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Heika's Take: Stars face sizable task after dropping Game 2 to Golden Knights

By Mike Heika

April 25, 2024

When the Stars got down 3-0 to the Vegas Golden Knights in the 2023 Western Conference Final, coach Pete DeBoer said the challenge was like eating an elephant – you have to do it one bite at a time.

The Stars pushed that series to six games before losing in game six to the eventual Stanley Cup champions.

This season, they are down 2-0 in the best-of-seven series after a 3-1 home loss Wednesday. So, how big is this challenge?

“It’s big, but you can’t feel sorry for yourself,” DeBoer said.

Dallas controlled much of the first period and scored first when [Jason Robertson](#) popped in a power play goal. However, Vegas bounced right back when [Radek Faksa](#) turned a puck over, and Golden Knights star players Jack Eichel and Jonathan Marchessault got behind [Ryan Suter](#) and [Thomas Harley](#) to tie things up at the 18:09 mark of the first.

The Stars had an 11-6 edge in shots on goal, a 24-14 advantage in shot attempts and had twice as many quality scoring chances, so there was a feeling of disappointment in the first intermission.

“I loved our first period,” DeBoer said. “We make one mistake at the end of the first and that was a critical point in the game. The wrong guy gets behind us at the wrong time, and that’s what they do, they make you pay. You come out of the first after playing a great period, and you have nothing to show for it, and that was a momentum swing.”

After that, Dallas was able to generate just 10 total shots on goal – five in the second and five in the third. As much as Logan Thompson was very good in net for Vegas, the bottom line is a team that has some of the best defensemen in the league and knows how to play a suffocating style, gave the Stars very little.

“We just didn’t generate a lot of shots on net. Five shots, that’s not enough,” said Robertson, who has two goals in two games so far. “They’re the defending Cup champs for a reason. They know how to squeeze it out and finish the game out. We need to generate more shot attempts, look for some tips and get some second and third chances.”

Dallas was the third in scoring this season at 3.59 goals per game, but has just four goals so far in the first two games against Vegas. The game also was different in that Dallas was credited with 53 hits. It averaged 17.6 hits per game during the regular season, ranking 31st in the league.

“Maybe we’re hitting too much, maybe we need to go for pucks more,” [Tyler Seguin](#) said. “We’ll take a look at it.”

DeBoer said he liked the physical play – Vegas finished with 55 hits – but didn’t like the fact that both [Mason Marchment](#) and Faksa left the game with injuries in the third period.

“I liked the fact that both teams were physically engaged,” DeBoer said. “I didn’t think it hurt our game, other than we lost some bodies.”

There was no update on either player after the game, so we’ll see if either or both could be out for Game 3 on Saturday in Las Vegas.

Vegas finished with a 26-21 advantage in shots on goal in this game, and did a wonderful job of holding onto a one-goal lead before adding an empty-netter late. The Golden Knights battled injuries all season and finished as the second wild card team/eight seed in the Western Conference. That means they drew the top-seeded Stars and had to play on the road to start the series.

But it didn’t take long for this team to find its game after adding the likes of Mark Stone, Tomáš Hertl, Anthony Mantha and Noah Hanifin into the mix. Vegas is playing like the defending Stanley Cup champs and now gets the chance to take its 2-0 lead home, where it was 27-12-2 this season, sixth best in the league. Dallas was 26-10-5 for the most road wins in franchise history and the best road record in the NHL this season.

“We’ve been the best road team in the league, and we’ve got to go in there and win,” DeBoer said. “But they’re a very good hockey club for a reason. I think they have a deeper roster than they had last year.”

That’s a scary proposition, but the Stars know what they’re up against. After all, Dallas won two games when facing elimination last season – and that was after overcoming 2-1 series deficits against Minnesota and Seattle.

“We’ve prided ourselves all year on how we respond,” said Seguin. “That was the message right away. You’ve got to start with one. We’ve been a good road team all year and we’ve got to do it again.

The historic odds aren’t good for the Stars. Since the NHL started the wild card format in 2014, teams that go down 2-0 in a best-of-seven series while losing the first two at home are 3-24 in winning the series.

“Disappointed,” DeBoer said when asked about the reality of his top-seeded team being in such a big hole. “I thought Game 1, we probably deserved better, but you’ve got to find a way to win that game. Tonight, the margin was [tiny]. It was a 1-1 game for most of the game. They found a way to win both.”

And that’s what Vegas has done. It went 16-6 in the playoffs last season and was just a bit better on a lot of nights. This team knows how to win playoff games.

“Maybe we’re a little frustrated by last year, knowing how good a team we are, especially 5-on-5,” Seguin said. “We’ll take the day tomorrow and reset and get excited for this challenge ahead of us.”

NHL.com

Shaver dies at 96, was radio voice for Minnesota North Stars

By NHL.com

April 24, 2024

Al Shaver, a media honoree in the Hockey Hall of Fame and longtime radio voice of the Minnesota North Stars, has died at the age of 96.

Shaver was the 1993 recipient of the Foster Hewitt Memorial Award in recognition of those in radio and television who made outstanding contributions to their profession and hockey as selected by the NHL Broadcasters' Association. He is also a member of the Minnesota Broadcasting Hall of Fame for his contributions with the North Stars from 1967 until the franchise relocated to Dallas in 1993. He went on to call men's hockey games at the University of Minnesota until retiring in 1996 after 48 years in broadcasting.

Shaver graduated from the Lorne Greene Academy of Radio and television arts in Toronto in 1948 and worked as a morning talk show host and baseball play-by-play announcer in Guelph, Ontario, Calgary and Medicine Hat, Alberta. He called the Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian Football League beginning in 1952 and handled five Gray Cup championship games for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.



© Beverly Schaefer/Hockey Hall of Fame

Following stints in Montreal and Toronto during the 1960s, Shaver arrived in Minneapolis-Saint Paul. He is a 10-time Minnesota Sportscaster of the Year and a 2003 inductee into the Pavek Museum of public broadcasting.

His son, Wally, is the current voice of the Golden Gophers hockey program.

The Al Shaver Press Box at Xcel Energy Center, home of the Minnesota Wild, is named in his honor. Shaver called the final game in North Stars history and signed off with the "Last Call" after a 5-3 loss to the Detroit Red Wings at Joe Louis Arena on April 15, 1993.

"The Stars lose it here, 5-3, and now it's pack-'em up time and on to Dallas," Shaver announced. "We wish them good luck. And to all the North Stars over the past 26 years, we say thank you, all of you, for so much fine entertainment.

"It's been a pleasure knowing you. Minnesota's loss is definitely a gain for Dallas, and a big one. We thank you, though, from the bottoms of our hearts, for all the wonderful nights at Met Center, when you've given us so much entertainment and you've been such a credit to the community in which you played. We will still remember you as the Minnesota North Stars. Good night, everybody. And goodbye."

NHL.com

Golden Knights head home to 'hardest place to play in League' with 2 road wins

By Paul Delos Santos

April 24, 2024

DALLAS -- Vegas Golden Knights forward [Keegan Kolesar](#) smiled when asked what he looked forward to when they return home for their first playoff game at T-Mobile Arena as defending Stanley Cup champions following their 3-1 victory against the Dallas Stars in Game 2 of the Western Conference First Round.

"The fan base," Kolesar said. "It's the best. You saw it, you know, voted the hardest place to play in League."

The Golden Knights return to Las Vegas with a 2-0 series lead against the Stars. They got timely goals and played another defensively sound game, limiting Dallas to 10 shots over the final two periods and holding them without a shot on goal in the final 6:45 of the third period.

"The veteran group we have, I think it just shows, we know how to win," said [Logan Thompson](#), who made 20 saves Wednesday. "We've done it all year. We did last year. That's just the experience of our group coming through and just shutting them down and keeping me outside and making my life a lot easier."

The Golden Knights have won all four series in team history when leading 2-0. Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said there is a slight shift in mindset when it comes to leading 2-0 compared to splitting the first two games.

"We're that much closer to our main goal, first and foremost, and understanding how we're playing to get there," Cassidy said. "Now, for me, I'm thinking 'OK, let's just be better in Game 3 at home and let's not assume anything.' They're going to come in ready to go. They know they're up against it."

Last season, Vegas took a 3-0 lead in the Western Conference Final before Dallas rallied with back-to-back wins before losing Game 6.

"They made it 3-2 in a hurry, so I don't think they're going anywhere," Cassidy said. "So, our focus is we're going to talk about ourselves and not worry about how Dallas may or may not respond. They're a good team, come ready to play. ... So, it doesn't matter where we play. We're getting a strong opponent."

The Stars, meanwhile, have lost nine of the last 11 meetings with the Golden Knights.

"They're the Stanley Cup Champions. They've got everyone figured out," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "They figured out everyone last year, too. We're not alone in that boat."

The Stars were the best road team in the NHL during regular season (26-10-5) and will lean on that experience as they try to become the first team since the 2002 Detroit Red Wings to win a series after falling behind 2-0 as a No. 1 seed.

“You can’t feel sorry for yourself,” DeBoer said. “I like a lot of the things we’re doing. We got to find an extra goal or two a night 5-on-5 and keep one extra out a night 5-on-5. ... You can’t just dwell on the negative. You got to look; we’ve been the best road team in the League all year. We got to go in there and win some road games.”

NHL.com

Golden Knights defeat Stars in Game 2, extend Western 1st Round lead

By Taylor Baird

April 25, 2024

DALLAS -- [Jack Eichel](#) and [Jonathan Marchessault](#) each had a goal and an assist for the Vegas Golden Knights, who extended their lead in the Western Conference First Round with a 3-1 win against the Dallas Stars in Game 2 at American Airlines Center on Wednesday.

"I think we expected them to come out and push hard that first 5-10 minutes, and they did," Eichel said. "They were physical, played hard, they had some chances. [Logan Thompson] made some big stops for us. That's a very desperate hockey team and a very good one. They gave us all we could handle."

[Noah Hanifin](#) also scored for Vegas, which is the second wild card from the West. [Logan Thompson](#) made 20 saves.

