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DallasStars.com

NHL announces start time for Stars - Golden Knights Game 5 on May 1

By Dallas Stars Communications

April 29, 2024

FRISCO, Texas -- **The National Hockey League** announced today that the start time for Game 5 of the 2024 Stanley Cup Playoffs First Round series between the Dallas Stars and Vegas Golden Knights has been scheduled for **6:30 p.m. CT** on Wednesday, May 1 at American Airlines Center.

The game will be televised on **Bally Sports Southwest** and **ESPN** and heard on **Sportsradio 96.7 FM/1310 AM The Ticket**.

As details become available on the playoff schedule, tickets, home games, watch parties and events, they will be posted on [DallasStars.com](https://www.dallasstars.com).

DallasStars.com

Heika's Take: Stars continue road dominance, even series in Game 4 win

By Mike Heika

April 30, 2024

The best road team in the NHL proved itself in Las Vegas this week, as the Stars took two wins at T-Mobile Arena and evened up the best-of-seven playoff series with the Golden Knights. Dallas grabbed a 4-2 win on Monday that exemplified so many of the things that made this team good on the road. Showing patience, perseverance and depth scoring were chief among them. Now, what many believe is the best first-round series in the Stanley Cup Playoffs heads back to Texas for Game 5 Wednesday with both teams chomping at the bit for more.

"This was big for our group," said captain [Jamie Benn](#). "There was no panic in our game. We knew they were going to come out hard, they're a good team. But we weathered the storm and found a way to win."

After Dallas dominated the first 30 minutes of Game 3 and eventually won it in overtime, Vegas had motivation on its side in Game 4. The Golden Knights took a 1-0 lead and had twice as many shot attempts out of the gate. But the Stars were able to stick with it and tie things up on a fluky shot from [Evgenii Dadonov](#), and that really helped the Stars get to their feet.

After Michael Amadio scored for Vegas on a hard-working goal 14 minutes into the first period, the Stars had to scramble. But Dadonov flipped a puck on net from deep in the corner, and it deflected off of goalie Logan Thompson's mask and into the net three minutes later for a tie game.

"It's crazy," said goalie [Jake Oettinger](#). "Hopefully, we learn from that. Throw pucks at the net and you're going to score dirty goals like that in the playoffs."

Oettinger has seen it happen against him, so he felt getting one the other way was a good omen. But the ability to overcome the push was more than just good fortune. Oettinger was great in net, the Stars battled back, and the strategy of the series took center ice.

"It's two really good teams going at it," said Stars forward [Ty Dellandrea](#), who scored the game-winning goal. "We've kept going back and forth. It's playoff hockey and it's exciting."

Vegas took a 2-1 lead in the second period on a nice rebound goal from Jack Eichel. Then, Dallas bounced back and tied things up at 2-2 on a power play goal from [Wyatt Johnston](#). Dallas drew two power plays in the second period and that helped the Stars hold a 17-6 advantage in shots on goal in the middle frame. DeBoer said he felt his players read the physical play of the Knights and reacted well. Vegas finished with a 43-20 advantage in hits, and DeBoer said Dallas used that.

“They had the advantage in some shots ([n the first period], but I thought they were running around chasing hits and we talked about using that against them, and I thought in the second period we really took control of the game when we drew some penalties and made them play in their own end,” DeBoer said.

Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said he feels his team needs to be physical to negate the skill of the Stars.

“We’re a big team, we want to finish checks,” Cassidy said. “I think there are areas on the ice where you have to finish Dallas. They have a lot of skill and we have to be hard on them and make them earn their ice. We took away a lot of their rush game tonight, which is one of the biggest parts of their game.”

The back-and-forth in the series was evident early in Game 4. Vegas defenseman Brayden McNabb hit Stars forward [Logan Stankoven](#), and Benn returned the favor seconds later by laying out McNabb. That’s just part of the details that each side is trying to execute.

Asked about how the Stars came back from being down 0-2 in the series after two losses at home, Oettinger said, “It’s not surprising to anyone in this room.”

“We felt good about our game in Dallas and it just didn’t go the way we wanted it to,” Oettinger added. “Series go a million different ways. It’s not always how you draw it up. I couldn’t be more proud of the way the guys played, just the decisions and the little plays that separate this time of year.”

With the score tied 2-2, both sides were digging in when the Stars got one of those great efforts. The fourth line with Dellandrea, [Craig Smith](#) and [Sam Steel](#) had a ferocious shift and Smith found himself off to the right of the Vegas goal. He whipped a shot into the crease, and it bounced off of Dellandrea’s chest and went into the net for a 3-2 Stars lead late in the period.

“We can get out of the period 2-2, but we stayed too long in the shift,” Cassidy said. “Then, we mismanaged the puck. It’s a fortunate play, but they’re putting everything to the net. You’re going to get some of those bounces.”

That allowed the Stars to lock things down in the third period, and [Roope Hintz](#) added an empty-net goal to put an exclamation point on the game.

“I thought in the second period we really took control of the game,” DeBoer said. “The play in the third period was just locking it down. You don’t like to sit back that much, but I felt like we were smart like they were in Dallas when they had the lead going into the third.”

Both sides are learning from each other, which makes the series all the more interesting. Dallas was the top seed in the West this season, while Vegas got in as the eighth seed. But the Golden Knights are the defending Stanley Cup champions and battled injuries all season. Now, they are healthy and at full strength.

“I think everyone knew that these games would be like this,” DeBoer said. “You look at the four games and I don’t think we have played a poor game yet. I’m excited about our group getting home.

NHL.com

Stars edge Golden Knights in Game 4, even Western 1st Round series

By Paul Delos Santos

April 30, 2024

LAS VEGAS -- [Jake Oettinger](#) made 32 saves for the Dallas Stars in a 4-2 win against the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 4 of the Western Conference First Round at T-Mobile Arena on Monday.

