



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Saturday, October 28, 2023**

1. What Andrei Vasilevskiy is doing as Lightning ride hot Jonas Johansson – Kristie Ackert (Tampa Bay Times)
2. Johansson makes 23 saves, Stamkos has goal and assist, and Lightning hammer Sharks 6-0 – Mark Didtler (Associated Press)
3. The Backcheck: Lightning get second-straight shutout against the Sharks – Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)
4. Syracuse Crunch fall to Comets, 4-2 – Syracuse Crunch (Syracuse.com)

What Andrei Vasilevskiy is doing as Lightning ride hot Jonas Johansson **Kristie Ackert (Tampa Bay Times)**

BRANDON — The Lightning took their biggest blow of 2023-24 before the season had even started. They received word that five-time All-Star goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy, the backbone of their two most recent Stanley Cup titles and three straight Cup final appearances, would miss eight to 10 weeks following back surgery.

Vasilevskiy had a microdiscectomy Sept. 28 to address a lumbar disk herniation. A month later, he is still feeling his way back.

“He’s been great,” coach Jon Cooper said. “You have to pull him down because he wants to do more and more and more. He’s on schedule and looks great. His spirits are great.

“I can’t put a timetable on (his return). ... We’ve got a few more weeks. It was, like, right around that Thanksgiving time.”

Vasilevskiy’s rehabilitation takes place mostly away from the team and behind closed doors. Cooper said the goaltender has progressed to putting on skates and getting on the ice for what the coach called a light “Christmas skate.”

As Vasilevskiy gets closer to returning, Cooper said, more information will be funneled through him.

The Thanksgiving target is encouraging.

The Lightning have 12 games scheduled between now and Thanksgiving Day. In Jonas Johansson they have found a solid replacement to help them weather Vasilevskiy’s absence.

Tampa Bay signed Johansson, who had limited NHL experience, in free agency during the summer because it believed Vasilevskiy no longer needed a veteran behind him. The signing also was a way to save money under the salary cap.

Johansson, who had just 35 games of NHL experience before signing, was coming off his best year in the NHL: three games with the Avalanche.

No one was sure how Johansson, who turned 28 last month, would react when he was thrown into the fire at the start of the season, but he has responded well.

In seven games, Johansson is 4-1-2 with a 2.56 goals-against average and a .925 save percentage. This week he posted back-to-back shutouts with 32 saves against the Hurricanes and 23 against the Sharks.

The Lightning have been more than pleased with their return on the gamble they took on Johansson.

“We signed him for a reason. And that was to do what he’s doing,” Cooper said. “We just expected we would start him 20 times a year, not 20 times in the first two months. And so, that’s the difference. But he’s proven himself to be much more than capable, and everything of what our scouts saw is coming to fruition, and it’s good for him to see that he can handle the work as well.”

Still, to get back a healthy Vasilevskiy could be a season-changer for the Lightning, who seem to be working out their defensive system for much of the first month of the season.

Since 2015-16, Vasilevskiy leads the NHL in wins (256) and is third in shutouts (31). He helped the Lightning win the Stanley Cup in back-to-back seasons, playing every minute during the 2020 and 2021 playoffs.

The 29-year-old won the Vezina Trophy in 2018-19 and the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP in 2021.

Notes

Forward Tyler Motte was on the ice for part of Friday's practice, wearing a red no-contact jersey. It was the first time he had practiced with the team since suffering an upper-body injury in the season opener. "It means he's getting in shape, hockey shape, but doesn't change any timeline on him," Cooper said. "Best-case scenario, he plays on the road trip," a four-game set that begins Thursday. ... Forward Brandon Hagel was the only player missing from practice. Cooper said he had a rest day. Hagel was to be on the ice when the Lightning return to practice Sunday.

Johansson makes 23 saves, Stamkos has goal and assist, and Lightning hammer Sharks 6-0 **Mark Didtler (Associated Press)**

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Jonas Johansson made 23 saves for his second consecutive shutout, Steven Stamkos had a goal and an assist, and the Tampa Bay Lightning hammered the winless San Jose Sharks 6-0 on Thursday night.

Tampa Bay also got goals from Brayden Point, Michael Eyssimont, Brandon Hagel, Nicholas Paul and Luke Glendening.