"The veteran group we have, losing [Nicolas Hague](#) was unfortunate but we can just plug [Alec Martinez](#) back in there, just shows we know how to win," Thompson said. "We've done it all year. We did it last year. That's just the experience of our group coming through. Just shutting them down and keeping them to the outside, making my life a lot easier."

[Jason Robertson](#) scored, and [Jake Oettinger](#) made 23 saves for Dallas, which is the No. 1 seed from the Central Division.

"They're the Stanley Cup champions, they've got everyone figured out. They figured out everyone last year too, so we're not alone in that boat," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "I thought Game 1 we probably deserved better, but you have to find a way to win that game. Tonight, the margin is [thin], it's a 1-1 game most of the game. They found a way to win both those games."

Game 3 of the best-of-7 series is at Vegas on Saturday (10:30 p.m. ET; TBS, truTV, MAX, BSSW, SCRIPPS).

"I'll go back to as recently as last year they were down 3-0 [in the series] and made it 3-2 in a hurry. I don't think they're going anywhere," Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Our focus is more we're going to talk about ourselves and not worry about how Dallas may or may not respond. They're a good team, they'll come ready to play. They're a great road team. They may have the best road record in the NHL. If not, they're right there. There's going to be no gimmies in that regard, so it doesn't matter where we play. We're getting a strong opponent. We've just got to keep building our game."

Robertson gave Dallas a 1-0 lead at 16:47 of the first period on a shot from the top of the left face-off circle on the power play.

Marchessault tied it 1-1 at 18:09. [Ivan Barbashev](#) sprung Eichel on a breakaway with a stretch pass. Eichel drove down the slot to draw Oettinger out then backhanded a pass to Marchessault on his right for the shot into the open net.

“They’re the defending Cup champs for a reason. They know how to squeeze it out and finish a game off,” Robertson said. “It’s going to be a grind [to come back in the series], but everyone in here is going to be confident and ready to go.”

Hanifin gave Vegas a 2-1 lead at 18:53 in the second period when he corralled a rebound and shot it from the left face-off dot. It was Hanifin’s first career playoff goal.

“We didn’t sit back and let them control the play,” Hanifin said. “We checked really well, especially off the rush, we had really good gaps, good back pressure from our forwards. That’s where they’re dangerous is off the rush, and we kind of eliminated those chances. We were still trying to make plays and score goals [in the third], that’s what you want to do when you’ve got a lead.”

Eichel scored into the empty net at 19:26 for the 3-1 final.

“You’ve got to start with one. They played some good road games and we’ve been a good road team all year, and we’ve got to do it again,” Dallas forward [Tyler Seguin](#) said. “Maybe we’re almost being frustrated by last year, knowing how good of a team we are, especially at 5-on-5. We’ll take the day tomorrow, reset, and get excited for this challenge ahead of us.”

NOTES: Hague is day to day with an undisclosed injury. He did not play in Game 2. ... Dallas forwards [Mason Marchment](#) and [Radek Faksa](#) each was injured between the six- and eight-minute mark in the third period. DeBoer did not have an update on either after the game.

The Dallas Morning News

Five thoughts from Stars' Game 2 loss to Golden Knights: Late response eludes Dallas

By Lia Assimakopoulos

April 24, 2024

The Stars fell into a two-game hole in their first-round series with the Vegas Golden Knights after dropping their second home game 3-1.

After striking first in the first period, Vegas answered with two goals to secure the win and added an empty netter with 33 seconds remaining.

The Stars will now have to hit the road and steal a game in Vegas to keep their season alive.

Here are five thoughts from Game 2 of Stars-Golden Knights:

Both teams brought next-level physicality

The Stars were given a wakeup call in Game 1 when Vegas delivered 55 hits to their 31, reminding the Stars — who are far from the league's most physical team — of the type of hockey their opponent plays.

On Wednesday, the Stars tried to match it.

Dallas, which averaged only 17.8 hits per game in the regular season, recorded 53 total while Vegas had 55 again. That included Mason Marchment delivering a booming hit on Zach Whitecloud in the first period and Jason Robertson following it up with a hit on Mark Stone not long after, which made the Dallas crowd go wild.

Jamie Benn, Mason Marchment and Radek Faksa were among Dallas' leaders with seven, seven and six hits. Keegan Kolesar led Vegas with nine.

The Stars haven't needed to resort to a physical game this season. One of their most physical players — Jani Hakanpää, their leader in hits by 86 — hasn't even been available for the last month. But it might be a necessary strategy to compete both with Vegas and in playoff-style hockey.

Forward Tyler Seguin suggested postgame that Dallas may have focused too much on the physical aspect of the game, especially when it needed a late goal.

"Maybe we're hitting too much," he said. "Maybe we have to go after the pucks more."

However coach Pete DeBoer said the only drawback in his eyes was that Marchment and Faksa were both injured in the process.

"I like the fact both teams were physically engaged," he said. "I didn't think it hurt our game other than we lost some bodies."

Jason Robertson's playoff success vs. Vegas continues

Stars forward Jason Robertson went through a slump last postseason where he went eight games in the first and second rounds without a goal. He came alive again in the Western Conference Finals against Vegas, scoring five goals and an assist in the series.

Robertson has goals in the first two games this series, scoring on the power play for Dallas late in the first period Wednesday. The man advantage was for a penalty he drew.

Robertson has been Dallas' most consistent point earner this season. While he scored 17 fewer goals in the regular season than last year, he was still the team's leader in points with 51 added assists.

However, his goal-scoring abilities are shining through early in the playoffs, especially when the goals are few and far between.

Dallas forced into line changes early in the series

After Vegas defenseman Noah Hanifin gave his team the lead with 1:07 remaining in the second period, Dallas returned to the ice in the third with a sense of desperation.

Facing a 0-2 deficit while starting the series at home was far from ideal and prompted the Stars coaching staff to make some changes.

Benn, Wyatt Johnston and Joe Pavelski started on a line together while Logan Stankoven joined Robertson and Roope Hintz for the final 20 minutes.

DeBoer rarely changes the Stars lines, especially the top one of Robertson, Hintz and Pavelski. He's only done so a handful of times this season.

The last two lines ultimately changed as well, as Marchment and Faksa exited the game early with injuries during the third period.

The change did not spark a goal for Dallas, which was held scoreless in the third.

Vegas' defense proving to be a problem for Dallas

Vegas finds its sweet spot when it can build a lead and then rely on its defensive game. That's what happened again Wednesday night.

The Golden Knights allowed the Stars just 21 shots on goal, including just five in each of the last two periods. After blocking 20 shots in Game 1, Vegas blocked an additional 16 in Game 2. However, Dallas competed with them, adding 18.

Even with defenseman Nicolas Hague out of the lineup due to a lower-body injury, the Golden Knights have unmatched defensive depth and were able to slide Alec Martinez in easily.

“I think they have a deeper roster than they had last year if you look at their entire lineup, including their scratches,” DeBoer said.

The Stars finished third in the league in goals per game at 3.59 but have been held below that average in both playoff games so far.

When the Stars have needed a late goal, no one is answering the call
Dallas trailed by one in the third period of both of the first two games and neither time was able to find the equalizer.

In fact, Dallas didn't score in either the second or third period Wednesday. The first period was Dallas' worst throughout the regular season, as the Stars relied on its offense that thrived in the second period to come back in 26 games.

But through two games this series, Dallas has three first-period goals and only one outside of that, which came in the third period of Game 1.

Dallas resolved one of its struggles from Game 1 by taking the early lead. However, that did only so much good since Vegas was able to score 82 seconds later.

“I think we've had our chances,” Seguin said. “They've been enough to win and just didn't do it.”

The Dallas Morning News

What happened to the fun, high-scoring Stars? Dallas needs a playoff miracle now

By Tim Cowlshaw

April 25, 2024

Forty-five minutes after another Stars loss to Vegas, this one by a 3-1 count, the ice at American Airlines Center was already covered up with boards, preparation for Mavs-Clippers Game 3 Friday night already well underway. This sort of thing happens all the time during the regular season, but it hits different when you recognize that maybe, just maybe, that ice won't need to be uncovered again until September.

How did things get so desperate so fast for the Dallas Stars, No. 1 seed in the West?

The simple answer is that Vegas showed up instead of the LA Kings, a result of the Golden Knights mailing in their final regular season game and losing to the awful Anaheim Ducks while LA was beating the equally bad Blackhawks to pass Vegas by a point in the standings. That was the same night the Stars locked down home-ice advantage for the Western Conference playoffs with a win over St. Louis, coach Pete DeBoer telling us afterward, "Now comes the fun part."

Stars fans are still waiting.

What's so fun about watching the Stars fail to score a single goal at even strength in a "must win" atmosphere in Game 2? What's so fun about Dallas scoring all of two goals in the last five periods against (checks notes) Logan Thompson? What's so fun about Thompson being better than Jake Oettinger in both the first two games of the playoffs?

A year ago it was the conference finals and the Stars found themselves down 2-0 to this same squad. At least they were heading home. Captain Jamie Benn nearly ended the series by himself by taking a horrible misconduct penalty near the start of Game 3, but Dallas still managed to stick around for six games. Maybe they can do the same again this time, but going on the road down 2-0 sure feels closer to the end than any of us imagined about 72 hours ago.

I pictured the Stars playing hockey into June. If they don't win a game at T-Mobile Arena, they won't make it to May.

"You can't feel sorry for yourself," DeBoer said after another late-night defeat. "It feels like it's more evenly matched this year to me. We were the best road team in the league this year, and we've got to go win some games there."

Related: Five thoughts from Stars' Game 2 loss to Golden Knights: Late response eludes Dallas
They have to win one, for sure, just to make those Game 5 tickets you might be holding have any value. At the same time DeBoer talked about liking his team's chances, he also said he

thinks Vegas has a deeper team than it did last spring in winning the Stanley Cup. And Stars fans will vouch for that.

Vegas' defense has the Stars' offense under house arrest. D-man Alex Pietrangelo, the captain of that 2019 St. Louis squad that slipped by the Stars on its way to a Cup, leads a blue line that mostly keeps Thompson out of harm's way. In a game that was 1-1, the Stars had a 12-6 advantage in shots on goal, then watched Vegas outshoot them 10-4 the rest of the period and outscore them 1-0 which is all that was needed. Jack Eichel's empty-net goal in the final minute was just a signal to get Stars fans running for the exits to make it home not too long after midnight.

