



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips  
Sunday, December 3, 2023**

1. Struggling Lightning get thumped by Stars, lose fourth in a row – Associated Press
2. Tampa Bay Lightning get embarrassed in Dallas, hit rock bottom – Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

## **Struggling Lightning get thumped by Stars, lose fourth in a row**

### **Associated Press**

DALLAS — Jason Robertson scored twice and Joe Pavelski had a goal and two assists, helping the Stars beat the struggling Lightning 8-1 on Saturday.

Jamie Benn and Mason Marchment each had a goal and an assist for Dallas (14-5-3), which raced out to an early 3-0 lead. Tyler Seguin, Thomas Harley and Sam Steel also scored, and Jake Oettinger made 32 saves.

Victor Hedman scored for the Lightning (10-10-5), who have lost four consecutive games for the first time this season. The eight goals matched a season high for Dallas and are the most allowed by Tampa Bay.

Andrei Vasilevskiy was relieved after two periods, allowing six goals on 25 shots in his fourth start since returning last week following offseason back surgery. Jonas Johansson allowed the goals to Harley and Steel late in the game.

Vasilevskiy, a former Vezina and Conn Smythe winner, entered with a 13-2-3 career record and 1.76 goals-against average against Dallas in regular-season play, plus all six decisions in the Bolts' 2020 Stanley Cup Final victory over the Stars.

"This is his fourth game in almost a year, so he's getting his legs back," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "He's still the best in the world."

Robertson has eight goals in 22 games after scoring 18 to this point last season, when he led Dallas with 46. Benn, the NHL's 2014-15 scoring champion, had one goal in his previous 13 games.

"We've had different guys battling some confidence in scoring at different points," Dallas coach Pete DeBoer said. "The right guys got goals tonight."

Seguin opened the scoring at 1:01 by bunting in a puck that popped up on a centering pass by Marchment. Robertson made it 2-0 by squeezing a shot between Vasilevskiy's right skate and the post at 6:28 of the first. Benn made it 3-0 at 7:39 on a breakaway goal on Dallas' seventh shot on net.

"It just seems like there's a black cloud hanging over us," Tampa Bay defenseman Calvin de Haan said.

The Lightning capitalized on a double-minor penalty on Miro Heiskanen. Hedman whistled home a shot from the high slot 1:04 into the power play.

Marchment followed his first two-goal game of the season on Thursday at Calgary by scoring on a wrist shot at 3:42 of the second period for a 4-1 lead.

Pavelski's power-play goal at 12:25 of the second increased his team-high total to 11 on the season.

Robertson's second goal was also a power-play score, at 14:23 of the second. He converted a rebound after Benn's shot caromed off the post.

Nikita Kucherov, who went into play leading the NHL with 39 points, assisted on Hedman's goal to extend his point streak to nine games (four goals, 13 assists).

“You get a game like this, in 82 games, there’s going to be some stinkers, and when it feels like every shot is going into the net, and every one you take is not. That happens,” Cooper said. “Usually, you just burn the tape and turn the page and move on to the next game.

“What makes it tough is the three (games) before, where we feel for sure we could have taken two of them, probably gotten points out of the last three and we don’t; now all of a sudden we’ve lost four in a row and this one is much more of a stinger.”

### **Up next**

The teams will complete the home-and-home series at Tampa on Monday.

## **Tampa Bay Lightning get embarrassed in Dallas, hit rock bottom**

### **Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)**

DALLAS – Sometimes instead of trying to hang on to a broken rung while attempt to climb up a ladder, it's better to fall to the bottom and look for a different route back up.

Entering Saturday's game at Dallas, the Tampa Bay Lightning lost three consecutive games. In all three games, the argument could be made that they probably should have won all three and come away with at least four points.

By the end of Saturday's game, whatever the Lightning were hanging on from the previous three games thinking they were ready to climb completely fell apart and dropped Tampa Bay to the bottom.

Now, the Lightning need to find a new way back up. The season is getting late, early.

Here are your five talking points from a blowout loss in Dallas.

### **WHAT WAS THAT START?**

Hard to find the words to describe how the Lightning started this game on Saturday.

Tampa Bay entered on a three-game losing streak, the second three-game slide in the young season. Avoiding extended losing streaks is essential at this time of the year. Falling too far behind in the standings means having to climb over multiple teams.

So, seeking to avoid a four-game losing streak should have brought about a certain sense of urgency.

Instead, Tampa Bay started the game as if it was the fourth game of the preseason schedule.

The game was less than 10 minutes old and the Lightning were already down by three goals. Tyler Seguin was not tied up at the side of the net and was able to whack a puck out of the air 61 seconds into the game.

Jason Robertson had enough space at the bottom of the left circle to squeeze a puck through a small window off the inside of the near post and bank it off Andrei Vasilevskiy. And Jaime Benn converted a breakaway ay 7:39, 61 seconds after Robertson's goal, to put Dallas up 3-0.

For one of the rare times, head coach Jon Cooper called a timeout after the Benn goal.

"At that point, the game can get a little squirrely emotionally," Austin Watson said. "We hadn't given up much, but what we did ended up in the back of our net. Just to try to stick with what we were doing and claw our way back."

It was too little, too late.

Victor Hedman notched a power play goal at 12:25 on the front half of a four-minute power play, but Tampa Bay need to convert on both to give themselves an emotional boost. It didn't happen and the slow start just carried right on through to the end of the game.

