



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Saturday, December 9, 2023**

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Where will Lightning's Conor Sheary fit in upon his return? **Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

NASHVILLE — It took a while for Conor Sheary to feel comfortable with the Lightning. And right as he started to settle in with his new team, a left hand injury has kept him out of the lineup for the past month.

After practicing with teammates for the first time since the injury Thursday morning, Sheary's return appears to be on the horizon. He had been skating on his own, but joined the Lightning for their season-long five-game, 10-day road trip with the hope that he'll be able to play at some point.

"I think that's the goal," Sheary said. "I don't have a game circled or anything like that. At this point, I think it's more day-to-day than it is the four- to six-week (timetable). It's just kind of how I feel coming out in the morning and on the ice.

"Each day gets better, so that's the good news for me."

Sheary, 31, has been a sort of enigma in his brief time with the Lightning. In the offseason, the Lightning signed him to a three-year, \$2 million average annual value contract with the vision that he'd help the team get better defensively and protect leads. Sheary's deal was the only multi-year one and the largest financial commitment given to any of the team's offseason free-agent additions.

He came to the Lightning with the reputation of being a player who could skate on any line. He's played with stars, skating with Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin early on in his career in Pittsburgh, winning back-to-back Stanley Cups in his first two years in the league. Most recently, he skated with Alexander Ovechkin in Washington. But Sheary also has fit in well on matchup and checking lines with his speed and forechecking ability.

But he struggled initially to find his place with the Lightning. Four games into the season, Sheary was already a minus-6; nine games into the season, he was still searching for his first goal.

He started to find his footing on a line with center Nick Paul and wing Steven Stamkos. He scored in Game No. 10 in Columbus, and the trio began to jell into one of the Lightning's top lines establishing zone time. In a 6-4 win in Ottawa on Nov. 4, Sheary logged a season-high 15:23 of ice time and his line outchanced the opposition 17-9.

Two games later, just 34 seconds into his first shift of the Lightning's win in Montreal on Nov. 7, Sheary took a blocked shot to his left hand and didn't return. Within the next few days, he was placed on injured reserve.

"I scored my first goal a couple of games right before, which obviously gives me confidence, and I was playing on a line that I felt comfortable with and we started to create some chemistry so the timing of it was definitely unfortunate," he said. "But knowing that I have that is an important thing to look back on and draw from. That doesn't just disappear overnight. So hopefully when I do get back in there, it'll just kind of be a smooth transition."

Sheary's return likely would mean that forward Cole Koepke, the team's only waiver-exempt forward, would return to AHL Syracuse. But where Sheary now fits in the line mix is unknown. Since he was sidelined, Stamkos has moved to the top line with Brayden Point and Nikita Kucherov. Paul is now centering a line with Tanner Jeannot and Mikey Eyssimont that has shown promise.

First, Sheary will have to get used to new equipment. He's had his left thumb heavily wrapped during his recovery, so he is practicing with protection there under his glove.

“I’m just trying to work back into it,” he said. “This long road trip, I think it was important for me to be around the guys and eventually hopefully jump back into practice, but (Thursday) was a good step towards that.”

4 reasons the Lightning faltered in Nashville

Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)

NASHVILLE — The scheduling gods weren't kind to the Lightning when they forced Tampa Bay to open a five-game, 10-day road trip Thursday in Nashville after playing at home the previous night.

They had to face a Predators team (14-12-0, 28 points) that's one of the hottest in the league. Getting the puck past Nashville goaltender Juuse Saros, who entered the night having won six of his last seven starts, proved to be an even tougher challenge.

The Lightning's 5-1 road loss to the Predators took some steam out of the momentum they built with two convincing wins at home, but this was an especially frustrating night for them in Nashville.

Here are four examples why:

PK falters killed momentum

After the Lightning opened the scoring on a nifty goal by Alex Barre-Boulet, Nashville turned the game around by converting its first two power-play opportunities. The Lightning's penalty kill was 6-for-6 in their back-to-back home wins over Dallas and Pittsburgh, but a pair of bad penalties — a holding-the-stick call on Steven Stamkos and a high stick by Brandon Hagel — forced the PK unit on the ice.

A long rebound was giftwrapped to Juuso Parssinen in the slot for a Grade-A that he buried to tie the score on the first power play, and Filip Forsberg needed just seven seconds into the second power play to score off a faceoff win, flinging a puck from the right circle through a screen and off the left pad of Jonas Johansson and in.