What's it like when it feels as though the clock is striking way too soon for a really good hockey team? I've mentioned it more than once but I covered the first Stars' team to produce a banner (Central Division Champions 1996-97). A team that won the division by 10 points over eventual Cup winner Detroit didn't escape the first round in an almost tragic-feeling Game 7 double overtime loss to Edmonton. I can still see the stunned looks on the players' and Ken Hitchcock's faces.

This team, point-wise, is even better than that one was. They're in the playoffs for the third straight year and one assumes they have learned some things about the challenges along the way. But when Roope Hintz, this team's best player in the first two rounds a year ago, goes silent for two games and Oettinger is yet to play a game one might kindly describe as "adequate," when the Stars go over 10 minutes in a first-period stretch without a shot on goal, over eight minutes in the second doing likewise, it feels like the air is rushing out of this blimp awfully fast.

I can't imagine a team this good is going to be swept out of the playoffs in four games. Doesn't fit. Doesn't seem possible. But if you're asking me if the Stars can win four out of five over Vegas, three of them on the road? That sounds like a "Do you believe in miracles" call that just isn't going to get made.

The Dallas Morning News

Stars were stifled by Vegas once again. Do Golden Knights have Dallas figured out?

By Lia Assimakopoulos

April 25, 2024

The Stars entered their first-round series with Vegas saying last season didn't matter.

They even said the regular season didn't matter, as the teams hadn't faced each other since Dec. 9 — well before the trade deadline and the bulk of the season that landed the teams at first and eighth, respectively, in their conference.

But after dropping Game 2 to fall into a 0-2 hole in the series, marking the sixth consecutive loss to the Golden Knights and the ninth in their last 11 meetings, it might be a sign.

Do the Golden Knights just have the Stars figured out?

"They're the Stanley Cup champions," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said postgame. "They've got everyone figured out. They figured out everyone last year, too, so we're not alone in that boat."

In franchise history, the Stars have their second-to-worst winning percentage against the Golden Knights, beating them in just six of 17 meetings (35.3%). The only worse matchup for the Stars has been the Boston Bruins at (32.3%).

This season, there were only five teams Dallas did not beat. Of those teams, the Stars played only one of them three times — Vegas.

There's a reason most Stars fans — and likely the team included — hoped they'd draw Los Angeles on the last night of the regular season. A goal with 1:21 remaining ended that dream.

However, two of Dallas' regular-season meetings against the Golden Knights went to overtime. Both of its first two playoff games against them were decided by a single goal (outside of a garbage-time empty-netter for the Knights on Wednesday).

"I thought last year they probably carried the play, even though we found a way to scratch out some wins. I don't think that's the case this year," DeBoer said. "It doesn't feel that way anyways. It feels a lot more evenly matched to me."

But given how evenly matched the all-time series has been, it doesn't make much sense on paper why the Stars have so often come up on the wrong end.

Forward Tyler Seguin suggested some lingering emotions from last year have crept into this series. That was seen Wednesday night when the Stars shattered their average hits of 17.8 per game, delivering 53 in an emotional and physical game.

“Maybe we’re almost being frustrated by last year, by knowing how good of a team we are, especially 5-on-5,” Seguin said.

The Stars even seem to have the better chances in 5-on-5. For the second straight game, they had the advantage in high-danger scoring chances. But Vegas has found a way to capitalize on the breaks it gets, including a flawless rush goal on a pass from Jack Eichel to Jonathan Marchessault late in the first period that tied the score.

“We make one mistake at the end of the first,” DeBoer said. “That was probably a critical point in the game. That’s what they do. They make you pay. You come out of the first after playing a great period, and you have nothing to show for it.”

From there, Vegas has been able to dominate defensively, just as it did last year. The Golden Knights allowed just five Stars shots on goal in each of the second and third periods. They scored one on a scramble in front of the net, which was all they needed to put the game away.

“They’re the defending cup champs for a reason. They know how to squeeze it out and finish the game off,” Stars forward Jason Robertson said. “We just need to generate more shot attempts, maybe look for some tips, second and third chances.”

In a series with razor-thin margins, Vegas has done a great job playing to their strengths. Their physicality, depth and defensive abilities have shone through in the first two meetings, and the Stars haven’t done enough to match them.

But Dallas has strengths of its own it can play to. It holds a significant advantage on special teams. In the regular season, its power play ranked sixth in the league (24.2%) and its penalty kill ranked eighth (82%). Vegas, on the other hand, had just the 20th-best power play (20.2%) and 16th-best penalty kill (79.3%). The Stars capitalized on that advantage Wednesday, scoring their lone goal on the power play.

The Stars also have a stud in net, and he looked the part Wednesday. After a rocky start to the series, Oettinger was making diving saves left and right, stopping 23 shots on 25 attempts. He’s across the ice from Logan Thompson, who played in just his second playoff game Wednesday, and looked shaky at times, especially when attempting to make glove saves.

Above all that, the Stars had the third-best offense in the league in the regular season and by far the deepest with eight 20-plus goal scorers. Only three of them have found playoff goals so far with the Stars averaging two goals per game — far below their regular-season average of 3.59.

There are ways for the Stars to claw back into the series, but they'll have to start soon. Otherwise, they could head into another offseason wondering if Vegas can ever be beaten.

"We've prided ourselves all year on how we respond, how we don't lose many games in a row, so we'll start with one," Seguin said.

The Athletic

What's wrong with the Dallas Stars? Nothing, they've just run into the defending NHL champs

By Jesse Granger

April 25, 2024

DALLAS — Pete DeBoer addressed the media Wednesday night following a second-straight playoff game in which he felt his top-seeded [Dallas Stars](#) played well, and yet the Stars trail their first-round series against the [Golden Knights](#) 2-0 as it shifts to Las Vegas.

“They’re the Stanley Cup champions, they’ve got everyone figured out,” DeBoer said despondently after the 3-1 loss. “They figured out everyone last year, too, so we’re not alone on that boat.”

The Stars began Wednesday night’s game with the desperation you’d expect from a team in their situation.

Dallas forward [Mason Marchment](#) laid a crushing blow on [Zach Whitecloud](#) behind the Vegas net in the opening minutes. Moments later, [Jason Robertson](#) sent Vegas captain [Mark Stone](#) whirling to the ice violently with a big reverse check. In total, the Stars dished out 24 hits in the opening period alone and 53 in the game.

The sold-out crowd at American Airlines Center rocked the building, especially when Robertson gave the home team an early lead with a power-play goal.

None of it fazed the defending champs.

Vegas absorbed the punishment with composure, weathered the early storm and escaped the first period with a 1-1 tie. Then the Golden Knights found their game, completely shut down the Stars’ high-powered offense and closed out a 3-1 win to take a commanding 2-0 series lead as they head back to Vegas.

“It’s typical when you win the first one on the road and you’re feeling good about yourself, and all of a sudden they’re punching you in the mouth a little bit and then you had better get going,” Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said after. “We did respond well to that.”

After an impressive 113-point regular season, the Stars entered the playoffs as one of the favorites to win it all. They’re one of the most complete teams in the league, with four lines of forwards who are legitimate scoring threats, a world-class defenseman and a stud goalie. The Stars haven’t choked. In fact, they believe they’ve played relatively well in the opening two games of their first-round series. And yet, they find themselves in a 2-0 hole, heading to one of the most difficult venues to play in the [NHL](#).

Dating back to last year's Western Conference final, the Golden Knights have beaten the Stars in five straight games and nine of their last 11 meetings. At this point, the Dallas players appear to be out of answers.

"We played good enough to win the game and just didn't do it," Stars forward [Jamie Benn](#) said. "Maybe we're hitting too much. Maybe we need to go for pucks more. I don't know. Maybe we were just being frustrated by last year, and knowing how good of a team they are, especially at five-on-five."

Perhaps the most disheartening part of the start to the first-round series for the Stars is the fact they've played well.

"I loved our first period," DeBoer said. "We make one mistake at the end of the first. (We) probably deserved to be up. That was probably a critical point in the game. The wrong guy gets in behind us at the wrong time, and that's what they do. They make you pay. You come out of the first having played a great period and you have nothing to show for it."

Vegas forward [Ivan Barbashev](#) stole the puck and found [Jack Eichel](#) with a long stretch pass near the end of the opening frame. Eichel drove to the net with Stars defenseman [Ryan Suter](#) draped on his back, deked to pull goalie [Jake Oettinger](#) to the left, then dished the puck against the grain to [Jonathan Marchessault](#), who crushed it into the wide-open net.

"You go into the intermission 1-1 and we know we haven't been at our best but we got through it," Cassidy said. "Now it's like, 'OK let's build our game and get to our game,' and I think that's what happened."

After generating 11 shots and five high-danger chances in the opening period, Dallas had only 10 shots in the final 40 minutes. Their third-ranked offense which averaged 3.59 goals per game in the regular season was completely pacified by the Golden Knights' stout defense. Protecting a one-goal lead in the third period, Vegas didn't allow a single shot on goal over the final five minutes of the game. It was a defensive clinic eerily similar to Game 1 on Monday. Needing goals late, Dallas has generated only four total high-danger chances in the third period over both games.

"They were physical, but I think that fits into our style of play pretty well," said Vegas defenseman [Noah Hanifin](#), who scored the game-winning goal. "We're a big team and can play that type of game as well. I think we handled it and we were really poised. We made plays, and everyone was talking and communicating out there."

It's a shocking start to the postseason for the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference, heading on the road without a win, but this isn't a typical wild-card team the Stars are facing. These are the defending champions, healthy at exactly the right time of year. The Golden Knights are deep at every position, partially because they added Hanifin, [Tomas Hertl](#) and [Anthony Mantha](#) at the

deadline using the cap space cleared by placing Stone on long-term injured reserve when he lacerated his spleen.

Vegas has [come under a lot of criticism](#) for its utilization of the LTIR space and the timing of Stone's return for the second straight year. It's not the first team to use LTIR to its advantage, and considering it's within the current rules, it likely won't be the last.

