



AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Thursday, December 7, 2023

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After beating the Penguins, 4 things the Lightning can build on **Kristie Ackert (Tampa Bay Times)**

TAMPA — Call this little two-game homestand the Lightning's Revenge Era.

After Monday beating the Stars, who had handed them a seven-goal loss two days earlier, the Lightning got sweet revenge for their collapse last week versus the Penguins by beating Pittsburgh 3-1 Wednesday night at Amalie Arena.

Nikita Kucherov, Anthony Cirelli and Tanner Jeannot scored as the Lightning improved to 12-10-5. Coming off his first shutout of the season, Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 24 shots, allowing just a fluke goal with 53 seconds to play. The Bolts held the Penguins (11-11-3) scoreless on four power plays, including 40 seconds of 5-on-3 hockey.

"We just started playing from the first minute and played consistent throughout the game," Kucherov said. "As I said before, when you follow the plan, you have a good chance to win the game. We did the last couple days."

The Lightning now head out on a five-game road trip. Here are four things to take away from Wednesday night's win:

Kucherov's 'elite' play

What more can you say about Kucherov? He's been the most consistent player for the Lightning this season and arguably the best in the NHL.

"There's a lot of great players in this league, the best in the world. But I think right now through (27) games, you've got to put him at the top of the mountain," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "He's been elite. All I can say."

With his assist on Cirelli's first-period goal and his own power-play goal, the right wing extended his point streak to a franchise-record 11 straight games. He surpassed Brad Richards and Marty St. Louis, who had 10-game point streaks.

Kucherov's goal, a one-timer from the left circle at 8:31 in the second period, was his second goal in as many games. Kucherov has scored in 15 of his last 16 games and leads all NHL skaters with 44 points. He is second in goals with 17.

Cirelli heating up

After having just one goal through 10 games, the center has scored three in his last two and four over his last six. Cirelli scored twice in Monday's win over the Stars for his second multi-point game of the season.

If Cirelli can get going, that's a big boost for the Lightning, who need more secondary scoring.

"Tony is finally getting rewarded for a lot of great stuff he's doing and he's playing against some of the best lines every single game," Cooper said. "It's much needed because we've been trending on a certain couple of guys to do all our scoring, and when you get depth in scoring that's really going to help us."

Defense wins games

After giving up 19 goals in their four-game losing streak to end November, the Lightning have given up just one goal in the last 120 minutes. Vasilevskiy, who said he is starting to feel like himself after September back surgery, is a big part of that. He almost had another shutout Wednesday night and stopping all 25 shots he faced Monday.

“Only one goal against so it was kind of a fluke one going in there,” Jeannot said of Pittsburgh’s lone goal in the final minute. “I think we’ve been really good. There have been times when we’ve been hemmed in our zone a little bit but I think guys grinded it out and stayed in good position to not give up too many Grade-A chances. So I think we’ve been good. We’ve just got to keep building on it.”

Mini momentum

The Lightning made the most of their short stint at home, and they needed the wins because the road has not been friendly. Tampa Bay lost its last three games away from Amalie Arena and is 4-7-2 overall.

The Lightning head out on a 12-day, five-game road trip that begins in Nashville on Thursday night and then winds through Seattle, Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary.

“Everybody’s got to play better. Before, I said we were still far away from playing really good hockey. We’re trying to build up right here from this couple of games and, hopefully, we find consistency in our game,” Kucherov said.

Tampa Bay Lightning complete revenge tour as Vasilevskiy, Kucherov lead the way Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

TAMPA – The Tampa Bay Lightning completed a mini revenge tour on Wednesday.

After hitting the lowest point of the season in Dallas, one game after blowing a two-goal lead to Pittsburgh, the Lightning have rebounded with consecutive wins – Monday against the Stars and Wednesday against the Penguins.

After allowing eight goals to the Stars on Saturday, Tampa Bay has allowed one goal in the past two games (but really, they haven't allowed any).

Here's five talking points on how they've started to make a climb back up from the bottom.

TWO WORDS: GOAL-TENDING

There was a social media conversation floating around on Sunday about whether or not it was time to remove Andrei Vasilevskiy from the throne was the top goaltender in the world. In his first four games since returning from back surgery, Vasilevskiy was 1-3 with a 3.87 goals against average and .859 save percentage.

Those were his first four games, not only since back surgery, but since April 29 when Tampa Bay lost in Game 6 to the Toronto Maple Leafs. He hadn't faced any game action since then, having missed all of training camp and preseason. All Vasilevskiy had under his belt was about 10 days of practice before jumping back into game action.

Eleven periods of hockey had enough people wondering if his reign was over.

Well, the King is Back. Long Live the King.

"He looks like the best goalie in the world, like he is," Tanner Jeannot said. "It's a really good feeling to know that he's back there in the pipes."

