

## **Canucks skate to easy win over Oilers**

By Brad Ziemer, Vancouver Sun

They say you can't win them all, but the Vancouver Canucks are certainly putting that theory to the test. So is goalie Cory Schneider.

The Canucks ran their winning streak to eight games and Schneider is now unbeaten in regulation in 10 starts after Vancouver skated to a decisive 6-1 decision Friday night over the Edmonton Oilers at Rogers Arena.

The Canucks say eight is not enough. Nine would be nice, especially coming against tonight's opponent, the Detroit Red Wings.

It will be a Western Conference showdown tonight at Rogers Arena and now that the Canucks have dispatched the Calgary Flames and Oilers, they'd love to finish off their three-game homestand in style with a win over the Wings.

"It will be fun," said Daniel Sedin, who had two goals and an assist in Friday night's win. "Every year Detroit is a great team. It was big for us winning these two games against Calgary and Edmonton. We didn't want to look past these two games and now we can focus on tomorrow."

The Wings enter Saturday's game two points behind the Canucks, who have a game in hand on Detroit.

"It's a team that wants to play some offence, too," Daniel said of the Wings. "They are really good defensively, but they are not afraid to attack and that can make for a really good game."

The Canucks played a really good game against the Oilers as they rode their top three offensive guns to an easy win.

Captain Henrik Sedin had three assists and Ryan Kesler picked up his second career hat trick as the Canucks thoroughly outclassed a young Oiler team that hung tough for only one period before Vancouver took over the game.

"We played well tonight," Kesler said. "From the puck drop we were pretty good. We established most of the play tonight and Cory played an excellent game for us."

Kesler's hat trick leaves him with 23 goals this season, setting up an interesting battle with Daniel Sedin, whose pair Friday left him with 24.

Kesler insists there is no rivalry.

"It's good competition, but he is obviously a pure goal-scorer so there is no way I will be able to keep up with him," said a smiling Kesler.

Daniel is not so sure.

"I am scoring all of my goals within six feet and he can score a lot from the blue line," Daniel said. "He has a great shot. He showed that last year and this year too."

The Canucks are now 27-8-5 on the season and 17-1-2 in their last 20 games. They haven't lost in regulation since Dec. 12. Schneider hasn't lost in regulation at all. He is now 8-0-2 in his 10 starts this season and tied the franchise record for the longest string of starts without a regulation-time loss. Kirk McLean, Dan Cloutier, Cesare Maniago and Richard Brodeur also all went undefeated in 10 games during their time in Vancouver.

The first period was scoreless, but Daniel finished off a give-and-go with Henrik 30 seconds into the second to make it 1-0. Just over a minute later, Kesler put the Canucks up by two with a wrist shot from the slot that hit the glove of Edmonton goalie Nikolai Khabibulin, bounced high into the air and into the net.

Daniel made it 3-0 at 6:36 of the second. He picked a long clearing pass from linemate Alex Burrows out of the air with his glove hand in the neutral zone, passed the puck to Henrik who gave it right back to his brother. Daniel then beat Khabibulin with a backhand from in close.

"That wasn't the nicest pass," Burrows said of his long bomb. "Those two saucers afterwards were the nicest plays. They played a great game tonight."

The Sedins are now tied for third in the NHL scoring race with 53 points. They are both on pace for 100-point seasons and Daniel is on track for 50 goals.

The Oilers got their goal with less than a second remaining in the second when Ales Hemsky stuffed the puck under Schneider during a goalmouth scramble. The play was reviewed and it was determined the puck had crossed the line with two-tenths of a second left on the clock.

Kesler restored Vancouver's three-goal lead five minutes into the third period when he tipped in a Dan Hamhuis point shot. He completed the hat trick at 10:56 during a five-on-three power play, tipping in a Christian Ehrhoff shot. Defenceman Alex Edler, on the power play, made it 6-1 at 13:02.

Canuck coach Alain Vigneault had his first-unit power play on the ice late in the game in response to some chippy play by the Oilers.

"If they are going to run around and be stupid, that is what you have to do," said Henrik Sedin. "They have to realize if they keep doing it, it is going to be embarrassing. I think he did the right thing."

**ICE CHIPS:** The win means Vigneault will be behind one of the benches at the All Star Game later this month in Raleigh, N.C. . . This is Vancouver's longest winning streak since winning 10 straight in November of 2002. . . Kesler did more than score goals. He was 14-3 in the faceoff circle.

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## **Schneider puts Canucks in just-win situation**

By Iain MacIntyre, Vancouver Sun columnist

We like to think that if Cory Schneider had been chosen a star Friday night, he'd have skated out for the adoring home fans and blown kisses to the crowd. He'd have signed some autographs, given away his stick and jersey. Maybe donated a kidney.

But, one game after Roberto Luongo didn't make it out for his first-star selection, Schneider didn't get the chance to return the love.

"I suppose I would have," Schneider said when asked would he stay or would he go. "I don't get it as often as [Luongo] does."

The highly deserving Sedin brothers and Ryan Kesler did the post-game damage control, clapping to the fans and waving graciously when they made curtain calls after the Canucks' 6-1 win against the Edmonton Oilers.

But don't think Schneider wasn't a star. He made 23 saves, including a couple of stunners before the Canucks pulled away early in the second period, and ran his rookie record to 8-0-2.

His 10-game "unbeaten" streak - overtime and shootouts count only in the standings - ties a franchise record. How about an unbeaten season?

"I don't think so," Schneider smiled. "The odds are going to catch up to me eventually. I'm just trying to win as many games as I can. I've got to be leading the league in goal support. It seems every time I play, I get four, five or six goals. That's been a big part of my record. At the same time, it's on me, too, to make some early saves."

The Canucks are averaging 4.4 goals in Schneider's 10 starts, and have yet to score fewer than three for the 24-year-old.

With that kind of run support, Martin Brochu could have built a National Hockey League career in Vancouver. John Garrett would be in the Hall of Fame.

The Canucks have made it easy for Schneider, but that support goes both ways. He earned teammates' trust immediately by proving he was ready for the NHL and able to win.

"I think once you stop getting nervous before games [you're ready]," Schneider said. "Before, I just felt a little overwhelmed. I had butterflies in my stomach and was shaking. Now it just seems like confidence and calm, and I just go out and play the game that I've played my whole life.

"Guys are competing to be the best and be the guy who scores that big goal and carries the load on his shoulders. It seems like it's a different guy each night. Early in the year we talked about accountability - performing our jobs and everyone holds you accountable. We don't have to scream and yell; we know what our jobs are and if we don't do it, you're the first person to know. We really trust each other and have a lot of confidence in our teammates."

Lost amid the Canucks' escalating point total and Schneider's rookie run, is the goalie's escalating value. Not to the Canucks, but to any team that might need a netminder this summer or sometime next season.

The Tampa Bay Lightning just surrendered a 21-year-old former first-round draft pick to acquire 41-year-old Dwayne Roloson - a serviceable veteran beyond his best years. So how much might Schneider be worth?

It's worth remembering that the plan was never to groom Schneider to become a starter in Vancouver. He'll be 36 when Luongo's contract expires.

The strategy for Canuck management all along was to allow their best prospect to embark on the next phase of development and, hopefully, provide solid enough netminding to fulfill the organization's plan to reduce Luongo's workload by at least 10 games.

A month ago, that plan seemed like a cheap, expendable election promise when Luongo was starting his ninth straight and Schneider had to overcome rigor mortis to play his one game in five weeks.

Canuck coach Alain Vigneault was more bemused than upset by criticism about his goaltending "rotation" back then, and said simply people should see what the schedule looks like in January before drawing conclusions.

