pose for a photo with their team in front of their pit lane garage ahead of the first practice session for the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix at the Suzuka International Circuit. — AP

## POINT-SEEKING BUTTON REPLACES ALONSO AT MONACO GRAND PRIX

**SAKHIR:** Veteran British driver Jenson Button will step in for Fernando Alonso at the Monaco Grand Prix next month. Although the 37-year-old Button retired at the end of last season, he is taking Alonso's seat for this single race because McLaren has allowed the Spaniard to make his IndyCar debut at the Indianapolis 500 on May 28. Both races are on the same day.

"I'm thrilled to be making a one-off return to Formula 1 racing, and I couldn't think of a better place to make that return," Button said in a team statement yesterday. "I've won the race before, in 2009, and it's one of my all-time favorite racetracks. It's a tricky street circuit on which a good driver can really make a difference and, although the McLaren-Honda MCL32 hasn't begun the season well, I think it may be more suited to Monaco than to the faster circuits."

Button is oozing confidence he will be fit enough despite the six-month gap from his last F1 race. "I'm supremely fit, having done a lot of triathlon training recently, so I have no worries on that score," he said. "I'll drive the MCL32 around Monaco in the McLaren simulator beforehand, and I reckon I'll be ready." Alonso retakes his seat for the race after Monaco - the Canadian GP on June 11 - and for the remainder of the season.

McLaren has yet to score a point after two races - Australia and China - following a frustrating campaign last year where the team struggled to adapt to the Honda engines. "I realize we won't have a realistic chance of repeating my 2009 victory, but I think we'll have an opportunity to score world championship points," said Button, who will race alongside teammate Stoffel Vandoorne.

"I was truly delighted when Jenson accepted our suggestion

that he race at Monaco," McLaren's racing director Eric Boullier said. "Jenson is a class act. He's a superb driver, fast, smooth and precise, and he won't have lost any of his competitive edge over the past few months. He'll do a great job for us, I'm sure of that."

### 'GREAT FOR THE SPORT'

Button's farewell race at last season's Abu Dhabi GP ended badly when he had to retire with a suspension problem. Although Button, who is still contracted to McLaren, also has an option to drive for the team in 2018, he said at the time that he did not expect to come back. Button was widely expected to take Alonso's seat at Monaco. Other drivers were already saying how excited they were by his potential return, even before yesterday's announcement.

"I think it would be great for the sport to have Jenson back in," said three-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton, who raced alongside Button at McLaren before joining Mercedes in 2012. "I like Jenson, I still think he is one of the best drivers ... his caliber is still higher than any other driver who could take that spot, for sure."

The 35-year-old Alonso's motivation is part of a wider ambition that also includes the Le Mans 24 Hours endurance race. McLaren is back in the Indianapolis 500 for the first time in 38 years with Alonso's entry, a Dallara DW12 chassis run by Andretti Autosport. Team owner Michael Andretti is a former IndyCar champion who raced in Formula One for McLaren in 1993. Alonso flies to Alabama next week to visit his IndyCar team members and then have a seat fitting done. After the Russian GP on April 30, his schedule will become even more hectic. — AP

## ARENA THINKS US COULD WIN 2026 WORLD CUP

**NEW YORK:** Bruce Arena looks into the future, thinks about the possibility of the US hosting the World Cup for the second time and believes the Americans could win the title. "I think in 2026 we're going to be fully emerged into the game and a big player," the US coach said Thursday. "So I think 2026 will be the time where we're going to start talking about winning a World Cup. It wasn't going to be in 1994. It wasn't going to be in 2010, but 2026 could be our time."

Continued strides in player development leading up to the event is what he figures could allow that to become reality. The US had not played in the World Cup since 1950 when FIFA voted in 1988 to have the US host the '94 tournament, which drew more than 3.58 million fans and became the most-attended World Cup ever. The Americans have qualified for seven straight World Cups, and Arena coached them to the 2002 quarterfinals, the best American finish since they reached the semifinals of the first World Cup in 1930.

### 'POLITICALLY CORRECT'

This week, the US Soccer Federation announced it intends to bid jointly to host the 2026 tournament with Mexico and Canada. Sixty matches would be in the US, with 10 each in the other countries. "Think about where we were in 1994, '98, 2000, and keep going, and just think about where we'll be with even nine more in our league, even nine more years of players developing all over the world, and then play in the World Cup in our country," Arena said. While the joint bid is considered the favorite, Arena said he wasn't assuming the US will host because "we're being politically correct in a time where you don't even need to be politically correct."

Arena coached the US from 1998-2006 and was rehired in November to replace Jurgen Klinsmann, fired following losses to Mexico and Costa Rica in the first two games of the final round of World Cup qualifying in North and Central America and the Caribbean. The US rebounded in March to rout Honduras 6-0 at home and draw 1-1 at Panama.

Next, the US hosts Trinidad and Tobago on June 8 and plays three days later at Mexico City. Mexico leads the hexagonal with 10 points, followed by Costa Rica (seven), Panama (five), the United States and Honduras (four each) and T&T (three). The top three nations qualify for next year's tournament in Russia, and the No. 4 finisher plays Asia's fifth-place team in a playoff for another berth. "We're far from out of the woods here," Arena said. "We have, again, I think very little margin for error, so there's a lot of urgency in these two games. ... Perhaps we're not in as much trouble as we were the last time but I don't feel good about sitting with four points after four games."

The team is tentatively scheduled to reconvene May 28 ahead of an exhibition in Sandy, Utah, followed by the qualifier against Trinidad at Commerce City, Colorado. The Utah venue is at about 4,500 feet altitude, Colorado at 5,200 feet and Azteca Stadium at 7,820. "Our game plan is already established in some ways in that we are going to go in, train at altitude," Arena said, adding: "I've had experience with this in the past, failed miserably" a reference to March training in Colorado Springs ahead of a 2-1 loss at Mexico City in 2005.

Arena doesn't expect strained relations between President Donald Trump's administration and Mexico to be a factor. "Mexico-US is such a big game I would think that that will take precedent over any kind of political issues," Arena said. "I don't think the Mexican fans are going to be pointing fingers at us because of the political climate." — AP