



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips**  
**Sunday, October 22, 2023**

1. The Backcheck: Lightning suffer overtime loss to Toronto – Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)
2. This feels familiar: Lightning fall to Maple Leafs in overtime at home – Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)
3. Steven Stamkos' contract uncertainty is no distraction for Lightning – Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)
4. Tampa Bay Lightning let down their goaltending in blowing late lead (again) to Leafs – Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

## **The Backcheck: Lightning suffer overtime loss to Toronto** **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

The Tampa Bay Lightning felt a sense of déjà vu Saturday night with the Toronto Maple Leafs scoring two goals in the third period to force overtime before John Tavares netted the game-winning goal 4:05 into the extra frame to hand the Bolts a 4-3 loss.

The Lightning moved to 2-2-2 on the season with a home record of 2-0-1.

After Auston Matthews hit the post early for Toronto, the Leafs jumped out to a 1-0 lead shortly after with William Nylander beating Jonas Johansson for his fourth goal of the season 4:16 into the first period.

Matthew Knies was sent to the penalty box for cross-checking 1:54 later, putting Tampa Bay on the power play for the first time of the game, and it did not take long for the Bolts to capitalize.

Just 16 seconds into the man advantage, Victor Hedman sent the puck to Nikita Kucherov before he quickly exchanged passes with Brayden Point and wired a quick shot past the blocker of Ilya Samsonov to even the score at 1-1.

The Lightning grabbed the lead 3:48 later when Kucherov took another pass from Point in the offensive zone and quickly sent the puck to the back door, where Alex Barre-Boulet was waiting to redirect a shot right through the legs of Samsonov and give Tampa Bay a 2-1 lead with 9:56 remaining in the opening period.

Kucherov added his third point of the period 3:25 later when the Lightning went back on the power play and scored just four seconds into the man advantage to make it a 3-1 game. Following a faceoff win by Nick Paul, Steven Stamkos sent the puck back to the point for Mikhail Sergachev, who put a pass right in the wheelhouse of Kucherov, allowing him to rip a one-timer past Samsonov to push the lead to two goals.

With neither team finding a way to score in the second period, the Bolts went into the third with a two-goal lead and were playing well for the first half of the frame. But after Matthew Knies got Toronto back within one with 7:49 left in the third period, things started to break down.

Knies tied the game just 2:22 after he got the Leafs back within one, capitalizing on a 2-on-1 off a pass from Max Domi to force overtime. From there, the Lightning were unable to record a shot on goal and barely held any possession, similar to the overtime loss in Buffalo.

Toronto outshot Tampa Bay 5-0 in overtime with Tavares scoring the game-winning goal with 55 seconds remaining.

Jonas Johansson was very strong between the pipes for the Lightning, finishing the game with a career-high 48 saves in the loss.

### **Bolts Quotes**

Jon Cooper on what needs to change in 3-on-3 overtime: "I either gotta change the way we do it or I gotta change the guys I put out there."

Jon Cooper on losing the two-goal lead in the third period: "It's disappointing the way that players handled the last half of the third period and overtime. We're much better than that. Give Toronto a ton

of credit. They did what you have to do to get points in a hockey game. They played the whole 60 minutes-plus and we didn't."

Jon Cooper on the end of the game: "You saw the intensity of the game elevate when the score got tied. Then, everybody was really, really engaged and we almost scored the winner at the end there. But, why did it take them to tie it for us to get to that point? Something we have to learn as a team."

Mikhail Sergachev on the 3-on-3: "You have to kind of be pushing them. Try to keep them to the outside and skate. We tried to do that, but as I said, they're great players and they make plays...When we had the puck, we definitely didn't do a good job and gave it back to them. We have to be a little bit more patient."

### **Bolts by the Numbers**

Nikita Kucherov recorded the 15<sup>th</sup> three-point period of his career, one shy of the Lightning franchise record held by Martin St. Louis.

Steven Stamkos now has points in 16 of his last 20 games vs. Toronto (6-24—30), including seven straight (2-9—11). He's picked up points in 22 of his 25 career home games against the Leafs (10-23—33).

The Lightning's two power-play goals required only 21 seconds of power-play time, the third-fastest time between two power-play goals in franchise history.

Nikita Kucherov (6-3—9) is tied for the NHL lead in goals and ranks tied for third in points.

