



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Monday, January 22, 2024**

1. How Lightning's season-high win streak crashed to an end in Detroit – Eduardo A. Encina (Tampa Bay Times)
2. Tampa Bay Lightning called out by coach: "You can't lay an egg like that" – Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

How Lightning's season-high win streak crashed to an end in Detroit **Eduardo A. Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

DETROIT — Though they've started to find their way over the past month and arguably were playing their best hockey during a season-high five-game win streak, the Lightning aren't going to be perfect every night.

Still, to start Sunday night's game in Detroit as flat as they did against a Red Wings team they are competing against in the Atlantic Division standings was a bitter pill to swallow.

The Lightning's 2-1 loss at Little Caesars Arena marked the end of a rough night for Tampa Bay sports teams in the Motor City. The Bucs' season ended four blocks away with a playoff loss to the Lions at Ford Field.

Much like the Bucs, the Lightning's slow start will force them to battle their way into the postseason. After their win streak put them into the fray, Sunday's loss was a step back both on the ice and in the standings.

"If you want to make the playoffs, you can't lay an egg like that against the team you're going neck and neck against," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "We reeled off five in a row just to pull us back into a race. Now, we've got a chance to say, 'OK, hey, we've arrived,' and we failed (Sunday)."

Detroit bumped Tampa Bay out of third place in the Atlantic (both teams have 53 points, but the Wings have a better point percentage) and into the first wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

"In the last few weeks, we've elevated our game and our attention to detail, our work ethic," Cooper added. "All those things have been outstanding. Are you going to play like that every single game? You're not. ... Everybody's got their up and downs, but our downs have happened early in the year, and now we need to have a heck of (a lot) more ups."

Late-period goal changes momentum

The Lightning opened the scoring on one of the prettiest plays of the season, moving the puck into the offensive zone with precision passing before Victor Hedman and Nikita Kucherov ran a give-and-go that opened up the right dot for Hedman to score his ninth goal of the season.

Still, Tampa Bay struggled to sustain any offense, losing battles and chasing the puck throughout the first period. Late in the period, Dylan Larkin pushed his way into the Lightning zone and dropped a pass for Lucas Raymond. Raymond launched a shot that went off goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy, who was unable to spin around to stop the puck from going into the net.

Raymond's goal with 91 seconds remaining in the first rewarded the Red Wings for a period in which they outshot the Lightning 12-5. It got worse from there.

One-man show in the second

Throughout the second period, the game looked a lot like Tampa Bay's last win in Detroit, when Vasilevskiy withstood a Red Wings onslaught in a 45-save shutout last February. The Lightning played like they were depending on their all-world goaltender to bail them out, and Vasilevskiy made 18 saves in the period, including eight during a 3:50 shorthanded stretch.

Vasilevskiy made a glove save on Christian Fischer's point-black shot from the left hash, stopped Raymond in close with a pad save, fought off a David Perron one-timer from the left dot and somehow prevented a shot from going in in the final seconds of a 5-on-3.

But the difference-maker in the game came when Anthony Cirelli's errant pass hit off J.T. Compher's skate and sprung Daniel Sprong for a breakaway. All five Lightning skaters were up in the offensive zone, and Sprong fought off a Nick Perbix backcheck and beat Vasilevskiy under his glove to give Detroit a 2-1 lead.

"At the end of the day, we probably got what we deserved," Hedman said. "Vasy kept us in the game and made some 10-bellers in the third, too."

Too little, too late

After being outshot 31-10 over the first two periods, the Lightning made a push in the third, recording the first 10 shots. But with their shots unsuccessful, frustration built. They had nine shots on goal and 12 attempts on a pair of power plays but couldn't break through.

Detroit goaltender Alex Lyon stopped all 18 shots he saw in the period but faced just one after Cooper pulled Vasilevskiy for an extra attacker with 3:01 left. That shot came with the Lightning on a 6-on-4 power play for the final 12 seconds. The Red Wings made three key blocks over the final 3:16.

The Lightning had 21 scoring chances in the period, including 11 from high-danger areas, but nothing to show for it.

"We had some looks," center Brayden Point said. "Their goalie played well. They made some good blocks. We had some chances, but they didn't go in. Trying to win a game just playing the third, it's tough to do."

Tampa Bay Lightning called out by coach: “You can’t lay an egg like that” Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

DETROIT – Certain games throughout the course of a season need to have a team’s attention.

Whether that’s a big rival, a top tier opponent or, like Sunday, a team right there in the standings vying for a postseason spot.

The Tampa Bay Lightning rolled into MoTown riding the wave of a five-game winning streak. That run pushed the Tampa Bay Lightning back into the playoff mix. Tampa Bay came into Sunday occupying third place in the Atlantic Division standings, one point ahead of Toronto and two ahead of Detroit.

