Buttons are bursting off jackets in Anahim Lake, so proud are folks of native son Carey Price.

Price on Tuesday joined four other B.C.-bred players on Team Canada ahead of February’s Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

Yet you’d never know Price was anything special when he returns to family and friends in the Ulkatcho Indian band during off-seasons, the band’s education director said.

“Carey is so laid back, you’d not ever know when he comes home he’s a star in the NHL,” said Marietta West. “He’s an everyday kind of guy, that’s how he is.”

West’s five-year-old daughter is typical of fans on the reserve.

The other day, while flicking through the channels, she saw a hockey game, with a team dressed in red, the predominant colour of the home jerseys of the Montreal Canadiens.

“‘Is that Carey?’ she asked,” West said. “She started cheering, ‘Go Carey, come on!’”

Price’s mom Lynda was chief of the Ulkatcho First Nation for a few terms and now studies law.

“Carey’s mom said to me a few days ago, ‘If Carey makes it ...’ and I said, ‘Don’t say if, say when he gets chosen.’”

B.C.-raised players make up one-fifth of Team Canada’s 25-man roster.

Duncan Keith is from Penticton, Shea Weber from Sicamous, Jamie Benn from Victoria.

And the Canucks’ Dan Hamhuis, who had been considered a long-shot, is from Smithers.
“At Christmas, Dan came home and was at my brother Tyler’s place for a card party and he hasn’t changed at all,” said Mitch Pederson, who grew up playing with Hamhuis and whose dad Don coached the two.

The Pedersons own a plumbing and heating store in Smithers, and Mitch said all day Tuesday people dropped in “to BS about it.”

“It means a lot, especially for a small town.”

Smithers’ old rink was built in 1943 as an aircraft hangar and has seen better days.

The town is building a second rink, the foundation of which is just being laid now.

“Dan was a real big part of the fundraising effort for a new rink,” said Mayor Taylor Bachrach. “The whole community is proud of what Dan has accomplished, just the way he approaches sports and life.”

Hamhuis gets ready for shutdown role

Jim Jamieson – The Province | January 8, 2014

Canucks defenceman’s left shot gets him onto the roster ahead of veterans Seabrook and Boyle

Much like his game that’s not easily noticed, Dan Hamhuis slipped quietly through the apparent barriers to his inclusion on Canada’s Olympic hockey team.

The Canucks defenceman was named on Tuesday as one of Team Canada’s eight defencemen to compete at the Sochi Olympics next month.

Hamhuis was invited to the summer orientation camp, just as he was in 2010 when he didn’t make the cut, but supplanted notable omissions Brent Seabrook, Dan Boyle, Marc Staal and Mark Giordano to gain a spot on the roster.

Hamhuis spent a sleepless night but woke up just before 8 on Tuesday morning to find a message from Team Canada management member Ken Holland on his cellphone, telling him to start packing for Sochi.

“I wasn’t sure,” said Hamhuis, who did a nice job most of the night on new Olympic teammate Sidney Crosby but had to watch from the bench as Crosby scored the shootout winner in a 5-4 Pittsburgh victory.
“I didn’t know what they were thinking. It was a lot of tough decisions for them to make. I thought they maybe would have called yesterday, so I was kind of waiting by the phone all day. It was a restless sleep last night and I was certainly excited to get the call this morning.”

As expected, Canucks netminder Roberto Luongo was also named to Team Canada as one of its three goaltenders. Luongo, who backstopped Canada to a gold medal in 2010 in Vancouver, is still out with an ankle injury but wasn’t allowed to discuss his physical health when meeting with reporters.

“It’s a great honour,” said Luongo. “It (2010) was a huge moment, not only for myself but all the rest of the guys on that team. You still look at replays and get the chills and goose bumps and that’s probably going to stay there for the rest of my days. Hopefully, we can make some more good memories.”

Hamhuis, 31, overcame a rough start to a season complicated by adjusting to a new coach’s system, but has been excellent the last two months and recently has been logging in the 30-minute range of ice time per game.

“I knew I didn’t have a strong start and was uncomfortable with my game, but it was sticking with it, working on my individual skills and figuring out the new systems,” said Hamhuis. “Each day it got better and I started to get my confidence back.”

His familiarity with the big internationalsized ice through his seven times representing Canada, and the fact he’s a left shot certainly helped him get selected. Head coach Mike Babcock wanted four left- and four right-shot D-men on the team, so with Drew Doughty, Alex Pietrangelo, P.K. Subban and Shea Weber in the mix, that put right-handers Seabrook and Boyle — both members of the 2010 team — in a deficit position.

“Looking at the players on that list, it’s pretty incredible the amount of talent on that team and the amount that was left off the team,” said Hamhuis. “I’m sure the managers agonized over the decisions.

“There were so many great defencemen vying for a spot on the team and it seemed like there was a lot of strength on that right side, especially. Hopefully, that works out well for me and I get a chance to contribute.”

But Hamhuis also brings high-end mobility and the ability to take on top players in a shutdown matchup, and those qualities clearly put him on the quick team that Canada GM Steve Yzerman selected.

Hamhuis said he wasn’t concerned about the external criticism after his early struggles.

“My game isn’t a game that makes a whole lot of noise in the headlines or the fans, but I’ve always felt that hockey people appreciate the game that I play — whether it’s coaches or a guy like Steve Yzerman, who’s picking an Olympic team,” he said.
Just where Hamhuis fits in with Canada’s star-studded roster remains to be seen, but it’s a safe bet he’ll be used on the penalty kill — he anchors the Canucks’ No. 1-ranked unit — and in a shutdown role. He also played a season with fellow British Columbian Weber — who’s also expected to play against the opposition’s top lines — so that’s an obvious pairing to explore.

