



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips**  
**Wednesday, December 13, 2023**

1. Lightning play without Victor Hedman, fall to Canucks – Associated Press
2. How Lightning forward Anthony Cirelli is elevating his offensive game – Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)
3. Tampa Bay Lightning play well, not well enough, in Vancouver – Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

## **Lightning play without Victor Hedman, fall to Canucks**

### **Associated Press**

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Brock Boeser scored a hat trick, Quinn Hughes had three assists and the Canucks beat the Lightning 4-1 on Tuesday night.

Andrei Kuzmenko also scored for Vancouver, winners of three straight, while J.T. Miller chipped in with two assists. Brayden Point had the lone goal for the Lightning, who were missing defenseman Victor Hedman (upper-body injury).

Boeser scored his 19th goal of the season at 9:28 of the second period after Miller's initial shot was blocked by Andrei Vasilevskiy, allowing the winger to bat the puck in mid-air.

He added a second goal eight minutes later, firing his shot past Vasilevskiy on the blocker side after Hughes cycled around the net and found the winger open at the point.

Boeser's final goal was an empty-netter with just over a minute to play in the third. With his second hat trick of the season, Boeser is tied with Toronto's Auston Matthews for the NHL lead with 21 goals.

The Lightning opened the scoring less than two minutes into the game. Brandon Hagel found Mikhail Sergachev with a cross-ice pass and he found an open Point at the side of the net.

Kuzmenko scored the equalizer for the Canucks on their first power play of the game. He fired a one-timer past Vasilevskiy at 6:08 of the first period.

Vasilevskiy, who had won five straight against the Canucks before Tuesday, made 18 saves. Vancouver netminder Thatcher Demko had 28 stops.

## **How Lightning forward Anthony Cirelli is elevating his offensive game** **Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

Lightning center Anthony Cirelli has been one of the league's best forwards for several years, but has mostly gone under the radar nationally.

Why? It's easy for him to be overshadowed playing among such a group of stars. But mostly, it's because the Frank J. Selke Trophy, given annually to the league's top two-way forward, is often awarded to a player who puts up big offensive numbers.

And Cirelli hasn't done that, at least not yet.

This season, the 26-year-old has four goals and six points in his last four games — entering Tuesday night's late matchup in Vancouver — after scoring just three goals in his first 24 games. Cirelli has shown this kind of streakiness in the past, but he's still on pace to set a career high in goals (20) and equal his high in points (44), which came during his fourth-place Selke finish in the 2019-20 season.

Here's why Cirelli is starting to find his scoring touch:

**He's healthy**

Offseason shoulder surgery forced Cirelli to miss the first 23 games of last season, so he didn't make his debut until Dec. 3. He started strong with six assists in his first five games back, but had just three goals in his first 28 games.

Cirelli hasn't played anything close to an uninterrupted season since his first full season in 2018-19, when he saw action in all 82 games. His game is a physical one, so he takes his share of punishment, but has often played through ailments, including a dislocated shoulder in the 2022 playoffs.

This season, Cirelli has missed just one game after taking a shot on the hand.

**He's developing a nose for the front of the net**

Each of his last four goals came in almost the same spot: right between the hashmarks or just in front. Two were well-timed tips from the slot, one came just outside the paint along the right post, and the other on a turnover in the corner was fed to him skating between the circles.

Goal scorers have the ability to get the puck in space in front of the net, and those goals are an indication that he's beginning to find that part of his game. Cirelli has been a player who can create his own chances with his speed, physicality and acumen, but the recent ability to find the soft spots in front is noticeable.

**He's taking advantage of new power-play responsibilities**

Cirelli has long been a valuable force on the penalty kill, but he's become a key component to the Lightning's second power-play unit.

Going into the season, the Lightning experimented with both Cirelli and Nick Paul in the net front position on the first team (a spot vacated by Alex Killorn). Tampa Bay went with Paul, but Cirelli has now earned playing time on the second unit in the bumper position. He's already scored two power-play goals, including one last Wednesday against Pittsburgh that opened scoring.

**He's staying true to his M.O.: Defense leads to offense**

Lightning coach Jon Cooper talks about how strong defense will always get rewards, and when Cirelli and Brandon Hagel, arguably the team's top two-way players, are on the ice together — whether its in 5-on-5, the penalty kill or the power play — their dedication to defense often leads to opportunities on offense.

Cirelli has always been committed to a defense-first approach — he's one of the best at forechecking and providing back pressure — and even in the last two games in which he's scored, he's also tallied four blocked shots in each contest. He's a plus-4 in his last four games, after going minus-8 before then.

He's bringing out the best in teammates

The chemistry between Cirelli and Hagel is special, but other teammates also want to skate with Cirelli because they know he's going to work hard for them. He brought out the puckhound in Alex Barre-Boulet, which led to his first goal of the season two games ago in Nashville.

