

Sports

Fluery stops 26 shots to lead Knights to 3-0 win over Capitals

Rookie forward Barzal powers Islanders past Jets

WASHINGTON: Marc-Andre Fluery stopped 26 shots to pick up his first shutout of the season and lead the Vegas Golden Knights to a 3-0 victory over the Washington Capitals on Saturday night at T-Mobile Arena. It was the eighth win in nine games (8-0-1) for the Golden Knights, who are tied with Tampa Bay for the most home wins in the NHL. (15). Alex Tuch, Oscar Lindberg and William Karlsson all scored first-period goals for Vegas. That was all Fluery needed en route to the 45th career shutout of his career. Braden Holtby had 25 saves for Washington, which fell out of first place in the Metropolitan Division.

LIGHTNING 3, WILD 0

Dan Girardi, Tyler Johnson and Nikita Kucherov scored in the final 2:42 to lift Tampa Bay. Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 22 saves for his fourth shutout of the season and eighth of his career. The NHL-best Lightning enter the three-day break for Christmas with nine wins in the past 10 games and seven consecutive victories on home ice. Alex Stalock, starting in net on consecutive nights, stopped 28 shots for the Wild.



Matthews had a goal in his first game back from concussion

DUCKS 4, PENGUINS 0

John Gibson made 29 saves for his 13th career shutout, leading Anaheim to victory over his hometown team. Ondrej Kase, Rickard Rakell, Andrew Cogliano and Cam Fowler staked the Ducks to a 4-0 lead through two periods. Anaheim finished a six-game road trip 3-2-1. Gibson improved to 2-3-0 versus the Penguins. Pittsburgh's Matt Murray gave up three goals on 13 shots before he was pulled for rookie Tristan Jarry, who stopped nine of 10 shots. The Penguins lost for the fifth time in seven games.

ISLANDERS 5, JETS 2

Mathew Barzal collected his first NHL hat trick as New York cruised past Winnipeg. Barzal (20 years, 211 days) scored twice in the first and once in the third to become the youngest Islanders player to record a hat trick since John Tavares did so at 20 years and 117 days on Jan. 15, 2011. Anders Lee and Anthony Beauvillier also scored for New York and Jaroslav Halak recorded 38 saves. Tucker Poolman and Adam Lowry scored for the Jets, who ended a four-game road trip with three straight losses (0-2-1). Steve Mason made 24 saves.

MAPLE LEAFS 3, RANGERS 2

Auston Matthews had a goal and an assist in his first game back from a concussion as Toronto defeated New York. William Nylander also had a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs. Ron Hainsey had a goal and Morgan Rielly had two assists for Toronto. Frederik Andersen stopped 30 shots to halt the Maple Leafs' four-game road losing streak. Jimmy Vesey and J.T. Miller had the Rangers' goals. Henrik Lundqvist made 34 saves for New York.

Breathless finish forecast for Sydney-Hobart race

SYDNEY: A close race could be in store for Australia's gruelling Sydney to Hobart bluewater classic, with unfavourable conditions near the finish set to work against the supermaxi favourites. There are 103 entries, including 28 from overseas, for the 73rd edition of the often brutal 628-nautical mile (1,163-kilometre) slog across the Tasman Sea, which leaves Sydney on December 26.

The weather forecast points to a fast race, ideal conditions for line honours favourite Comanche, one of four supermaxis in the hunt along with Wild Oats XI, BlackJack and InfoTrack. But the conditions could also see the frontrunners arrive in Hobart's notoriously breathless River Derwent at night.

"It doesn't look good for us in the river. We could spend a lot of time there," Comanche's navigator Stan Honey said. Ichi Ban's navigator Will Oxley quipped that "between 10pm and 10am is death in the Derwent".

The Bureau of Meteorology's state weather services chief Jane Golding said the race was likely to start in a moderate east or south-easterly breeze around 10 knots. "The winds will shift around to the north-east during the afternoon, to around 15 knots," she added.

The forecast, if it holds, means last year's record race time of 1 day 13hr 31min 20sec by Australian supermaxi Perpetual Loyal, now InfoTrack, was unlikely to be under threat. Wild Oats, an eight-time winner, is hoping to make it third time lucky after being forced to retire from the last two races.