Vancouver just passed the mid-point of a 21-game blitz crammed into 40 days.

Schneider has started five of the last eight, equaling in about two weeks his workload from the first 2 ½ months.

Not only does the schedule agree with Schneider, it's helping Luongo, too.

After deteriorating in the last two playoffs, maybe Luongo really will go into the next one having played 60 games instead of 68 or 73. And maybe that will make a difference. At this point, the he'll-be-better-if-rested theory is nothing more than intriguing supposition.

It may not work. But we know what the Canucks did in the past with Luongo didn't work at playoff time, which is why it's encouraging to see Vigneault stick with the plan to lighten his workload.

At this point, it's win-win for everyone. Especially unbeaten Schneider.

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Big night for Canucks big guns

Daniel Sedin, Ryan Kesler combine for five goals as Canucks trounce Oilers

By HOSEA CHEUNG, QMI Agency

VANCOUVER - Henrik Sedin sure knows how to take credit for his brother's goal-scoring success.

On a night that featured a back-and-forth battle between the Canucks top two scorers, the team captain took a light-hearted jab at Daniel Sedin following the game.

"If I would have myself passing to me, I would have 24 [goals] too," said Henrik, while glancing back at his linemate.

Daniel, who tallied twice, finished runner-up to Ryan Kesler's three-goal effort Friday night at Rogers Arena as the two now lead the club with 24 and 23 tallies respectively.

The goal-scoring pair though were just a bit more humble, and serious, after the superb showing.

"It's good competition," said Kesler. "[Daniel]'s obviously a pure goal scorer so there's no way I will keep up with him."

Added Daniel, who also recorded his 600th career point with a third period assist: "We need guys to push each other and that's what this team is doing."

Henrik, on his part, finished with three helpers.

In the end, the competition within the Canucks proved to be a more exciting storyline than the actual matchup between the two teams on the ice. Vancouver solidified their place atop the NHL standings by trouncing the lowly Edmonton Oilers 6-1, thus extending their winning streak to eight games. The Canucks also set a new franchise record for longest stretch without losing in regulation, having gone 13-0-2 in their last 15.

Cory Schneider, who was making his 10th start of the season, made 23 saves to improve his record to 8-0-2 on the season.

The Canucks have little time to celebrate the victory as they host a tougher opponent in the Detroit Red Wings Saturday night.

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# Kesler's hat trick powers Canucks past Oilers

The Canadian Press  
1/8/2011 2:31:45 AM

VANCOUVER -- [Daniel Sedin](#) hasn't been able to shake teammate [Ryan Kesler](#) in the NHL goal-scoring race.

Not that he minds. In fact, he thinks the friendly rivalry helps make the Vancouver Canucks dangerous.

Sedin broke the game open with a pair of goals early in the second period, and Kesler put it away late by completing his second hat trick of the season during Vancouver's 6-1 rout of the Edmonton Oilers on Friday in front of a raucous sellout crowd of 18,810 at Rogers Arena.

Sedin is third in the NHL with 24 goals, while Kesler has 23.

"It's good (competition)," Sedin said. "We need guys pushing each other on different spots on this team, and we're doing that right now. That's why we're a good team."

Sedin's goals came during a dominant six-minute six-second span early in the second period that saw the Canucks score on their first three shots of the frame.

Kesler also scored during that outburst, and added two more in the third period as Vancouver (27-8-5) improved to 13-0-2 in its past 15 games -- the best stretch in franchise history -- and maintained its hold atop the NHL standings with 59 points.

[Alexander Edler](#) also scored for Vancouver, while [Henrik Sedin](#) added three assists as the Canucks won their eighth straight.

[Ales Hemsky](#) replied for Edmonton (13-20-7), which couldn't build on the momentum of Thursday's 2-1 victory over the New York Islanders. The Oilers have lost eight of their past nine games.

"We played the best team in the NHL tonight and we lost by five -- you don't hand the puck over to a team like this," said Oilers coach Tom Renney, whose club went an abysmal 17 of 54 in the faceoff circle for a 31 per cent success rate.

"Unfortunately that's the way here with the Oilers and when you're not starting with the puck most often it's a hard game to play."

Kesler had no career hat tricks entering this season, and wasn't having much luck early in the campaign breaking the trend. Twice he had two-goal games -- one in Ottawa and one in Toronto -- and both times he hit the post on his attempt for a third goal.

The 26-year-old centre now has two hat tricks in less than a month after recording his first on Dec. 15 in a 3-2 victory over Columbus.

"Two in a month is pretty good. I'll try for three in a month," Kesler said after the game as the crowd gave him a standing ovation. "It's happening for me right now. I'm just having fun with this."

As for catching [Daniel Sedin](#), Kesler isn't holding his breath.

"He's obviously a pure goal scorer so there's no way I'll be able to keep up with him," Kesler said.

Countered Sedin: "I'm scoring all of my goals within six feet and he scores a lot from the blue-line. He's got a great shot and he's showing it."

After the Sedin twins spun some magic to make it 1-0 30 seconds into the second period, Kesler used his patented wrist shot to make it 2-0 1:34 later.

He deflected a [Dan Hamhuis](#) shot to make it 4-1 early in the third period, then tipped in a power-play point shot for a 5-1 lead.

Edmonton has been a favourite target for [Daniel Sedin](#) over the years. The sniper now has 29 goals in 58 games against the Oilers, his best total against any NHL team.

As usual, it was [Henrik Sedin](#) who did the playmaking, feeding his twin brother perfect passes on each of the goals. The first goal came on a give and go, and the second on a perfectly executed 2-on-1 to give the Canucks a 3-0 lead.

At the other end, Canucks goaltender [Cory Schneider](#) was impressive in his fifth start in the past eight games.

Schneider was confident, read the play well and was always in position in improving to 8-0-2 this season.

He robbed [Taylor Hall](#) on a point-blank chance with the game still scoreless, Hemsy on a breakaway and then made a spectacular glove save off a [Dustin Penner](#) one-timer from the side of the net with the Oilers enjoying a 4-on-3 man advantage.

"I've got to be leading the league in run support," said Schneider. "It seems like every time we play I get four, five, six goals and that's been a big part of my record. But at same time it's on me to make some early saves and keep it scoreless and keep us in the game and give us the opportunity to open it up."

The lone puck to beat him came with 0.3 seconds left in the second period, as Hensky jammed the puck past his right pad at the side of the net to make it 3-1.

Eidler scored a late power-play goal to round out the scoring.

NOTES: The Canucks improved to 4-0 against Edmonton and 11-1-0 versus the Northwest Division. ... [Alex Burrows](#) played his 400th career game, recording an assist. He has 192 points (93 goals, 99 assists). ... Edmonton's [Gilbert Brule](#), who had goals in two straight games, did not play after suffering a chest injury against New York on Thursday. ... The Canucks scratched C Alex Bolduc and put winger [Aaron Volpatti](#) in the lineup. [Tanner Glass](#), usually a left winger, took Bolduc's spot at centre on the fourth line.

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## **Oilers have rough night in Vancouver**

By ROBERT TYCHKOWSKI, QMI Agency

VANCOUVER - There is an uneasy certainty whenever a team plays the Vancouver Canucks: They are going to see a lot of Daniel and Henrik Sedin.

Guaranteed Kin Night, if you will.

And brother, the Edmonton Oilers felt like they ran into a family reunion of them Friday night at Rogers Place.

The Twins seemed like quadruplets at times, and Ryan Kesler seemed like an honorary Sedin in a 6-1 romp.

Kesler had the hat-trick, Daniel had two goals and an assist and Henrik had three assists in handing Edmonton its 10th loss in the last 12 games.