### **GOALIE PULL**

Jon Cooper rarely pulls his starting goaltender during a game (unless, of course, it's for the extra attacker).

But when Dallas scored its sixth goal of the game at the 14:23, Jonas Johansson had his mask on as if he was prepared to go in the game. Vasilevskiy just let in his sixth goal on the Stars' 25th shot of the game. While it wasn't all on him, there were three goals he wasn't his usual self, which is somewhat understandable considering Saturday was his fourth start since returning from back surgery.

When the teams came out for the start of the third period, however, Johansson did take over in goal. And Cooper indicated that it was as much performance based as the way the game was heading.

"There's things that are unlucky for a goalie," Cooper said. "For a guy to whack one out of the air. Another one was a seeing-eye single shot by a player that is used to scoring. Those are tough ones. A goalie can look you in the eyes and say, 'I can't believe these are going in', but we've put them in these circumstances. This is his fourth game in almost a year, so he's getting his legs back. But he's still the best in the world and that's the guy we want in our net."

## **TRYING TO MINE MORE GOALS**

Just over a week ago, the Lightning struck goals.

When the Lightning scored eight goals in a game at Carolina they did so on just 14 shots on goal. It's the fewest shots on goal to score eight goals in a game in NHL history. And Tampa Bay had only 30 attempted shots.

During the four-game losing streak, Tampa Bay has scored a total of five goals. In the four games, the Lightning have 144 shots on goal. They have directed 296 attempts toward goal. And they have five goals.

After a shooting percentage of over 58-percent in Carolina, the Lightning are shooting 3.5-percent in the past four games. That's a major dive off a very high cliff.

"Just have to stick with it and have to work," Austin Watson said. "It's a bit unfortunate where we score eight [goals] on 14 [shots] in Carolina, and then over the last three games or so, we have put a lot of rubber on the net and can't seem to find a way to bear down when we get chances."

Teams go through scoring droughts – and the Lightning were shutout in back-to-back games earlier this season – throughout the course of a season. Things have dried up.

"It's tough," Cooper said. "Four games ago, we score eight on 14 and now we have five out of 150. We have really good players there, but you're used to scoring and it's not going in the net. It's not a 15-game year, it's an 82-game year. There are going to be some dry spells. But before we do that, we have to start keeping the puck out. For us, that has got to be paramount."

## **SEEING STARS**

Dallas is among the top teams in the Western Conference. With 31 points, the Stars are three points behind Vegas for the best record in the West. The Lightning lost to a very good team on Saturday.

But it was more than a loss. It was an embarrassing outcome. The last time the Lightning allowed eight-or-more goals in a game came at Florida on December 30, 2021. That was the game in which Tampa Bay were without the services of a handful of players – including Vasilevskiy and backup goaltender Brian Elliott – after testing positive for COVID.

Outside of that game against the Panthers, the eight goals allowed is the most since Cooper took over behind the bench. Since the start of the 2011-12 season, the only other time Tampa Bay has allowed eight goals in game came on February 25, 2012, at Pittsburgh.

“In 82 games, there are going to be some stinkers,” Cooper said. “When it feels like every shot is going in the net and everyone you take is not, that happens. Usually, you have to burn the tape, turn the page, and move onto the next game. What makes it tough is that in the three previous games, we for sure could have taken two of them and gotten points on the last three. We don’t, and now all sudden we’ve lost four in a row. This one is much more of a stinger.”

Now, Tampa Bay gets the chance to get things back on track in the next game, which is Monday at home against Dallas.

“The good thing is we have these guys again,” Cooper said. “You can look at it two ways. That’s a heck of a team, Dallas. But when something like this happens, if you have a choice, you would want to play the same team again. We’re going to have that opportunity in a few nights.”

## **KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE**

A loss like Saturday can test a team’s mettle. It can be disheartening, particularly for a team that has the expectation that the Lightning carry.

It has the potential to erode team confidence and trust. And the Lightning are very well aware of that.

“The worst thing that could happen is letting negativity creep into this locker room,” defenseman Calvin de Haan. “I’ve played on some subpar teams over my career, and when that negativity starts creeping in, it makes things worse. We need to stay focused and stay positive. I’m sure the teams that have won championships here with the Lightning have faced some adversity over the course of those seasons and playoffs, as well. We are just going through that a little bit right now. It’s definitely not for lack of effort. We are trying our best out there. The stars aren’t aligning for us.”

It’s important to keep forging forward.

“A week ago we won three in a row, and to find out you lost four in a row, you can’t bury your head in the sand,” Cooper said. “You have to say, ‘Okay, what can we get better at here,’ and move onto the next one.”

## **NOTES**

Tampa Bay scratched D Haydn Fleury and LW Cole Koepke. ... RW Nikita Kucherov extended his scoring streak to nine games. ... Kucherov became the fastest player in franchise history to reach the 40-point mark, doing so in in his 24th game of the season, eclipsing Steven Stamkos’s mark of 25 games set in 2010-11. ... The Lightning have allowed the opening goal of the game 17 times in 25 games. They are 4-8-5 in those games. ... The four-game losing streak is the longest Tampa Bay has endured in the first half of the season since Nov. 25 -Dec. 1, 2016.

## **MY THREE STARS**

1. Stars LW Jason Robertson – Two goals, six shot attempts
2. Stars G Jake Oettinger – Stopped 32 shots, saved 2.30 goals against expected
3. Stars C Joe Pavelski – Goal, two assists, four shots