### **Krenner's Three Stars**

Jonas Johansson

Matthew Knies

Nikita Kucherov

### **Lightning Look Ahead**

Tuesday, October 24 vs. Carolina Hurricanes, 7 p.m. ET, AMALIE Arena

Thursday, October 26 vs. San Jose Sharks, 7 p.m. ET, AMALIE Arena

Monday, October 30 vs. Seattle Kraken, 7 p.m. ET, AMALIE Arena

## **This feels familiar: Lightning fall to Maple Leafs in overtime at home** **Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

TAMPA — Facing the Maple Leafs for the first time since their first-round playoff exit against Toronto almost six months ago, the Lightning met an all-too-familiar fate Saturday at Amalie Arena.

They spent the offseason retooling their roster to build a team that could better protect leads, and coaches implemented a new defensive structure focused on better defending the middle of the ice.

But Saturday's result was a 4-3 overtime loss in which the Lightning blew a two-goal lead in the final eight minutes of regulation and continued a trend dating to last postseason's unceremonious departure.

"Watched that movie before against these guys," coach Jon Cooper said. "And it's disappointing just the way that the players handled the last half of the third and overtime. We're much better than that."

The story of the last postseason was the Lightning's three home overtime losses to the Maple Leafs, including in two games in which they carried a lead into the third period. Including the playoffs, the Lightning have lost nine of their last 10 overtime games dating to Feb. 15.

On Saturday, they saw Toronto forward Matthew Knies score twice over 2:22 of the third period, erasing a 3-1 Lightning lead and sending the game to overtime, where Tampa Bay failed to record a shot on goal before John Tavares — the player who ended its 2022-23 season with a Game 6 overtime goal — scored with 54.2 seconds remaining.

"We had guys back; we just didn't defend well enough," defenseman Mikhail Sergachev said. "It's just moments like that, when the games are slipping, you've got to kind of notice it. We were there, but we just didn't do a good job defending."

"We thought we were playing well, but those two chances, you can't be sleeping on that. But hopefully, it's going to be a turning point."

On Knies' first goal, with 7:49 remaining, Toronto forward Max Domi carried the puck from one blue line to the other uninterrupted and caught the Lightning defense retreating flat-footed. Domi's cross-ice pass to Knies set him up for an open look on goalie Jonas Johansson. On Knies' second goal, a turnover by Lightning forward Brandon Hagel in the neutral zone led to a 2-on-1 the other way that saw Domi and Knies connect again.

And in overtime, Hagel's sloppy pass through the neutral zone was picked off, giving forward William Nylander and Tavares a 2-on-1 going the other way, with Tavares tucking the puck inside the far post.

"Eventually when you turn the puck over and you're not playing with the desperation, something's going to go in, and we gave (the Maple Leafs) some major rushes," Cooper said. "Those are big-time chances. So how did it get to that point? You have to digest that, and we just let them, so you give them enough of those, eventually they're going to go in."

"And the goalie did everything he could to keep them out, but eventually the percentages are going to work against you."

Johansson was superb, stopping 48 of 52 shots. He turned away several shots that the Lightning pushed to the outside in the first two periods, but in the third, he faced too many Grade A chances and odd-man rushes.

“Give Toronto a ton of credit,” Cooper said. “They did what you have to do to get points in hockey games. They played the whole 60 minutes-plus, and we didn’t. And then we left it again on our goalie’s shoulders to carry it home, and that’s so unfair.

“I thought he should have been all three stars (of the game), to be honest.”

Said Sergachev: “(Johansson) played unbelievable. We as a team let him down and didn’t play our best.”

Nikita Kucherov played a leading role in giving the Lightning a 3-1 lead with two goals and an assist in the first period. Tampa Bay scored three goals on its first four shots, chasing Toronto goaltender Ilya Samsonov from the game.

Samsonov’s replacement, Joseph Woll, stopped all 29 shots he faced, including a left pad save in the final seconds of regulation that denied Kucherov a hat trick and the Lightning a victory. Tampa Bay was outshot 20-12 in the third.

“(The Maple Leafs) were pushing hard,” Sergachev said. “They were trying to win, and we gave up two, three, four chances, and they capitalized on that.

“They have obviously world-class players, and they’ve been good for a lot of years. You just can’t do what we did, especially against those guys.”

## **Steven Stamkos' contract uncertainty is no distraction for Lightning** **Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

TAMPA — Lightning captain Steven Stamkos made headlines last month when he expressed disappointment that the team hadn't engaged him in contract extension talks during the offseason. But inside the Lightning locker room, Stamkos hasn't let any lingering displeasure become a distraction.