After three one-goal losses to Vancouver this season, all heck broke loose in the fourth meeting of the season. If Thursday against the Islanders looked like 29 vs 28, this one absolutely looked like 1 vs 28.

The first period ended in a scoreless tie, but the way the Sedins had Edmonton hemmed in their own end on seemingly every shift, it seemed only a matter of time.

And it was.

The roof fell in in the middle period. In a hurry.

Vancouver scored three goals on their first three shots, at 30 seconds, 2:04 and 6:36.

Game set and match.

Nobody comes back from 3-0 anymore.



Daniel started it with a one-timer from his brother, then Ryan Kesler made it 2-0 on a loing shot goal that was straight out of the Tommy Salo handbook. He let it go from a step inside the blueline and Khabibulin had it hit his glove and bounce in over his head. The only thing missing was the infamous duck.

Then the Sedins stormed in on a two on one on Theo Peckham... and do we need to finish the sentence?

Three-nothing.

“A young team like this. if we come out hard maybe they’ll start doubting themselves,” said Tanner Glass.

That’s the way it looked.

Edmonton got a breath of life in the final fractions of a second of the second. Ales Hemsy banged one in from the doorstep and a long review proved that he made it with two-tenths of a second to spare.

The Canucks were already in the dressing room when they found out it was 3-1.

Didn’t seem to bother them, though.

Kesler made it 4-1 on a deflection five minutes into the third period and then 5-1 with the hat-trick goal with Peckham serving a double-minor for frustration.

- FOSTER GRANTED ICE - Kurtis Foster was back in the mix after sitting out the Islanders game as a healthy scratch. Foster hasn’t been bad, they just need a little bit more of everything from the 6-foot-5 defenceman, who had just 11 points (and was minus seven) in his first 37 games.

“He’s got to work to his strengths - size and strength and shot , passing ability,” said head coach Tom Renney, who sees a lot of upside there. “He’s got to play to those things for sure. When he does that it’ll be doubtful that he’s out of the lineup.”

- MOMENTUM STALLED - Just as Gilbert Brule got rolling, two goals in two games, he’s out of the mix for a while with an upper body ailment.

“He’s got a bruised abdomen or chest or whatever so he stayed behind for some tests,” said Renney. “We anticipate everything will be fine.”

LATE HITS... Nikolai Khabibulin’s workload will shrink a little with Edmonton’s effort to give Devan Dubnyk more games, but he’s OK with it. “Khabby’s a real pro,” said Renney. “He understands what we’re trying to do here in terms of building this organization up again. In the meantime he’s keeping us competitive.” ... Jordan Eberle also stayed back in Edmonton to

recover from a sprained ankle and appendectomy. "He's convalescing," said Renney. "We anticipate he'll join us on the trip some time, whether he plays or not remains to be seen."

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## Canucks ride Kesler's trick in 6-1 blowout over Oilers

By Jason Botchford

The Canucks are going to lose again. We think.

It just didn't look that way Friday.

The Western Conference's No. 1 team steamrolled the worst in a 6-1 exhibition of Canucks dominance. Vancouver had terrific goaltending, a slick puck-moving defence and two lines which were virtually unstoppable after the first period.

Ryan Kesler got a hat trick. And Daniel Sedin had the better game.

The Canucks are expected to get a tougher run Saturday in a Western Conference showdown with the Detroit Red Wings. Not that they took the Edmonton Oilers lightly Friday. They didn't and it's why Edmonton didn't have a chance.

The Canucks are on a 17-1-2 roll and have won eight straight. They set a franchise record by going 15 games without a loss in regulation. They've played 40 games have 27 wins and sport a stunning plus-43 goal differential. It's helped them to the best record in the NHL midway through the season, meaning Alain Vigneault will be the all-star coach.

Can we start the playoffs, already?

"We'd like it to be further in the season, but this is where we are, 40 games in," Henrik Sedin said. "It's tough to make the playoffs but we want to do a whole lot more than that.

"You know and we know, people won't be happy if we win the President's Trophy and lose in the first round. We are trying to stay focused and on that even keel.

"I haven't heard any player talk about [the win streak.] Not in the room, not in the mornings and not on the ice. We don't talk about that. We just keep looking forward."

On Friday, they just kept going forward, too at Edmonton's net. Oh, the Oilers skated hard and looked energized for a while. They even controlled parts of the first period despite only getting six shots on net.

But if you are going to shut down the Canucks, these days, you are going to need some defencemen significantly better than Jason Strudwick and Theo Peckham.

If not, the Sedins are going to make it look easy, which is what they did by scoring two goals in the first seven minutes of the second period.

Daniel Sedin scored two goals and has 24 on the year. Kesler scored three and has 23. Both are legitimate threats to get 50.

Daniel also added an assist to give him 600 career points.

“It’s obviously fun and knowing that it took me less games than Hank makes it even more fun,” Daniel quipped.

He did it in 745 games, Henrik in 751.

Daniel opened the scoring in a game for the ninth time this season. It was 30 seconds into the middle frame when Kevin Bieksa kept a puck in the offensive zone, allowing Henrik Sedin to set up his brother with a crisp cross-crease pass.

The pair hooked up again but not until Kesler scored on a 44-foot wrist shot which flicked agonizingly off Nikolai Khabibulin’s glove, floating into the Oilers net. For the Canucks, the top two lines gave them three goals in 6:36 to start the second. It looked lethal.

The most encouraging part may have been what happened next. The Canucks kept coming. Kesler scored two more goals and Alex Edler scored late in the third.

“We wanted to keep the pedal to the metal and keep going and we did,” Kesler said.

“That’s what we have to do to be successful keep skating and use our speed. We want a lot of end zone time and that’s when we’re dangerous.

“We have to keep doing that for a full 60 every game.”

Sounds like high standards. And why not? The Canucks appear capable of just about anything right now.

Cory Schneider was terrific again, giving the Canucks their eighth straight stellar goaltending performance. He had to make a point-blank stop on Taylor Hall in the first period of a scoreless game. Then he exploded in the crease, going post-to-post, to stop a Dustin Penner one-timer while the game was 2-0 in the second.

The last time the Canucks had any sort of letdown in net was when Roberto Luongo was beat for a couple of bad goals in a 5-4 OT loss against Detroit.

He now gets a chance at payback. The win sets up a Hockey Night in Canada spectacle Saturday when a well-rested Luongo will take on the Wings in Rogers Arena.

“Both of the games we played this year, the one here and the one there, were some of the best games I’ve seen so far this year,” Vigneault said.

“If we get that [Saturday,] it should be a great game.”

Can’t wait.

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## Canucks snack on Oilers

*MATTHEW SEKERES*

Vancouver— Globe and Mail Update

The Edmonton Oilers may be a divisional and geographic rival to the Vancouver Canucks, but the Western Conference's worst team was simply an appetizer for the top team in the NHL on Friday night.

The main course comes Saturday when the Detroit Red Wings arrive at Rogers Arena in a battle between the two best in the West.

But in what was a classic look-ahead situation, the Canucks resisted that temptation and fattened up with a 6-1 victory over the Oilers. It was Vancouver's fourth win in as many games against Edmonton this season, and pushed the team's record to 11-1 against the porous Northwest Division.

Ryan Kesler netted the second hat trick of his career – the first was on Dec. 15 – and continued his sizzling season. Daniel Sedin scored twice and is on pace for a 50-goal season. He also notched the 600th point of his career on a third-period goal by Alexander Edler, while Henrik Sedin had three assists.

Edmonton's Ales Hemsky struck with 0.3 seconds remaining in the middle period – and after a video review – to give the visitors a fighting chance in the third period. But Kesler's second goal, five minutes into the final frame, finished matters.