It was the Stars' second straight win on the road to even the best-of-7 series. Game 5 will return to Dallas on Wednesday.

"It's not surprising to anyone in this room (to come back from down 0-2 in the series)," Oettinger said. "We felt good about our game in Dallas, it just didn't go the way we wanted to. Series go a million different ways. It's not always how you draw it up. Teams have back from down 3-0, 3-1. It's not over unless you give up. No one in here is giving up."

[Evgenii Dadonov](#), [Ty Dellandrea](#) and [Roope Hintz](#) each scored his first goal of the playoffs for Dallas, which is the No. 1 seed from the Central Division and Western Conference.

"Tonight was [Oettinger's] best night. Third period, he locked it down and made some huge saves," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "When he gets in that zone, he's a really tough guy to beat. I like how our group is playing around him and defending around him. But you know, we bent a little bit tonight. You knew they were going to push back, and you know, he made some critical saves at key times. So, we're going to need that. ... He's got to be one of our best players, but I feel like he's in that zone."

[Michael Amadio](#) and [Jack Eichel](#) scored, and [Logan Thompson](#) made 28 saves for Vegas, which is the second wild card.

"So here we are, tied 2-2. All close games," Golden Knights coach Bruce Cassidy said. "So, we have to be the team that makes the right plays in the next game like we did up there on the last trip. I don't think it was our best game. I don't think it was theirs in Dallas, but we made the plays at the right time to win the hockey game. We played winning hockey in the third period. That will be the task in front of us now."

Amadio gave the Golden Knights a 1-0 lead at 14:25 of the first period. Oettinger stopped his initial redirection, but he was able to swat the rebound just over the goal line.

Dadonov tied it 1-1 at 17:52, roofing a shot off the mask of Thompson from along the goal line. Eichel put Vegas back in front 2-1 at 3:09 of the second period. He jammed in a rebound after Jonathan Marchessault's shot on a 3-on-2 rush hit the right post.

“It was a step up from the last game (a 3-2 overtime loss on Saturday) where they totally dominated,” Vegas forward William Karlsson said. “I thought we had scoring chances. It's sport. It's going to bounce one way the other day and bounce the other way the next day. So, we're just going to regroup and focus on the next game.”

Wyatt Johnston tied it 2-2 at 9:45 with a power-play goal.

“We lost the momentum a little bit in second period. They got their power-play goal, and after that they generated another power play,” Marchessault said. “They were able to get a goal in the last two minutes. So, I think that's an unfortunate bounce. But I mean, it's momentum swings in the playoffs, and I don't think we managed that well today.”

Dellandrea gave the Stars a 3-2 lead at 18:34 of the second when Craig Smith's shot from a sharp angle deflected in off his chest.

“It's the playoffs,” Dellandrea said. “It's just about trying to win a game for this group. Everybody's been playing well. I'm just trying to help the group and keep that going for them.” Hintz scored an empty-net goal at 18:38 of the third period for the 4-2 final. The goal came shortly after he blocked a one-timer from Noah Hanifin.

“You got to pay a price to win in this league,” Stars captain Jamie Benn said. “That was a perfect example.”

NHL.com

Stars defense paves way for Game 4 win against Golden Knights

By Nicholas Cotsonika

April 30, 2024

LAS VEGAS -- It hurt. Clearly. The Dallas Stars were protecting a one-goal lead late in the third period, and the Vegas Golden Knights were pushing desperately, goalie pulled. [Roope Hintz](#), the Stars No. 1 center, blocked a slap shot by Golden Knights defenseman [Noah Hanifin](#) with 1:40 left.

Soon afterward, Hintz was rewarded. The puck bounced to him inside the Dallas blue line, and he fired it 120 feet into an empty net with 1:22 to go. As his teammates gave him pats on the back, he grimaced in pain.

Dallas won 4-2 in the Game 4 of the Western Conference First Round at T-Mobile Arena on Monday, tying the best-of-7 series 2-2.

"It's plays like that," goalie [Jake Oettinger](#) said, "that separate winning a championship and going home."

After the first two games of this series, it looked like the Stars might be going home early. They lost 4-3 in Game 1 and 3-1 in Game 2 in Dallas.

Last season, they fell behind the Golden Knights 3-0 in the conference final, lost the series in six and watched them go on to win the Stanley Cup. In the regular season, they lost all three meetings against them (0-1-2).

But this is a team that won the Western Conference and finished one point behind the New York Rangers for the best record in the NHL. This is a team that had the best road record in the League (.695 points percentage). This is a team with championship aspirations.

The Stars were resilient in Games 3 and 4 overall and within each game.

In Game 3, they dominated the first 30 minutes and took a 2-0 lead, only to watch the Golden Knights tie it 2-2. In overtime, they were one shot from another 3-0 hole against the Golden Knights, but center [Wyatt Johnston](#) gave them a 3-2 win.

In Game 4, they fell behind 1-0 and 2-1. But they kept coming back, and when they took a 3-2 lead into the third period, they locked it down.

Game 5 is at American Airlines Center in Dallas on Wednesday (7:30 p.m. ET; ESPN).

"It's not over unless you give up, and no one in here has given up, and now we're right back in this series," Oettinger said. "I just couldn't be more proud of the way the guys played, and just the decisions and the little plays that separate this time of year, and just the way that Pete

(DeBoer) was preaching playing the right way. It was a great message, and guys took it and played the right way and got rewarded.”

The Stars are considered Stanley Cup contenders because of their depth -- a mix of high-end players and role players at different stages of their NHL careers -- and hunger to win. In Game 4, they got another goal from Johnston, the 20-year-old who led them with 32 goals in the regular season. But they also got goals from Evgenii Dadonov, a third-line left wing, and Ty Dellandrea, a fourth-line left wing.