"The PK, we've got to do a better job," Victor Hedman said. "At the end of the day, I think we left some plays out there that we could have done better."

They faced a brick wall

Ryan McDonagh's goal less than two minutes after Forsberg scored made it 3-1, and the Lightning had their chances in the second, especially on the power play, but couldn't break through against Saros, who made 32 saves and fought off an onslaught of Lightning one-timers.

In six minutes of power-play time in the second period, the Lightning had 12 shot attempts — five of them on goal — and seven scoring chances, but came away with nothing. The more shots Saros turned away, the more persistent the Lightning snipers were, instead of trying to manufacture some greasy goals in front.

"Maybe that was missing a little bit," Hedman said. "But we had a lot of good looks, you know, in tight from the size where, where we can score without a screen...A lot of stuff that on most nights maybe go in."

They didn't help their goaltender

After starting 17 of the Lightning's first 20 games, Johansson has reverted to sporadic playing time with Andrei Vasilevskiy's return. Thursday's start in Nashville was his second in two weeks, and even though he allowed four goals on 29 shots, his teammates didn't do much to help him.

Parssinen's tying goal came on a juicy rebound in front, and McDonagh's score came on a long rebound on a third-chance shot, so the Lightning struggled to get the puck out of the front of the net.

The other two goals came off poor coverage following Nashville faceoff wins, the backbreaker coming on Roman Josi's rocket from the top of the right circle through traffic that Johansson had little chance of stopping.

"He gave us a chance tonight," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Your goalie is your last line of defense and sometimes it looks bad when he gives up four but it sure as hell wasn't his fault. He did everything he could for us."

An early emptied net backfired

Cooper can be a riverboat gambler when it comes to pulling his goaltender for an extra attacker late. Down three goals, he called Johansson to the bench with 8:22 remaining in regulation. The Lightning were able to get four shots on goal and had the Predators with tired legs, but it left them with little margin for error and after the puck rolled off Mikey Eyssimont's blade, Kiefer Sherwood beat the Lightning to the loose puck and pushed it forward to Yakov Trenin for an empty-net goal.

After the goal, Lightning defenseman Mikhail Sergachev slammed his stick on the goal's crossbar in frustration and then split it in two smashing it against the boards.

"I'm not going to sit here and say I love seeing the goals go into the net against us and I know guys get upset about that, but we're down and we're down by multiples," Cooper said.

"So if you want to have any chance to get back, you've got to give yourself some time...Listen, we want to win the game, so we're gonna try and give ourselves the best chance possible and I know the odds may be against us, but who knows."

Tampa Bay Lightning tripped up to start key road trip **Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)**

NASHVILLE – The Tampa Bay Lightning played well on Thursday. But not well enough.

The Lightning created offense on Wednesday. But didn't score enough.

Tampa Bay took [two steps](#) forward [earlier this week](#). On Thursday, the Lightning took a step back.

The Lightning have reached another delicate part of the season as they hit the 28-game mark with a 5-1 loss to Nashville. It was not the ideal start to a five-game road trip.

Here's the talking points from another loss on the road.

QUICK, SAND, SLUGGISH

Tampa Bay stumbled to start the game, recovered to score the opening goal, but then . . .

It's happened on too many occasions this season where the Lightning suffer an in-game set back and fail to push back. Tampa Bay actually opened the scoring when Alex Barre-Boulet swatted a one-timer past Juse Saros from a Brandon Hagel feed at 13:32 of the first period.

Nashville tied it with a power play goal from Joose Parssinen off a rebound. The Predators then scored twice in the span of 1:55 in the opening five minutes of the second period. A power play goal from Filip Forsberg and a sweeping backhand from Ryan McDonagh (remember him?) as he was in the left circle for a loose puck.

After that, despite 35 minutes still remaining in the game, it felt like the game was over.

"The game was fine, we were playing a decent road game," Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said. "Then they get two quick ones in the in the second and once that happened, we just . . . we didn't punch back. That's probably the most disappointing thing about the game. You're not going to win every game. But let's give a push. Whether you're up or down or protecting a lead or trying to come from behind – especially in that case – you have to punch back and we didn't tonight. So that was the disappointing part about tonight."

That's not the [first time that's happened this season](#), either.