Edmonton produced some excellent scoring opportunities in the first period, but its offence started to sag as the game wore on.

That's what happens when you rarely have the puck, and the Oilers were often without the puck after losing 26 of 31 faceoffs through two periods.

### **Turning Point**

Kesler's first goal just two minutes into the second period made it 2-0 and put the Oilers in a big hole. Kesler has 21 points in his past 15 games, and this goal was an example of everything turning up roses.

Edmonton goalie Nikolai Khabibulin got a big piece of the puck with his glove hand, but it popped up and fell behind him into the net.

### **Goaltending**

Canucks backup Cory Schneider made his fifth start in the past eight games and tied a club record for longest unbeaten streak (10 games). Schneider, who made 23 saves, is undefeated in regulation this year, pushing his mark to 8-0-2.

The former [first-round draft picks](#) looks as though he has finally established himself as an NHL puck-stopper and is giving starter Roberto Luongo rest without a drop-off in performance. Vancouver's plan entering this season was to give Schneider 20 or so games to keep Luongo fresh for the playoffs.

So far, so good.

### **Streaking**

The Canucks won for the eighth consecutive game, and established the second-longest streak of the NHL season after Pittsburgh's 12-game run from Nov. 17 to Dec. 11. They also topped their longest winning streak from last season.

The Canucks are 17-1-2 over their past 20 games, and have six successive victories on home ice. The Canucks are unbeaten in 15, a club record, 14-0-1. The Oilers, meanwhile, are without a power-play goal in 21 tries.

### **Roster Watch**

An Oilers roster that has been decimated by injuries was without two more Friday. Defenceman Jim Vandermeer aggravated an ankle injury and remained in Edmonton. So did former Vancouver junior Gilbert Brule, who has a bruised abdomen.

The Canucks made one change, dressing fourth-line winger Aaron Volpatti in place of centre Alexandre Bolduc. Tanner Glass played centre for the first time in two years.

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Schneider: 'I feel more like and NHL goalie than I did before'

By Jim Jamieson

The Canucks managed to avoid another lost shutout bid by scoring six goals on the hapless Edmonton Oilers on Friday at Rogers Arena.

Not that it was close to being a shutout for nominal backup Cory Schneider – the Oilers actually made certain of that by scoring their only goal in a 6-1 loss at the end of the second period after a dubious video review awarded the score to Ales Hemsky.

But Schneider who extended his unbeaten streak (and overall record) to 8-0-2 and tied a club record – probably deserved his first NHL shutout on another excellent performance.

He made several timely saves early when the game was scoreless – including a beauty on Taylor Hall midway through the first period. But his best was on Dustin Penner, in the second period when the score was 2-0 for the Canucks and the Oilers were on a four on three power play. When a goal might have put the Oilers back in it, Schneider slid cross-crease and foiled Penner, who had a wide open side to shoot at.

"I knew he was over there but I had to stay on Hemsy," said Schneider, who would have been among the three stars except for a hat trick from Ryan Kesler and three-point nights from the Sedins. "As soon as he passed I just kind of lunged and he happened to hit me. We scored the third goal a little later so it turned out to be a big save."

It's been painfully obvious for a while now that there's no drop off when No. 1 Roberto Luongo takes a game off. The team clearly has no concerns when Schneider is between the pipes and that may have something to do with the bushels of goals they seem to score when he's in there. In his 10 starts, the Canucks have scored 44 goals. No wonder he's still undefeated.

"I've got to be leading the league in goal support," said Schneider, who stopped 23 of 24 Oiler shots. "It seems like every time I play we get four-five-six goals. At the same it's up to me to make some early saves and give us a chance to open it up."

Daniel Sedin said the team brims with confidence when the rookie is in goal.

"He made some great saves," said Daniel. "He was solid. Even in practice you can tell that he's really good. For us there's not a big difference."

On the contentious goal, it appeared the period clock had gone to zero before Hemsy poked it in.

"He batted it out of the air and started stuffing it and I lost track of it in my pads," said Schneider. "I didn't really know where it was and they were whacking away and it went over the line. I knew it was in the net, but the ref blew it off right away. I got some other breaks so I'm not too worried about it."

Schneider said he and Luongo have developed an excellent working relationship.

"We work well in practice together," he said. "We kind of feed off each other and joke around a little bit, but he's clearly the guy here and he's been playing great the last month and a half. I'm just trying go step in and give the team an option to rest Lou so he can be as sharp as he can be."

Schneider has been working with goaltender coach Roland Melanson since the preseason and the tweaks to his style are paying dividends.

"I feel more at ease," he said. "Less scambly, more efficient in the net, less energy used by making smaller movements and being on angle more often. I feel more like and NHL goalie than I did before."

And there's no question he's playing like one.

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**Canucks at the head of the class at mid-season**

## Dedication to off-season homework is paying off for some players, but fans have identified a few whose work needs improvement

### Vancouver Sun

#### Most Valuable Player

Who is the Canucks' most valuable player this year?

You like him, You really, really like him. Ryan Kesler garnered 78 per cent of the votes in our online pool. Henrik Sedin, the reigning NHL MVP, was a distant second with 12 per cent.

#### FORWARDS A Ryan Kesler

Iain MacIntyre: " Has grown up this season, elevating play and moving beyond superior two-way centre to just an outstanding player. Period."

#### A Jeff Tambellini

#### B Mason Raymond

Ian Walker: " Hand injuries have cost the second-line speedster a bunch of games this season, but he's played well when in the lineup."

#### C Joel Perrault

Iain MacIntyre: "Good minor-leaguer, fringe NHLer, he's not good enough to play for Canucks. But seven games not enough to grade."

### Best Defenceman

Who is the Canucks' best defenceman this year?

Alex Edler was the overwhelming favourite with 53 per cent of the votes. The 24-year-old Swede had 24 points and was plus-10 through 39 games.

#### A Manny Malhotra

Iain MacIntyre: "Wish fans graded me in algebra. Sick on faceoffs, excellent on PK and in leadership. But an A for six-goal forward? No way. C-plus."

#### B Alex Burrows

Brad Ziemer: "Has bounced back nicely from shoulder surgery and is starting to look like the player we saw last season. B it is."

B Raffi Torres

C Rick Rypien

Iain MacIntyre: "Only nine games, sandwiched around suspension for grabbing a fan. Incomplete term, but we're all pulling for him."

Most pleasant surprise

Who is the Canucks' most pleasant surprise this season?

The former first-round pick of the L.A. Kings, Jeff Tambellini is fulfilling his promise with the Canucks. The speedy winger has carved himself a place on the club with 15 points in 25 games.

A Daniel Sedin

Iain MacIntyre: "Sibling rivalry continues to bloom. 'Little brother' on pace for 45 goals and 100 points. Earns his grade every night."

B Tanner Glass

Ian Walker: " Hit. Fight. Score. Play centre. Play Scrabble. Glass has done everything asked of him and is set to record career highs in goals and points."

C Alex Bolduc

Ian Walker: " Ankle sprain forced the fourth-line centre to miss the first two months, so he's hardly played enough to make a true assessment."

C Mikael Samuelsson

Iain MacIntyre: "His poor season is a myth; his points pace is close to last year's career-best. Yeah, he overhandles the puck, but he deserves better than C."

GOALIES

A Cory Schneider

Ian Walker: "Was the only goalie in the league with more than 500 minutes played to go undefeated in his first nine starts heading into Friday's game. Enough said."

B Roberto Luongo



Brad Ziemer: "After his traditional slow start, Luongo has been very good the last several weeks. I'd give him a B+ or maybe even an A-."

### Biggest disappointment

Who is the Canucks' biggest disappointment this season?