Dellandrea’s goal turned out to be the winner. He went to the net late in the second period, and when right wing Craig Smith threw the puck toward the net from a sharp angle, it went off his upper body and past goalie Logan Thompson at 18:34.

“Get pucks towards the net, and good things happen,” Smith said.

Dellandrea and Smith were healthy scratches the first two games. They played the past two games due to injuries to forwards Mason Marchment and Radek Faksa.

“Guys have come in, and it’s been seamless,” DeBoer said. “[They have] not only jumped in but had an effect on the game. That depth has been great, and you can feel it. It’s contagious to our group. Those guys are really driving a lot of plays for us. They’ve been fantastic.”

The Stars sat on the lead in the third period perhaps too much, outshot 14-7. But Oettinger made 14 saves, finishing with 32.

“You knew they were going to push back, and he made some critical saves at key times,” DeBoer said. “We’re going to need that. Two out of three going home. He’s got to be one of our best players, but I feel like he’s in that zone now.”

The Stars had 24 blocked shots, including 16 in the third. Even players known more for scoring contributed to the defensive effort. Center Matt Duchene has one assist in the series, but he had four blocked shots in Game 4. Hintz, who led Dallas with 24 points (10 goals, 14 assists) in 19 playoff games last season, didn’t have a point until he blocked that shot and scored that empty-netter.

“You’ve got to pay a price to win in this league,” said captain Jamie Benn, who had two blocked shots, “and that’s a perfect example.”

No pain, no gain.

“We’ve got some good buy-in from key guys there,” DeBoer said. “There’s a lot of guys in that room that want to win.”

The Dallas Morning News

Five thoughts from Stars-Golden Knights Game 4: Dallas roars back to tie series

By Lia Assimakopoulos
April 30, 2024

LAS VEGAS — Just like that, we have an even series.

The Dallas Stars came away with their second road win of the playoffs Monday night in a 4-2 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 4 of the first-round series at T-Mobile Arena.

The win evens the series at 2-2, with the teams set to board flights to Dallas for Game 5 on Wednesday.

Here are five thoughts on Game 4 of the Stars-Golden Knights series:

Road warriors

The Stars were the NHL's best road team all season, and it showed in their latest trip to Vegas.

After posting a 26-10-5 road record, earning points 69.5% of the time, Dallas is now perfect on the road in the playoffs, going 2-0 in Games 3 and 4 at T-Mobile Arena.

Vegas is known as one of the toughest atmospheres in which to play, from the booming crowd to the thumping, club-like music. However, Dallas' desperation kicked in and was enough to even the series before returning home for Game 5 on Wednesday.

"It's not surprising to anyone in this room," Stars goalie Jake Oettinger said. "We felt good about our game in Dallas. Just didn't go the way we wanted it to. Series go a million different ways. It's not always how you draw it up. Teams have come back from down 3-0, 3-1. It's not over unless you give up, and there's no one in here that's giving up, and now we're right back in this series."

The Stars restored their home-ice advantage over the last three games of the series. However, a home team has not yet won in this series, so Dallas will hope to be the first to do so in Game 5.

From out of the lineup to playoff playmakers

Dallas got goals from its two players who have seen the least amount of ice time in the last few months — Evgenii Dadonov and Ty Dellandrea.

Dadonov scored from a seemingly impossible angle, shooting from the goal line and bouncing the puck off the helmet of Vegas goalie Logan Thompson to tie the score 1-1 in the first period.

The Russian forward had missed over two months of the season with a lower-body fracture he suffered on Feb. 10. He returned to the lineup in the last game of the regular season and finally found the net in his fifth game back — scoring his first goal since Feb. 7.

Dellandrea watched most of the Stars' recent games from the press box, as he was a healthy scratch for every regular-season game in April but one. He played his first game since April 6 on Saturday to fill in for injured Radek Faksa and Mason Marchment and scored in his second playoff game this year.

A wild sequence in front of the net ended with a shot from Craig Smith bouncing off Dellandrea's body and into the net. The score was his first since Feb. 15 and ended up being the game-winner. He was also the hero in Game 5 of last year's series against Vegas on the road where he scored two third-period goals to extend the series.

"It's just about trying to win games for this group," Dellandrea said. "Just trying to help the group and keep that going for them."

Jack Eichel vs. Wyatt Johnston continues

The battle between Vegas forward Jack Eichel and Wyatt Johnston for the series' leading scorer continued Monday night.

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The two players have been the most obvious difference-makers among skaters, and each have three goals in the series.

Eichel was dangerous on the rush Monday, as he has been all series. After Jonathan Marchessault hit iron on a rush attempt, Eichel cleaned up the rebound and found the net to give Vegas a 2-1 lead in the second period.

At the period's midway mark, Johnston cleaned up a rebound on the power play to tie the score back up. He now has all three of his playoff goals in the last two games.

For most of the night, he was Dallas' most aggressive forward to the point where his goal felt inevitable.

The two forwards were among their team's best scorers in the regular season, each passing the 30-goal mark.

The battle between the two will be one to watch as the series continues.

Slow start but Stars respond

The Stars have been one of the league's best teams in the second period this season, scoring 106 second-period goals (third-best in NHL) in the regular season.

Entering Monday's matchup, however, Dallas ranked last among playoff teams with just one goal in the middle frame.

Dallas needed a big second-period showing after Vegas came out hot with a 14-8 shot advantage and 13-7 scoring chance advantage. The Golden Knights also took the lead just 3:09 into the second period.

Nevertheless, a pair of Vegas penalties shifted the momentum in Dallas' favor. The Stars scored on one of the power plays and was able to take over the shot advantage during the second. It also spent a large portion of the period in the offensive zone. Not long after the second penalty, Dellandrea gave Dallas the lead.

"Despite the push, I never felt that we were overwhelmed at any moment," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "They had the advantage in some shots. I thought they were running around chasing hits. We talked about using that over-aggressiveness against them."