“We played a full season together in Nashville and we had a really good year that year. We were really comfortable playing with each other. In 2009 we played together at the world championships in Switzerland, so that could be possible.”

Besides Hamhuis and Luongo, Henrik and Daniel Sedin and Alex Edler were named to Sweden’s roster on Tuesday, the Swedes obviously not concerned that Edler is recovering from a knee injury and will be suspended for the first two games of the tournament for slew footing Erik Staal at the world championships last spring. Ryan Kesler was named to Team USA last week, while Yannick Weber was named to the Swiss team on Monday. As well, prospect Ronalds Kenins will play for Latvia.

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**Crosby steals Canucks’ thunder**

Jason Botchford – The Province | January 8, 2014

**Pens captain scores with 55 seconds left to tie, nets shootout winner**

In Sidney Crosby’s first game in Vancouver since the golden goal, he sure came close to reliving it. Crosby scored again in Rogers Arena, and did it dramatically. Like he knows any other way.

This time it was in regulation. But there were just 55 seconds left, and it tied a game that featured two big-time comebacks. The first was from the Canucks. Down 2-0 at the midway point, they scored four unanswered to take a 4-2 lead with 1:11 left.

But then it was Crosby’s turn. The Penguins collectively gut-punched the Canucks with two goals in 16 seconds, which helped send the game to the shootout, where Pittsburgh just about never loses.

“It was fun until we blew the lead,” Canucks forward Zack Kassian said. “Then, we choked in the shootout. But that’s what the regular season is for, to learn from these things.”

The Canucks have done a lot of learning. Four times this season they’ve blown late leads when the opponent pulls the goalie.

“It should be fixable,” Canucks forward Ryan Kesler said. “We have to do something. Like work on it in practice. It’s inexcusable. We put our best defensive players out for a reason. To have a centre-ice draw and then give up a late one like that, it shouldn’t happen.”
Crosby’s goal fully resuscitated the Pens, who looked done when Kassian scored with 6:36 left to put the Canucks up 4-2. Of course, a team with Crosby is never done.

You’d think blowing a two-goal lead with 1:11 left would be the only thing that could make this week any worse for the Canucks.

But not when your best player is hampered by an injury, and this one is serious. Henrik Sedin played through a hand injury Tuesday, protecting his 674-game iron-man streak while shielding the injury by taking the night off from faceoffs. It left the Canucks taking on the Penguins without Alex Burrows, Alex Edler, Roberto Luongo and the full, healthy use of one of Henrik’s hands.

But with the way Eddie Lack, Kassian and Chris Higgins played — before Kris Letang and Crosby scored late — it appeared the Canucks weren’t going to need any of them.

Higgins scored on a breakaway midway through the third to put the Canucks up 3-2.

Kassian then knocked in what will be a contender for goal of the year. Kassian, playing with a broken nose, actually bounced the puck off the ice, then swatted it out of the air and into the net with his backhand. It was as ridiculous a goal as a Canuck has scored in years. And it should have been enough to win.

Lack’s work will drift more under-the-radar, especially after blowing the game. But he was as good as it gets after the Penguins went up two goals. He made a sprawling, desperate save on Letang in tight, which kept Pittsburgh from going up 3-0.

Then, in overtime, he stopped James Neal all alone to send it to a shootout.

With all their injuries, maybe it shouldn’t have been a surprise to see the Canucks trying to get a point or two by utilizing the 1-3-1 trap.

Sure it was booed in the second and the third as the Penguins held on to the puck in the offensive zone while the five Canucks skaters clung to the neutral zone. It wasn’t great for entertainment purposes at times, but it sure kept the Canucks in a game that looked like it had Pittsburgh blowout potential early.

The Penguins rode a dominating first period to that early two-goal lead, but goals from Jason Garrison in the second and Chris Tanev in the third tied things at two.

Garrison was set up by Crosby, of all people, who was trying to clear the puck from behind his net when he sliced it through the slot and on to Garrison’s blade.

The unusual Crosby gaffe made up for one by another Olympian. Dan Hamhuis, one of the surprises on Team Canada’s announced roster, couldn’t control a puck at his blue-line.
Brian Gibbons picked his pocket, leading to a breakaway goal that put the Pens up 1-0 just 13:15 into the game.

Evgeni Malkin scored the other Pittsburgh goal 5:25 into the second.

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**Vancouver loses a heartbreaker**

Tony Gallagher – The Province | January 8, 2014

Canucks get a point but can’t contain the Penguins — and there’s likely more pain to come

The Vancouver Canucks have lost enough games this season when they’ve played pretty well, so it’s only fair they got at least one point when they couldn’t seem to put one foot in front of another most of the night.

It was called a “miraculous comeback by the Penguins” on the TEAM 1040 AM, but who really staged the miracle? The Canucks getting a point from this one was just as astonishing as the Pens getting out of here with a win.

At one point in the second period the Canucks were down a couple of goals and in full trap mode in their own building, so far had they drifted from the game they were trying to play earlier in the season when they had enough energy to forecheck the way the system they employ calls for. They had nothing, so much so they convinced the Penguins they could mentally pack up and head to their next stop on the trip.

Amid reports that Canucks captain Henrik Sedin is seriously injured with some sort of hand or wrist ailment, given he isn’t taking faceoffs and he keeps taking his stick out of his left hand, the Canucks’ best players simply looked worn out before Ryan Kesler kind of got it going in the second period to kick start his line.

The Sedins insist they feel fine, but they were invisible in this one.

If you were forced to pick Vancouver’s three best forwards, you might name Tom Sestito and Zack Kassian in the first two periods, with Chris Higgins joining the group in the bizarre third period when goals seemed to fall from the sky like manna from heaven.