Despite a respectable 24 points (but only eight goals) in 38 games, Mikael Samuelsson was chosen as most disappointing Canuck by nearly 50 per cent of voters.

A Henrik Sedin

Iain MacIntyre: "So much for fall-off for centre who won Hart and Ross trophies last year. On pace for another 100 points. C on his jersey, A on the ice."

B Jannik Hansen

C Guillaume Desbiens

Iain MacIntyre: "Must have bribed the teacher for this grade. Didn't intimidate ... and team got better without him. Not ready for NHL. D."

C Aaron Volpatti

DEFENCEMEN A Alex Edler

Brad Ziemer: "Very quietly, Edler is developing into an elite defenceman who can handle major minutes. He deserves the A."

B Andrew Alberts

Ian Walker: "Other than falling on Luongo in the pre-season, Alberts has done everything in his power to lose his embarrassing nicknames from last season."

B Kevin Bieksa

Iain MacIntyre: "He was solid in the first quarter, excellent in the second, so the grade fits a player who seems to have figured out how to play within himself."

B Aaron Rome

Ian Walker: "When the biggest question on the team is who will be your sixth defenceman, Rome or Alberts, you know things are going well."

Season standings

Where will the Canucks finish in regular season standings?

Nearly 41 per cent of you figure the Canucks will finish in first place in the Western Conference, while 26 per cent say the team should finish first overall in the NHL.

A Christian Ehrhoff

B Keith Ballard

B Dan Hamhuis

Iain MacIntyre: "Except for transition back from injury in November, he's been better than anyone thought. Stabilizing influence on Bieksa. Solid B."

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Red Wings D Brad Stuart suffers broken jaw in win

By HELENE ST. JAMES

CALGARY, Alberta -- The Red Wings, already reeling with injuries to significant forwards, have lost one of their top defensemen indefinitely.

Brad Stuart suffered a broken jaw after a blindside hit by Calgary's Tom Kostopoulos midway through the third period of Friday's 5-4 shootout victory at the Saddledome.

General manager Ken Holland said Stuart "is going to try to have surgery in Vancouver," where the Wings play tonight.

The hit left Mike Babcock irate.

"It's unfortunate," Babcock said. "It was a bad hit, a blindside hit to the head. Uncalled for, unneeded. Disappointing."

Kostopoulos was assessed a roughing penalty on the play, but Babcock is hoping the NHL will take a closer look.

"I'd assume they'd look at it and I'd assume he's suspended," Babcock said. "You're supposed to protect the good players in the league and that's a good player. I mean, I would have no problem if the guy buries him, he's swinging at the puck, but you don't have to hit him in the head. There's no reason to do that. It's disappointing."

Immediately following the game, Babcock didn't know if Stuart will need surgery, but said, "he'll need something. For sure he's got to get his jaw wired shut. It's disgraceful. It's embarrassing."

Stuart was visibly angry as he left the ice, and still looked upset as he sat at his locker after the game. Naturally he didn't want to talk.

Niklas Kronwall said Stuart, "is obviously one of our key players. He's been great for us all year. It really, really hurts to lose him. I haven't seen the hit myself, but I heard it was really bad."

Rafalski said, "that's a lot of minutes back there on the blueline. Obviously, it's not what we needed with all those other guys injured. I don't know if there's really a place for that. I mean, he's not expecting anything like that."

Stuart joins a sick bay already filled with top playmaker Pavel Datsyuk, 16-goal scorer Danny Cleary, third-line center Mike Modano and, for Friday's game and likely for tonight at Vancouver, Valtteri Filppula.

Filppula is day-to-day with a groin injury, but both Datsyuk (hand) and Cleary (ankle) are out at least through January and Modano (wrist) through mid-March.

Defenseman Jakub Kindl will take Stuart's stop for the immediate future.

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548842      Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings douse Flames in shootout

By HELENE ST. JAMES

CALGARY, Alberta -- Red Wings defenseman Brian Rafalski went 29 games without a goal, but made up for it Friday.

Rafalski scored twice at the Saddledome, using his second goal to tie a game the Wings had trailed almost from the start. Todd Bertuzzi delivered the victory in the shootout when he fooled Miikka Kiprusoff with a slow approach before flicking a backhand into the Flames net to secure a 5-4 victory at the Saddledome.

It wasn't the Wings' best game of the season, and Jimmy Howard had to amend with a strong finish for a shaky start, but the Wings did field a depleted lineup, having lost Valtteri Filppula to a groin injury on top of being without Pavel Datsyuk, Danny Cleary and Mike Modano. Brad Stuart left in the third period after getting rammed by Tom Kostopoulos.

#### GAMETRACKER

Their depth continued to show, though, as Darren Helm scored for the second time in two games to tie it up late in the first period after Curtis Glencross scored at 8:43. Jarome Iginla maneuvered the puck around the back of the net and stuffed it in from the right side just 10 seconds before the period expired to restore Calgary's lead.

Rafalski sent the puck in off Mark Giordano's leg 41 seconds into the second period, but Glencross lifted a shot high over a sprawled Howard 28 seconds later. Anton Babchuk's shot hit Nicklas Lidstrom's stick and deflected in at 11:33, giving the Flames four goals

on 18 shots. Patrick Eaves snapped Jiri Hudler's cross-ice pass in the last minute of the second period.

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## Mid-season awards

*ERIC DUHATSCHEK*

Globe and Mail Update

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In the NHL, rarely does a mid-season [most valuable player](#) ever actually take home the hardware, when they eventually pass it out in June, amid the glitter and heat of Las Vegas. In the past few years, for example, the Calgary Flames' Jarome Iginla and the Los Angeles Kings' Anze Kopitar were variously anointed with that unofficial designation, couldn't sustain the same level of play in the second half, and eventually lost out.

The MVP award has been like that of late in the NHL - passed around from one star to the next, no one grasping it and then clinging to it the way Wayne Gretzky did once upon a time.

But unless Sidney Crosby's concussion is worse than expected, or recurs at some point in the second half, there shouldn't be a lot of suspense this time around. Thanks to a surge that began roughly at the start of November, Crosby has been monstrously valuable his team on every level this season. The Penguins are a comparatively average collection of talent beyond the top few players, but have accomplished extraordinary things as a team this season, largely because of their captain's play and his influence, on the scoreboard and in the dressing room.

Crosby looked as if he'll run away with the scoring title, and the Penguins look as if they'll contend for top spot in the Eastern Conference as long as his absence isn't too prolonged - no mean feat considering Jordan Staal is just back in the lineup after missing the first half and Evgeni Malkin has had issues with injuries and inconsistency.

There are any number of excellent contenders for the two runner-up spots, which give the recipients a chance to don a tuxedo and politely clap in the wings as Crosby accepts the award - the same way Crosby and Alex Ovechkin did last year for the reigning champion, Henrik Sedin of the [Vancouver Canucks](#).

It was an eventful first half, dominated by an HBO documentary on the Penguins and Washington Capitals that built momentum for a less-than-thrilling Winter Classic.

Something about franchise instability seems to translate into unexpected success on the ice. It was a formula that the Phoenix Coyotes introduced last year, en route to an unexpected fourth place showing in the Western Conference (after being ranked 15th out of 15 in most pre-season

predictions) and it has been co-opted by the Atlanta Thrashers and Dallas Stars, two teams under financial siege in their respective markets that are nevertheless far exceeding all the expectations placed on them in the pre-season prognoses.