The result is an incredibly deep roster with a wealth of postseason experience playing at the top of its game.

Eichel leads a center group loaded with talent. Hertl has already made his presence felt and plays a heavy style of hockey that thrives this time of year. [William Karlsson](#) is one of the best lockdown centers in the NHL, and [Nicolas Roy](#) is a big, powerful fourth-line centerman with the skill to finish around the net.

They're strong on the wing as well, with Stone, Barbashev, [Chandler Stephenson](#) and Marchessault — last year's Conn Smythe winner and this year's leading scorer. The defensive group has an embarrassment of riches with [Alex Pietrangelo](#), Hanifin, [Shea Theodore](#), [Brayden McNabb](#) and Whitecloud.

In goal, [Logan Thompson](#) has played well in his first two games of playoff hockey. He made a crucial save late in the second period, stuffing [Wyatt Johnston](#)'s drive to the net with his left pad to keep it 1-1. Moments later, Hanifin gave Vegas the lead. Waiting in the wings is [Adin Hill](#), who backstopped last year's Cup run.

"They're a very good hockey club for a reason," DeBoer said. "I think they've got a deeper roster than they had last year if you look at their entire lineup including their scratches."

For a good example of that depth, look no further than the replacement for defenseman [Nicolas Hague](#), who was injured near the end of Game 1. In comes three-time Cup champion [Alec Martinez](#) who played in every playoff game in last year's run and scored the Cup-clinching goal for Los Angeles in 2014. He filled in on Wednesday and the group didn't miss a beat.

Dallas has outplayed Vegas for stretches in each of the first two games, but the details have cost the Stars. A momentary lapse in focus lost the lead at the end of the first period and flipped the entire momentum of the game. It's that attention to detail the Golden Knights have mastered over several deep playoff runs.

"There's an understanding of what it takes to win in this league," Cassidy said. "We've been through it this time of year. You can't get loose. You can't relax. You have to stay on your toes and try to attack."

"I think our guys really matured through the run last year. I wasn't here the year before so I can't speak to what happened on previous runs, but I just like what's said on the bench. I like our professional approach."

The Stars won the West in the regular season for a reason. They were one of very few teams to rank inside the top 10 in both goals for and against. They finished with the second-most points in franchise history, behind only the 1998-99 team that won the Cup. They had eight different players with at least 20 goals, and nine with at least 50 points. This team is really good. The Stars fell behind Vegas 3-0 in last year's conference finals, but did win two straight to make it a series before falling in Game 6. They also had the best road record in the NHL this season, so hope isn't lost.

"You can't feel sorry for yourself," DeBoer said. "I like a lot of the things we're doing. We have to find a way to find an extra goal or two a night at five-on-five and keep an extra one out a night at five-on-five."

Still, to play as well as Dallas has with a 2-0 series deficit to show for it is frustrating, and it's showing.

Asked how he and his teammates can put these losses behind them heading to Las Vegas, Stars forward [Tyler Seguin](#) responded, "I don't know, read a book? Do what you have to do. I don't know."

ESPN.com

Stars in 2-0 series hole again after Game 2 loss to Knights

By Ryan S. Clark

April 25, 2024

DALLAS -- For a second straight postseason, the [Dallas Stars](#) will be tasked with trying to climb out of a 2-0 first-round series hole against the [Vegas Golden Knights](#).

A 3-1 loss Wednesday in a Western Conference quarterfinal game at the American Airlines Center left the Stars searching for answers against a team they've failed to beat in six straight games and in nine of their past 11 regular-season and playoff games.

"I think we had our chances, played good enough to win again," Stars forward [Tyler Seguin](#) said. "We just didn't do it."

One of the challenges the Stars have faced in their recent encounters against the Golden Knights was falling behind early. It happened again in Game 1 on Monday when the Golden Knights scored the first two goals to set up what was an eventual 4-3 victory.

Game 2 saw the Stars score the first goal against the Golden Knights for the first time since Game 2 of the Western Conference finals last season.

Stars forward [Jason Robertson](#) scored a power-play goal with 3:13 left in the first period. But the lead lasted less than two minutes when reigning Conn Smythe Trophy winner [Jonathan Marchessault](#) tied the score with 1:51 remaining.

From there, it was about what team could find a firm enough grasp to take control of a game that constantly felt out of reach.

Dallas felt that frustration in the second period when [Wyatt Johnston](#) won a puck battle that allowed him to play a quick pass to [Logan Stankoven](#), who then delivered a back-door pass to Robertson, only to have Robertson's shot gradually rise over a gaping net.

Vegas felt that same frustration as well. There was a 4-on-4 in the second period that saw Golden Knights defenseman [Alex Pietrangelo](#) fire off three shots in eight seconds that were all stopped by a sprawling [Jake Oettinger](#).

"I mean, that's hockey. It goes both ways," said Robertson, who finished with a goal and two shots while logging 20:22 in ice time. "They've had the same thing, but you just gotta stick with it and try and bear down and get that puck. There's going to be plenty of opportunities throughout the game to bear down and get it. We gotta do more of that."

The Golden Knights took control when [Nicolas Roy](#) created traffic at the net front. He threw a shot on net that was deflected but made its way to [Noah Hanifin](#), with the defenseman launching a wrist shot that went over Oettinger's glove for a 2-1 lead with 1:07 left in the second.

Even with a 58.5% shot share, the Stars mustered only five shots on net in the third period and two high-danger scoring chances. Stars coach Peter DeBoer pulled Oettinger with 1:51 remaining to get an extra-skater advantage.

It's just that the Stars could never really get settled in the Golden Knights' zone. That led to the Golden Knights clearing the puck before Eichel scored an empty-net goal with 33 seconds left that gave the Golden Knights a 3-1 lead and a 2-0 series advantage.

"I loved our first period, and we made one mistake at the end of the first. ... You come out of the first with nothing to show for it," DeBoer said. "I think that was probably a momentum swing. Then, we gotta find a way to score 5-on-5. We generated some chances. You're not going to get a ton against them just like we're not going to give up a bunch."

Last season saw the Golden Knights take a 3-0 lead in the Western Conference finals before the Stars rallied to force Game 6. The Golden Knights closed out the series with an emphatic 6-0 win before advancing to the Stanley Cup Finals, where they beat the [Florida Panthers](#) in five games. Reaching the conference finals further cemented the argument that the Stars were in a championship window. They used the offseason to strengthen their roster by signing another top-nine forward in [Matt Duchene](#) while keeping much of their roster intact.

They used the trade deadline to add defenseman [Chris Tanev](#), which bolstered a team that would go on to win 52 games and finish second behind the [New York Rangers](#) in the Presidents' Trophy race with 113 points.

Winning the Central and having the best record in the Western Conference set the stage for the Stars to become the top seed in the West. But it also meant their championship aspirations would present another encounter with the Golden Knights.

After losing the first two games, DeBoer was asked if it felt like the Golden Knights have the Stars figured out.

"They're the Stanley Cup champions. They've got everyone figured out," DeBoer said. "They figured out everyone last year, too, right? We're not alone in that boat."

Although they lost in the conference finals, the Stars' first two defeats of the series were decided in overtime. A year later, they find themselves in another 2-0 series deficit that's once again been defined by the tightest of margins.

Is there anything DeBoer feels the Stars learned from last year's conference finals that could possibly help this year?

"I thought last year, they probably carried the play even though we found a way to scratch out some wins," DeBoer said. "I don't think that's the case this year. It doesn't feel that way, anyway. It feels a lot more evenly matched."

ESPN.com

NHL: Insights on first 17 games of 2024 Stanley Cup playoffs

By ESPN Staff

April 25, 2024

The [2024 Stanley Cup playoffs](#) have delivered all the requisite thrills that fans have come to expect from the greatest postseason in sports. But through the first 17 games -- three for [Boston Bruins-Toronto Maple Leafs](#), and two for every other series -- we've also learned some lessons about each club, whether it's new information coming to light or confirmation of our [pre-playoff thoughts](#).

To help sort through all of that new data -- and identify which trends will continue to influence the rest of the first round and beyond -- ESPN reporters Ryan S. Clark, Kristen Shilton and Greg Wyshynski present their takeaways from the first wave of first-round games.

...

What's next for the Stars, down 0-2?

How much have the [Dallas Stars](#) struggled against the [Vegas Golden Knights](#) recently? Game 2's defeat makes six straight losses, and they've also lost nine of their last 11 combined regular-season and playoff games to Vegas. Last year's Western Conference finals saw the Stars fall into an 0-2 series after two overtime games. They'd fall into a 0-3 hole before winning two games to force Game 6, then suffering a season-ending loss to the Golden Knights.

They face another 0-2 deficit, and must figure out how to recover quickly against the defending Stanley Cup champions. Stars coach Peter DeBoer said after the Game 2 loss that he felt like the Golden Knights carried the play last season, whereas he believes both teams now "are a lot more evenly matched."

This season saw the Stars finish tied for a league-high 26 road wins. Stars forward [Tyler Seguin](#) said the goal is to now parlay that success on the road into something that could help them climb back into the series.

"I don't know if you can be too physical in playoffs, but maybe we're almost being frustrated by last year by knowing how good of a team we are," Seguin said, while referencing how the Stars finished with 53 hits. "Especially 5-on-5. We'll take a day tomorrow and reset and get excited for this challenge ahead of us." – *Clark*

Sam's Story

Some Stars thoughts on Game 2 vs Vegas

By Sam Nestler

April 25, 2024

The Stars lost 3-1 in Game 2 on Wednesday, the second straight one-goal loss (not including the empty netter) of this series.

Dallas took a 1-0 lead before the Golden Knights scored three straight to take a 2-0 series lead in enemy territory.

That Just Can't Happen

The cardinal sin in hockey is preached at every level; don't allow goals in the first two or last two minutes of a period. The reason is simple. It is an immediate and powerful momentum swinger. But in this series against Vegas, a team that ended their season and Stanley Cup hopes last year, the Stars have sinned repeatedly.

In Game 1, Dallas took a penalty 23 seconds in and saw the Golden Knights convert on the power play to take a 1-0 lead less than 90 seconds into the series. Immediate tough pill to swallow.