Playing their third game in four nights against high-level opposition, the Canucks once again got outstanding goaltending from Eddie Lack early to keep them in the game and then somehow managed to scrounge up some offence from where it rarely comes to take an improbable 4-2 lead.
Of course they then went for the jugular in the third period — their own, of course — staging the absolutely expected pratfall to blow the lead in the last two minutes, precipitated by Lack who looked decidedly weak on both goals, if you wish to be harsh.

“That third one hit me in the ass and it was a bit of bad luck there,” said Kesler. “But we have to figure out how to close these games out. That should never happen.”

The inevitable result ensured in the shootout, but as coach John Tortorella said afterwards: “I’m ecstatic we got a point.”

He should be because that was something that looked impossible earlier in the evening. And while the point was nice despite the fact it should have been two, unless something changes radically very quickly with this sorry lot they are well on their way to at least an eight-game losing streak and quite possibly a few more.

Before the game in discussing his scratches, Tortorella indicated he wasn’t thrilled with the play of Dale Weise on the weekend and said of David Booth, “I can’t find him.”

He could probably have said that about any number of his players early in this one when they came out of the gate looking entirely worn out. But they just somehow kept hanging around until good fortune could smile on them, beginning with a Sidney Crosby giveaway to Jason Garrison to plant the concept of offence into the Vancouver psyche.

From there the goals came from the likes of Chris Tanev, Higgins on a pass from Jannik Hansen and then from Kassian, who miraculously backhanded a bouncing puck up into the top right-hand corner to give him two points on the night and something to show on the scoresheet to go along with his six hits for what might have been his best game of the year.

Amazing what a guy can do when he’s given an opportunity in a top six position playing with Kesler, something Kassian has not been afforded many times this season.

Emotional Hammer nails Sochi gig

Iain MacIntyre – The Vancouver Sun | January 8, 2014

This just in!: Dan Hamhuis hasn’t made a lot of noise or headlines, but that’s about to change for the new Olympian from Smithers

Marty Hamhuis hasn’t slept the same since his son, Dan, returned to his home province 3 ½ years ago to play hockey for the Vancouver Canucks. “Since he became a Canuck, I have to get out of bed an hour earlier every day just to talk hockey with people,” Mr. Hamhuis laughed Tuesday. “Everybody is good about it. They’re happy to have Northern B. C. represented in the NHL.”
Imagine how they feel about having Dan Hamhuis represent Smithers and Northern B. C. on Team Canada at the Olympics.

As a regional sales rep for CocaCola, Marty Hamhuis knows a lot of people in a lot of small northern towns. Dan joked that between his dad and his sister, Erin, who works in the credit union in Smithers, the Hamhuises pretty much know everybody.

“I’ve been staying in the house all day because I don’t dare go out,” Marty said after Dan was chosen to play for Canada in Russia next month. “Judging by the texts I got, a lot of people in Smithers are elated. Out of all the players, Dan might have been one of the easiest guys to sweep under the carpet because he doesn’t get the press that a lot of other guys do.” For instance, Hamhuis gets only a sliver of the coverage devoted to Canuck goalie Roberto Luongo, who was named to his third Olympic team. Luongo is never out of the headlines, Hamhuis rarely in them. The defenceman plays a game as quiet as he is, which is why the 31-year-old has been “under the carpet” for most of his National Hockey League career. With the Nashville Predators, for whom he spent his first six NHL seasons, Hamhuis was blacked out by the giant shadows of Norris Trophy-calibre defencemates Shea Weber and Ryan Suter.

In Vancouver, where Hamhuis moved in 2010 as a free agent, he has been merely one part of a core group of good defencemen.

Even amid the laser-like glare on the Canucks in this city and province, a lot of people probably didn’t realize how good he was until No. 1 defenceman Alex Edler was injured five weeks ago and coach John Tortorella soon started playing Hamhuis 28 to 30 minutes a night.

“My game is not a game that makes a lot of noise with headlines for the media and fans,” Hamhuis, 31, said.

“But I’ve always felt that hockey people appreciate the game that I play. My dad has always told me that, too.”

Hamhuis speaks softly when he speaks at all and rarely displays emotion. But he came close to crying Tuesday when asked about the support he receives from his community and people in Northern B. C.

“When you think of all the people who have helped me along the way, starting with my parents especially,” he said, his voice catching. “My mom and dad have been huge supporters of my hockey career growing up. Great motherly support, and fatherly criticisms at the right time, too. So much support.

“I’m certainly proud to be from B. C. and represent our province. There’s a lot of great players who have represented Canada in the past from here. It’s about the whole country coming together and putting a good show on in Sochi.”
Although he has played for Canada at five world championships, Hamhuis thought his best chance to make an Olympic team passed in 2010 when, at age 27, he wasn’t selected for the Vancouver Games.

He turned his phone off when he went to bed Monday night, and learned he had made Team Canada from a voicemail left by Ken Holland, one of Canadian manager Steve Yzerman’s assistants. That recording, played on speakerphone by Hamhuis for his wife, Sarah, and their three girls, is now precious.

The media scrum Hamhuis faced at Rogers Arena, before Tuesday’s Canuck game against the Pittsburgh Penguins, was probably the largest of his career.

“And, this is the part of the excitement of the Olympic announcement I was not looking forward to,” he admitted.

Luongo, on the other hand, is accustomed to crowds and questions.

“It’s my third time and it’s just as special as the first two times,” Luongo, 34, told reporters about his Olympic invitation. “It’s a different challenge (than winning an Olympics at home) but it’s a fun one. Playing in Russia, with the history there, is something I know I’m excited about.”