Stamkos, the face of the franchise since he was drafted in No. 1 overall in 2008, is playing through the final year of his eight-year contract without knowing his future with the team. He long has expressed his desire to spend his entire career in Tampa Bay. But general manager Julien BriseBois has said there are no plans to discuss his contract until after the season.

With the Maple Leafs in town tonight for the teams' first meeting since they eliminated the Lightning in last postseason's opening round, Toronto's obsession with Stamkos — he chose to remain in Tampa Bay over playing for his hometown Leafs the last time he approached free agency in 2016 — continued.

Asked how Stamkos has handled his contract uncertainty following morning skate, Lightning coach Jon Cooper said, "Honestly, had that not come up, I probably would not have even known it existed."

"And that's how it is in the room," Cooper added. "You know, everybody in our locker room is pretty team-oriented and focused and Steven is the leader of that group and the concerns he has, it's never come up in our room, or not with me, anyway. And I've been with these guys a long time. It hasn't affected him because his play has been great."

During last month's media day, Stamkos said he was "disappointed" in the lack of extension discussions, saying he told the team at the end of last season that he'd like to get an extension done before training camp began. The Lightning were focused on rebuilding their roster for this season, but also extended Brandon Hagel, who could have become a restricted free agent after 2023-24, for eight years.

Going into the offseason healthy and having a longer offseason than the Lightning have recently had — they played the last game of the season the previous three years — Stamkos said he felt like he came into the season in great physical shape because he was able to do more in his offseason preparation.

Stamkos entered Saturday with points in all three games he's played — he missed two with a lower-body injury but returned Thursday — and is averaging 19:01 in ice time. He has a power-play assist in all three games and had a three-point night (two goals, an assist) in the loss at Detroit last week

"He's played great and that stuff will take care of itself and all we can focus on is the games at hand," said Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman, who is in his 15th season as Stamkos' teammate. "He's been through a lot in his career and this doesn't bother us one bit what's going on."

## **Tampa Bay Lightning let down their goaltending in blowing late lead (again) to Leafs Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)**

TAMPA – Six games into the season, the Tampa Bay Lightning sit tied for most goals allowed in the league with the Carolina Hurricanes.

One might surmise that the absence of all-world goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy would be *the* factor in the inflated goals against allowed by the Lightning. Six games into the season, that assumption would be completely wrong.

The rate at which Tampa Bay is allowing goals has very little, if anything, to do with the goaltending.

And at some point the Lightning are going to have to reward their goaltenders for the performance they have put in during the early stages of the season. Saturday night against Toronto was not that night.

Because in an all-too familiar script, the Lightning had a third-period, multi-goal lead against the Leafs but failed to secure a victory and lost in overtime. And this particular chapter of the story ruined the starting role put forth by Jonas Johansson.

Johansson ended the night tied for the third-most saves in a regular season game in franchise history, stopping 48 of the 52 shots he faced, Tampa Bay needed to reward their goaltender for that type of a performance.

“He played unbelievable . . . again,” defenseman Mikhail Sergachev said, “I know we as a team let him down, we didn’t play our best.”

By period, the amount of shots on goal allowed by the Lightning were: 17, 10, 20, 5.

In two of the three periods in regulation, Tampa Bay allowed an expected goals rate of more than a goal. But Johansson kept turning chance after chance aside. And for 50-plus minutes, it was a performance that was standing up while protecting a two-goal lead in the third period.

A blown coverage and a lost puck during a line change cost the Lightning the lead in the span of 2 minutes, 22 seconds. Then in the overtime, the Lightning barely touched the puck and were burned once again by a turnover that led to a 2-on-1.

Brandon Hagel was in the middle of all three plays that cost the Lightning a point.

The first was when Hagel was outbattled up the right wing boards by Max Domi before Domi reached the Tampa Bay zone and was able to send a pass across the ice – and past three Tampa Bay defenders – to find Matthew Knies for an open shot that finally solved Johansson at 12:11.

On the tying goal, Hagel made a good play to intercept a pass in the neutral zone and stepped around a defender. Behind him, three Lightning players (Luke Glendening, Conor Sheary and Sergachev) went for a change at the same time David Kampf stepped up on Hagel to separate him from the puck. That created an odd-man situation as Domi came into the zone with Hagel chasing and Nick Perbix left to defend the play as Steven Stamkos, Anthony Cirelli and Nick Perbix caught trying to play catch up coming off the bench.

That all but spoiled the performance put in by Johansson.