Then came the second period, with Dallas getting a clutch goal from Jason Robertson late in the first to bring them within one. But 1:06 into the second, a long seeing-eye shot eludes Jake Oettinger, and the Stars are kicked in the gut once again.

It cost them Game 1.

In Game 2, the theme continued. Dallas dominated the first 10 minutes of the game but was unable to convert to turn their good play into a lead. Vegas, on the other hand, took advantage of their chances.

Dallas finally took its first lead of the series with under four minutes left in the period, But the Golden Knights answered quickly, tying the game at 18:09... in the final two minutes of a period. Noah Hanifin made matters worse when his wrist shot beat Oettinger under the glove with 1:07 left in the second. It was the eventual game-winner, and Jack Eichel added an empty-net goal in the final minute to seal the win.

For those keeping track:

Goals in the first or final two minutes of a period:

- **Golden Knights: 5**
- **Stars: 1**

That just can't happen. Especially when the goals are as important as they have been.

Now the Stars are facing the consequences, staring down a 2-0 series deficit as they go on the road for Games 3 and 4. Not ideal.

The Playoff Phenomenon

Jake Oettinger has built a reputation for taking his game to the next level in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. Think Game 7 against the Calgary Flames in 2022 or when the Stars needed him most last year.

The 25-year-old is 13-14 with a .914 save percentage in 27 career playoff starts (before Game 2).

After just an okay performance in the Game 1 loss, Oettinger was excellent in Game 2.

Not only did he make key saves, but Oettinger stole more than a few goals from Vegas. He gave his team a chance to win.

First, admire this sequence of saves in the first period.

Oettinger is at his best when he is competing. Tonight in Game 3, he was certainly competing.

In the third period, Oettinger continued his stellar play. He was able to get a pad on Chandler Stephenson's open net power-play look, stopped Eichel twice, and had an answer for all nine Vegas shots that came his way.

Oettinger finished with a .920 save percentage, making 23 saves on 25 shots.

He gave his team a chance to win. Did I say that already?

Unfortunately, his team could not find a way to create chances, let alone get a puck past Logan Thompson.

But despite the loss, it was nice to see the return of the...

So... now what?

Well, the Stars are up against it now. They have a tall order in front of them. Their dogs are barking... I don't know, every cliché about being in a tough spot applies.

The top seed has gone down 2-0 in a series four times in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. Twice they have been swept. They have never come back to win the series, 0-4.

Until now? Game 3 Saturday from Las Vegas.

NOTES:

- **Radek Faksa and Mason Marchment both left the game in the third period and were being evaluated in the dressing room. Neither player returned and coach Pete DeBoer had no update after the game.**
- Dallas swapped Logan Stankoven onto the top line with Roope Hintz and Jason Robertson in the third period. Joe Pavelski moved down with Jamie Benn and Wyatt Johnston. The Benn-Johnston-Stankoven line has been the Stars' best, and one of the only lines to continuously create offense in the series.

Shap Shots

20/20: Golden Knights take 2-0 series lead

By Sean Shapiro

April 25, 2024

My apologies for the delay on the 20/20 tonight.

Normally I like to have these up as close to the final buzzer as possible, but tonight I had a beer league game (we won 4-0, I had a shutout), so I caught up on the the Vegas Golden Knights 3-1 Game 2 win against the Dallas Stars afterward.

Vegas lead the series 2-0, Game 3 is Saturday night in Nevada.

1. This felt like a statement game for the Golden Knights.

See, after Game 1 I felt the Stars outplayed Vegas, I still felt good about my pick of Dallas to win the series. After Game 2, I'm less convinced the defending Stanley Cup Champions will get ousted.

The Golden Knights played bully and territorial hockey extremely well. The Stars struggled to get to the prime scoring areas, and after making a meal of a shot in Game 1, Logan Thompson easily sat in the halo around his net and better controlled his rebounds.

Vegas also defended the blue line extremely well, better than it did in Game 1, and turned Dallas into a chip-and-chase team in Game 2.

The Stars battled well, give them that, but they were drawn into a battle that better suited the other combatant.

2. A lot got made about Jack Eichel not having a shot on goal in Game 1.

Eichel doesn't need to shoot to be an effective player, and he's continued to kill Dallas as a setup man the past two seasons.

And this play right here was a killer.

That's Eichel with the puck, he's stretched out Jake Oettinger and drawn the defender on a 2-on-0.

Most players, even elite NHL ones, continue the path here and try to get this shot off.

Instead Eichel makes the pass to Jonathan Marchessault, who easily finishes and tied the game at 1-1 in the first period.

3. That goal came 82 seconds after Dallas had taken its first lead of the series.

One of the keys to beating Vegas is getting an early lead, forcing them to break a bit out of their shell and stretch them out a bit.

A 1-0 Dallas lead heading into the first intermission would have been a building block. Instead Vegas was allowed to effectively re-set and never really had to worry about digging out of a hole.

4. Jake Oettinger had no chance on Marchessault goal. He also had the bounce back Dallas needed, even if he didn't get the win.

The Stars goalie, who allowed three goals in the first period on Monday, stopped 23 shots and got into a better rhythm early.

One of the things I've noticed about Oettinger is that he's very much a rhythm goalie early in games. He needs a couple of those shots to feel the action, and once he the snowball gets rolling he gets even better.

Peak Oettinger is a well-positioned athlete, and not just an athlete trying to make stops.

5. [His best stop deserves its own number here.](#)

The save will be remembered for the sprawling glove stop and the rebound, which the Stars defenders somehow failed to get themselves.

But the key to the entire stop is right here.

This is right after the initial shot. Oettinger has mad the pad save and is in an active recovery and has remained square. He's not too deep in his stance and he's not lost balance.

He's able to make the eventual dive to his left, because he of the fundamentals on the first save.

6. Noah Hanifin scored the game-winning goal in the second period.

It's another example of the immediate moments before the finish not looking great for Dallas.

All six Stars are in the house, and collapsed around the net, which allows Hanifin to jump in from the point like he does.

Hanifin does a nice job to move the angle, give credit where it's due, but it's also a missed opportunity by Mason Marchment (No. 27 above) to get to the man and win a puck battle.

7. The Stars actually had a lead in this game.

Jason Robertson scored on the power play and Dallas led 1-0.

When Robertson is clicking with the man advantage, it's because he can act as the shot-pass option player on the right flank. Either getting moving downhill for a shot, or finding the cross-seam pass, typically to Roope Hintz, on the other flank.

And that play is actually open more this series.

The Vegas penalty kill is overly focused on Joe Pavelski. They are effectively man-marking Pavelski in the defensive zone, and it's collapsed their shape even more than usual.

It leaves massive openings and lanes like this for Robertson to shoot down.

8. The heavy focus on Pavelski, by the way, is fascinating to me.

It's not a bad idea, but Vegas seems to have decided that he's the guy that won't beat them this series.

Emotionally speaking, it's not a bad move. Pavelski is, many times, the moral compass for the Stars. Frustrating him, taking him out of the play, can have impacts beyond just tying up his stick in the slot.

9. It's easy to pick at things after a loss, but Robertson needs to win the puck battle along the boards late in the third period that eventually led to Eichel's empty-net goal to make it 3-1.

10. The Stars were in this spot last postseason against Vegas.

They were down 2-0 after a pair of close games, and lost their heads in Game 3 at home when Jamie Benn cross-checked Mark Stone's neck.

From a Dallas perspective, that's probably the most sobering reminder Pete DeBoer can give his team before they fly to Vegas for Game 3 this season.

11. Give credit to Thompson, who I think took a step in his game after struggling with some rebound control and looked nervous in Game 1.

12. Mason Marchment and Radek Faksa didn't finish the game.

It likely means Craig Smith will be back in the lineup for Game 3, and the Stars might have to think about potentially calling up Mavrik Bourque from the AHL to help fill out their top-nine.

Bourque, by the way has been buzzing, and dominated the Texas Stars first playoff game on Tuesday night against the Manitoba Moose.

Here is the quick highlight package.

13. When it comes to reinforcements, Vegas being able to bring in Alec Martinez as their seventh defender is an incredibly luxury.

Martinez has won three Stanley Cups, played every postseason game for Vegas last season, and while his foot speed has dropped, is perfect for the Golden Knights boxy defensive system.

If the Stars had to reach into their defensive depth, especially with Jani Hakanpää still out with injury, there would be some major concerns.

14. Kind of feels like the Vegas machine is up and running right now.

It's not the prettiest machine, but after getting through some kinks in Game 1 and 2, and leading the series 2-0, it's going to be a happy flight home for the Golden Knights.

15. It's a small thing, but I hate that Pete DeBoer has in back-to-back games tried to match the Vegas fourth line to start the game.

DeBoer is a line roller, not a line matcher. But when the other team is putting out a checking line — like they do to start most periods — I'd start the Wyatt Johnston trio.

16. Shea Theodore had a sneaky good game for Vegas.

17. The line with Mark Stone and Tomas Hertl, while good on the power play in Game 1, is struggling to get going so far this series.

At even strength Stone and Hertl, with Chandler Stephenson, were caved in defensively.

18. Not a fan of the embellishment penalty on Miro Heiskanen in the first period. It felt like a makeup call in the moment.

19. Matt Duchene has been invisible so far through two games.

20. I'll close it out with this.

The Stars effectively have gone into must-win mode by the third game of the postseason.

Saturday will either be a real downer for Dallas, or it swings everything back the other way.

We will see.

Stars Stack

(2024 Playoffs, Round 1) Game 2 Stray Observations: Vegas Beat Dallas 3-1

By David Castillo

April 25, 2024

Any room for optimism?

Nope. Dallas is down by two in the first two versus Vegas. As the ESPN booth kept reminding us as if we all had short term memory loss — since 2010, the one seeds down by two in the first two to the eight seeds always lose. And against *this* Vegas team?

We'll talk about specific players in the strays, but one thing I want to preface before we start burning Roope Hintz in effigy: it's hard for players to look their best when the better team is able to execute the best in-game tactics. Of course Hintz doesn't look fast. Does it look like Cassidy and his squad are giving him space?