But, whether it was the sting of watching the Tampa Bay Buccaneers lose to the Lions just down the street in the NFC Divisional round, coming off a back-to-back situation or just plain not up for the game, the Tampa Bay Lightning caught the ire of their head coach. Harsh comments rarely surface as they did Sunday night.

But what happened in the opening 40 minutes against the Red Wings probably deserved a harsher tone than what Jon Cooper delivered.

Tampa Bay opened the scoring after a dazzling passing play from Nikita Kucherov to Victor Hedman to Nikita Kucherov and back to Victor Hedman for a one-timer. It was a jaw-dropping play to give Tampa Bay a 1-0 lead 8:45 into the game.

That type of goal should be something that lifts the bench and becomes fuel. But it turned out to be sort of the opposite. After the goal, the Lightning’s game went flat. Perhaps, flat-lined might have been a more appropriate description.

Tampa Bay dipped. The Lightning struggled to complete a pass. The puck looked like a Weeble wobbling on their sticks, not able to settle down on stick blades. Poor decisions, bad plays. It all happened.

“Some nights it’s just going to be one of those nights where you’re fighting to get momentum,” Hedman said. “You’re fighting to make plays and you just can’t get anything going.”

That all but summed up the 32 minutes of play after Hedman opened the scoring. If not for the vintage display put forth by goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy, then the deficit through two periods would have been much more than one goal.

And the two goals that Detroit scored were somewhat fortunate and unlucky breaks for Vasilevskiy. On the tying goal Vasilevskiy stopped a 2-on-1 with a shoulder save, but the puck bounced up into the air. As Vasilevskiy realized the imminent danger, he swept around to knock the puck out of the crease with his stick, but inadvertently pushed the puck into the net.

On the second goal, Anthony Cirelli tried to send a short pass from along the boards just inside the blueline to Steven Stamkos gaining the zone. The puck was off target, slipped past the blade of Stamkos and caromed off the skate of Detroit’s J.T. Compher out to center ice. As that happened, Nick Perbix was trying to change behind the play with everyone else caught up ice. The puck landed on the blade of Daniel Sprong, who had a breakaway from the red line in and beat Vasilevskiy.

So Detroit had a 2-1 lead after two periods. The Red Wings had a 31-10 shot advantage through 40 minutes. The shot attempts were 51-22, the scoring chances were 25-6 and the expected goals were 3.19 to 0.55.

That was not the type of showing the Lightning expected. Not after winning five straight games. Not while facing what, for all intents and purposes, was a playoff game. It was matchup with a team that was a four-point matchup.

The Lightning had won five straight, but it needed to be six. Instead, it came to a screeching halt.

“If you want to make the playoffs you can’t lay an egg like that against the team you’re going neck-and-neck against,” Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said. “So it was a lesson. We reeled off five in a row just to pull us back into the race. Then we have a chance to say we’ve arrived. We failed tonight.”

Even with all that, even with how poorly the Lightning played in two periods, it was a one-goal game. So all it took was one shot to get Tampa Bay back into the game.

As it turned out, 19 shots were not even enough. Tampa Bay peppered Alex Lyon for the entire period. They had two power play opportunities. The Lightning’s expected goals for the third period was 3.4. After six scoring chances in the first two periods, Tampa Bay had 21 in the final 20 minutes. After two high danger chances in the opening 40 minutes, the Lightning had 11 in the third period.

They did everything but tie the score. But, it was probably a just result based on how the game was played by Tampa Bay.

“You just can’t play a one-period game in this league and expect to win,” Cooper said. “We had a chance and the only reason we had a chance was because the goalie gave us a chance. ... We get that goal semi-early in the game and as soon as that happened, our game went south and they turned it up a notch.”

The result was less than ideal. The level of play was a step back with one more game remaining on the trip to get things back on track.

“Probably in the last few weeks, we’ve elevated our game,” Cooper said. “Our attention to detail, our work ethic, all those things have been outstanding. Are you going to play like that every single game? You’re not, any coach will tell you everybody’s got their up and downs. But our downs happened early in the year and now we need to have a heck of a lot more ups.

“But we can’t look back now and this game is behind us. Now we have to go into another tough building in Philly and play a team that’s having a heck of a year.”

NOTES

Tampa Bay scratched LW Alex Barre-Boulet, D Phil Myers and D Erik Cernak. ... Victor Hedman scored the 152nd goal of his NHL career to tie Sergei Zubov and Al Iafrate for 43rd place on the League’s all-time list among defensemen

MY THREE STARS

1. Lightning G Andrei Vasilevskiy – Stopped 33 shots at an expected goals rate of 3.52 against
2. Red Wings G Alex Lyon – Only faced 10 shots through two periods, but stopped 19 shots in the third
3. Lightning D Victor Hedman – Goal, eight shots on goal, two blocked shots, 26:58 of ice time