



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Sunday, February 11, 2024**

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Lightning finally break through on road trip, top Blue Jackets

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Brandon Hagel had a goal and two assists, Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 33 shots, and the Lightning beat the Blue Jackets 4-2 Saturday night to snap a two-game skid.

Nick Paul had a goal and an assist, and Anthony Cirelli and Steven Stamkos also scored for Tampa Bay, now third in the Atlantic Division. Hagel's three-point effort gives him 10 points in a six-game streak.

"It's hard to win in this league and when you walk into an NHL building and come away with two points you take those and move on to the next game," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "You can pick apart any game you want but the bottom line is we needed these points, we got them and let's move on."

Boone Jenner scored twice in the third period to get Columbus within a goal, both with assists from Johnny Gaudreau. Elvis Merzlikins had 33 saves for the Blue Jackets, who have now lost two straight at home and three of their last four games, and sit last in the Metropolitan Division.

Despite an early barrage of shots from Columbus, Tampa Bay got on the board first when Paul scored his seventh power-play goal of the season with 4:20 remaining in the first during a double-minor, the result of Kent Johnson's high-sticking penalty.

"Vasy made some big saves early," Stamkos said. "Once we scored that goal, a great goal on the power play by Paulie, I think we got some life. We had a pretty good response after that."

Cirelli's breakaway 49 seconds into the second period made it 2-0 before Stamkos' one-timer 23 seconds into the third period. Nikita Kucherov had an assist to extend his point streak to seven games.

Jenner made it 3-1 with 7:38 left in the third, shooting a laser from the right circle, for his first goal since Dec. 3 and 14th of the season. Jenner, who missed 15 games with a broken jaw, is coming off his first All-Star appearance.

"We had our legs going and created chances from that," Jenner said. "(Vasilevskiy) made some great saves and some posts, but I liked the way we just stuck with it and we knew we'd get rewarded if we didn't change anything."

Jenner's second score at 15:59 of the third pulled Columbus within a goal but it would get no closer.

"I just thought we were on our heels a little too much in the D-zone," Stamkos said. "We need to be a little bit more aggressive, and just cut down their time in space. ... But the way things went in the first two games (back-to-back losses at the Rangers and Islanders), we'll take the points."

Hagel's empty-netter came with 48 seconds left to seal the win.

The Backcheck: Bolts pick up road win over the Blue Jackets

Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)

After dropping the first two games of a four-game road trip, the Tampa Bay Lightning got back in the win column with a 4-2 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets Saturday night at Nationwide Arena.

With 4:20 remaining in the opening frame, Nick Paul opened the scoring with a power-play goal to give the Bolts the 1-0 lead with the lone goal of the first period.

After Paul took a high stick from Kent Johnson and earned Tampa Bay a four-minute power play, the powerforward found himself skating on the second unit following some repairs from the medical staff on the bench. Positioning himself in the slot, Paul jumped on a rebound following a shot from Brandon Hagel and quickly roofed a follow-up into the top right corner for his 14th goal of the season with Darren Raddysh picking up the secondary helper.

Starting the middle frame with a purpose, the Lightning quickly grabbed the 2-0 lead when Anthony Cirelli scored his 11th goal of the year just 49 seconds into the period.

Taking a pass from Paul in the defensive zone, Cirelli banked the puck off the boards near the Tampa Bay blue line for Hagel, who calmly braced for a hit from Ivan Provorov and slid the puck to the middle of the ice for Cirelli. Using his speed, Cirelli created separation from Cole Sillinger and made a move to the backhand before beating Elvis Merzlikins to double the Bolts lead.

Opening the third period with another quick goal, the Lightning went up 3-0 when Steven Stamkos hammered home his 22nd goal of the season with his patented one-timer on the power play. After Nikita Kucherov sent a pass to the point for Victor Hedman, the big defenseman put the puck on a platter for Stamkos, who wired home his 207th career power-play goal to make it a 3-0 game.

Columbus got back within one late in the third period following back-to-back goals from Boone Jenner at the 12:22 and 15:50 marks of the final frame, but Tampa Bay got an answer from Hagel, who found the back of the empty net with less than a minute remaining to seal the 4-2 victory. Kucherov and Cirelli both picked up assists on the final goal of the contest.

Andrei Vasilevskiy got the start in goal for the Bolts and was strong between the pipes with 33 saves on 35 shots against.

Bolts by the Numbers

- Nick Paul opened the scoring with his 14th goal of the season and added an assist in the second period for his eighth multi-point game of the campaign. Paul has now scored a career-high seven power-play goals this season, tied with Brayden Point for the third-most on the team and trailing only Steven Stamkos (12) and Nikita Kucherov (11). Up to 29 points through 53 games (14-15—29), Paul is just three points away from tying his career-high 32-point seasons from 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- Anthony Cirelli scored his 11th goal of the year and added one assist for his sixth multi-point game of the year. Cirelli has picked up points in five of his last six contests (1-6—7) and seven of his last nine (3-8—11).
- Brandon Hagel scored one goal and picked up two assists for his 13th multi-point game of the season. Hagel extended his point streak to six games (6-4—10), tied for the longest of his career, and has found the scoresheet in 12 of his last 14 contests (9-9—18). Hagel's five empty-net goals are the most among all NHL skaters.

- Nikita Kucherov recorded two assists and extended his point streak to seven games (5-9—14) with his 27th multi-point game of the season. Kucherov's 89 points (33-56—89) are the most among all NHL skaters, as are his 38 power-play points (11-27—38).