The Stars, who spent all of last summer subtracting vets from their recent past (Mike Modano, Jere Lehtenin, Marty Turco), added a piece of the old puzzle Friday morning, re-acquiring Jamie Langenbrunner from the New Jersey Devils. The man at the switch, Stars' general manager Joe Nieuwendyk, was originally traded to the Devils in the same deal back in March of 2002 and thus knows something about the player that he's getting.

The NHL in today's capped world is prone to unexpected swings - and that includes New Jersey, where the suddenly free-spending Devils are getting clobbered nightly, after straying from their identity as a defensive-first, money's tight organization. In the wake of the Ilya Kovalchuk contract fiasco last summer, few in NHL positions of power are shedding many tears on behalf of the Devils.

So without further preamble, a look at how the awards would be divvied up if the season rolled to a close midway through Saturday's schedule, when the midpoint of the season (615 games) officially occurs.

**Hart (MVP):** Crosby, for all the reasons stated above. Runners-up: Steven Stamkos (Tampa), Ondrej Pavelec (Atlanta). Now in his third season, Stamkos was giving Crosby a run for his money early - there was talk of 50 goals in 50 games for a time - and except for a brief slump there around the 30-game mark, has been brilliant. Pavelec, meanwhile, has had the most uneven of seasons, considering he fainted 10 minutes into Atlanta's first game, missed 10 matches with a concussion, and then has been lights-out brilliant for the Thrashers, proving that the decision to gift Kari Lehtonen to Dallas was defensible under the circumstances.

**Norris (top defenceman):** Nicklas Lidstrom (Detroit). Runners-up: Dustin Byfuglien (Atlanta), Kris Letang (Pittsburgh). Byfuglien is of course the easy sexy choice. He's immersed in a break-out season for Atlanta, the decision to switch him permanently to defence by Craig Ramsey brilliant in hindsight. Byfuglien is doing for the Thrashers what Duncan Keith did for his former team the Blackhawks last season - dominate at both ends of the ice, and gobble up big minutes beside. But Lidstrom is back with a vengeance for Detroit and while what he and Byfuglien do is far different - the former is more of a contain-style - it is impossible to overlook what the brilliant Swede is doing at age 40, offensively and defensively.

**Vezina (top goalie):** Winner: [Ondrej Pavelec](#). Runners-up: Tim Thomas (Boston), Jonathan Quick (Los Angeles). Montreal's Carey Price was a candidate through 30 games or so and could emerge again, but his numbers have tailed off of late. So, for that matter, have Thomas's, although they are still otherworldly. Two years after winning the Vezina, a year after mostly languishing on the bench, he is back, firmly entrenched as the Bruins' No. 1, playing for what is perennially one of the league's top defensive teams. Quick is quietly putting together an extraordinary season for the up-and-coming Kings, but Pavelec, with less to work with than any of the above and facing more shots than everybody this side of Jonas Hiller, has been the glue that's kept Atlanta's playoff drive alive.

**Jack Adams (coach of the year):** Winner: Ramsey (Atlanta). Runners-up: Dan Bylsma (Pittsburgh), Alain Vigneault (Vancouver). You could make a strong case for half-a-dozen worthy candidates, but Ramsey's work in Atlanta goes above and beyond. The Thrashers were skunked in the pre-season and looked as if they'd have their usual unremarkable season, especially with Kovalchuk gone to greyer pastures in New Jersey. But the haul of players recruited from the Blackhawks' off-season purge, Pavelec's fine play in goal, and Ramsey's patient, teaching approach have made them a playoff contender, at least so far. Bylsma gets a tip of the cap for keeping the Penguins competitive, despite an ugly start by Marc-Andre Fleury, Staal's absence and Sergei Gonchar's departure for Ottawa.

**Calder (rookie of the year):** Winner: Taylor Hall (Edmonton). Runners-up: Jeff Skinner (Carolina), Logan Couture (San Jose): Couture is the goal-scoring leader among first-year players and Skinner is the youngest in the NHL, but Hall, after a slow start, is looking a lot like Stamkos did in his rookie season. His confidence is growing in leaps and bounds. More than anything, he has an on-ice presence that gives hints of the early Crosby - same wide body, same skating stance. Edmonton has a lot of very good rookies; Hall though has a chance to become something special.

**Selke Trophy (best defensive forward):** Ryan Kesler (Vancouver). Runners-up: Mike Richards (Philadelphia), Pavel Datsyuk (Detroit). Datsyuk's candidacy is hampered by a month on IR, but for many, he is still the most complete forward in the game. Richards' defensive abilities are engrained in his DNA, but Kesler has been all things to Vancouver this year - strong in the face-off circle, quality penalty killing, excellent plus-minus. He's come close for two years running; nothing about his play or production this year suggests it'll be third time unlucky.

**Lady Byng (gentlemanly conduct):** Martin St. Louis (Tampa). Runners-up: Daniel Sedin (Vancouver), Henrik Sedin (Vancouver). St. Louis is once again doing what he does best - competes hard, stays out of the box, scores points with the best of them and does it in the shadow of Stamkos now, just as he did it in the shadow of Lecavalier and Richards before. The consummate pro, just as the Sedins are for the surging Canucks.

**ETC ETC:** The Anaheim Ducks had won three in a row without Ryan Getzlaf, until Wednesday night's defeat to Nashville, in which they outplayed the Predators but were stymied by a fine performance from [Pekka Rinne](#). Anaheim is hanging in the playoff race, with about eight other like-minded teams, and one of the more unheralded reasons was the play of goaltender Jonas Hiller, who had faced more shots than any other NHL netminder, but had won 19 games for a team with a vastly rebuilt defence corps that featured a teenager, Cam Fowler, and a hard-working journeyman in Toni Lydman that had been excellent since returning from the vertigo and dizzy spells that kept him out at the start of the year ...Langenbrunner was scratched for Thursday night's 4-2 loss to the Flyers, told to stay home until general manager Lou Lamoriello could complete the deal with the Stars for his rights. Langenbrunner could be a valuable pick-up for Dallas, given his playoff experience (two Stanley Cup championships) and leadership qualities (captain of the Devils as well as the 2010 U.S. Olympic team). Langenbrunner has also been a 60-point plus scorer in three of the last four years, when he's played virtually a full schedule (the only year he missed was 07-08 when he was absent for 18 games because of injury). Langenbrunner is a rental for now, a soon-to-be unrestricted free agent, but at 35, there is

a better than even chance that he'll play out his career in Dalals, where it began back in 1994-95 - and may give the Stars some measure of protection if Brad Richards ultimately departs as a free agent.

**AND FINALLY:** Injuries may be a cyclical fact of NHL life, but there was a patch in this past fortnight where no less than six teams all lost their leading scorers for a little while anyway. Apart from Crosby, that toll also included Buffalo (Derek Roy), Detroit ([Pavel Datsyuk](#)), Anaheim (Ryan Getzlaf), Chicago (Jonathan Toews) and Edmonton (Ryan Whitney). And while Jason Spezza (Ottawa) wasn't the Senators' de facto scoring leader (that dubious honour on the low-scoring Senators belonged to Erik Karlsson), he was within three points when he was injured. Add in Cal O'Reilly (No. 2 on Nashville) and it represented a trend that defied analysis since the injuries ranged from borderline cheap shots (like the one that sidelined Spezza) to quirky flukes (Getzlaf getting multiple nasal fractures, after a puck was tipped up into his face).

Detroit then went ahead of lost Daniel Cleary, their leading goal-scorer, as well. As for Chicago, they were lucky to get Toews back after only a two-game absence; and following the returns of [Patrick Kane](#) and Marian Hossa, for now anyway, have all hands on deck for the second-half push to a playoff spot.

Overall, none of the injuries were unique or related to a particular cause - such as head shots - and the NHL had been humming along pretty well there for a while, with a minimum number of serious injuries.