Last spring, Luongo wasn’t even the starting goalie on the Canucks. Next month, he may start for Canada in Sochi. His path since 2010 has been tumultuous and rife with drama. But as a player, Luongo is back where he was.

In a reflective moment Saturday — as he was about to return from a groin injury, about to sprain an ankle against the Los Angeles Kings — Luongo said: “All the stuff I’ve been through, you go through so much you learn to deal with pretty much every situation. I just want to enjoy the game and play hard.

“I want to do it for myself — prove that I’m still a No. 1. That was my main goal. Other than that, I’ve got a lot of respect for every guy in this (Canuck) locker-room. We’ve been together for many years — those poor guys — so it would not have been fair to them to show up here and have a bad attitude or anything like that. Besides, I’m privileged to be playing in the NHL and you can’t take that for granted.”

Luongo got another chance to start in Vancouver because Cory Schneider was traded in June to the New Jersey Devils.

Hamhuis is getting his Olympic chance because Canada needed a left-shot defenceman who can skate and pass and play intelligently — and because Yzerman doesn’t care about headlines.

It took Luongo three months to prove he is still an elite player. It took Hamhuis most of his life.
Beast mode for five-ringed circus

Harrison Mooney – The Vancouver Sun | January 8, 2014

Harrison Mooney suggests Sochi events for Canucks omitted from Olympics

The Vancouver Canucks learned Tuesday they would be sending a grand total of seven players to Sochi’s Olympic hockey tournament. As expected, Roberto Luongo will be tending the crease, much like he did for the 2010 club, and Dan Hamhuis managed to infiltrate the bubble on which he’d been situated since the summer, earning an invitation thanks to his strong play to end 2013 and his left-handedness.

Team Sweden selected Henrik and Daniel Sedin, the former of whom will be wearing an ‘A’ for his country, perhaps in a bid to help their coach tell the two apart from the front, and Alex Edler. Last week, Ryan Kesler was invited to Team USA. And Yannick Weber has been invited to join the Swiss defence, which has as many holes as the nation’s cheese.

If you want to get technical, Canuck prospect Ronalds Kenins, who may or may not be two people, both of whom are named either Ronalds Kenin or Ronald Kenins, is also going to Sochi. He’ll be repping Team Latvia. So we’ll say eight Canucks are on their way to Russia for the biggest international hockey tournament since the birth of Blue Ivy Carter. But enough about them. What are the rest of the Canucks supposed to do while they’re away? Sure, they could go on a vacation or take some time to let their nagging injuries heal. Or they could find another way to Sochi — another sport. I mean, let’s be honest. These guys are natural athletes. It shouldn’t take much for them to take up and excel at some other Olympic event. Here are a few suggestions:

DAVID BOOTH: BIATHLON

A reminder, for those that forget this is a real sport: the biathlon is a mix of cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. It’s perfect for Booth. We already know he’s a pretty good marksman, although he might struggle with targets that aren’t alive. He certainly does during NHL games, which I think is why he seems so determined to hit the goalie most of the time. Stop aiming for the heart, David. Anyway, only weirdos do the biathlon, and I think we can all agree that Booth is that.

CHRIS TANEV: CURLING

It’s right up his alley, and not only because it’s a sport for the calm, cool, and collected, but because it’s the sport Tanev’s gentle shot was made for. This guy’s not going to blast one past anybody anyway. He just might be able to gently slide one to the button.

JANNIK HANSEN: SHORT-TRACK SPEED SKATING
Hansen would excel on the short track. He’s very fast, for one thing, so he’s already got that going for him. But more than that, this is a sport where the athletes spend most of their time with their hands tucked behind their back. That’s ideal for Hansen, who doesn’t really have hands anyway.

CHRIS HIGGINS: LUGE

Do you know what you need to be the biggest luger? Guts. Guts encased in a rock-solid midsection. I think we can all agree that Higgins has what it takes.

SEDIN TWINS: TWO-MAN LUGE

I know, I know. They’re already going to the Olympics as hockey players. But they aren’t busy every day. And who better to succeed in awkward sport of two-man luge than two guys that clearly mind spending time in proximity to one another? After sharing a womb, I bet they’ll find the tiny sled downright roomy. Or maybe it will remind them of their time in utero, meaning they find it...

wait for it ... womby.

JASON GARRISON: FREESTYLE SKIING — MOGULS

Much like the luge calls for incredible abdominal strength, the moguls call for insane calf muscles. Perhaps you didn’t know this, but Jason Garrison’s got freakish super calves. It looks like his calves swallowed tennis balls.

TOM SESTITO: SKELETON

The guy fights for a living, so he clearly has very little regard for his head. Why not play the sport where you shoot down a sheet of ice at speeds of 130 kilometres per hour, head first?

EDDIE LACK: X-COUNTRY SKIING — 50 km

What do Eddie Lack and the 50 km cross-country course have in common? Long legs. Heyo! (Disclosure: this entire column was an excuse to make that awful, awful joke.)

ZACK KASSIAN: FIGURE SKATING

Because of his grace, beauty, nobility and dignity on the ice, obviously.

Sid the Kid nets the Foldin’ Goal

Brad Ziemer – The Vancouver Sun | January 8, 2014
Another late collapse extends Vancouver’s losing skid to five games

On a day that was all about the Winter Olympics, the Vancouver Canucks delivered another medal-worthy collapse.

After coming back from two goals down to grab a 4-2 lead, the Canucks surrendered two goals in the final 1:11 of the third period and lost 5-4 in a shootout to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday at Rogers Arena.

It was just the latest late-game meltdown by a Canuck team that has now lost five straight.

The Canucks are looking like an especially fragile team when they try to close out games.