ROAD QUITE BUMPY

The Lightning continue to have issues away from home.

Thursday marked the fourth consecutive road loss, all in regulation. And it's easy to suggest that Tampa Bay has played well enough in some of these games to come way with a victory. But the end result is what matters.

And in those four losses, Tampa Bay has scored a total of four goals. They haven't scored more than one in any of those games. Overall the Lightning have a 4-8-2 road record on the season. A .357 points percentage on the road is not going to get this team to the playoffs.

"You have win on the road and we haven't been doing that," Hagel said. "If you want to make the playoffs you're going to have to win on the road. That's four losses in a row."

Tampa Bay has been outscored 60-42 on the road this season (and that includes an 8-1 victory against Carolina). The penalty kill is under 80-percent. At home, the Lightning have a plus-10 goal differential. On the road it's minus-18.

"You have to win on the road to be successful in this league," defenseman Victor Hedman said.

It's not a good trend as Tampa Bay opened a key five-game road trip with Thursday's loss. The next four games go to Seattle, Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary. The Lightning won't play at home again until December 19.

"Good thing we have four more on the road so we can hopefully bounce back and find a way to win on the road," Hagel said. "Ten more days of this. We can't sit and dread on this or else it's going to be a long 10 days."

DIFFERENT GOALTENDING APPROACH

When Andrei Vasilevskiy missed the first seven weeks of the season, Jonas Johansson started 17 of the first 20 games. Johansson was essentially playing every other day, as most No. 1 goaltenders do.

But Vasilevskiy is back and figures to be in that every-other-day mode as the regular starter. Since Vasilevskiy returned, Johansson has made two starts, both in the second half of back-to-back games, both on the road.

When Johansson was the starter, he was in a rhythm. And he gave the team a chance to win most nights. He went 8-4-5 with a 3.41 GAA and .898 save percentage while facing the most shots and high danger chances in the league.

Now, however, his game action is going to be less and there will be no rhythm. In his two starts since Vasilevskiy returned, Johansson has lost both, allowing seven goals on 57 shots. He also made one relief appearance, allowing two goals in the third period against Dallas on December 2.

Johansson has not looked as sharp in his past two starts as he did when in a rhythm, with perhaps three of the goals he's allowed as a bit shaky.

"No doubt it's a tougher job," Cooper said. "When you get in the rhythm and you're playing two-three games a week, it's different. Then you go from that and now you're not. It can be tough, but he gave us a chance tonight. I'm not looking back at him and saying 'Oh my God', no he gave us a chance. "Again, we just gave them too good of looks. If you're going to put the puck in some goalscorer's sticks in tight, they're going to get it done. One was off a face-off and I didn't think we handled that well in coverage. And another one was a D-zone coverage which, again, we didn't handle ver well. Your goalie is the last line of defense and sometimes it looks bad when he gives up four. But it sure the hell wasn't his fault. He did everything he could for us."

SPECIAL TEAMS REVERSAL

On Wednesday against Pittsburgh, the Lightning had two power play goals an the penalty kill was perfect.

It went the other way against the Predators. Nashville's power play scored twice while Tampa Bay went O-for on four chances. The Lightning had three consecutive power chances in the second period with a chance to get back in the game.

It didn't happen.

“It feels like on the road, we’re having a tough time trying to find the back of the net,” Cooper said. “I think that’s when you have to dig your heels in and get some of those greasy ones. Then, when our special teams aren’t rolling, we have to find a way five-on-five. The power play had some looks, they didn’t go in for us. But they didn’t go in and we gave up two on the powerplay. You don’t win that war, it’s harder to win the game.”

Tampa Bay finished with six shots on goal on their four power play chances. The Lightning generated seven scoring chances in that time, but just two high danger chances.

“Felt like we had a lot of great looks on the power play,” Hedman said. “On the PK we have to do a better job keeping those out of our net. We’ve done a great job of late on the power play and PK but today wasn’t our day. They won that battle and ultimately won the game.”

NOTES

Tampa Bay scratched D Haydn Fleury and LW Cole Koepke. ... Tampa Bay has opened the scoring in three consecutive games. ... Nikita Kucherov saw his 11-game scoring and assist streak come to an end. Kucherov has two 12-game scoring streaks in his career and would have become the first player in franchise history with three scoring streaks of 12-plus games. ... The Lightning split the season series with the Predators. ... Tampa Bay fell to 8-3 when scoring the opening goal.