- Steven Stamkos scored his 207th career power-play goal to move within two of tying Gordie Howe (209 PPG) for the fourth-most power-play goals scored with a single franchise by any player in NHL history. Stamkos is up to 12 power-play goals on the season, tied for the third-most among all NHL skaters. Stamkos is up to 48 points (22-26—48) on the season.

- Darren Raddysh collected one assist for his 20th point of the season (4-16—20). Raddysh has recorded 10 points over his last 13 games (4-6—10).

- Victor Hedman recorded his 43rd assist of the season to bring his season point total to 52 (9-43—52). Hedman is up to 23 power-play points this year (4-19—23), the third-most among all NHL defensemen. He has found the scoresheet in eight of his last 10 games (3-10—13).

- Andrei Vasilevskiy made 33 saves on 35 shots against and improved to 17-11-0 on the season. Vasilevskiy is 8-2-0 over his last 10 starts and has recorded 16 wins since December 1, tied for the most among all NHL goaltenders during that span.

Bolts Quotes

- Jon Cooper: "It's hard to win in this league and when you can walk into an NHL building as a road team and come out with two points, you take those and move on to the next game. You can pick apart any game you want, but bottom line is we needed these points. We got them. Let's move on."

- Anthony Cirelli: "There's a lot of good that came from the game. It's just playing for that full 60. Obviously, they worked hard, and they kept playing the full 60. We gave up a couple chances there that went in the net. That's on us to be better & try to play that full, 60-minute game."

- Cooper: "There were spurts where we were leaking oil a little but for the most part, it was a good team game. Like I said, we gave them one midway through the third there and gave them a little life. We take a tough penalty we probably shouldn't have there. They score on that. This is the NHL. There are good players on all teams, and they can get you. But a big goal at the end for us to hold on and, like I said, Vasy held it down when we needed help."

Krenner's Three Stars

1. Brandon Hagel
2. Andrei Vasilevskiy
3. Anthony Cirelli

Lightning Look Ahead

- Tuesday, February 13 at Boston Bruins, 7 p.m. ET, TD Garden
- Thursday, February 15 vs. Colorado Avalanche, 7 p.m. ET, AMALIE Arena
- Saturday, February 17 vs. Florida Panthers, 7 p.m. ET, AMALIE Arena

A look at Mikhail Sergachev's recovery, prognosis after leg injury **Eduardo A. Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

Defenseman Mikhail Sergachev's recovery from a fractured tibia and fibula in his lower left leg likely will keep him sidelined for the remainder of the regular season, a top physician for an NHL team suggested to the Tampa Bay Times. But a postseason return is conceivable depending on how far the Lightning might get.

"I would be shocked if you got back in the next two months, but depending on the fracture, it's possible," said Dr. Brian Schulz, the head orthopedic surgeon for the Anaheim Ducks.

The Lightning entered Saturday's game in Columbus with just 30 games remaining in the regular season, which ends for them April 17 in Toronto. But Schulz said the longer the Lightning could extend a potential playoff run — they currently sit in the first wild-card position in the East — the more likely Sergachev returns.

"I think that's a very fast return," Schultz said of Sergachev coming back before the postseason. "I don't know the specifics of the injury. If he had a very straight-forward fracture that was away from the joint and the fixation is strong, then maybe. But that would be a very quick timeline.

"That being said, if they're playing in the postseason, that's another (two to) three months potentially to where he could make it back."

Sergachev was injured in the second period of Wednesday's 3-1 loss to the Rangers at Madison Square Garden, his left leg turning awkwardly under his own weight after making contact with Rangers forward Alexis Lafreniere while pursuing the puck in the corner. Sergachev was carted off the ice, sitting up on a stretcher, and had surgery Thursday in New York to stabilize the bones. He is expected to return to Tampa this weekend to begin his rehabilitation.

Coming out of Thursday's surgery, the Lightning were optimistic, as it appeared the fractures were clean and didn't impact any ligaments.

Schulz, also the head orthopedic surgeon for the Los Angeles Angels and a physician with the Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe Institute in Los Angeles, said you see injuries like Sergachev's only about once or twice a year in the NHL. It's typically a freak instance where a leg gets caught or a player hits the boards awkwardly.

The rehabilitation that Sergachev likely faces initially would include strengthening the muscles in his leg without putting stress on the bone as it heals. That can be accomplished by working in a pool, Schulz said, and would allow Sergachev to limit the muscle mass he loses and more easily bring it back when he can begin bearing weight on the leg. Bones tend to heal faster than ligaments, and they tend to heal rather well, Schulz said, but how long it takes for Sergachev to bear weight on the leg will dictate the timetable for a return.

"You're looking at probably two to three months for the bone to completely heal, maybe a little bit quicker in a professional athlete," Schulz said. "They tend to heal a little bit faster than maybe the average person. A lot of it, too, depends on where the bone was broken and how they were able to fix it. If it entered into the joints, you've got to be a little careful and limit the weight bearing up front. ...

"If it's more of the longer part of the bone, he may be able to weight bear faster depending on how they fixed it. So some of that stuff will factor into it as well because the sooner you can weight bear, the less muscle he'll lose from not walking around on it, but you've also got to protect whatever you fix, too, while it's healing.

“If he starts weight bearing at like six weeks, and he started skating at eight weeks (then) maybe he’s playing in 12 weeks. But it’s really hard to know exactly.”