("What about Logan" —yes. And he's getting a very different matchup. Which we'll get to.) That's what makes all of this feel like we can clock Dallas' early exit with an egg timer. Vegas looks comfortable in their own skin. Dallas, even when they've been the "better" team, still look like the team they were last year; with a modest degree of uncertainty, and Vegas can smell it.

Since we'll focus on the players in the strays, I want to start out with this: I see a lot of fans going hard on the players, but not a word about DeBoer. Why? Keep in mind, this is not my attempt at playing armchair coach, and calling into question every decision because of hindsight — but this is the second time in a row that Dallas has gone into the postseason with a major change.

Last year it was ditching Colin Miller and Nils Lundkvist as part of the postseason lineup, which had a pretty tangible effect on the blueline chemistry with Ryan Suter playing top line minutes. Anything this series? Surprisingly something similar — (yes, the fourth line thing is weird) by giving Lundkvist these insultingly short shifts, the rest of the defenders are forced into chemistries they previously didn't have. This is a nitpick in the grand scheme of things, but it's also something that has felt tangible this series, with goals against happening against duos with minimal experience with each other.

Of course, this neglects some of the forward responsibility. Offensive laziness can lead to defensive lapses, and that's exactly what happened with Vegas' first goal — really the goal that felt like the

dagger. No, Suter nor Thomas Harley played it well, but why was Radek Faksa trying to carry that puck in with possession in the waning minute of a game they had a lead in? (It's worth pointing out that this was also just a [really good play](#) from Ivan Barbashev.)

Jake Oettinger: back again

If there were any concerns about Oettinger, not to mention, whether or not he was actually good or just unlucky in Game 1, then he did as great a job as possible quelling those concerns.

Robertson to Stankoven

It's worth wondering at one point this will be a thing. At a certain point Dallas will need to ask what is better: three good offensive lines, or one dominant line with one good offensive line, and one x-factor. Whether or not Jason Robertson with Logan Stankoven is it, is a separate issue I guess, but it's hard not to think about given how often they've incidentally connected. Besides, what's the alternative?

Roope Hintz vs. Jack Eichel

I see Stars fans giving Hintz a hard time. Does he deserve it? Yes. The top center needs to be better. But the difference between Hintz and the other forwards is that Hintz is facing the Eichel matchup — his most common forward opponent — and it's simply not going well. Two things: 1) Eichel is simply a better player. And 2) Hintz' speed relies on buildup, and identifying space. If Dallas can't break out of the zone with speed, which they haven't because of Vegas' forecheck, and Vegas is clogging the neutral zone, which Vegas continues to do well, then of course Hintz' best traits will be muted.

This is not an apologia for Hintz, so much as a respect for the fact that Hintz is one on one with a better player. Rather than lament what Hintz is or is not capable of, I think the onus is on the coaching staff to figure out how to jailbreak that speed. Speaking of:

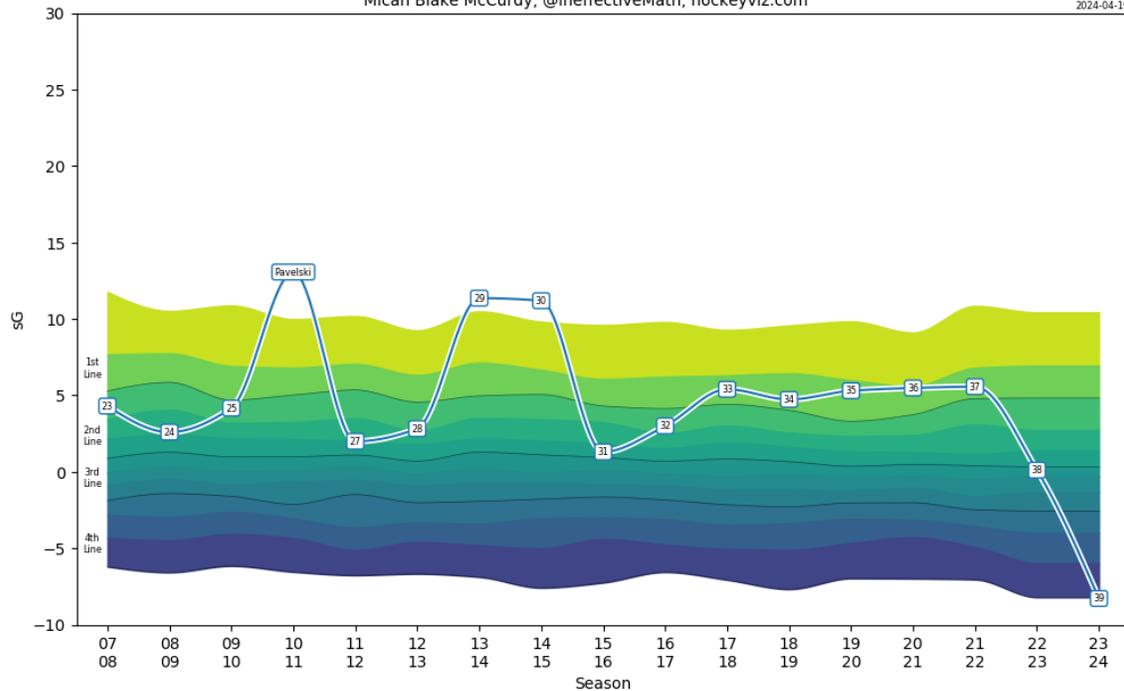
Let's talk armchair strategies

Pavelski needs to be demoted, full stop. I know he's a good story, but last night was the bagillionth time I've seen him get puckjacked with zero clue that anybody might catch up to him. Truth is, this has been the case for awhile, but he's been racking up points, so no one cared.

sG History, Pavelski

Micah Blake McCurdy, @IneffectiveMath, hockeyviz.com

Made 2024-04-19



Dallas should. It's a critical piece of why the top line can't attack with speed.

Also, while Mavrik Bourque won't get called up, he totally should. (But they won't and I get it.)

The Vegas perspective

This speaks for itself. If you're Vegas, you've never felt better. You didn't even get the matchups you asked for, but you're winning them. DeBoer seems to have no answer for Cassidy's defensive system, and the one flaw that can be exploited — chances off the rush — Dallas doesn't excel at (that's right: for all the hooting and hollering over Dallas' ability to shoot off the rush, they've never generated chances at a high rate, and it's one of the things we've talked about here as a potential "regression").

Sturmstack

Three Thoughts on Knights at Stars, Gm 2

By Bob Strum

April 25, 2024

Oh, dear.

The playoffs are so wonderful, but sometimes they are over in a blink if you don't find victory. After the events of Wednesday night at the American Airlines Center when Vegas took out the Dallas Stars again, we have great concerns.

Vegas beat Dallas 3-1 in Game 2 of the Best-of-Seven series and took both games in Texas to claim a commanding 2-0 lead as the series turns back to Vegas. Now, Dallas must win out there at least once to even the series back to Dallas for Game 5. This has taken quite an unexpected turn.

These are My Three Thoughts:

–This thing is now already in critical condition and the family is being notified that our loved one might not make it.

The Dallas Stars played nearly into June last year and then returned with a better team, proving it over 82 games. Now, the possibility exists that it could all end in the blink of an eye if they don't perform a miraculous escape. Game 2 was pivotal, and unfortunately, it pivoted in the wrong direction.

When we look back at this particular game, you know it's just a tough night at the office. The Stars tried to bring everything they had and empty their tanks with effort and determination. But they seem to be running repeatedly into a brick wall, and frankly, no amount of determination seems to be helping. They are finding that their opponent is ready for every attack and poised and dismissive. The Vegas Golden Knights know the Stars' plan and snuff it out before it even gets dramatic. The repeated sorties are failing, and so is the belief.

So, yeah, if it were just one game, you would tell them to get back up there and make it happen. It isn't one game. It isn't two. Or five. Or seven. It is now 11 games in the last 12 months against Vegas. The Stars have played Vegas 11 times, and they keep losing. For a team that just went an entire season with 21 losses, you can wonder about the mentality of losing to the same team over

and over and over again. Does Vegas “have your number,” or are they just a better hockey team showing you that you might be the best team most nights, but in a series against these guys, you are the second-best team? Vegas has held the Cup, and you can believe that if they can beat the so-called “best other team in the West” this handily over an 11-game stretch, it might not be a lucky bounce or a missed call.

Vegas might just be better at hockey than the Dallas Stars, as difficult as that is for us to read.

I mean, look at this from hockeyreference.com if you just look at Dallas vs Vegas from May 1 to May 1:

Team	Date ▲	G	Opp	Result	G	PPG	SHG	SOG	PIM	GA	PP GA	SH GA	SOGA
DAL	2023-05-19	3	@ VEG	L 3-4 (OT)	3	0	0	36	2	4	0	0	37
DAL	2023-05-21	2	@ VEG	L 2-3 (OT)	2	1	0	28	4	3	1	0	24
DAL	2023-05-23	0	VEG	L 0-4	0	0	0	34	35	4	1	0	16
DAL	2023-05-25	3	VEG	W 3-2 (OT)	3	2	0	42	2	2	0	0	39
DAL	2023-05-27	4	@ VEG	W 4-2	4	0	0	34	2	2	0	0	29
DAL	2023-05-29	0	VEG	L 0-6	0	0	0	23	6	6	1	0	29
DAL	2023-10-17	2	@ VEG	L 2-2 (SO)	2	0	0	26	18	2	0	0	34
DAL	2023-11-22	1	VEG	L 1-2 (OT)	1	0	0	32	8	2	1	0	26
DAL	2023-12-09	1	VEG	L 1-6	1	0	0	20	4	6	0	0	27
DAL	2024-04-22	3	VEG	L 3-4	3	0	0	29	4	4	2	0	15
DAL	2024-04-24	1	VEG	L 1-3	1	1	0	21	6	3	0	0	26

If 2-9 isn’t convincing enough, we could easily argue that Dallas is roughly 0-9 in games where Vegas played with urgency and full interest.

I won’t treat them too harshly if they relaxed up three games-to-zero and with the Stars captain suspended last May, and allowed Dallas to think they were back in the series a small bit.