That was the first time all series the Stars held the lead entering the third period.

Stars figuring out Thompson

Vegas' goalie has been its savior for much of the series, and while it took three full games to get there, the Stars are appearing to figure Thompson out.

After Johnston scored the overtime game-winner going top-shelf from a difficult angle on Saturday night, the opening minutes of Monday's game showed that Dallas felt that was the best way to beat Thompson.

Pushing pucks through his pads hasn't been effective all series, so the Stars either shot high or created opportunities off rebounds. Dadonov's first-period goal also hit off Thompson's head before it bounced in.

Entering the game with a .927 save percentage and 2.14 goals-against average, the Stars have had to get creative and earn every goal this series.

The Dallas Morning News

Stars' series-tying Game 4 win over Vegas showed just how deep and dangerous Dallas can be

By Lia Assimakopoulos

April 30, 2024

LAS VEGAS — When a shot bounced off the shoulder of Ty Dellandrea and past Vegas goalie Logan Thompson with 1:26 left in the second period of Game 4, the rest of the Stars' roster was even happier than Dellandrea.

The team was overjoyed to celebrate what would become the game-winner for Dallas in a 4-2 victory Monday that evened the series at 2-2 before returning home.

But seeing one of their favorite teammates experience the highlight of his season in the biggest game yet carried almost as much weight.

"No better teammate than Ty," Stars captain Jamie Benn said postgame. "We all see what he's done throughout the year. He works on his game every day."

Dellandrea and fellow bottom-six forward Evgenii Dadonov spent more time out of the lineup than any other player on the opening day roster this season. Dadonov battled a serious injury in the latter half of the season while Dellandrea found himself scratching out of the lineup most nights.

But the two scored gritty goals in Game 4 to carry Dallas to its biggest win of the season and set it up for a chance to take the series lead at home.

"I can't say enough about our depth guys stepping in," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "We've got a couple injuries. We've got three pretty good players out right now in [Jani] Hakanpää, [Radek] Faksa and [Mason] Marchment, and guys have come in and it's been seamless. Not only jumped in, but had an effect on the game.

"That depth has been great. You can feel it. It's contagious to our group. Those guys are really driving a lot of plays for us."

Dadonov played in just 51 games for Dallas this season and missed over two months after suffering a lower-body fracture against Montreal on Feb. 10. He returned on the last night of the regular season, but it took five games before he found his first goal.

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On a new line with Tyler Seguin and Joe Pavelski, the Russian forward threw a puck on net from an impossible angle on the goal line late in the first period. It ultimately bounced off the helmet of Thompson and in.

After Wyatt Johnston tied the score on a power-play goal midway through the second, Dellandrea scored his goal right before intermission. It was just Dellandrea's third goal of the season and second game-winner in a playoff series against Vegas.

The 23-year-old scored two third-period goals at T-Mobile Arena during last year's Game 5 to extend the series to six games.

"He likes playing Vegas," DeBoer said.

Dellandrea didn't even play Games 1 and 2 of this series. When Marchment and Faksa went down with injuries in Game 2, he drew into the lineup for Game 3. There was even discussion of whether AHL MVP Mavrik Bourque — who was called up ahead of Game 3 — would leapfrog Dellandrea.

Dellandrea recorded just nine points (two goals and seven assists) in the regular season after charting 28 last season and playing in all 82 regular-season games. Dallas added fourth-line depth this offseason in Craig Smith and Sam Steel, who ultimately replaced him.

Smith has also provided a spark for the Stars after being a healthy scratch in Game 1.

"A lot of different pieces have worked this year for that fourth line. Anybody that goes in there plays. We all have a little bit of chemistry," Dellandrea said. "It's just about trying to win games for this group. Just trying to help the group and keep that going for them."

Dallas bragged about its depth entering the postseason after setting a franchise record with eight different players scoring 20 or more goals. That also led the NHL. But through the first three games of the series, the eight goals were scored by five players.

But Monday's game gave Vegas a taste of how dangerous Dallas can be when its depth shines. The Stars just may need another performance like this one from Dellandrea to slay Vegas once and for all.

"There's no one in here that deserves that more than him," said Stars goalie Jake Oettinger, who is best friends and lives with Dellandrea. "There's no one that puts the team first more than him. He works his butt off and never has a bad attitude.

"Everyone wants to win and not everyone's going to have the exact role that they want, but if you win the championship, at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter."

The Athletic

Stars, Golden Knights delivering the drama in best first-round series of the playoffs

By Jesse Granger

April 30, 2024

LAS VEGAS — In a first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs in which two series are already over and five more are on the brink of ending through only five games, the [Vegas Golden Knights](#) and [Dallas Stars](#) are delivering the drama.

Dallas ground out another close, 4-2 win Monday night in Vegas to tie the series 2-2. Through four games, the Stars and Golden Knights have traded board-rattling hits, sensational saves and series-changing goals, all before a team has won a game on its home ice.

It's a rematch from last year's Western Conference finals, pitting two of the league's juggernauts and Cup favorites against each other right off the bat, and thus far it has lived up to the hype. Asked whether this first-round series feels like one much deeper in the postseason, Golden Knights forward [Jonathan Marchessault](#) quickly replied, "One hundred percent."

"This is as hard as it can get," Marchessault continued. "Last year was the same thing. This is two good teams in the West going at it right off the bat. It's going to be a battle, for sure."

The series has given us everything a hockey fan hopes for in the playoffs, and it might still have a long way to go. All four games have come down to the wire, with the teams separated by only one goal each night (aside from two late empty-net goals). They battled through an overtime thriller Saturday night in Las Vegas.

"It's two really good teams going at it," said Stars forward [Ty Dellandrea](#), who had a swollen bump underneath his right eye after scoring the game-winning goal Monday night on a shot that deflected off his body in the crease. "We've been going back and forth. It's playoff hockey. It's exciting. It's just a great, great series."