"These are games that hopefully build some confidence in what you want to achieve going forward," Stamkos said. "Work on some system things. We've been talking a lot about some changes we've made, and this was a game that, four or five- nothing kind of halfway through the game, you just don't want to cheat out there. And I thought we did a good job of sticking to our structure."

San Jose goalie Mackenzie Blackwood, under constant siege, was pulled at 7:29 of the second after allowing five goals on 21 mostly quality shots.

The Sharks have opened the season at 0-6-1. Dating to a 7-2 win at Arizona last Apr. 1, San Jose is winless in 13 games (0-11-2).

"We've just got to play with more of a competitive edge to our game," Sharks coach David Quinn said before the game. "I mean, just because you are around a battle doesn't mean you're in the battle. There's a big, big difference. We have to play with more freakin' attitude if we're going to be successful and generate more offense and spend less time in our end."

San Jose has eight goals in its seven games, scoring more than one just once.

"Not good, not good at all," Sharks defenseman Mario Ferraro said. "We weren't hard enough to play against. Too much time and space for them. We're not happy about that one. There's nothing positive to take. It's the NHL, no one's going to do us any favors."

Johansson, filling in for the injured Andrei Vasilevskiy, had 32 saves in a 3-0 win Tuesday over Carolina.

Lightning coach Jon Cooper said Vasilevskiy (back surgery) is doing light skating like "a Christmas skate" and is expected back in late November.

Stamkos made it 3-0 during a 5-on-3 power play with 42 seconds left in the first. Stamkos tied Dale Hawerchuk for 39th place on the all-time goals list with 518. The captain has 196 power-play goals, which is one away from tying Jarome Iginla for 21st place.

Stamkos also tied Ray Whitney for 71st all-time with 1,064 points. After going two games without a shot on goal, the Lightning captain took 11 shots with one on goal.

Tampa Bay had 79 shot attempts, compared to 41 for the Sharks.

Veteran San Jose defenseman Marc-Edouard Vlasic was a healthy scratch for the second straight game.

The Backcheck: Lightning get second-straight shutout against the Sharks **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

It was a dominant night for the Tampa Bay Lightning at AMALIE Arena Thursday with the Bolts skating to a 6-0 victory over the San Jose Sharks, pushing their point streak to five straight games, improving to 3-0-1 on the homestand and winning back-to-back contests for the first time this season.

Tampa Bay opened the scoring early with Brayden Point lighting the lamp for the second-straight game off a pass from Mikhail Sergachev. After Nick Perbix found Sergachev at the center point with a D-to-D pass, Sergachev moved the puck to the right faceoff dot for Point, who waited patiently before picking his spot and wiring a shot off the far post and past Mackenzie Blackwood to open the scoring just 1:41 into the game.

Less than five minutes later, Mikey Eyssimont doubled Tampa Bay's lead with his second goal of the campaign. Nick Perbix sent a pass across the blue line for Calvin de Haan, who sifted a shot towards that net, where Eyssimont was waiting to redirect the puck past Blackwood, despite being cross-checked in the back and falling to the ice. With the primary assist, de Haan recorded his first point as a member of the Lightning.

After back to-back penalties from the Sharks put the Lightning on a 5-on-3 power play near the end of the first period, it was Steven Stamkos who made it a 3-0 game with his 196th career power-play goal. Taking a pass from Kucherov in his regular spot on the power play at the left circle, Stamkos picked his spot and rifled a wrist shot right under the arm of Blackwood with 41.4 seconds left in the first.

Going into the second period with a 3-0 lead, the Bolts didn't take their foot off the gas and Brandon Hagel pushed the lead to 4-0 just 4:01 into the middle frame.

Following a beautiful stretch pass with Victor Hedman finding Alex Barré-Boulet at the San Jose blue line, Barré-Boulet sent a saucer pass right over the stick of the San Jose defender to Hagel, who calmly walked in alone on Blackwood and placed a perfect shot into the top right corner for his fifth goal of the season.

Blackwood's night came to an end 3:28 later with Nick Paul scoring his fifth goal of the year right in front of the net. After former Bolts defenseman Jan Rutta blocked a heavy one-timer from Stamkos, the Lightning captain found Paul in front of the net before the power forward made a move to the backhand and scored to make it a 5-0 game.