When Cirelli centered a line with Tanner Jeannot and Mikey Eyssimont, they dominated zone time, more than doubling the opponent in shot attempts (68-33). Cirelli has even seen more ice time with Nikita Kucherov in 5-on-5. Cooper often has spoken about how Cirelli is a player who brings others into the fight, and he's continued to do that this year — and get rewarded for it in the offensive zone.

## **Tampa Bay Lightning play well, not well enough, in Vancouver**

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

VANCOUVER – The Tampa Bay Lightning look like they are stuck in a limbo.

On some nights, they look ready to contend again. Other nights, like they are ready to fall off a metaphorical cliff.

There there's night like Tuesday, when they get caught in between.

Good, but not good enough. It's sometimes referred to as the mushy middle.

And it's not a good place to be stuck in.

Here's some talking points from a 4-1 loss in Vancouver.

### **QUICK STRIKE, FIZZLE OUT**

Every team seeks a quick start. Jump right into a game with both feet. Score the first goal.

Tampa Bay did just that, and then some.

The opening goal of the game came a mere 85 seconds into the game. It was a classic off-the-rush play where five quick passes led to a tic-tac-goal, with four of those passes took place in the offensive zone.

Brayden Point carried from the defensive zone through the neutral zone and found Nikita Kucherov to gain the zone. Kucherov found Brandon Hagel at the right circle, who went diagonal with the pass across the ice to Mikhail Sergachev who found Point backdoor for the tap in.

The play will show up on the highlight reel at the end of the season for one of the top goals of the season.

But, that was it. Nothing else happened offensively. The power play went 0-for-3.

Chances were created, but not much in terms of the high quality variety, even with Natural Stat Trick tracking the Lightning with 33 scoring chances and 14 high danger chances. The eye test says the chances weren't that dangerous.

"They play tight in their own zone and I don't think we did a good enough job of getting guys inside their guys in their zone," Point said. "A lot of shots that we did have, they got the rebounds or they cleared the loose pucks. So I think just better efforts in front of the net, getting guys there and putting the puck there more I think would have helped our game."

### **SECOND PERIOD SETBACK**

Tampa Bay has had its fair share of struggles at times in the middle frame this season. On many occasions, the game has slipped away in the second, not dissimilar to what happened in [Seattle on Saturday](#).

It happened again on Tuesday.

The game was tied 1-1 after two periods and the Lightning had the better of the play in the first period.

Vancouver would score twice in the second period to grab a 3-1 lead. The Lightning were outshot 14-5 in the second after holding an 11-4 advantage in the first period.

“It was a tough second period,” Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said.

Tampa Bay’s goal differential now sits at minus-2. But the shot differential in the second period on the season is stark. Including Tuesday, the Lightning have now been outshot 319-283, a differential of minus-36. It’s the only period this season in which Tampa Bay has been outshot.

## **CHAFFEE’S DEBUT**

Tampa Bay brought up forward Mitchell Chaffee from Syracuse ahead of the game. Signed as a free agent after spending three seasons in the Minnesota organization, appearing in two games with the Wild in 2021. Chaffee suffered a season-ending knee injury last season and was limited to 10 games with the Iowa Wild.

Chaffee scored 23 goals in his second season in the AHL and had five in 10 games last season before the knee injury. Through 21 games with Syracuse, Chaffee leads the Crunch in goals (9) and is tied for the team lead in points (19).

The 6-foot-1, 200-pound forward played two seasons in the USHL before a three-year collegiate career at UMass-Amherst. In three seasons in the NCAA, Chaffee had 47 goals and 95 points in 109 games.

Chaffee started the game on right wing with Steven Stamkos and Alex Barre-Boulet. Chaffee finished with 6:56 of ice time on 11 shifts, dishing out two hits and finishing with one blocked shot.

Chaffee’s ice time was limited to an extent because Kucherov was being double-shifted throughout the game. Kucherov finished with 26:16 of ice time, second behind only Sergachev.

## **NOTES**

Tampa Bay D Victor Hedman missed the game with an upper-body injury and is considered day-to-day. Hedman missed the third period of Saturday’s game in Seattle. ... Steven Stamkos, who missed the game against the Kraken due to illness, returned to the lineup. ... The Lightning reassigned LW Cole Kopeke to Syracuse on Monday and recalled RW Mitchell Chaffee and D Phil Myers from the Crunch on Tuesday. ... Tampa Bay is 1-5 in the past six road games.

## **MY THREE STARS**

1. Canucks RW Brock Boeser – Hat trick, plus-2, four shots
2. Canucks D Quinn Hughes – Three assists, plus-3, three blocked shots
3. Canucks C J.T. Miller – Two assists, plus-2, five shot attempts, three hits, 9-for-10 on faceoffs