



AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Tuesday, January 9, 2024

1. Injury-riddled Lightning embark on critical home stretch – Eduardo A. Encina (Tampa Bay Times)
2. Nuts & Bolts: Lightning host Kings to kick off homestand – Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)

Injury-riddled Lightning embark on critical home stretch **Eduardo A. Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

BRANDON — The Lightning already sit at the official mid-way point of the regular season facing an uphill climb to get into the playoffs, but they will also be without some of their key players while trying to chase their way back into postseason positioning.

After returning to the ice Monday with a practice session at the TGH Ice Plex, coach Jon Cooper indicated that the team will be without both left-shot defenseman Mikhail Sergachev and physical forward Tanner Jeannot for the immediate future.

Jeannot took a hit into the boards in the second period of Saturday's 7-3 loss in Boston, struggled to get back to his feet and didn't return. Cooper said that Jeannot, who was absent from Monday's practice, was undergoing further evaluation, but added that his status is probably more week-to-week than day-to-day.

Cooper also wasn't optimistic that Sergachev, who hasn't played since Dec. 19 after taking a puck to the back of his left foot, would return from long-term injured reserve when he is eligible on Saturday; the Lightning host the Ducks that night.

"I wouldn't put any hard, fast dates; they've got some significant injuries," Cooper said of Jeannot and Sergachev. "So, it's unfortunate. They're all kind of piling up at the same time. ... It's a tough stretch for us right now."

One positive note on the injury front: The Lightning should get top right-shot defenseman Erik Cernak back for Tuesday's game against the Kings, which is the start of a four-game homestand over a 10-day stretch. Cernak, who has missed the past three games, was injured Dec. 31 against Montreal and was a full participant in Monday's practice. Jack Thompson was reassigned to AHL Syracuse Monday afternoon, another indication of Cernak's likely return Tuesday.

Cernak's return will be a welcomed boost for the Lightning's defensive corps, which is without Sergachev and Haydn Fleury. Over the past two games, three of the team's top defensemen prospects — Emil Lilleberg, Thompson and Declan Carlile — have made their NHL debuts.

"It's a tough situation because you want to be able to see these players," Cooper said. "Either you saw them in camp (or) they've been in the minors improving and so then you want to see what they can do at the NHL level. But if they're at the NHL level, that means you've lost somebody to injury and you don't want to do that. ..."

"But you have to understand that injuries are part of the game. And when other guys are called upon, you want to see if they've got potential to be in our future. And all the guys that have come up have most definitely. So that's a great sign."

Coming off a road trip to Winnipeg, Minnesota and Boston that netted just two of a possible six points, this upcoming stretch is a crucial one. The Lightning entered Monday sitting one point out of the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, but they ranked 12th out of the conference's 16 teams based on point percentage because they've played more games than other teams.

Their game Tuesday against the Kings, a team that boasts the best road record in the league at 13-3-1, opens a three-game stretch in five days. After Saturday's game against the Ducks, they don't play again until the following Thursday against Minnesota, which will provide valuable time to get healthy, but also allow other teams to build points.

Both losses on the Lightning's just-completed road trip were winnable games. They went into the third period trailing by just one goal in both Winnipeg and Boston.

They trailed the Jets 2-1 until goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy's errant clear attempt turned the puck over and led to a Jets goal with less than five minutes remaining. In Boston, they trailed 4-3 going into the third and had already cut a two-goal lead to one twice in the game.

The Bruins then scored just 95 seconds into the third when Lilleberg challenged David Pastrnak on the rush inside the right wing blue line, and Pastrnak found Morgan Geekie open through the middle to make it 5-3.

The Lightning still hung with Boston deep into the third until Victor Hedman lost the puck on a 6-on-4, extra-attacker power play when his stick broke trying to snap a shot on goal, giving Jake DeBrusk an empty-netter with 3:26 left in regulation.

Earlier in that game, Boston scored after the Lightning thought a play had been whistled over, which earned Cooper a bench minor after Tampa Bay went down 3-1. A similar play occurred in the Lightning's win over Montreal on New Year's Eve.

"Some of it has been that," Cooper said of the unlucky turns. "But some of it also has been taking your eye off the prize for two or three minutes or taking a breath and all of a sudden you've taken that breath and that team's taken advantage of you. And it's hard to be at your peak for 60 straight minutes. It's just when you're not, it feels at times pucks have ended up in our net. And that's where we have to circle the wagons and get through those times better than we have."

Nuts & Bolts: Lightning host Kings to kick off homestand Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)

Everything you need to know ahead of Tampa Bay's matchup against the Los Angeles Kings on Tuesday.

When: Tuesday, January 9 - 7 p.m. ET

Where: AMALIE Arena - Tampa, FL

TV coverage: Bally Sports (check local listings)

Radio coverage: 102.5 MHz-FM, Lightning Radio 24/7

Where to stream it: BallySports.com

Lines from Monday's Practice (subject to change)

Forwards

Steven Stamkos - Brayden Point - Nikita Kucherov

Brandon Hagel - Anthony Cirelli - Mikey Eyssimont

Alex Barre-Boulet - Nick Paul - Conor Sheary

Austin Watson - Luke Glendening - Tyler Motte

Defensemen

Victor Hedman - Darren Raddysh

Calvin de Haan - Erik Cernak

Emile Lilleberg - Nick Perbix

Goaltenders

Andrei Vasilevskiy

Jonas Johansson

Tuesday's Matchup

The Lightning and Kings are playing the first of two matchups this season and the only meeting at AMALIE Arena...The Bolts posted a 1-1-0 record vs. LAK last season, including a 4-2 loss Oct. 25 at Crypto.com Arena and a 5-2 win Jan. 28 at AMALIE Arena... Nikita Kucherov (1-2—3) and Nick Perbix (0-3—3) were tied for the Lightning team lead in points vs. LAK last season... Kucherov is riding an 11-game point streak vs. LAK (8-12—20) and has found the scoresheet in 13 of his 15 career contests vs. LAK (9-13—22)...Kucherov has pointed in six of his seven career home games vs. LAK (5-2—7)...Brayden Point has picked up points in five of his last seven contests vs. LAK (3-5—8)...Steven Stamkos has found the scoresheet in nine of his last 10 games vs. LAK (7-10—17) with six multi-point efforts during that span...Stamkos has pointed in eight of his 10 career home contests vs. LAK (3- 8—11)...Victor Hedman has scored four goals over his last four games vs. LAK (4-1—5)...In 12 career games vs. LAK (11 starts), Andrei Vasilevskiy has recorded a 8-3-0 record with a .916 save percentage and 2.79 goals against average...Tampa Bay is 8-2-0 in their last 10 home games vs. LAK and 9-1-0 in the last 10 meetings overall... The Bolts are 29-12-2 with two ties all-time vs. LAK, including a home record of 14-6-2...Kucherov (9-13—22) and Stamkos (8-14—22) are tied for the Lightning franchise record for career points vs. LAK, while Kucherov leads the way in goals and Stamkos ranks first in assists.

Injuries

Erik Cernak - Upper-body - Day-to-Day

Haydn Fleury - Upper-body - Week-to-Week

Mikhail Sergachev - Upper-body - Week-to-Week

Tampa Bay Sports Item of the Game

Gasparilla Full Collection Drop

The Lightning 2024 Gasparilla-inspired collection has arrived exclusively at Tampa Bay Sports. Gear up now in store and online at TampaBaySports.com.

The Road Ahead

Thursday, January 11 vs. New Jersey Devils

Saturday, January 13 vs. Anaheim Ducks

Thursday, January 18 vs. Minnesota Wild