With 14:16 remaining in regulation, Luke Glendening got his first goal with Tampa Bay when he redirected a shot from Conor Sheary past Kaapo Kahkonen to seal the 6-0 win for the Lightning.

Between the pipes on the other end of the ice, Jonas Johansson made 23 saves for his second-straight shutout. Coming into the season, the new Bolts goaltender had one career NHL shutout. Now, he's tied for the league lead with two as he continues to do a fantastic job filling in for Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Bolts Quotes

Jon Cooper: "There's a lot of good things. I liked the way we played in our end again. We're not spending a whole ton of time in there. When we do, we're not really giving up a whole lot and if we do give something up, the goalie's there for us."

Steven Stamkos: “These are games that hopefully build some confidence in what you want to achieve going forward. Work on some system things. We've been talking a lot about some changes we've made and this was a game that was 4 or 5 nothing kind of halfway through the game. You just don't want to cheat out there and I thought we did a good job of sticking to our structure.”

Mikey Eyssimont: “We're starting to feel where guys are and know where their tendencies are on the ice. But I think for the most part, it's just sticking to our identity. I think we're finding that work ethic.”

Nick Perbix on Jonas Johansson: “Even before the shutouts, I think he was playing great. I mean, that Toronto game, he was the one he was the sole reason why we got that point.”

Bolts by the Numbers

- Steven Stamkos scored his 196th career power-play goal and passed Brett Hull (195) for the seventh-most among players with a single franchise in NHL history.
- Victor Hedman recorded his 39th career multi-assist period and tied Martin St. Louis for the second most in Lightning history. Steven Stamkos tops the list with 40.
- Victor Hedman is up to eight assists on the season, the most among all NHL defensemen, while his nine points are tied for first.
- Nikita Kucherov's 11 points are tied for the fifth-most among all NHL skaters.
- Jonas Johansson became the first Lightning goaltender to record back-to-back shutouts since Andrei Vasilevskiy blanked Philadelphia on November 23, 2021 before shutting out Seattle on November 26, 2021.

Krenner's Three Stars

1. Victor Hedman
2. Mikey Eyssimont
3. Steven Stamkos

Lightning Look Ahead

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

Thursday, November 2 at Columbus Blue Jackets, 7 p.m. ET, Nationwide Arena

Saturday, November 4 at Ottawa Senators, 7 p.m. ET, Canadian Tire Centre

Syracuse Crunch fall to Comets, 4-2 **Syracuse Crunch (Syracuse.com)**

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – The Syracuse Crunch fell to the Utica Comets, 4-2, tonight at the Upstate Medical University Arena.

The loss moves the Crunch to 3-2-0-0 on the season.

Crunch goaltender Hugo Alnefelt turned aside 16-of-20 shots. Isaac Poulter stopped 33-of-35 in net for the Comets. Syracuse was successful on 1-of-5 power play opportunities, while Utica went 1-for-3.

The Comets were first to score just 46 seconds into the game. Shane Bowers was down low to tip in a long left-point shot by Topias Vilen. Four minutes later, Max Willman doubled the lead with a wrister from the right circle as he came in on an odd-man rush.

The Crunch cut the lead in half with a power-play goal late in the opening frame. Jack Thompson walked the blue line and sent a wrister through traffic to net his first of the season.

Max Crozier knotted the score four minutes into the middle frame with his first professional goal. Gage Goncalves set up Crozier with a cross-zone feed as he sped down the right side. The rookie forward grabbed the puck and chipped it into the back of the net. Halfway through the frame, Utica regained their lead when Robbie Russo ripped a one-timer from the left circle.

Utica added an insurance marker late in the third period to secure their victory. Willman passed the puck out from behind the net for Xavier Parent. His shot was stopped, but Graeme Clarke was there to clean up the rebound.

The Crunch host the Laval Rocket tomorrow night.

Single game tickets and ticket packages for the 2023-24 season are on sale now and can be purchased in person at the Crunch office located inside the Upstate Medical University Arena at Onondaga County War Memorial at 800 S. State St. in Syracuse, by calling the office at 315-473-4444 or online through Ticketmaster

Crunchables: Max Crozier recorded his first professional goal tonight...Felix Robert is on a five-game points streak (4g, 2a).