Many teams would've crumbled after losing two straight home games to the defending Cup champions to begin a postseason, but this talented Stars squad responded with its best hockey. Only four games in, the physicality of this series is already testing the depth of both sides. Vegas is without defenseman [Nicolas Hague](#) after he went out in Game 1, but veteran blueliner [Alec Martinez](#) has filled in well. Dellandrea was a healthy scratch at the start of the series, but after multiple injuries, he jumped into the lineup and delivered for Dallas.

"That depth has been great, and you can feel it," Stars coach Peter DeBoer said. "It's contagious to our group. Those guys are really driving a lot of plays for us, so they've been fantastic."

Dellandrea wasn't the only Star to score from around the crease Monday. [Wyatt Johnston](#) scored his third goal of the playoffs on a rebound from right in front of the Vegas net. As is usually the case this time of year, the team that has controlled that area of the ice has come out on top.

“In the playoffs, it’s not about tic-tac-toe (passing); it’s about getting to the dirty areas,” Marchessault said. “Maybe we can steal a page out of their book and do a little more of that.” Even in a well-defended series in which open ice and time to make plays are incredibly hard to come by, the most talented players on each side have still found ways to deliver.

[Jack Eichel](#) was the best player for much of Monday’s contest, transporting the puck up and down the ice with ease, and scored his third goal of the playoffs to put Vegas up 2-1 early in the second period. [Mark Stone](#) and Marchessault have scored big goals for Vegas, as have trade deadline acquisitions [Tomas Hertl](#) and [Noah Hanifin](#).

Johnston was the overtime hero for Dallas on Saturday and has cemented his place as one of the best young players in the [NHL](#) with his play over the four games. [Jason Robertson](#) and [Miro Heiskanen](#) have scored for the Stars, and though [Roope Hintz](#) had been held pointless through almost four full games, he made a sensational play to end Monday’s contest.

With Vegas pressuring for the tying goal late, Hintz blocked a shot that left him visibly shaken. It was one of an incredible 16 blocks by Dallas in the third period. Hintz stayed on the ice, continued defending and eventually corralled the puck and sent it the length of the ice and into the empty net.

“I think everyone knew that these games would be like this,” DeBoer said. “You look at the four games — I don’t think we’ve played a poor game yet. I thought the first two games in Dallas, they were opportunistic in some different situations. I loved Game 3. Tonight for Game 4, you know you’re going to see their best, and I thought we were good tonight considering the situation. So I’m excited about our group getting home.”

Both goalies have played excellent hockey, especially lately. [Logan Thompson](#) stood on his head Saturday night, stopping a franchise-record 43 shots to hold the Golden Knights in the game. [Jake Oettinger](#) returned serve Monday with his best game of the postseason. He stopped the last 18 shots he faced, including 14 in the third period while Dallas protected a one-goal lead. Vegas spent most of the final frame attacking, but Oettinger was sharp on his edges, square to the puck and made the saves look easy.

The Stars held Vegas out of the dangerous areas for the most part, but late in the game, Oettinger robbed Hertl with a glove save from the side of the net. Moments later, Hintz scored the empty-netter to seal the win.

“I thought we had scoring chances, but that’s the sport,” Vegas center [William Karlsson](#) said. “It’s going to bounce one way on one day and bounce the other way on the next day. We just have to regroup and focus on the next game. It’s two good teams going at it. It’s going to be the little things that decide it.”

Now it becomes a best-of-three series, and both sides know the margin for error is slim.

“We have to be the team that makes the right plays the next game, like we did on the last trip,” Golden Knights coach Bruce Cassidy said. “I don’t think it was our best game. I don’t think it was theirs, in Dallas, but we made the plays at the right time to win the hockey game and played winning hockey in the third period.”

All of it feels much bigger than a first-round series, but that’s the beauty of it. It has already given us four excellent hockey games and feels destined to make it seven. Whoever emerges from this battle will roll straight into an even bigger matchup with either a loaded [Colorado Avalanche](#) squad that’s firing on all cylinders or a big, strong [Winnipeg Jets](#) team that found a way to claw its way back from a 3-1 hole.

To this point, it hasn’t been the most exciting first round as a whole, but the Golden Knights and Stars are delivering.

ESPN.com

2024 Stanley Cup playoffs: Takeaways from the first 33 games

By ESPN Staff

April 30, 2024

Through the first 33 games of the 2024 Stanley Cup playoffs, one team was swept, while every other series reached 3-1. It's been a bit lopsided, but there's been no shortage of drama.

From goaltending decisions to lineup moves to the usual slew of "only in hockey" injuries, it's been a wild 33 games to start off the postseason.

To put it all into context, here are ESPN reporters Ryan S. Clark, Kristen Shilton and Greg Wyshynski with their top takeaways after the second wave of first-round games.

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Depth scoring could be the difference in Golden Knights-Stars

There was [Evgenii Dadonov](#)'s game-tying goal in the first period. And there was [Ty Dellandrea](#)'s eventual game winner in the second period. They were two of the most significant moments in the Stars' 4-2 win in Game 4 that allowed them to tie the series against the defending champion [Vegas Golden Knights](#).

Those also the latest examples of how depth could play a role in deciding the only series that's tied going into Game 5. Dadonov and Dellandrea's contributions are just the second and third goals the Stars have received these playoffs from players who are not in their top-six forward corps, or on the top defense pairing. So far, eight of the Stars' 11 goals have come from those particular groups. [Mason Marchment](#), who is out with an undisclosed injury, also got on the board back in Game 1.