Vasilevskiy shut out the Stars on Monday, stopping 25 shots. Vasilevskiy shutout the Penguins on Wednesday, stopping 24 shots. (He won't get credit for back-to-back shutouts, however, because the Lightning scored an own goal after a Vasilevskiy turnover with 53 seconds left to spoil the shutout).

That's 49 consecutive shots that he has faced that Vasilevskiy has stopped. The road back is never easy, but in the past two games Vasilevskiy looks like he's back on his way to reclaiming is throne, if he even lost it.

"We're all happy he's back and he's playing good," Nikita Kucherov said.

PLAYING BETTER IN FRONT

At the times the Lightning have struggled to win games as well as hold on to leads within games, there have been a couple of underlying reasons – turnovers and structure.

It's something the coaching staff has discussed at length.

Heading into Monday, the Lightning had allowed 226 high danger chances at 5-on-5, the eighth most in the league. The 35 high danger goals allowed were tied for second most in the league.

Against the Stars, the Lightning allowed eight high danger chances. The Penguins generated just six high danger chances.

Against the Stars, Tampa Bay blocked 24 shots. Against Pittsburgh, the Lightning blocked 27 shots (or 30 as the game sheet tracked 30 shot attempts by Pittsburgh blocked).

In these past two games, the Lightning have done a much better job of preventing shots from getting through and when the shots are getting through, they are coming from the outside areas and not the high danger parts of the ice.

“We want to keep that protected, first and foremost, and then sort things out from there,” Jeannot said. “We know what we need to do to be successful out there. So we’ve been working on being smart with the puck in the neutral zone and not allowing odd-man rushes. I think we did a really good job of that past two games. We just have to keep building.”

It’s a more successful formula to winning games. Play defense first, let the offense happen.

“That’s what you’re looking for,” Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said. “Your team is realizing that you’re not going to have to score your way out to win games. And if you play some responsible defense, good things are gonna happen. And when we break down, the big guy’s back there to bail us out. Other teams are going to get chances. But we’ve just completely limited shooting ourselves in the foot. It’s helped our game.”

SPECIAL TEAMS THE DIFFERENCE

Through all the struggles Tampa Bay has endured at 5-on-5 this season (the Lightning are -16 in goal differential at 5-on-5), the special teams has been exceptional.

Tampa Bay’s power play entered Wednesday racked second in the league at 31-percent. At home, they have the best power play in the league at 34.1-percent. The penalty kill has been consistent and ranked 10th in the league.

Against the Penguins, Tampa Bay scored two power play goals. A tip by Anthony Cirelli and a bomb of a one-timer from Kucherov. The penalty kill was a perfect 5-for-5, which included killing off 39 seconds of a 5-on-3 for Pittsburgh in the third period.

Winning the special teams battle tends to improve the odds for victory.

GETTING DEPTH SCORING

Tampa Bay’s top players this season have produced offensively. Tampa Bay has five players with 20-or-more points – Nikita Kucherov, Brayden Point, Steven Stamkos, Victor Hedman and Brandon Hagel.

But they are not just a top-heavy offense. Eight players have scored at least five goals this season, including the five players mentioned above plus Nick Paul, Anthony Cirelli and Tanner Jeannot. Two others – Alex Barre-Boulet and Mikey Eyssimont – have four goals.

Of the three goals scored against the Penguins, Cirelli and Jeannot both notched their sixth goals of the season. That gives Tampa Bay seven different players who have now scored at least six goals.

“It’s much needed, because we’ve been depending on certain couple guys to do all our scoring,” Cooper said. “When you get depth scoring, that’s really going to help us.”

STILL LEADING THE WAY

Speaking of Kucherov, he registered another two points on Wednesday with a goal and an assist.

Kucherov extended his lead in the scoring race, now with 44 points, five more than J.T. Miller in Vancouver. Kucherov pulled into a tie with Cale Makar and Quinn Hughes for the league lead with 27 assists. He also scored his 17th goal of the season, tied with Sam Reinhart for second most, one behind Brock Boeser.

Kucherov picked up an assist for the 11th consecutive game, setting a new franchise record he shared with Marty St. Louis (2006-07 and 2009-10) and Brad Richards (2005-06). Kucherov all recorded his 216th career multi-point game to tie Leon Draisaitl, Pavel Bure, Wilf Paiement, Brad Park and Larry Robinson for 130th on the league's all-time list.

He has registered a point in 21 of his 26 games played this season.

"There's a lot of great players in this league, the best in the world," Cooper said. "But I think right now through 26 games, you have to put him at the top of the mountain. He's been elite."

Kucherov also leads the league in shots on goal with 126, 10 more than Jack Eichel. Kucherov is on pace for nearly 400 shots on goal this season. The franchise record is 339 by Vincent Lecavalier in 2006-07. Kucherov's career high is 279.

Is that organic or a conscious effort on his part?

"I don't know . . . trying to be Ovi," he said. "Just trying to help the team win and stay with the plan and play responsible in the D-zone. And when I have chance, try to score."