“I don’t know about fragile, but when you get scored on this many times in the last minute of the game — two tonight — it doesn’t feel good,” said Vancouver defenceman Kevin Bieksa. “It’s in the back of your mind. I’m not too worried. I think we’ll get out of it. But at the same time, these are points that we need.”

Two points looked to be in the bag for the Canucks when Chris Higgins and Zack Kassian scored 17 seconds apart 13 minutes into the third to give Vancouver a 4-2 lead.

But the Penguins had other ideas. Pittsburgh scored two late goals with goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury on the bench for an extra attacker to force overtime.

Sidney Crosby’s tying goal came at 19:05 of the third when he stuffed the puck past Vancouver goalie Eddie Lack.

“Today when they got their third one, I don’t know if we are panicking or not, but we kind of got a bad bounce on the fourth one,” Lack said. “I don’t know what happened. We gave the best player in the world an open net with a minute to go and that can’t happen.”

For the first 59 minutes of the game,

Crosby did not look anything like the best player in the world. He had been ordinary at best. But he set up Kris Letang’s goal that made it 4-3, scored the tying goal and then got the only goal of the shootout.

“We played a good third period,” said Canuck captain Henrik Sedin. “There has just been some bad bounces. It’s not like we don’t know what to do. I don’t think we’re fragile. I thought we played a good game tonight against a great team and we should have won the game.

“We gave up two goals against maybe the best offensive team in the league over 59 minutes. That’s good, but again we can’t hold on to leads and that hurts. We should have five or six more points and be up with the top teams in the West.”
Higgins took a breakaway pass from Jannik Hansen, fought off a check by defenceman Simon Despres and beat Fleury with a backhand to put Vancouver up 3-2 at 13:07 of the third. Just 17 seconds later, Kassian took a pass from Higgins and flipped a high backhand of his own past Fleury.

The game was almost overshadowed by all the Olympic-related news earlier in the day when Canada, and some other countries, announced rosters for their national teams.

Injured goalie Roberto Luongo and defenceman Dan Hamhuis were selected to Team Canada, while Henrik and Daniel Sedin and injured defenceman Alex Edler were named to the Swedish squad.

With Ryan Kesler (United States) and Yannick Weber (Switzerland) already selected, the Canucks will have seven Olympians in Sochi, Russia.

That’s the good news. The bad news is that the Canucks just aren’t playing well enough to beat the good NHL teams. That 10-1-1 run in December is beginning to feel like a distant memory.

“It’s all around us right now,” coach John Tortorella said of his team’s lategame struggles. “There’s no sense whining about it, no sense looking for excuses. We just have to continue to try to get better as a team.”

Tortorella said he has never been involved with a club that has lost so many late leads in a short span. “No, no, I haven’t. This one was a doozy. It is what it is. That’s what is around us. We’re going to try to exorcise it and get it away from us ... The state of our team, we’ve just got to try to get the positives and build on it.”

Tortorella tried to shake things up by benching a couple of his veterans Tuesday. The coach scratched wingers David Booth and Dale Weise, replacing them with American Hockey League call-ups Darren Archibald and Benn Ferriero.

Booth would not comment following the morning game-day skate about being scratched.

“If I say something I’ll just get into trouble,” he said.

In a pre-game radio interview, Tortorella said, “David Booth, I can’t find him.”

Pittsburgh grabbed a 2-0 lead at 5:25 of the second period when Evgeni Malkin took a pass from James Neal and beat Lack glove side from the slot. The goal, Malkin’s 12th of the season, came just seconds after Fleury stopped Hansen on a breakaway.

The Canucks cut the lead in half at 15:35 of the second period when defenceman Jason Garrison intercepted a Crosby clearing attempt and beat Fleury from just inside the left point. The
Penguins scored the only goal of the first period when Brian Gibbons got by Hansen on the right boards, drove to the net and slid the puck between the legs of Lack at the 13:15 mark.

Henrik Sedin played despite an injured hand suffered in Sunday’s loss in Anaheim. Sedin was not able to take any faceoffs on Tuesday.

ICE CHIPS: The Canucks are now 2-6 this season in shootouts. Kassian, Higgins and Mike Santorelli all failed to score in Tuesday’s shootout.

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**Sedins stoked to play in Sochi with ‘underdog’ Swedish squad**

Elliott Pap – The Vancouver Sun | January 8, 2014

There was no suspense Tuesday for Daniel and Henrik Sedin on whether they were going to Sochi to play for Sweden at the 2014 Winter Olympics. They already knew, having been tipped off by team officials they were on the squad. It will be the third Games for both.

“We actually had a few guys who found out earlier,” Daniel revealed. “So I’ve known for a while.”

Daniel and Henrik will be joined by defenceman Alex Edler on the Swedish side, bringing to seven the number of Canucks heading to Sochi. Blue-liner Yannick Weber was named to the Swiss team Monday.

American Ryan Kesler and the two Canadians, Roberto Luongo and Dan Hamhuis, complete the Canuck group.

“I like our team,” said Daniel when queried about Sweden’s chances.

“I think we have some really good offensive guys, I’m talking about the forwards now, and some really good hard-working checking guys, too. So I think our team is built a little bit different than last time around and I’m excited about it.”

Brother Henrik will wear an ‘A’ in Sochi with Detroit’s Henrik Zetterberg serving as the Swedish captain. The Swedes won the gold in Torino in 2006, but Henrik was already playing the 2014 underdog card on Tuesday.

“I think Russia and Canada are maybe the two top teams if you look at it on paper,” said Henrik.
“And Russia is playing at home as well. There are five, maybe six, teams who can win it. You have to be good at the right time. I don’t think anyone is a huge favourite but I think Russia and Canada are the best on paper.

