

Sports

Eric Staal's hat trick leads Wild over Blues in lopsided 8-3 win

Jack Campbell made 41 saves to pick up his first career NHL win

MINNESOTA: Eric Staal collected three goals and five points, and Jason Zucker potted one goal and had four assists as the Minnesota Wild recorded their fifth straight win with an 8-3 thumping of the struggling St. Louis Blues on Tuesday night in Saint Paul, Minn. Mikael Granlund, the third member of Minnesota's top line, scored twice in a four-point game as the Wild tied a franchise record for most goals in a game. Goalie Devan Dubnyk made 22 saves in the victory. Mikko Koivu had a goal and an assist for the Wild, and Jared Spurgeon scored a goal. The Blues got a pair of goals from Vladimir Tarasenko and one from Alex Pietrangelo.

PREDATORS 6, JETS 5

Ryan Hartman's first goal in a Nashville uniform—with exactly one minute left in the third period—gave Nashville a comeback win over Winnipeg. Hartman emerged as the hero in his first game since being acquired in a trade with the Chicago Blackhawks. Roman Josi collected five assists for the Predators, and Craig Smith scored two goals. The Predators, who trailed 5-3 with less than 10 minutes remaining, recorded their fifth straight win and denied the Jets a chance to move into a tie with them for first place in the Central Division. The Jets lost for the first time in three games.



McAvoy scores winner in a two-point game

Meier, Logan Couture and Chris Tierney also scored goals for the Sharks. Connor McDavid and Jesse Puljujarvi potted goals for Edmonton, which saw its three-game winning streak end and was rebuffed in its chance to sweep its California road trip. The Oilers won one-goal decisions Saturday night in Los Angeles and Sunday night in Anaheim.

KINGS 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1

Jack Campbell made 41 saves to pick up his first career NHL win as visiting Los Angeles completed a back-to-back sweep of Vegas. Campbell, the 11th pick of the 2010 draft by the Dallas Stars, was making his first start in goal for the Kings this season and first in the NHL since 2013. He was called up from the AHL Ontario Reign last week when Los Angeles traded Darcy Kuemper to the Arizona Coyotes. Anze Kopitar had a goal and an assist, and Jeff Carter, Kyle Clifford and Tyler Toffoli also scored goals for the Kings. William Karlsson found the net for the Golden Knights.

SHARKS 5, OILERS 2

Joe Pavelski notched a goal and two assists in San Jose's four-goal second period as the Sharks bounced visiting Edmonton. Evander Kane, acquired Monday from the Buffalo Sabres, chipped in two assists in his first game for San Jose. Justin Braun, Timo



LAS VEGAS: Jon Merrill #15 of the Vegas Golden Knights skates with the puck against Alex Iafallo #19 of the Los Angeles Kings in the first period of their game at T-Mobile Arena on Tuesday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Kings won 4-1. — AFP

NHL results/standings

Boston 4, Carolina 3 (OT); New Jersey 3, Pittsburgh 2; Washington 3, Ottawa 2; Florida 3, Toronto 2 (OT); Minnesota 8, St. Louis 3; Nashville 6, Winnipeg 5; Dallas 2, Calgary 0; Los Angeles 4, Las Vegas 1; San Jose 5, Edmonton 2; Calgary 6, Vancouver 1; Las Vegas 5, Florida 2; Chicago 4, Minnesota 1; Winnipeg 4, St. Louis 0.

Eastern Conference						Western Conference							
Atlantic Division						Central Division							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Tampa Bay	43	17	3	227	170	89	Nashville	39	14	9	202	160	87
Toronto	39	20	7	218	185	85	Winnipeg	37	17	9	213	170	83
Boston	38	15	8	199	153	84	Minnesota	36	20	7	196	177	79
Florida	29	25	6	178	195	64	Dallas	36	23	4	186	164	76
Detroit	26	26	10	165	183	62	St. Louis	34	26	4	176	172	72
Montreal	23	29	10	157	194	56	Colorado	33	24	5	190	186	71
Ottawa	21	31	10	168	219	52	Chicago	27	28	8	178	179	62
Buffalo	19	33	11	151	206	49	Pacific Division						
							Las Vegas	41	17	5	218	173	87
							San Jose	34	21	9	187	178	77
							Los Angeles	35	24	5	184	158	75
							Anaheim	31	21	12	176	178	74
							Calgary	32	23	9	182	187	73
							Edmonton	27	32	4	179	209	58
							Vancouver	24	32	7	168	204	55
							Arizona	18	34	10	148	205	46
							Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)						

Cheika set to walk if Wallabies don't win World Cup

SYDNEY: Wallabies coach Michael Cheika says he will likely quit if he fails to lead Australia to victory at the World Cup in Japan next year. The two-time winners have been pitted with Wales, Georgia, Fiji and Uruguay in a Pool D pundits have called a dream draw, although Cheika has warned against complacency.

Australia lost the 2015 London final to the All Blacks and the 50-year-old said he has set himself a win-or-walk ultimatum in Japan, with making the decider again not enough to sway him to give it one more crack in 2023. "The way I see it is like this: we came second in the last one and you have got to improve," he told the Sydney Daily Telegraph yesterday. "So there is only winning the World Cup,

otherwise it is probably somebody else's opportunity to do it.