“He’s battling out there,” Alex Barre-Boulet said. “He’s been playing really well since the start of the season and obviously we have to get it done more for him.”

In the overtime, when Tampa Bay didn’t touch the puck until the 2:04 mark when Nick Paul won a defensive zone draw, it looked like an all-too familiar feeling. In the final minute of the OT, Hagel had the puck on his stick at the blue line and tried to rush a pass up ice. Instead the pass was intercepted by William Nylander that set up a 2-on-1 chance. Nikita Kucherov made a good back-checking effort getting his stick on the Nylander pass and nearly deflected the puck wide, but it hit the shaft of the stick of John Tavares and fluttered into the net with 55 seconds left.

“Obviously frustrated. . . watched that movie before against these guys,” head coach Jon Cooper said. “And it’s disappointing just the way that players handled the last half of the third period and overtime, we’re much better than that. And give Toronto a ton of credit they, they did what you have to do to get points in hockey games, they played the whole 60 minutes plus, and we didn’t. Then we left it again, on our goalie shoulders to carry it home. And that’s so unfair. And we obviously we didn’t do it, and we didn’t deserve to do it.”

When the Lightning get themselves into these situations, it generally comes down to one issue – puck management. For the most part, they were fine in that area for most of the night and despite the high shot volume there were not a ton of high danger chances allowed, just seven through two periods. Then, when the game was in the balance later in the period, that’s when some of those bad habits came back.

“Eventually when you turn the puck over and you’re not playing with the desperation, something’s going to go in,” Cooper said. “We gave them some major rushes, and those outside shots and stuff like that they’re stat padders, but we give them the chances that go of the net. Those are big time chances. So know how did it get to that point, you have to digest that and and we just let them. So when you give them enough of those, eventually they’re going to go in. The goalie did everything he could to keep them out but eventually the percentages are gonna work against you.”

The Lightning’s overtime percentage is also working against them right now.

With the [second overtime loss](#) of the season, Tampa Bay has now lost nine of the past 10 games decided by overtime, four of those to the Maple Leafs. The Lightning lost three of the four games in the opening round series loss to Toronto last season, and in two of those held a lead in the third period on home ice. While it might be an anomaly, it’s also quite an alarming trend for a team that has had so much success in overtime, particularly in the 2020 playoff run when Tampa Bay went 6-2 in the playoffs en route to winning the Stanley Cup.

The law of averages suggest that is going to turn around. But it won’t just happen by happenstance.

“Either we’re going to have to change the way we do it or I’m going to have to change the guys I put out there,” Cooper said.

It wiped out the good work, beyond the performance of Johansson, the Lightning did. That included wiping out an early one-goal deficit by scoring the next three.

Nikita Kucherov scored on a one-timer for a power play goal at 6:26, tying the game 2:10 after Toronto took the lead. Alex Barre-Boulet finished off a good play, getting to the front of the net to redirect a pass from Kucherov through the five-hole of Ilya Samsonov at 10:04.

Kucherov struck again on the power play, delivering another one-timer from the right circle on a feed from Sergachev at 13:29.



All of it erased by mistakes at times of the game that Tampa Bay is usually in lockdown mode. Instead, they opened the door.

“They got that (second) goal when their guy carried the puck all the way down from his own zone into our zone and passing through the middle,” Sergachev said. “We have guys back, we just didn’t defend well enough. For their third goal it’s a bad line change and a 2-on-1. So it’s just moments like that when the game is slipping you have to kind of notice. We were there but we just didn’t do a good job defending.”

NOTES: D Zach Bogosian was back in the lineup for the second time in the past three games ... D Calvin de Haan, D Haydn Fleury and RW Austin Watson were scratched. ... Former Tampa Bay Lightning head coach Guy Boucher is now an assistant coach with the Leafs, his first job back in the NHL since he was let go by Ottawa in 2019. ... Kucherov recorded his 15th career three-point game, one shy of the franchise record set by Marty St. Louis. ... LW Alex Barre-Boulet scored his first goal in the NHL since November 23, 2021, against Philadelphia. ... Tampa Bay’s 52 shots on goal against mark the third most allowed in franchise history.

### My Three Stars

1. Leafs RW Matthew Knies – Two goals, assist, plus-2
2. Lightning RW Nikita Kucherov – Two goals, assist, six shots on goal, 10 shot attempts
3. Lightning G Jonas Johansson – Stopped 48 shots on goal despite the overtime loss