One thing you learn quickly if you follow sports of any variety, but especially in something like boxing, is the repeated phrase that styles make fights. This fighter is great unless he runs into a Southpaw or a brawler or something that upsets his rhythm. For some reason, this one type of opponent can throw him off his game, and he is not near the fighter. I am starting to wonder if this is what we have here before us because as Game 2 was developing, the Stars wanted to start fast and cause chaos in hopes of grabbing the lead.

They did a nice job of pushing the issue and getting Vegas on their heels. The trouble is that Vegas spent all day planning for just such an onslaught and with great composure just weathered the storm and knew that they would be fine. That may be an expansion team, but it is filled with veterans who have played a lot of hockey at a very high level, and you aren't going to rattle them with a loud arena or even a goal against. Vegas deserves a lot of respect for the ease with which they let you try to control the contest with increased urgency. But, they take your best flurry, wait for you to tire yourself out or to show some expressions of discouragement, and then they hit back hard.

Dallas did get the lead on a Jason Robertson power play goal with 3:13 left in the 1st period after Jamie Benn established some great traffic out front. Vegas spent all of 82 seconds trailing last night before they tied the game right back up. That is how championships are won. You feel like you deal with a "storm," and you still get to the first intermission tied. Incredibly demoralizing, but also a pretty good sign that Vegas is no ordinary eighth seed. These are the champions. If you are going to beat them, you are not going to be able to do that with a little 1st period storm.

–My buddy texted me after the game and said the following: “Two games in and I really can’t think of any point in either game where we looked like the better team.” All I could do is reply that I have no reply.

I know this is an extension of the first point, but it is tough to argue with the idea that Dallas is looking at a team that controls the middle of the zone in both directions.

I thought the Dallas job of defending was much better last night and also got some fantastic saves from Jake Oettinger. He was excellent in at least three different scenarios where he had to be fantastic and he did it.

But, you just aren't going to win very many hockey games with one goal.

And how many stretches happened last night that felt like five minutes and sometimes ten where they would not even put a puck at Knights' goalie, Logan Thompson. Five shots on goal in the second period and five shots on goal in the third period is it?

If you are trailing a must-win game at home in the playoffs with a team with [“unprecedented scoring depth” like the Stars have](#), how are you averaging one shot every four minutes of playing time for the final two periods?

Can you simply not generate any offense?

Roope Hintz, Joe Pavelski, Tyler Seguin, Matt Duchene all seem to verify that the answer is pretty clear. Pete DeBoer even tried to monkey with the lines and find a combination that made sense, but there were no combinations that could rattle Vegas.

If Dallas is to win, they simply must be a menace at 5v5 offense and to this point in the series – with last change and the benefit of a welcoming atmosphere – there is no indication they have that club in their bag.

Disappointing, to say the least.

The Stars best players again? For me, I do think it is the kids.

Logan and Wyatt. Wyatt and Logan. They are noteworthy every night and Johnston will hate that he did not put this one away in a pivotal moment in Game 2 that was followed a blink later by Noah Hanifan scoring on the other end. But, Wyatt might have had the game on his stick here:

Logan Thompson did not have to make many big saves, but it is tough to say he has not been the better goaltender in two road wins on his first two playoff starts of his career.

The man has his name on the Cup already and he never played a second last year, but if Vegas were to go on a run – seems plausible! – Thompson will be front and center this year.

Here is My Third Thought:

–I don't have a good rally speech right now because words won't fix this. Gavin wants me to answer the question, "is there hope?"

Hope is the optimistic feeling you get when you find a positive result. It can be one shift or one night, but whatever it is, these series have taught us over the years that they can turn and unexpected things do happen. But look, we saw the tiny odds of a team losing the first two games at home and then winning a series. We know that the ability to do that is minuscule against any opponent – let alone these guys.

The Stars now have the enormous task of beating "these guys" four out of five games, and it looks bad right now. Ominous skies are everywhere, and doubt is going to be on the menu for a while. Does the extra day help or hurt? Beats me. Speaking of beat up, the Stars may or may not have their two most physical forwards as Mason Marchment and Radek Faksa left the game, and I don't

believe they returned. If you lose your two big boys and are trying to beat this physical machine, what is the next plan?

I did not wake up this morning (hello, from Detroit, by the way) feeling better about this mess. I hated splitting at home and giving up home ice advantage, so getting swept at home really has my chin in the dirt today.

But... you work hard for a year for this chance. We know there will be some big ramifications if this is how this dream ends and that this team will never look like this team again. Guys will be sent out, and who knows, people might get fired. The Mike McCarthy discussion may get applied to the Stars. How can a team that is so good come up so empty when it matters?

This roster is on the border of "old" in many regards. Guys like Joe Pavelski, Matt Duchene, and Chris Tanev are all UFAs. Things might get rebooted if this fails this badly. There will be a severe price to pay.

Is it over? Probably. Just like it was probably over when the Astros beat the Rangers in all three games in Arlington in October. It probably is over. But, maybe there can be hope inserted on Saturday, and if you win that one hockey game, you can argue the series is still very much on. Now, can you win on Saturday? Vegas and Vegas (the oddsmakers) will make that a very unlikely turn in the series, but when you are down to your final strike, what other options do you have? I guess what I am saying is that you don't concede a series because you lost two games, but I also don't want to act like they aren't up against it. I called last night a "must-win" game, and they didn't really come that close to winning it. It feels like we are standing in rubble, and the failure is clear. They are not good enough to beat this enemy, it seems.

But, two is not four. The history books are filled with stories like this, and sometimes, the plot turns. Other times, the team that has lost the first two starts to feel its resolve dissipate and its belief, with it.

We are about to learn about this team's mental makeup. We think they are a unified group with good leadership, but that will be proven or denied on the hostile ice in Vegas. This is a discouraged team, but what makes this sport so great is that there is usually an opportunity to dig your way out of adversity if you are willing to shovel.

Is there hope? I have my severe doubts at this point as I quietly turned off the game last night and sat in my thoughts for a few minutes. I assume that is the posture those boys will be in as they fly back to Vegas. How did we get into this mess again?

More importantly, is there any way out of it?

Now, we just hope hockey season can make it to May 1. It is a tough morning in this hockey community.

Stars Thoughts

Game 2 WCQF AfterThoughts: Losing the Plot

By Robert Tiffin

April 25, 2024

Well, that wasn't fun.

Or at least, it was, right up until it turned into a rigged carnival game where you also get punched in the stomach every time you toss a ring. And also, the carnival barker that lured you into the game is actually a lawyer, he only happened to be working this job because he lost a bet to a coworker in Anaheim on the last day of Carnival Season (a real thing, probably), and now he's just using his professionally persuasive skills on your cocky little self because he's bored. Also, he owns the entire carnival. Maybe just don't go to carnivals, actually!

First, the good. Dallas came out with a newfound aggression to start Game 2, and the cavalcade of hits just kept on coming. Mason Marchment, Jason Robertson, and Jamie Benn (many times) clearly received and gave marching orders to the effect of, "Run over these bunch of silly geese!" And they did that, culminating eventually in Jason Robertson's power play (that he drew) and Jason Robertson's goal (that he scored) to give Dallas its first lead of the series.

All seemed lovely, if still tense, and the Stars simply needed to build on that lead and force Vegas to open up a bit more. They did not do that.

Because, well, Vegas happened, piling up blocked shots and clogged lanes, resulting in Dallas turnovers and failed dump-ins. You may have seen this once or twice before, in fact:

None of those turnovers was more costly than Radek Faksa's failed deposit at the offensive blue line that immediately got turned into a Jack Eichel-Jonathan Marchessault 2-0 rush that was only ever going to end up behind a stricken Jake Oettinger. I don't love the positioning of Thomas Harley and Ryan Suter on this play, but with the Stars' aggressive forechecking mentality in the early part of this game, you can understand that they'd be caught leaning the wrong direction here.

It was a frustrating night for the Stars' fourth line, as they ate a minus on that play. They also failed to generate much of anything through 40 minutes, and DeBoer started juggling the forward lines in the third period, understandably so.

Anyway, that tying Vegas goal sapped the momentum for Dallas, and Vegas then got what they wanted: a clogged, shotless contest where they could cycle for hours and throw pucks across the ice in hopes of getting one of those killer passes through. They never managed to capitalize on one of those, but they did get some good fortune when Esa Lindell made a good play to poke a puck out of the frying pan, only to get fired right back down their collective throat:

You can point to Marchment's not-quite-diligent defensive work there if you want, but the reality of the situation is that Hanifin was aggressive, as Vegas always is on the cycle, and the puck fortunately

popped to him. He was patient enough to wait for a clear shot, and he put it past Oettinger—who again, never really had a chance on it.

That made a frustrating game an infuriating one. Stars getting frustrated, trying to force things, as exemplified by Jason Robertson and Miro Heiskanen's refusal and/or inability to get the puck into the crease with the extra attacker on the ice, eventually turning it over (multiple times) along the boards.

Tactically, you have to look at a lot of things with a critically eye. The Stars were trying a lot of stretch passes during the final two periods, and they rarely resulted in anything more than a dump-and-change scenario. As Dallas got more desperate, they again succumbed to the desire to skate into the teeth of the Vegas trap, losing the puck most every time.

This was the same lineup, and the same starting lineup, even. DeBoer projected all the confidence in the world, despite being down 1-0 in the series. With a veteran coach, you take it or leave it. They didn't get here by accident.

When Dallas had more rhythm early, they were attacking the blue line with speed after good bump passes and skating in the neutral zone. Whether they chose to dump it in or make a play, they were creating the space to do so successfully.

As the game wore on, they seemed to slow down, and the space disappeared. They would frequently lose the race to a dumped-in puck, either because they hadn't come with enough speed (thanks to a clogged neutral zone) or because Vegas had forechecked effectively enough that Dallas didn't have the skaters available for passes and puck recovery of any kind in the offensive zone.