“We might not be as deep as we were in ’06 when we won but when it comes down to one game, if you have a great goaltender back there who steals a game, I don’t think it really matters who you have up front.”

Edler’s spot seemed far from a sure thing. He has been out of the Canucks lineup since Dec. 3 after suffering a right knee sprain in Nashville.

He also has two games to serve on an international suspension for his knee-on-knee hit against Eric Staal in last spring’s world championship. He admitted he was concerned that his injury and suspension might hurt his chances. He should be back in the Canuck lineup soon although he didn’t play Tuesday against Pittsburgh.

“It’s a great honour, it’s huge, it’s a dream,” said Edler, 27, who will be in his first Olympics.

“Yeah, I mean, there were a few things that were a little bit against me but the coaches made it clear pretty early that it was something that didn’t matter and that I still had the same chance as everyone else.”

For Weber, it will be his second Olympics. He played in Vancouver in 2010.

“It’s exciting for all the guys,” said the 25-year-old blue-liner. “Every time you’re able to represent your country, especially in a tournament like the Olympics, it’s something special. I think all the guys should be proud of themselves.”

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**Canucks blow two-goal lead late in third en route to shootout loss to Pens**


- Wild ride ends with Pittsburgh winning 5-4 in shootout over Vancouver
- Pittsburgh blows 2-0 lead, Vancouver blows 4-2 lead
- Canucks lose fifth in a row, Penguins win 17th of 20

By mid-October, just two weeks into the 2013-14 National Hockey League season, the Vancouver Canucks had already spiralled out of top trio in the formidable Pacific Division. A nasty November saw the team fall even farther, out of the playoff picture, even if it was still early. Revival came in December and by last weekend the Canucks finally had third place in their grasp, just as they began the toughest six-game stretch of their schedule on the road against the Los Angeles Kings.
L.A., for the first time in the Darryl Sutter era, had lost five in a row and a Vancouver victory would have usurped its rival in the standings. Instead, the Kings manhandled the Canucks and then the next night the Anaheim Ducks snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, or if you like, the Canucks grabbed a loss from the gaping mouth of a win.

So it was, again, the Canucks in the tenuous position of fourth come Tuesday night in Vancouver, welcoming Captain Canada Sidney Crosby and the best of the East, the Pittsburgh Penguins. It was also the same day many of the international Olympic teams were named and after the dust settled Vancouver and Pittsburgh both boasted seven men heading to the 2014 Sochi Winter Games.

Back at home, only the top three places in a division are guaranteed a playoff position in this new NHL – so they are especially coveted, and while the Canucks can’t quite crack the club, stuck outside looking in, the glass is right there for the team to smash and climb through. Losses such as the one to Pittsburgh are not going to get shards of glass flying.

"It's happened too many times," said Vancouver captain Henrik Sedin of blowing yet-another lead.

But asked if the team was fragile, Sedin bristled. "It's not that we don't know what to do. I don't think it's fragile."

The Penguins locker room meanwhile basked in the happy pulse of winning.

"We found a way," said Crosby, sitting in his corner stall. "We've been down the last couple games and climbed back."

Vancouver has done the opposite. Against Anaheim, the Ducks tied it late and won with 0.6 seconds left in overtime.

"A doozy" is how Coach John Tortorella described the loss to Pittsburgh. And he conceded the team is indeed fragile. "Sure it is," said Tortorella. "It's how quickly we get out of it."

The tilt against Pittsburgh began like the L.A./Anaheim punch-ups ended, with an assault on the Canucks net. The Crosby line swept in, then came Evgeni Malkin, a ridiculous one-two flurry when the Canadian and Russian are at their best. Canucks backup Eddie Lack – with Roberto Luongo resting – held steady, as he has so often this year.

Olympian errors were an irony of the evening. Seven minutes into the evening, Pittsburgh dominating, Canucks defenceman and surprise Team Canada pick, Dan Hamhuis, chosen for his reliability, botched a handle on the puck at the Penguins blueline and Penguins rookie, 25-year-old Brian Gibbons grabbed his chance and raced up the ice, unperturbed by a strong Jannik Hansen backcheck, deked and slid the puck between Lack’s legs. It was his second goal in just his 11th career NHL game.
The second goal saw the Canucks see some of the November bad luck. Hansen was unable convert on his own breakaway and, immediately following, Malkin converted in the slot on a pass from James Neal. On the goal Malkin shrugged off Hansen, who nearly dug the puck away and scored with Canucks rookie Darren Archibald draped on him.

Down 2-0, yes, but the Canucks, despite moments of disorganization, found life, and tilted the ice back towards the Pens, the type of effort that is so praised by give-me-your-all-and-more coach John Tortorella. The shot count and shots attempted began to near even and the Pens looked a bit less powerful and then some luck, something you don’t see every day, a real boneheaded mistake from none other than Crosby. With five minutes left in the frame, Crosby behind his own net, under pressure, blithely backhanded the puck out and it was happily received by Canucks defenceman Jason Garrison, whose wrist shot zinged by Marc Andre-Fleury, the marker just Garrison’s third goal in 48 games.

What ails the Canucks, according to Tortorella before the game, was a forecheck that had gone feeble, and a recent inability to absorb physical play and retain possession of the puck. Then there’s, in general, play away from the puck. David Booth, for one, has looked lost and on Tuesday wasn’t even dressed, his season going backwards, again.

In better news, there’s Zack Kassian, who looks smarter and stronger, game by game.