One of the hallmarks of the Golden Knights' title run was their ability to receive goals throughout their lineup. So far, getting secondary and tertiary offense has been an issue to this point. Like the Stars, eight of their 11 goals have come from their top-six forwards or top defensive pairing. Second-pairing defenseman [Brayden McNabb](#) is responsible for having two of those goals beyond that group. The other is [Michael Amadio](#), who gave the Golden Knights a 1-0 lead in Game 4. Stay tuned. -- *Clark*

Shap Shots

20/20: Ugly third, but effective as Stars even up series with Golden Knights

By Sean Shapiro

April 30, 2024

It's now a tied series.

The Dallas Stars defeated the Vegas Golden Knights 4-2 on Monday in Nevada.

Here is the 20/20.

1. Amazing what 48 hours can do to a hockey series.

Dallas went from trailing the series 0-2, getting goalie'd in Game 3 and whispers of sweep were starting to sneak through.

Now it's tied 2-2, a best-of-three with two of those games in Dallas.

2. For better or worse, this game reminded me of the Rick Bowness era of Stars hockey.

Dallas took a 3-2 lead on their 25th shot of the game with 1:26 remaining in the second period.

They didn't take their 27th shot until there was 9:47 remaining, a span of more than 10 minutes without anything offensive.

Technically shot 26 happened, but that was a 138-foot dump in that happened to be on net.

Dallas went into an area defense, building a shell and just soft dumping pucks out to kill both time and area in the third period.

It was ugly.

3. Jake Oettinger has taken some heat this series from Stars fans.

And there's some merit in that. If Oettinger was better in Game 1, Dallas could potentially be in a chance to close the series out in Game 5 on Wednesday.

But Oettinger has rebounded well, and while Logan Thompson's performance in Game 3 overshadowed him, the Stars goalie was very good in both games in Vegas.

In Game 4 he made 33 saves.

4. It won't make the highlight reel, but Oettinger's save on Tomas Hertl with about 1:40 remaining sealing his left post set the stage for Roope Hintz to ice the game into the empty net.

5. Craig Smith used Ty Dellandrea as a backboard.

This is what happened on the goal that gave Dallas a 3-2 lead in the second period.



Before that it was a dynamic shift by the Stars fourth line, which features two players — Dellandrea and Smith — who were healthy scratches in Game 1 and 2.

Jack Eichel has been Vegas best player this series, arguably the best player on either team not named Wyatt Johnston (more on him in a second), but this was an extended shift where the Eichel line got ran ragged.

6. Wyatt Johnston continues to deliver for Dallas.

The Game 3 overtime hero and the Stars leading scorer in the regular season, Johnston tied the game for Dallas at 2-2 on the power play in the second period.

It was a classic Johnston goal.

He didn't overly pursue the play or get caught in the chaos. Instead he stopped at the front of the net, waiting for opportunity and scored.

7. Evgenii Dadonov banked one off Thompson's face to tie the game at 1-1 in the first period.

The build up wasn't the same, but the entry into the net was similar to Wyatt Johnston's overtime goal in Game 3.

Thompson was tight against the post, in an RVH (also known as a post lean), and as right-catch goalie, had slightly extra space over the left shoulder.

It's small, very small, window. But it exists right here:



There are lots of conversations to have about the RVH and post-integration techniques. It's all very nerdy and I could talk about it for hours.

8. Instead, I'm only going to talk about it with one more point...

In my view, Thompson gets into the RVH much too early on this play.

Here is two seconds before the goal, he's already down with the puck below the goal line.



The RVH is a blocking technique, not an active save selection. It should be used to make short-side saves, where the player is in tight and options are effectively taken away by the geography of the ice.

In this situation, Dadonov has a ton of options.

He can pass to the point for a low-to-high shot, he can carry it out and shoot, he can try to pop it to the player in the slot.

In all of these situations, Thompson is ill-prepared for the ensuing action. In fact, the only shot he's prepped for is Dadonov attempted a wrap-around and a low shot.

It's kind of funny, because while the play was dubbed, "from an impossible," angle on the broadcast, there were actually a ton of options for Dallas to generate a goal on this sequence.

9. Michael Amadio was fresh for Game 4.

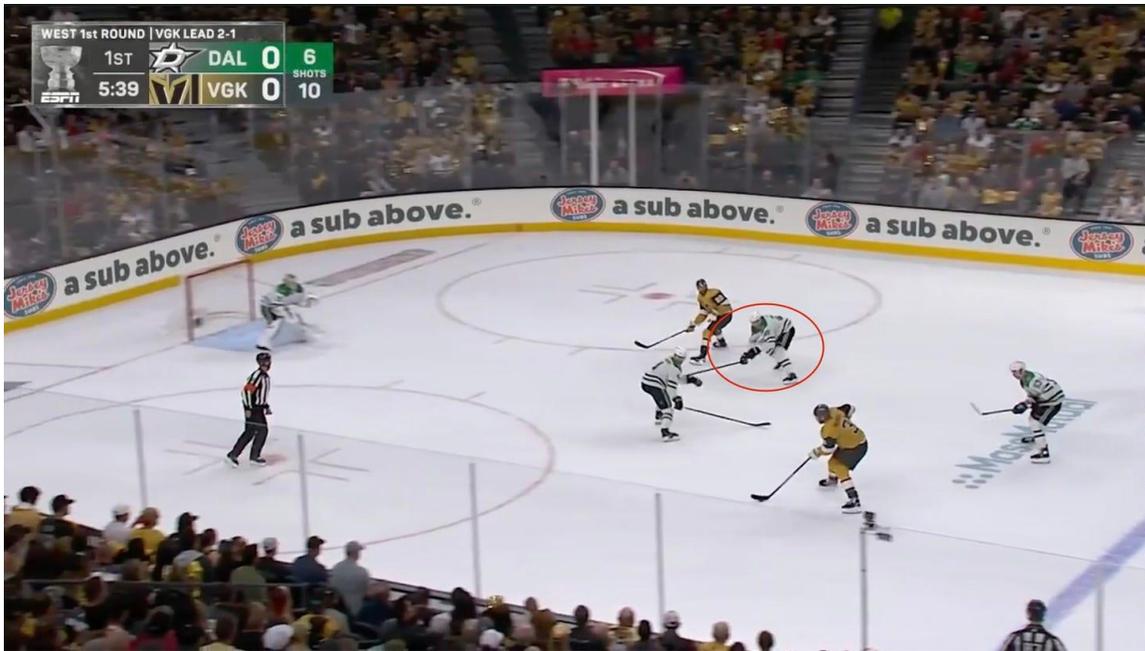
He also opened the scoring.