It took a blow to its chances when the top of its 45-metre (147-foot) high carbon fibre mast was struck by lightning last week, destroying some of its instruments, but is expected to be ready. "The goal is to be first, to finish," said Wild Oats skipper Mark Richards.

Medium-sized boats, which expect to arrive at the Derwent in the morning, would be in "red hot" competition for the overall win, Oxley suggested. "It will come down to boat handling and minimising damage," he said. "Everyone talks about how much fun it is to go downwind, but in 25 to 30 knots on a TP52 (Ichi Ban), that's a lot of wind on the eastern side of Bass Strait.

BRUINS 3, RED WINGS 1

Patrice Bergeron scored twice as Boston won its fourth straight game. Brad Marchand scored one goal and set up Bergeron's winner 6:11 into the third, and Tuukka Rask made 30 saves for the Bruins. Bergeron scored an empty-net goal in the closing seconds for his 10th goal of the season. Frans Nielsen scored a short-handed goal and Jimmy Howard made 22 saves for the Red Wings, who haven't won at TD Garden since April 14, 2014.

OILERS 4, CANADIENS 1

Connor McDavid had a goal and an assist to lead Edmonton to its fourth straight victory. Juhar Khaira also had a goal and an assist for the Oilers. Ryan Strome and Milan Lucic also scored. Leon Draisaitl had three assists and Cam Talbot made 29 saves for Edmonton. Antti Niemi made 31 saves for the Canadiens, who had their two-game winning streak snapped. Andrew Shaw scored for Montreal.

DEVILS 4, BLACKHAWKS 1

Cory Schneider made 39 saves, and Brian Boyle sparked a three-goal first period as New Jersey won its fourth straight game. Schneider made 21 saves in the second period and withstood a flurry in the opening half of the period. He made five stops on Patrick Kane before allowing the Blackhawks wing's 300th career goal late in the second. The Devils scored three times in the first 13:22 to chase Chicago goaltender Corey Crawford for the second time this season. Kyle Palmieri scored a power-play goal and Pavel Zacha capped the three-goal outburst.

SHARKS 2, KINGS 0

Goalie Martin Jones stopped 28 shots for his 100th career victory while defeating his former team as San Jose topped Los Angeles. Jones improved to 8-3-2 in his career against the Kings, the team he broke in with and for which he played two seasons, including 2014 when the Kings won the Stanley Cup. Jones collected his third shutout of the season and 18th of his career. Marcus Sorensen scored his third goal in four games and Joe Pavelski scored for the Sharks.

STARS 4, PREDATORS 3 (SO)

Alexander Radulov and Tyler Seguin scored in the shootout, and Dallas killed off two penalties in overtime—including 31 seconds of a 5-on-3 — in defeating Nashville. Ben Bishop made 29 saves to help the Stars win back-to-back games and extend a four-game point streak. Bishop stopped Filip Forsberg and Kevin Fiala in the shootout before Seguin scored in the third round. Juuse Saaros made 25 saves for the Predators, who lost their third straight game.

BLUES 3, CANUCKS 1

Kyle Brodziak's goal with 1:30 left in the second



PITTSBURGH: Jakob Silfverberg #33 of the Anaheim Ducks skates with the puck against the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG PAINTS Arena on Saturday in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.— AFP

period stood up as the winner as St. Louis defeated Vancouver. Brodziak gave the Blues a 2-1 lead as he squeezed a shot from a sharp angle between Jacob Markstrom and the post while the crowd groaned. St. Louis ended a three game-losing streak, while the Canucks suffered their fourth straight loss. Patrik Berglund and Alex Steen (empty-netter) also scored for the Blues. Rookie Brock Boeser tallied for Vancouver.

BLUE JACKETS 2, FLYERS 1 (SO)

Pierre-Luc Dubois scored the only goal in the shootout on his first NHL attempt as Columbus defeated Philadelphia. Seth Jones scored in the opening period for the Blue Jackets, and Ivan Provorov answered with the tying goal in the second period for the Flyers. Sergei Bobrovsky made 30 stops for Columbus and Brian Elliott finished with 35 saves for Philadelphia. The Flyers' Sean Couturier nearly won the game with 17 seconds remaining in the third period, but his shot bounced off the goal post.