And there Kassian was in the third, nearly scoring on a great pass from Ryan Kesler in a Canucks push, an effort that ended with defenceman Chris Tanev scoring his fifth of the year and tying the game, the puck sneaking in through a considerable crowd of four – two of each team – obscuring Fleury’s view, the one-time Team Canada goalie smashing his stick in frustration.

Moments thereafter, 10 minutes to go, big-man Tom Sestito went off for charging Kris Letang and it was the game on the line with the league’s best power play – the Pens – and the league’s best penalty kill, the Canucks. The four outplayed the five.

Then: joy, briefly, for the home side. Hansen dug it out from the Vancouver end and rushed ahead and flipped a long breakaway pass to Chris Higgins and he delivered. Seventeen second later – that fast – it was Kassian, knocking a waist-high pass out of midair and lofting a top-shelf backhand, Fleury beaten again, the comeback complete and the insurance deposited.

On Tuesday, as a whole, the Canucks fixed some of what was wrong back in California.

But, uh, not quite. How do you blow leads like this? asked one wag after the Pens had tied. Answer: slowly, then suddenly. And the league’s best power play, against the league’s best penalty, in this case not precisely an official power play, the six (Fleury pulled) outweigh the five.

First, Letang scored with about a minute left, on a shot from the point, and then 16 seconds – that fast – a puck came to Crosby by the side of the net, Hamhuis flailing, and Captain Canada banged it home, redeemed. Tied game, point on the road salvaged.
Come overtime, James Neal nearly ended it twice for Pittsburgh but Lack recovered form and pushed the twisting tilt to a shootout. And in the almost-silly skills contest, the only scorer was… Crosby. The best players deliver when the best players have to deliver. It is what Vancouver lacks, sorely.

Pittsburgh is the exactly the type of team Vancouver, especially at home, has to beat if the Canucks are going to be a real contender and not just first-round fodder in April as the postseason begins. Going down 2-0, and blowing a 4-2 lead, does not bode well in the long-term. The trials continue, unrelenting. The potent St. Louis Blues arrive on Friday, and then it’s another sojourn through the vastness of L.A., on the road against the Kings on Monday and Wednesday in Anaheim. The fun never ends.

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**Tortorella can only shake head at Canucks loss**

Canadian Press – Sportsnet | January 8, 2014

VANCOUVER — A new year that has got off to a bad start took a strange twist for the Vancouver Canucks on Tuesday night.

Coach John Tortorella could only shake his head after watching his team give up two goals 16 seconds apart in the last 1:11 of the third period, then lose 5-4 to the Pittsburgh Penguins in a NHL shootout.

"This one was a doozy," said Tortorella.

That’s one word for it anyway.

The Canucks had erased a two-goal deficit and led 4-2 with 6:26 left in the third. Then the roof caved in on Vancouver. Again.

It was the Canucks’ fifth consecutive loss. Vancouver has blown third-period leads in four of those games. The Canucks have also been outshot in their last four games, including giving up 49 shots to each Los Angeles and Anaheim over the weekend.

The Canucks keep finding different ways to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

"It’s happening way too many times," said captain Henrik Sedin. "We should have at least five of six more points right now.

"This is where we are at. We have to take a look at it and see what we are doing wrong."
Vancouver lost five games during a 10-day stretch in November but got back on track to roll through December with a 10-1-1 streak. Things went off the rails with a 4-3 shootout at home to Philadelphia on Dec. 30. The Canucks have yet to win in 2014.

"It’s too many points being lost late in the game," said Daniel Sedin. "We are a good team that should be able to play with the lead.

"It’s happening too many times for it to be acceptable."

At one point, with Vancouver trailing 2-0, the Rogers Arena fans began booing as the Canucks sat back and watched the Penguins bring the puck out of their own end. Those jeers later turned to cheers as goaltender Eddie Lack twice robbed Pittsburgh’s Kris Letang.

The Canucks looked to be in control of the game after Jason Garrison, Chris Tanev, Chris Higgins and Zack Kassian scored consecutive goals. The Penguins tied the game on goals from Letang and Sidney Crosby with goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury on the bench. Crosby also scored in the shootout.

The Canucks have given up six goals this season when the opposition has pulled its goalie.

Defenceman Kevin Bieksa said the late losses are taking their toll on the team’s confidence.

"It seems like we are in control and doing the right things,’ he said. "With a minute or two left, bad things are happening. It’s almost contagious.

"When you get scored on this many times in the last minute of the game it doesn’t feel good. It’s in the back of your mind. I’m not too worried. I think we will get out of it."

Vancouver remains seventh in the NHL’s Western Conference with a 23-13-9 record for 55 points. Even during the losing skid the Canucks have managed to pick up three points in overtime or shootouts.

"The state of our team right now, we just have to try to get the positives and build off it," said Tortorella. "We played much better (Tuesday).

"We didn’t close out the game. We just have to keep working at it here and try to be a better club in those situations."

The Canucks used a patch-work lineup against the Pens. Minor leaguers Darren Archibald and Benn Ferriero were in the lineup while both David Booth and Dale Weise sat in the press box.

Not playing due to injuries was goaltender Roberto Luongo (ankle), defenceman Alex Edler (knee), defenceman Ryan Stanton (ankle), defenceman Andrew Alberts (concussion), right-winger Alex Burrows (broken jaw) and centre Jordan Schroeder (ankle).

Tortorella wasn’t looking for excuses.
"There is no sense whining about it," he said. "We just have to try to get better as a team."

Canucks collapse late, fall to Pens in shootout

Canadian Press – Sportsnet | January 8, 2014

VANCOUVER — The last time Sidney Crosby played at Rogers Arena, he sent an entire nation into a frenzy.

It was only fitting that he took over a game in the same building on the very day that Canada announced its roster for the Sochi Olympics.