BONUS POINT

Tampa Bay plays back-to-back games, having taken off for Nashville to face the Predators on Thursday. For Tanner Jeannot, it will be his first regular season game back in Nashville since he was traded to the Lightning in March.

"First time, so it'll be a fun experience," Jeannot said. "Just kind of take it one game at a time. Focus on the road trip and just play my game."

Earlier this season in Ottawa, former Senator Austin Watson went to the wrong penalty box when he was assessed a penalty. Jeannot compiled 217 minutes in penalties during his time with the Predators.

Any concern he might head to the wrong box without thinking, should he be called for a penalty?

"I'm sure the refs will be taking me the right way," he said.

NOTES

Tampa Bay scratched D Haydn Fleury and LW Cole Koepke. . . . Victor Hedman (0-2—2) recorded the 156th multi-point game of his NHL career and tied Reed Larson for 28th place on the League's all-time list among defensemen. . . . Hedman reached 300 career home assists and passed Martin St. Louis (298) for the sole possession of second place on the franchise's all-time list, 18 behind Steven Stamkos. Hedman joined Brent Burns (311), Erik Karlsson (307) and Ryan Suter (304) as the fourth active defenseman to reach the milestone. . . . D Mikhail Sergachev tied a career high with seven blocked shots. . . . Tampa Bay snapped a five-game winless streak against the Penguins.

MY THREE STARS

1. Lightning G Andrei Vasilevskiy – While the Pens did score one goal, he stopped all 24 shots he faced.
2. Lightning RW Nikita Kucherov – Goal, two points, six shot attempts
3. Lightning D Victor Hedman – Two assists, four shot attempts

Nuts & Bolts: The Lightning's roadtrip starts in Nashville **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

Everything you need to know ahead of Tampa Bay's matchup against the Nashville Predators on Thursday.

When: Thursday, December 7 - 8 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 Wednesday's game (subject to change)

Forwards

Steven Stamkos - Brayden Point - Nikita Kucherov
Brandon Hagel - Anthony Cirelli - Alex Barre-Boulet
Tanner Jeannot - Nick Paul - Mikey Eyssimont
Cole Koepke - Luke Glendening - Tyler Motte

Defensemen

Victor Hedman - Erik Cernak
Mikhail Sergachev - Darren Raddysh
Calvin de Haan - Nick Perbix

Goaltenders

Andrei Vasilevskiy
Jonas Johansson

Thursday's Matchup

The Lightning and the Predators are playing the second of two matchups this season and the only meeting at Bridgestone Arena...The Bolts defeated NSH 5-3 in the first game of the NHL season Oct. 10 at AMALIE Arena... Nick Paul (2-1—3) and Brayden Point (0-3—3) lead Tampa Bay in points vs. NSH this season, while Nikita Kucherov (2-0—2) and Paul are tied for the team lead in goals...Steven Stamkos is riding a 13-game point streak vs. NSH (10- 12—22) with goals in nine of those 13 contests...Stamkos has pointed in nine of his 11 road games at NSH (10-6— 16)...Kucherov has recorded points in eight consecutive contests vs. NSH (7-8—15) with assists in six of those eight games...Kucherov has found the scoresheet in eight of his nine career contests at NSH (6-6— 12)...Point is riding a seven-game point streak vs. NSH (4-7—11) and has found the scoresheet in 14 of the last 16 meetings (6-16—22)... Point has picked up points in six consecutive road games at NSH (2-7—9)...Victor Hedman has points in five of his last six contests vs. NSH (1-5—6)...Mikhail Sergachev has pointed in four straight contests vs. NSH (0-4—4) and 12 of the last 14 meetings (0- 15—15)...The Lightning have scored three or more goals in five straight games vs. NSH (total: 22 goals) and have recorded at least one power-play goal in six consecutive meetings...Tampa Bay has lit the lamp three or more times in 12 of the last 14 contests vs. NSH (total: 56 goals)...The Bolts are 7-3-0 in their last 10 games at NSH and 8-2-0 in the last 10 meetings overall...Tampa Bay is 23-15-3 with two ties all-time vs. NSH, including a road record of 12-8-2...Stamkos (16-17—33) holds the Lightning franchise records for career goals and points vs. NSH, while Hedman (4-19—23) leads the way in assists.

Injuries

Conor Sheary - Upper-body, out

Tampa Bay Sports Item of the Game

New '47 Lightning Headwear

It's Day One of Tampa Bay Sports' 12 Days of Drops, and today we're dropping new Tampa Bay Lightning holiday merchandise to add to your collection. Available in store at AMALIE Arena and online at [TampaBaySports.com](https://www.tampabay.com/sports), while supplies last. Check back daily for a new drop!

The Road Ahead

Saturday, December 9 at Seattle Kraken

Tuesday, December 12 at Vancouver Canucks

Thursday, December 14 at Edmonton Oilers