Amadio was one of the lineup casualties of the Vegas' active trade deadline, getting replaced by Anthony Mantha when it came to his role and getting fully shelved when Mark Stone was back for Game 1.

Mantha was not good in the first three games of this series, so he was healthy scratched for Game 4.

It's reflective of how Vegas operations. Mantha was a trade deadline acquisition, those players are rarely allowed to be scratched by the GM. But in Vegas, aside from a select few, there are no sacred cows.

10. On that goal, I'd like to Esa Lindell work on tying up Amadio in this situation.



Instead he overly focuses on the shot block and fronting, where simply getting a stick on Amadio's better disrupts the play.

11. Watch Roope Hintz on the sequence where Vegas took a 2-1 lead.

Between the frustrated slamming his stick in front of the net asking for a pass, to the late peel off at the end from not being able to get back.

It's pretty good encapsulation of Hintz' series so far.

Dallas needs him to be better... even with his gutsy shift at the end to block a shot and score into an empty net.

12. Same goes for Joe Pavelski, who for the first time in his career seems to have been caught by Father Time.

13. Matt Duchene had his best playoff game as a Star.

The Stars needed more from him in Games 1 through 3 and got it in Game 4.

14. Brayden McNabb leveled Logan Stankoven on the first shift of the game.

Less than five seconds later he was smoked with a clean hit by Jamie Benn.

It kicked off an evening where the teams combined for 63 hits.

Heavy, heavy hockey.

15. Trading for Chris Tanev was one of the best in-season moves Jim Nill has made during his tenure in Dallas.

In Game 4, on a night where Miro Heiskanen, truthfully speaking, wasn't at his best, Tanev became the defensive anchor Dallas needed.

Effectively taking every other shift, Tanev created a defensive halo around the Stars net. He also moved the puck extremely well, creating clean exits that some of the other Stars defenders struggled with against Vegas' forecheck.

When Tanev was on the ice, the Stars had a 29-20 edge in shot attempts at 5-on-5.

Compare that to a 10-36 disadvantage when Heiskanen was on the ice.

Yes, the Stars won a game where Heiskanen wasn't at his best. That wasn't a reality against Vegas in the 2023 Western Conference Final.

16. All of that being said, the Stars can't consistently give up as many odd-man rushes as they did Monday.

17. Nils Lundkvist only had four shifts for 1:45 of ice time, all of it in the first period.

That comes after Lundkvist was also effectively benched in Game 3 and only had five shifts, none after the second period.

I've said this before on the Spits & Suds podcast: it's not longer a debate of whether Lundkvist should be in or not, if the Stars coaches don't trust him, they might as well dress anyone else.

They would never do it, but 13 forwards and five defenders would be more effective if this is how Dallas is going to deploy its assets.

Might as well have given those two minutes to Mavrik Bourque, what could it hurt?

18. Tanev took a puck off the face in warmups and had to take a quick detour to the locker room before returning.

Tanev does not wear a helmet during warmups.

He's one of a handful of Stars that don't wear a helmet, and while it's incredibly rare for an injury, it always feels like an unnecessary risk.

In fact, a couple years back I was in Florida for a game and talking to Panthers GM Bill Zito. Zito told me one of his only rules was that all players had to wear helmets during warmups.

Zito told me he couldn't justify having a top player injured in warmups because they didn't wear a helmet. As he told me at the time, "how am I supposed to explain to my owner that we've lost Aleksander Barkov because he wasn't wearing a helmet?"

NHL rules have technically changed, players who entered the league within the past two seasons are no longer technically allowed to take warmups without a helmet. Anyone who played in the NHL before that is grandfathered in, similar to how Jamie Benn is still grandfathered in to play without a visor.

That rule, however, is rather toothless because teammates will often just cover the fine cost for a young player or someone taking warmups before a milestone game so they can go without a bucket.

19. Of the eight first-round series, this is the only one with a guaranteed Game 6.

I'm not surprised that this one will go six games, but it is surprising that so many others aren't nearly as close as I would have predicted.

20. Game 5 is a 6:30 CT start.

This series has gone from fans having to brew extra pots of coffee to potentially having to leave work early on Wednesday to fight DFW traffic.

SturmStack

Three Thoughts - Stars at Knights, Gm 4

By Bob Sturm

April 30, 2024

Three Thoughts is a reasonably quick write-up after each and every playoff game for all of our DFW squads. Playoffs are a rarity and never to be taken for granted, so here are my biggest takeaways from every playoff evening.

Spoilers are coming!

The Dallas Stars won the biggest game in a long time on Monday Night in Vegas by finding some grimy goals and then standing tall versus the onslaught as they took the home-ice (dis)advantage back with a 4-2 win over the Golden Knights. This evens the series at two games a piece in the best of seven series with it going back to Dallas on Wednesday Evening.