"What I would like to do in the interim is leave enough legacy in there so that that person has the best possible chance to do it as well." Cheika, who is out of contract at the end of 2019, admitted showing his cards so early was "probably not the normal answer". "People love to hedge their bets because they want their next contract," he said, adding that his motivation was to leave the Wallabies on a high. "So, in a World Cup, that's a good chance to leave and to leave behind the legacy that you've built in the interim. That's the target. You have to do better. And doing better is coming first." The Telegraph said Cheika was grooming assistant coach Stephen Larkham to take over, and he reiterated his belief that the former ACT Brumbies star had the tools to replace him.

"It is obviously not my decision ... but that's what I like, I like the idea of having that type of succession," he said. "Stephen has come on in leaps and bounds, even just in the time he's only been in this role (full-time) and understanding how to integrate and effect and understand, and listen. — AFP

Erasmus poised to take over as S Africa coach

CAPE TOWN: After a months-long wait, Rassie Erasmus is finally poised to take over as coach of South Africa today, and take on the task of guiding a team he once graced as a player to victory in next year's Rugby World Cup.

Erasmus returned home from coaching Irish provincial side Munster in November to become national Director of Rugby. That was a position that then Springbok coach Allister Coetzee felt was imposed on top of him, and he aimed bitter parting criticisms at SA Rugby's hierarchy when he was sacked on Feb. 2.

But Erasmus arguably arrives as an overdue replacement after a hapless two-year spell in which Coetzee's Springboks suffered a record 57-0 defeat at the hands of New Zealand, lost at home to Ireland for the first time and away to Italy and slumped to sixth in the world

rankings. With no other candidates in the frame, Erasmus's appointment is widely viewed as a formality. The new Springbok coaching team is due to be announced at 0930 GMT, with a news conference scheduled for 1100.

Erasmus faces a tough start with a game against Wales in Washington DC on June 2, followed by three home tests against England on the next three Saturdays. But the main focus will be on next year's World Cup in Japan, for which South Africa are currently considered among the dark horses rather than the favourites.

The 45-year-old Erasmus had success early on in his coaching career when he won the Currie Cup with the unfancied Free State Cheetahs and quickly built a reputation as an innovator. While in charge of Bloemfontein, he used mobile discotheque lights during matches to relay messages to his players from the coaching box, leading wags to call him 'DJ Rassie'.

He also served as technical advisor to the Springboks in the run-up to the 2007 Rugby World Cup in France, which South Africa won. Erasmus won 36 caps as a loose forward, debuting for South Africa against the British and Irish Lions in 1997 and captaining the side once, in a 32-6 loss to Australia in Brisbane in 1999. — Reuters

Bottas laps up early advantage over Hamilton

BARCELONA: Valtteri Bottas will take any advantage he can get as Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes team mate, even if it lasts little longer than the snow that covered the Circuit de Catalunya yesterday. With the day largely a write-off, the Finn looked set to end the first pre-season test having done much more mileage than the Briton who will line up in Australia on March 25 as favourite for a fifth Formula One title.

Bottas completed 94 laps on Tuesday and 58 on Monday for a total of 708km. Hamilton has done 25 laps in total, a mere 116km, and most were in damp and cold conditions. The test ends today and the teams have four more days at the circuit next week, when the weather should be better. "The miles, in these conditions, are less valuable than proper miles in proper conditions," Bottas, wrapped up warm on a chilly morning, told reporters.

"But I'll take it," added the Mercedes driver, who would have preferred to test in Bahrain than Barcelona.

the third period as New Jersey won at Pittsburgh. The goal was the right winger's ninth this season and came 5:01 into the third period with the teams deadlocked at 2. Noesen tipped the puck past Pittsburgh goalie Casey DeSmith (35 saves) — in for starter Matt Murray, who sustained a concussion in practice Monday.

BRUINS 4, HURRICANES 3 (OT)

Charlie McAvoy scored the winner in a two-point game, and Riley Nash and Tommy Wingels also had a goal and an assist apiece as Boston beat visiting Carolina in overtime. McAvoy ended overtime at the 1:08 mark when he raced down the ice during an odd-man rush and elected to shoot to the shelf after sustaining a broken foot on the weekend. Boston goalie Tuukka Rask regrouped from a spotty opening period and made 29 saves in the win that snapped the Bruins' two-game losing skid. — Reuters

"Definitely so far I've got a better understanding because of the mileage. "For sure Lewis will also get a good idea of the new car. He is quick to adapt anyway so I'm sure it will be fine for both of us."

FOCUSED BOTTAS

Bottas won three races last year after moving from Williams to Mercedes while Hamilton won nine and the title. The Finn suffered something of a slump after the August break and said he had spent plenty of time over the winter reviewing those races and others where he underperformed.

"I have definitely been focusing more on my weaknesses," he said. "But also you need to remember your strengths and how to use them." Hamilton, he said, also had weaknesses but he preferred to focus on himself rather than trying to get under the skin of his team mate.

"If I perform on the level I am aiming to at every single race, I hope that will do the job. I'm not going to start wasting my energy on any (mind) games," he added. Bottas said at the team's launch at Silverstone last week, when he was also the first to drive the new car, that he felt Hamilton was beatable over the course of a year. "He's definitely the toughest team mate I've ever had," he said. "But there's no driver who is unbeatable. I believe in myself also. "I feel I have better chances this year than last year." — Reuters



MONTMELLO: Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas drives at the Circuit de Catalunya on Tuesday in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona during the second day of the first week of tests for the Formula One Grand Prix season. — AFP