One exception to this, especially early, was Jason Robertson. You may know (as Mark Stone now does) that Robertson is a big guy, and he uses his size in a lot of different ways, both offensively and defensively. It's one reason he's undersold as someone who's just a power play contributor who disappears when the game gets tough. He's gotten better each postseason, and he's been the best player on the top line for two games in a row, although Logan Stankoven's promotion might give him a run for his money if things continue as they have.

Joe Pavelski was swapped with Stankoven in the third period, and man, does his four-goal night against Seattle seem like a long time ago. I'm still not counting out Pavelski in a playoff series, but the Stars' top line was better in this one, but not in the way you need to turn a series around. Roope Hintz seems a bit wary of Vegas's blue line defense, and you can't really blame him. The space just isn't there for him to exploit, and Dallas doesn't have other players on that line who have shown an ability to make things happen against Vegas.

One thing I'd consider, presuming players are healthy enough to do so, is moving Seguin up with Pavelski and Robertson. That trio is clever enough to find space and shooting lanes without the speed that Hintz brings. It also frees up Hintz to play with Duchene, who has looked ineffective (which is what Vegas does to a lot of players) through two games so far.

Things were really tight all night long, with Dallas going long stretches while failing to produce a shot on goal. A Jamie Benn hit on Chandler Stephenson was one of the only punctuation marks in the first

part of the second period, as both teams were fighting tooth and nail for space around the net, and they weren't wasting possessions with long shots on goal, or any shots on goal, really. But Vegas is happy to play in a desert like that, while Dallas tends to look for the nearest river.

But hey, we haven't talked about Logan Stankoven enough. He set up Robertson for another gorgeous chance in the second period, but a rolling puck got put just over the crossbar by Robertson. Bad luck for Dallas, good luck for Vegas. It's not an excuse, but it does explain why Dallas has lost two one-goal (effectively) games in a row. They just haven't been good enough to overcome the universe's margin for error.

Another place you could clearly see their struggles was during 4-on-4 hockey, which is not fun against Vegas. Every offensive zone possession feels like a Golden Knights power play, with Eichel and company even cycling back out of the zone to reset and try again as though it's 3-on-3. Vegas generated some chances off unforced errors after wearing Dallas down on the cycle (you'll hear that word a lot over the next two days), but Jake Oettinger denied Shea Theodore (who kind of worked over Miro Heiskanen?) three different times, twice from a prone position, announcing that he was, in fact, still here to make life difficult.

Oettinger hasn't been the problem, and I think this game will help more folks to see that. This is perhaps not as much consolation as we would've hoped to get before this game began.

More positives? Sure, I gotcha. Wyatt Johnston fought to get in alone with the puck from the half wall, fighting off the back check to nearly tuck a puck by Thompson's pad, but kudos to the backup/starting/third Vegas goaltender for stretching his left leg just far enough to stymie Johnston.

In fact, Dallas's biggest problem here is Vegas's source of pride: Dallas couldn't get to any real rebounds in this game, and that's despite Thompson giving up more than his fair share. Dallas's timing was all out of whack, which again, is going to happen when Vegas is fronting (and blocking) shots all the time. You can't really rely on Joe Pavelski to get clean tip opportunities when he can't see the puck. That's why power plays are so crucial for Dallas, but alas, they only got one of them (as did Vegas) all night.

The first (and only) Vegas power play, meanwhile, came after an officials' conference following a puck shot out of play, when Roope Hintz apparently sent it out untouched despite a lot of inconclusive video angles. Oh boy, I just can't wait for that to be another challengeable play next year. This league just keeps gettin' better, aside from the preposterous trapezoid and the inane fear of a missed offside before a goal.

As for this game, it ended with a whimper. Dallas rarely had the puck for much of the third period, and the unforced errors by the Stars down the stretch made Oettinger work far harder than he needed to in Game 1, and that was just to keep the game in reach.

Other worrying things that happened to Dallas, aside from, ah, losing the game, were injuries. They lost Faksa and Marchment shortly after the penalty kill, and it's hard to believe the news is going to be all that great.

Other than the human element, the most concerning thing, by far, was how Dallas was having to fight hard to beat Vegas's forecheck even late in the third, while Vegas barely had to do anything to get the puck behind Dallas's defense from their own zone. You quite simply cannot make it as easy on Vegas as Dallas did for the last two periods of the game, and it was troubling to see how easily Vegas adapted to Dallas's early strategy in order to restore their grinding, boring balance, short-circuiting Dallas's usually clinical attack.

The Stars have been forced into a game they never wanted to play, and they don't look particularly good at it. They can't really stop Vegas's cycle in their own zone, and they haven't managed to make them pay for it outside of Jamie Benn's breakaway goal in the first period of the series. They're having to work harder than Vegas to hold onto the puck less, and that's not a recipe for anything other than soul-searching and tee times.

There's gotta be more juice in the orange, because they're pressing hard and not getting much of anything in return. As a fan, watching a game like this is downright awful, like playing basketball at Recess with taller kids, helplessly jumping and stretching, but immediately getting smacked down on the rare occasion you managed to touch or shoot the ball. One of these teams has felt like the eight seed more and more as the series has worn on, and it is not the team that it should be.

Peter DeBoer is, no matter what you think a Vegas series proves, one of the best coaches in the world, by definition. His staff has two full days to rest and re-evaluate before what is, unfortunately, a must-win game. The Stars need better execution from some of their players, but they need a better approach by all of them, collectively. Both of these games have been close on the scoreboard, but the gap between these teams is starting to feel miles wide. The only way to fix it is to force Vegas to do the jumping, for once.

Las Vegas Review-Journal

Graney: Goaltender goes to another level to give Knights 2-0 lead

By Ed Graney

April 24, 2024

DALLAS — You have to imagine Golden Knights goalie Logan Thompson awoke Tuesday morning feeling pretty good about himself.

He had the evening before won the first playoff game of his NHL career. The nerves were quelled. The butterflies were gone.

Imagine how Thompson feels now.

He was stellar Wednesday night, and for it the Knights have a 2-0 lead in their best-of-seven series against the Dallas Stars.

And for it the Knights prevailed 3-1 before a sold-out and — as you can imagine — incredibly unhappy 18,532 at American Airlines Center.

What it means: The Knights won two road playoff games against the Western Conference's top seed to open this series and now return home for Games 3 and 4.

What it means: The series isn't over, but it's a long way back for Dallas.

Like from Summerlin to Los Angeles long. Maybe even farther.

Thompson shuts door

Bruce Cassidy said earlier in the week he wasn't sure this would be a goalie series, that those in net wouldn't necessarily decide which team moved on and which went on vacation.

The Knights' coach might have to change that thought.

Thompson stopped all but one of 21 shots Wednesday and make some acrobatic saves at that to keep the Stars just enough away. He was as good as those in front of him. And they were really good.

Thompson was more solid than great in Monday's 4-3 victory. He was more of the latter this time.

"We know how to win," Thompson said. "We did it all last year. It's just the experience of our group coming through and shutting things down.

"The first game was a little too close for my liking, but I settled in and it was fun. It's definitely not over. We just have to regroup and refocus and get ready for Game 3."

So you knew this was going to happen: The Stars pushed like nobody's business to start. They dominated possession. They played as you might expect in this scenario — a bit desperate.

But here's the thing — the Knights reacted calmly to all of it. Cleared the puck out of their zone. Didn't allow such aggression by the Stars to overcome them in front of Thompson.

Just stayed with it. Just didn't crumble. Just the opposite.

Here's another significant point: They answered adversity almost immediately.

Dallas took a 1-0 lead via a power-play goal from Jason Robertson, but fewer than two minutes later, Jonathan Marchessault tied things off a pass from Jack Eichel.

More importantly, it allowed the Knights to escape a first period 1-1 in what could (should?) have been a sure deficit.

But this was the sort of thing the Knights had expected. The kind of game they envisioned to a man. The Stars were going to do anything possible not to go down 2-0 in the series heading to T-Mobile Arena.

Heading to one of the league's most difficult rinks in which to win for opponents.

Physical? There wasn't a Knight in sight a Dallas player didn't try and hit. So much for the feeling-out portion of things in Game 1. This was by far more playoff hockey. And it was much better by both teams than Monday's opener.

Don't overload 'em

"You're always looking ahead at certain things," Cassidy said. "One of the things I've learned over the years is you can be overprepared for a playoff series. You give players all this information, and it's like, 'Wait a minute, can we just play hockey here?' Hopefully, we don't get caught by any surprises. You can overload players."

He hasn't in the least. Has pushed all the right buttons. Made the correct decision to go with Thompson in net for the series.

For it, his team has a deserved 2-0 lead.

SinBin.Vegas

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3 DALLAS STARS 1 (2-0 VGK)

By Ken Boehlke

April 24, 2024

Recap: Game 2 began with several quality chances for Dallas, but Vegas goaltender Logan Thompson kept his composure and held the game scoreless through most of the period. With under three minutes remaining in the opening frame the Stars took a 1-0 advantage. The lead wouldn't hold as Jonathan Marchessault tied the game before the first intermission. The game locked down in the middle frame with only 15 total shots on net. With :67 seconds left in the period Vegas defenseman Noah Hanifin wristed the puck into Dallas' net for their first lead of the game.

Vegas came out firing in the opening ten minutes of the final frame. The Golden Knights launched eight shots in the first half of the period and controlled play in the second half. The reigning Stanley Cup champions locked down and finished off the Stars 3-1 in Game 2.

The Golden Knights take a 2-0 series lead by defeating the Stars 3-1 in Game 2. The series will now shift to Vegas for Game's 3 and 4. Puck drop for Game 3 is scheduled for 7:30 PM on Saturday night. (Recap by Jason)

Analysis: The Golden Knights entered this series with a very specific plan against an opponent they know well. They wanted to keep their structure defensively and limit transition chances from the Stars. Through two games, they've done exactly that and they've completely taken the air out of the 3rd best scoring team in the league. VGK are making the Stars look hapless offensively. It's been impressive. The Golden Knights are coming home with a 2 game advantage. (Analysis by Ken)

Upcoming stories from the Vegas Golden Knights vs. Dallas Stars at American Airlines Center.

- VGK's structure leaving DAL searching for answers... again.

Ken's Three VGK Stars

*** Logan Thompson

** Jack Eichel

* Noah Hanifin