MY THREE STARS

1. Predators G Jussi Saros – Stopped 32 shots
2. Predators D Ryan McDonagh – Goal, assist, four shot attempts, plus-2, two blocked shots
3. Predators D Roman Josi – Goal, assist, plus-2, 10 shot attempts

Nuts & Bolts: Pacific Division portion of the trip begins in Seattle **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

Everything you need to know ahead of Tampa Bay's matchup against the Seattle Kraken on Saturday.

When: Saturday, December 9 - 10 p.m. ET

Where: Climate Pledge Arena - Seattle, WA

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
Austin Watson - Luke Glendening - Tyler Motte

Defensemen

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

Goaltenders

Andrei Vasilevskiy
Jonas Johansson

Saturday's Matchup

The Lightning and Kraken are playing the second of two matchups this season and the only meeting at Climate Pledge Arena...Tampa Bay fell to SEA in a 4-3 overtime loss Oct. 30 at AMALIE Arena in the first matchup of the season...Alex Barré-Boulet (1-1—2), Brandon Hagel (1-1—2) and Tanner Jeannot (1-1—2) lead the Bolts in points vs. SEA this season...Hagel has found the scoresheet in each of his four career games vs. SEA with goals in three of the four contests (3-3—6)...Steven Stamkos has pointed in four of his five career games vs. SEA (2-4—6)...Stamkos has four points in his two career contests at Climate Pledge Arena (0-4—4)...Victor Hedman has also found the scoresheet in four of his five career games vs. SEA (3-3—6)...Hedman has three points in his two career contests at Climate Pledge Arena (3-0—3)...Nikita Kucherov has recorded five points in four career games vs. SEA (1-4—5)...Brayden Point has posted four points in four career contests vs. SEA (1-3—4)...Anthony Cirelli has notched four points in four career games vs. SEA (1-3—4)...Tyler Motte has three points in two career contests vs. SEA with goals in each of the two meetings (2-1—3)...The Lightning have scored three or more goals in each of their five all-time meetings vs. SEA (total: 20 goals)...The Bolts are 4-0-1 all-time vs. SEA with a 2-0-0 record in games played at Climate Pledge Arena...Hedman (3-3—6) holds the Tampa Bay franchise record for career goals vs. SEA and is tied with Stamkos (2-4—6) for the lead in points, while Kucherov (1-4—5) is tied with Stamkos for the most assists.

Injuries

Conor Sheary - Upper-body, out

The Road Ahead

Tuesday, December 12 at Vancouver Canucks

Thursday, December 14 at Edmonton Oilers

Saturday, December 16 at Calgary Flames

Crunch take down Bears, 4-1

Syracuse Crunch

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – The Syracuse Crunch took down the Hershey Bears, 4-1, tonight at the Upstate Medical University Arena.

The Crunch snapped the Bear's nine-game winning streak and extended a five-game streak of their own. Syracuse is now 13-5-0-2 on the season.

Goaltender *Matt Tomkins* recorded the win stopping 21-of-22 shots in net for the Crunch. Hunter Shepard turned aside 18-of-21 between the pipes for the Bears. The Syracuse power play converted on 2-of-4 opportunities, while the penalty kill was a perfect 3-for-3.

The Crunch opened scoring 5:17 into the game with a power-play goal. *Sean Day* fired a shot from the blue line that was tipped past Shepard by *Waltteri Merelä*. Hershey quickly responded and *Ryan Hofer* tied the game four minutes later with a wrister from between the circles. Syracuse then potted another power-play marker to go back on top at 13:01. *Gage Goncalves* ripped a one-timer from the right circle that rang off the goal post and out for *Mitchell Chaffee* to send in from the left circle.

Syracuse continued to build on their lead with *Tristan Allard's* first professional goal late in the second period. *Emil Lilleberg's* shot from the high slot got caught in traffic, but Allard was down low to shove it across the goal line.

The Crunch held the Bears off through the third period and *Daniel Walcott* potted the final goal of the game into an empty net to lock in a Crunch win.

The Crunch host the Utica Comets tomorrow night.

Crunchables: *Gage Goncalves* has seven points (2g, 5a) in his last four games...*Mitchell Chaffee* is on a four-game goal-scoring streak.