PANTHERS 1, SENATORS 0

James Reimer made 38 saves to lead Florida over Ottawa. The shutout was the 18th of Reimer's career and fourth against Ottawa. The victory gave the Panthers a three-game winning streak for the first time this season. Jonathan Huberdeau scored for Florida. Mike Condon,

playing in place of No. 1 goaltender Craig Anderson (illness), made 37 saves for the Senators.

HURRICANES 4, SABRES 2

Defenseman Justin Faulk scored twice to snap a two-month scoring drought and Teuvo Teravainen matched a career high with three assists as Carolina defeated Buffalo. The Hurricanes won for the fifth time in its last six games. Cam Ward also improved to 7-0-1 in his last nine appearances in net for Carolina. Jordan Staal and Sebastian Aho also scored for the Hurricanes. The Sabres got second-period goals from Nathan Beaulieu— his first of the season—and Zemgus Girgensons.

AVALANCHE 6, COYOTES 2

Matt Nieto had a goal and an assist, and Colorado scored four goals in less than four minutes following a series of nasty mid-ice fights in its victory over Arizona. Carl Soderberg began the flurry and J.T. Compher and Nail Yakupov followed by scoring on the same power play resulting from Coyotes center Zac Rinaldo's match penalty as the Avalanche needed only 3:46 to turn a scoreless game into a 4-0 lead. Soderberg finished with two goals and Alexander Kerfoot had a pair of assists. Semyon Varlamov turned aside 32 shots despite allowing two short-handed goals to Derek Stepan.— Reuters



File photo shows the start of 2016 Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

"So we will be working pretty hard to look after the boat to get through those conditions."

NEW OWNERS

All the supermaxis this year are Australian owned, after Sydney's Jim Cooney purchased the 100-foot Comanche from American owner Jim Clark less than two weeks ago. Local media speculated he paid more than Aus\$10 million (US\$7.7 million) for the yacht.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity—too good to pass up," said Cooney, who is relishing the upcoming battle despite only having handled Comanche several times before the start of the race.

"This year competition is fierce, with the strongest line-up of supermaxis ever seen on one race," he said. "Depending on conditions, any of the 100 footers could

take line honours, it threatens to be one of the best races in the history of the event."

InfoTrack is also in the hands of a different owner, Sydney software developer Christian Beck, a newcomer to ocean racing. "I've seen the start one hundred times but I've no idea what happens after that," he joked.

One more serious note, he said that "if the weather is very windy like it was last year I think we have a realistic chance of taking back-to-back line honours". Last year's overall handicap winner, the Volvo 70 Giacomo, has been renamed Wizard, and is now under the ownership of American brothers David and Peter Askew.

It is tipped to again be a challenger for handicap honours—the vessel that performs best according to size. Line honours go to the fastest boat.— AFP

Chess federation says Israel excluded from Saudi-hosted match

ATHENS: Israeli players have been denied visas to participate in a speed chess championship hosted by Saudi Arabia this week, a vice president of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) said yesterday.

Seven Israeli players had requested visas for the tournament on Dec. 26-30. It would have marked the first time Saudi Arabia had publicly hosted Israelis as the Gulf state does not recognize Israel and there are no formal ties between them.

Israel Gelfer, vice president of FIDE, whose Secretariat is based in Athens, told Reuters in an email that visas for the Israeli players "have not been issued and will not be issued". He said the tournament would go ahead as planned. It was not immediately clear if other delegations had been excluded but players from Qatar had suggested they may have been rejected. Saudi Arabia's Center for International Communication said in a statement that more than 180 players would participate but did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israel Chess Federation Spokesman Lior Aizenberg said efforts were still being made "by various parties" to ensure the Israeli players took part. "The event is not a world championship if they prevent chess players from several countries from taking part," Aizenberg told Reuters.

"Every chess player should have the right to participate in an event on the basis of professional criteria, regardless of their passports, their place of issue or the stamps they bear," Aizenberg said FIDE should ensure Israeli players could compete in international events and that the Israeli federation was considering all options, including legal action and holding an international competition in Israel for players excluded from the Saudi match. FIDE had said in November it was undertaking a "huge effort" to ensure all players were granted visas.—Reuters