Detroit, on a tour of Western Canada this week, had a lot of experience dealing with this phenomenon last year, and were barely on the cusp of a playoff spot until after the 2010 Olympic break. Then they got healthy, caught fire in March and eventually soared to fifth in the West. Accordingly, they are used to dealing with the adversity and maybe even better suited to handle it because of their depth up front.

“As you say, we've been there before,” suggested Henrik Zetterberg, who had moved past Datsyuk into top spot on the Red Wings' scoring list. “Probably after the All-Star break, everybody'll be back and we'll have 27 games to get it going again.”

Zetterberg didn't have a better explanation for the outbreak than I did. He wasn't sure if it was cyclical, a function of scheduling, or more likely, a combination of both.

“There are a lot of games,” he acknowledged, “and if you play a lot of hockey and injuries will happen. It's part of it. It's a physical game. It is just what it is and you have to deal with. When injuries come, you have to play through it and make the best of it.”

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548843      Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' hot scorers exemplify team's depth

By HELENE ST. JAMES

CALGARY, Alberta -- Red Wings forward Valtteri Filppula missed Thursday's practice because of a groin injury. He sounded optimistic it wouldn't keep him from playing, but if he can't, the Wings have shown a knack for plugging holes.

Should they not have Filppula available tonight against the Flames at the Saddledome, they might look to Patrick Eaves. He skated with the top-six forwards in Filppula's place and is ready to play after missing three games with a sore elbow. It speaks to the team's depth that they have a fourth-liner who has 11 goals, fifth-most among the forwards.

"Eaves has been good for us," Chris Osgood said. "He's one of the reasons we're doing so well. He's been playing really well for us and scoring some big goals."

So has Darren Helm, who has eight of his 14 points in the past 11 games. The Wings especially are thrilled to see that Helm appears to be thinking more when he has the puck.

"We think Helmer is a hard guy to match up against because he works so hard, he competes so hard, he's on the puck," coach Mike Babcock said. "If he can get to be a guy who slows it down a little bit in his mind, so he can execute like he did last game, like he's done for the last while, that's positive for us. We know he can be a great fourth-line center who can win a Cup. ... We're optimistic that he can get better and take steps, but we're also very happy with what he does."

NOTEBOOK: The Wings watched video as part of Thursday's practice focused on cutting down goals-against. The Wings have allowed at least three goals in each of the past five games, but Babcock put the kibosh on any notion it coincided with losing forward Danny Cleary. "I don't buy any of that," Babcock said. "We've just got to keep being diligent and working at it. I'm a big believer, when you go through injuries, your structure protects the individual, and when you're not having injuries, your structure makes the skill come out. So either way you want, you've got to be good without the puck and you've got to be well structured." ...

Jimmy Howard is back in goal, looking to rebound from a little subpar stretch. "Has he been bad or an issue? No, not one bit," Babcock said. "But once you do something for a period of time, you set a standard for yourself, and we expect that standard and want more." ... Tonight's game begins another three-games-in-four-nights stretch for the Wings, who play at Vancouver on Saturday and at Colorado on Monday.

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548844      Detroit Red Wings

Wings persevere for rare shootout victory but lose Brad Stuart

Ted Kulfan / The Detroit News



Calgary, Alberta -- They won a game when they weren't at their best, but the mood in the Red Wings locker room didn't reflect it.

The Wings were livid after Friday's 5-4 shootout victory over Calgary.

The source of the anger was a blindside hit by Calgary's Tom Kostopoulos at 10:07 of the third period on Brad Stuart that broke Stuart's jaw.

The Wings felt it was late, unnecessary and is worthy of a suspension.

Stuart, for his part, made the trip after the game to Vancouver. But whether Stuart needs surgery, and how long he'll be out of the lineup, remains to be seen.

"It's embarrassing," said coach Mike Babcock of Kostopoulos' hit. "It's unfortunate, it was bad. A blindside hit to the head. It's uncalled for and unneeded. It's disappointing."

Babcock had little doubt the league will take action.

"I'd assume they'd look into it and I'd assume he'd be suspended," Babcock said.

"You're supposed to protect the good players in the league and he's a good player.

"I'd have no problem if the guy buries him. He's swinging at the puck but you don't have to hit him in the head. There's no reason for that. That's disappointing."

Flames coach Brent Sutter and Kostopoulos had no comment.

"I'm not commenting on it," Sutter said. "I haven't seen it."

The Wings were able to earn a victory in a shootout for the first time this season (1-1). They're only 24-30 all-time in the extra session, surprising considering the quality of offensive players they've had.

Todd Bertuzzi scored the lone goal in the shootout. Bertuzzi went in slowly on Flames goalie Miikka Kiprusoff, and casually flipped a backhand past the beleaguered goalie.

Jimmy Howard stopped all three Calgary shooters.

"Howie stepped up and made big saves and it was great to see Bert make a move like that," Nicklas Lidstrom said. "He was going real slow but he obviously knew what he was doing."

The Wings survived a Calgary power play in overtime (Bertuzzi for slashing) with Howard, who struggled through two periods, making two big stops on Calgary's Jarome Iginla.

"I wanted to win," said Howard, who had lost two consecutive games. "I wasn't going to make it three, that's for sure. I was going to do what it took to win a game."

Brian Rafalski hadn't scored all season but got two goals Friday. His second, at 8:16 of the third period, tied the score at 4.

Darren Helm and Patrick Eaves (power play) also scored for the Wings (26-10-5, 57 points).

Curtis Glencross had two goals, and Jarome Iginla and Anton Babchuk (power play) scored for Calgary (18-20-4, 40 points).

"Obviously we're very short-staffed and we didn't have the puck like we normally have, but we hung in there," Babcock said. "We found a way to get a couple of points, which is important."

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548845      Detroit Red Wings

Jimmy Howard toughs it out and gets a win

Ted Kulfan / The Detroit News

Calgary, Alberta -- Through two periods it wasn't looking very good for Jimmy Howard. But it sure ended well.

Howard, much like the Red Wings, persevered and was pivotal in the Wings' 5-4 shootout victory over the Calgary Flames.

Howard allowed four goals on 22 shots through two periods. But he stopped all 17 in the third period and overtime, and stopped all three Calgary players in the shootout.

Howard had lost two consecutive games last week and was skipped over in favor of Chris Osgood Tuesday in Edmonton.

Osgood, said coach Mike Babcock, will start Saturday in Vancouver.

"I wanted to win," Howard said of Friday's game. "I was going to do what it took to win a game."

Howard didn't look comfortable through 40 minutes, scrambling and going down quickly. But he settled down with the game in the balance.

"Just keep battling," Howard said. "It's going to pass if I stay focused and keep trying to make saves. Bounces will go our way."

Neither Howard or Calgary goalie Miikka Kiprusoff, was effective. Kiprusoff only made 23 saves, and three of the Wings' four goals could be labeled soft.

"Both goalies couldn't get hit (with the puck) early. Our guy found a way to make a few saves in the end," Babcock said. "Both the goalies were the same, the puck went in the net. Both guys were probably wondering what was going on?"

"Then at the end, Howie did a good job."

Halfway mark

The Red Wings reached the halfway mark of the schedule -- game 41 of the 82-game season -- in a familiar spot.

The Wings lead the Central Division and are the second seed in the Western Conference.

With a 26-10-5 record (57 points), they are pace for yet another 100-point season.

The injury toll hasn't been as extensive as last season. But it's been significant, what with Pavel Datsyuk (broken right hand, expected back end of January), Danny Cleary (fractured left ankle, end of January return) and Mike Modano (lacerated right wrist, mid-March) all key offensive threats.