The Penguins captain scored late in regulation and added the only goal of the shootout Tuesday as Pittsburgh rallied to defeat the Vancouver Canucks 5-4.

Both goals came at the same end of the arena where Crosby buried his memorable overtime effort in the gold-medal game against the United States at the 2010 Olympics.

"It’s hard not to think about it when you’re out there," said Crosby, who was among the 25 players named to the Canadian roster for the 2014 Games. "I remember it a little differently with the way the rink was set up and everything but (it’s) still a great memory.

"(You) kind of put it in the back of your mind though because there’s some other important things happening in the next little while."

One of those things was helping to rescue the Penguins after the Canucks scored goals 17 seconds apart to take the lead with under seven minutes to go in the third.

"That hurt. That was tough to give them that much momentum late in the game like that," said Crosby. "We found a way. It’s not the position we want to be in."

But Pittsburgh did Vancouver one better by tying the score with goals 16 seconds apart from Kris Letang and Crosby.

Letang’s shot from the point beat Canucks goalie Eddie Lack with 1:11 to go in regulation before Crosby banged a puck home with 55 seconds left on the clock.

"From the bench it took way too long to get it off his skate and to his stick," said Penguins head coach Dan Bylsma, who passed Eddie Johnson to become the Penguins all-time wins leader with 233 victories. "I wasn’t surprised by the celebration in that corner."

Said Lack: "We gave the best player in the world an open net with a minute to go. That can’t really happen."
Crosby then moved in on Lack in the shootout and fired a quick shot home.

"You don’t want to put yourself in that position, but if it does happen, if you are faced with that, you need to find ways to get out of it," said Crosby, who also had an assist. "To be down two with that much time left, we knew we had to get two quick ones and we found a way."

Evgeni Malkin and Brian Gibbons also scored in regulation for Pittsburgh (32-12-1), while Jussi Jokinen added two assists for a Penguins team that won their third straight and leads the Eastern Conference standings.

"It doesn’t matter what the score is with our team, we always believe we can come back," Penguins goalie Marc-Andre Fleury said after finishing with 22 saves. "I just try to stop the next puck and our chance to win is always there."

Chris Higgins, Zack Kassian and Christopher Tanev each had a goal and an assist, while Jason Garrison also scored for Vancouver (23-14-8). Lack made 31 saves as the Canucks lost their fifth game in a row.

Tied 2-2 in the third, Vancouver looked to be on its way to its first victory of 2014 when Higgins beat Fleury through the five-hole on a breakaway with 6:53 left in regulation for his 12th and Kassian swatted another shot past the Penguins goalie at 6:36 for his eighth.

"I want them to keep their heads up. There is no sense whining about it," said Canucks head coach John Tortorella. "There’s no sense looking for excuses. We just have to keep trying to get better as a team. There are a number of things I know this coaching staff is going to try and build on."

Lack made his second consecutive start for Vancouver in place of the injured Roberto Luongo, who suffered a suspected ankle injury against the Los Angeles Kings over the weekend.

Luongo, who was also named to Canada’s Olympic team along with Canucks defenceman Dan Hamhuis earlier in the day, had just returned to the lineup after dealing with a groin issue. Chris Kunitz, who plays on Crosby’s line, also made the cut.

Down 2-1 after two periods, Vancouver tied the score at 7:39 of third when Tanev’s shot from the point beat Fleury through traffic for his fifth of the season before the teams engaged in a wild finish.

"I don’t know how to explain it," said Canucks defenceman Kevin Bieksa. "We were in good position and had a pretty good third period. It all happened so quickly I don’t know what happened."

With Pittsburgh leading 1-0 after the first period, Fleury made a breakaway save on Canucks forward Jannik Hansen early in the second. The Penguins broke back the other way with Malkin beating Lack on a shot through traffic for his 12th of the season at 5:25.
Fleury had a bit of luck a bit later in the period as Canucks defenceman Yannick Weber rang a shot off the post, before Letang found iron behind Lack.

Letang had two more great chances to extend the lead, but Lack made a couple of huge saves before Garrison cut the Penguins’ advantage in half at 15:35.

After Crosby blindly threw the puck in front of his own net right to Garrison, the Vancouver defenceman ripped a shot by Fleury for his fifth of the season and first in 14 games.

Gibbons opened the scoring at 13:15 of the first period after Hamhuis failed to control the puck at the Pittsburgh blue-line. Playing on a line with Crosby and Kunitz, the undrafted 25-year-old free agent out of Boston College raced in alone and beat Lack for his second goal of the season in just his 11th NHL game.

Vancouver has had a habit of giving up late leads this season, having surrendered goals against on six different occasions with the other team’s goalie on the bench for an extra attacker.

"This one was a doozy. It is what is it. That’s what is around us," said Tortorella. "We are going to try to exorcise it and get it away from us. I thought we showed more confidence tonight. Day by day we will try to get better."

Notes: Fleury was Canada’s No. 3 goalie at the 2010 Olympics, but didn’t make this year’s squad. … Crosby was still recovering from his concussion issues when the Penguins made their last visit to Vancouver at the start of the 2011-12 season. … A total of seven Canucks will be heading to the Olympics. Daniel and Henrik Sedin, along with Alexander Edler, will suit up for Sweden, while Ryan Kesler (U.S.), Weber (Switzerland) and Hansen (Denmark) will also take part in the tournament. … On the Penguins’ side, Malkin (Russia), Jokinen and Olli Maatta (Finland), and Brooks Orpik and Paul Martin (U.S.) will compete for their countries. … The Canucks recalled Joacim Eriksson from the American Hockey League to serve as Lack’s backup with Luongo on the shelf. … Garrison’s goal was his 100th NHL point.