Babcock was pleased with the first half, although there's room for improvement.

"We've played real well, but in saying that, we haven't been as great lately," Babcock said. "Our injuries haven't helped us, but it's been a good growth opportunity for other people. We're set up in good position. You'd always like to have more. But if we duplicate in the second half what we did in the first half, that would be great."

Players such as Patrick Eaves (12 goals) and Darren Helm (16 points, plus-7) have been surprises, while Nicklas Lidstrom (39 points), Henrik Zetterberg (31 assists, 46 points) and Johan Franzen (17 goals) have taken on even larger responsibilities.

Babcock targets playing without the puck and the penalty kill (ranked 15th, 81.8 percent) as areas where the Wings need to improve.

The tight playoff race in the West doesn't allow for slumps or overlooking any team.

"We're in survival mode right now," Babcock said. "With the people that aren't in our lineup, we're clawing and scratching every night. When your club is like ours is right now, overlooking anybody doesn't happen."

Filppula out

Valtteri Filppula (groin) missed Friday's game. He took part in the morning skate but left the ice long before the skate ended.

"I wasn't happy about it but you have to be careful," Filppula said. "It was better when I was skating straight but when I was crossing over I felt it a little more. You have to be careful so you don't miss a lot of time." Eaves (infected elbow) returned to the lineup and scored a goal, while Filppula exited.

Babcock said Filppula is day-to-day, but acknowledged groin injuries can linger for a week or two.

"It's not a sharp pain, but just kind of there," Filppula said. "It's frustrating. But I'm trying to be smart about it and hope it doesn't get worse."

Ice chips

Babcock switched Johan Franzen to center with Filppula out. Franzen had an assist and was plus-2 in 22:15 ice time.

... Brian Rafalski scored his first two goals of the season in his 800th career game.

... Zetterberg's assist was the 300th of his career. He also extended his points streak to nine games (five goals, eight assists). Nicklas Lidstrom's eight-game point streak ended.

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Valtteri Filppula (groin) out as Wings reach halfway point of season

Ted Kulfan / The Detroit News

Calgary, Alberta— As the Red Wings approach the half way mark Friday night Game 41 of an 82-game schedule they're in a familiar spot:

Near the top of the standings (25-10-5, 55 points), and compensating for another injury.

The Wings will be without Valtteri Filppula on Friday. He's out, nursing a groin injury, and his availability is day-to-day.

Filppula participated for the early part of Friday's morning skate, but left the ice early.

"I wasn't happy about it, but you have to be careful," Filppula said. "It was better when I was skating straight but when I was crossing over I felt it a little more.

"You have to be careful so you don't miss a lot of time."

As Filppula was scratched from the lineup, Patrick Eaves (infected elbow) was to return after missing the last three games.

Babcock planned to use Henrik Zetterberg, Johan Franzen (replacing Filppula), Darren Helm and Justin Abdelkader as his centers against Calgary.

Babcock was pleased with the first half of the season, although there's room for improvement.

"We've played real well, but in saying that we haven't been as great lately," Babcock said. "Our injuries (Danny Cleary, Pavel Datsyuk, Mike Modano) haven't helped us, but it's been a good growth opportunity for other people."

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## Red Wings rally for shootout victory over Flames

The Canadian Press

CALGARY -- Two years ago when he played in Calgary, [Todd Bertuzzi](#) says he practised breakaways against [Miikka Kiprusoff](#) all the time.

That experience paid off Friday night.

[Brian Rafalski](#) scored his first two goals of the season while Bertuzzi registered the only goal of the shootout as the Detroit Red Wings rallied for a 5-4 victory over the Flames.

"I played here so I know Kip," said Bertuzzi, who played one season with Calgary. "He knows that I like to go in tight so I knew the poke check was coming. It was just a matter of me being quick with it and try to get it up."

After [Jiri Hudler](#) and [Alex Tanguay](#) each were stopped, Bertuzzi beat Kiprusoff with a nifty deke to his backhand.

[Jimmy Howard](#) kept it 1-0 stopping Nicklas Hagman and on Calgary's final chance to tie the shootout, [Rene Bourque](#) missed the net.

It was a huge turn of events for Bertuzzi, who spent the final 90 seconds of overtime in the penalty box watching the Flames pour on the pressure in their quest for the winning goal.

Asked if it felt like he was in the penalty box for a long time, Bertuzzi, replied: "Not really, I spent half of it yelling at (the ref) so it went by pretty quick.

"I wanted to score just because that ref who called that penalty on me. That motivated me more than anything."

Howard's best stop in the 4-on-3 came when he scrambled across the crease to get his blocker on [Jarome Iginla](#)'s shot.

Howard finished with 35 saves. His best work came in overtime when he turned aside six Flames shots including a dangerous one-timer from [Jarome Iginla](#).

"We kept ourselves in it, gave ourselves a chance and we were able to get that fourth one, and battled through overtime and Howie made some big saves on that last power play," said Rafalski, who tied it 4-4 on a harmless-looking long wrist shot at 8:16 of the third. "We found a way to get two points on the road and that's what you have to do."

[Darren Helm](#) and [Patrick Eaves](#) also scored for Detroit (26-10-5). The Red Wings immediately head to Vancouver where on Saturday they'll battle the Canucks in a showdown of the Western Conference's top two teams.

"They're playing well right now so it's going to be a big game, obviously, if you look at the standings," Rafalski said.

[Curtis Glencross](#) had two goals and an assist for Calgary (18-20-4). Iginla and [Anton Babchuk](#) had the others. Babchuk added two assists for his first multi-point game since being acquired in November from the Carolina Hurricanes.

The Flames are off until Tuesday when they begin a three-game Eastern road trip in Carolina.

"Obviously, we thought we deserved better," said Glencross. "We can't dwell on it. We all had a pretty good hockey game in here tonight."

The one possible exception might be Kiprusoff, who surrendered three soft goals on a rare shaky night between pipes.

"I'm not pointing fingers, I'm not going to do that, but there are saves that have to be made and they go through you," said Flames coach Brent Sutter. "We deserved two points here tonight and we never got them."

Detroit was outshot 39-27.

Glencross entered the game stuck in a massive slump with just one assist in his previous 17 contests. During that stretch he'd been a healthy scratch for two games.

He snapped out of the slump in a big way with two goals and an assist before the game was 22 minutes old.

"It's nice to get that monkey off the back. It's been a battle. It's nice to finally get going again," said Glencross. Notes: Detroit C [Valteri Filppula](#) (groin) did not play... Calgary RW [Ales Kotalik](#) took a turn as a healthy scratch. Kotalik has one goal and no assists in 14 games... Rafalski played in his 800th NHL game while Kostopoulos played in NHL game No. 500... The five-game road trip Detroit is on is the first of two road trips of that length for the Red Wings. The other is Feb. 26 -- Mar. 5... Calgary RW [Tim Jackman](#)'s five-game point streak (three goals, three assists) came to an end... Detroit has surrendered three or more goals in 10 of its last 11 games.

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## Red Wings' Stuart suffers broken jaw; out indefinitely

TSN.ca Staff

The Detroit Red Wings have lost one of their top defencemen indefinitely.

Brad Stuart suffered a broken jaw after a blindside hit by Calgary's Tom Kostopoulos midway through the third period of Friday's 5-4 shootout victory.

Kostopoulos was assessed a two-minute roughing penalty on the play and could face more discipline from the league.

Stuart reportedly underwent surgery Saturday morning in Vancouver and according to head coach Mike Babcock, he will be out "for a while."

Stuart joins Pavel Datsyuk (hand), Dan Cleary (ankle), Mike Modano (wrist) and Valteri Filppula (groin) on the injury list.

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