These are my Three Thoughts:

– **This extended weekend in Las Vegas has taught us a lot about this Dallas Stars hockey team as many left them for dead as they left Dallas down, 0-2.** It would be next to impossible to dig out of this hole with surely no more room for a single error, it would seem. Well, they needed everyone rowing as hard as they could, throwing themselves in front of pucks, and digging for every puck to try to survive, but doggone right, they did. They were the better team on Saturday, but on Monday, it was more about figuring out a way to beat an angry side on their own ice. Nobody expected the Cup Champions to put the series back in play without a proper amount of resistance, now did they? Dallas needed to show some huge levels of character and testicular fortitude as they worked their tails off for two nights and won by a slim margin in each game. Yet, over those two games, you would not say they looked out-classed at all. They were challenged in many ways. Mentally with knowing how high the hill is now and physically with plays like the one today where Brayden McNabb ran over Logan Stankoven to set an early tone.

Well, do you let him get away with it? Not if you are Stars Captain Jamie Benn. If you are Benn, you go even that out within a few seconds. Some may call that a small detail, but you cannot imagine the message it sends to the bench. Saddle up, boys. We are all in this together.

Just stuff of legend there and I bet Stankoven skates with more space knowing his captain has his back.

Vegas is going to keep coming because that is what they do. They are as formidable an opponent as you will find. Dallas has their hands full and are playing a very odd opponent in that you can make the case that they are both “not as good as we think they are” and “better than any 8-seed should ever be” all at the same time.

Vegas is really good, let's not get it twisted. But, what this weekend should show us is that the Stars are very good, too. And even more importantly, they have character and desire to not let the first round be their demise and force them to hear they are just the Cowboys in skates. No amount of regular season wins next year would be enough to convince anyone they were Cup contenders if they put this season together only to get trounced in Round 1 by a team that probably tanked the final game to get to you.

Well, that is now in the rear-view mirror and we very much have a series on our hands. Monday was a different game for sure and Dallas never really had control of it, but rather they survived some storms, limited chances, and made the most of what they could find on the other end with a goal from the goal-line off the mask of the goalie and then another goal off Ty Dellandrea's chest or head. There was one legitimate goal when Tyler Seguin and Matt Duchene worked hard to present Wyatt Johnston with another big goal opportunity that he cashed because he always does. And from there, up 3-2 with 20 minutes to go, it was a lot of great goaltending, rope-a-dope defense, and the pain of blocked shots leaving bruises.

It hurts to win is a slogan the other side used and I must tell you that down your two biggest forwards for these two games in the hornet's nest seemed unlikely to hope for more than a split. Instead, not only is Game 5 necessary, but so is Game 6. Dallas has dug out of their hole and no are probably the favorites again to get out of this ridiculous Round 1. But, let's not get ahead of ourselves. For that to happen, they will have to win a home game and maybe two, in a series where the home teams are 0-4.

– **The hero tonight was Jake Oettinger and there is no doubt about it that he is back.** He made 32 saves on 34 shots for a save percentage up over 94%. It is the second game in a row that was a road win where he saved 32 of 34 and that makes him 64 for 68 for 94.1% for the weekend and if that

doesn't quiet his growing group of critics, then we have all gone mad. He was under duress and a busy crease all night and he stood tall, composed, and covered the pucks well. He saw things and handled his business with great amounts of confidence.

This is great news after the way Game 1 went and Oettinger needed it badly. He now can feel good about his standing and so can those in front of him. I am not here to say he is a league-best player by any stretch, but the over-reactions in this city would make Dak Prescott proud on how you can be so good and your own fanbase can be so sure that you stink. It comes free with the dinner in Dallas these days, it seems, but they don't have to let that in their kitchen.

Overall, I think we can see real growth in front of him where the entire operation is based on everyone defending. At times, we can confuse that for parking a bus or playing too conservatively, but I think it saved them in this one because Vegas was trying to throw everything at them and for the most part, Dallas made sure the lion's share of the scoring chances were not premium. For once, they seemed the team that you could not get shots through and were building a perimeter around the net front.

You have to fight for your ice out there and with guys like Jack Eichel and Jonathan Marchessault always as clear and present dangers, you must be aware of everything and have the head on a swivel. To their credit, I thought Dallas did well and actually the [Stars had the sizable advantage in high danger scoring chances, 15-10, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.](#)

There are plenty of reasons the Stars have crawled back into this thing, but the reemergence of Oettinger has been massive and should be considered chief amongst them. I don't need to remind you the playoff-ism about goaltending, but it seems appropriate today: Goaltending is 50% of hockey unless it is poor and then it is 100%.

– **We seldom say much about 4th lines, but the Stars 4th line might have won this hockey game.** It is just not usually a primary main takeaway and to be fair, anytime it becomes a major storyline in a Dallas Stars game for years and years, it seems it is when the opponent messes up a Stars game with their 4th line popping one or two big goals home (I am looking at you, St Louis Blues).

But, tonight, I don't know where the Stars would have been if they didn't have their 4th line playing some of their best hockey. The trip of Craig Smith, Sam Steel, and Ty Dellandrea were just outstanding. This is such a vital key in a game like this because Vegas is trying to manipulate the "last change" opportunities and smothering the Stars best players at every opportunity. So, after a few close calls earlier, they finally popped one home to give the Stars a 3-2 lead late in the 2nd period and it seemed a just reward for remarkable work. And by popping one home, I actually mean they scored basically off Dellandrea's head, which is fitting for a checking line goal any day of the week.

Grit and grime, do it like a checking line and score off your melon if you need to do so. The idea with a 4th line is to have speed, tenacity, and pestering of the highest order. Perhaps physical play would be nice, too, but this is what you need. Agents of chaos and causers of disorder to steal a puck, get it in deep, and perhaps cause some scoring chances. Nothing is more frustrating for a home side that doesn't even know who these three guys are because they have hardly starred in this series. In fact, Smith and Dellandrea only got back into the lineup because of the injuries to Radek Faksa and Mason Marchment, so this is the ultimate "stay ready" situation. They get out there and they were easily the most productive line through two periods in Game 4 with a 14-6 (70%) Corsi advantage when most of the rest of the lines were below 50%. This is the territorial advantage by working in unison and well connected. It was the kind of play that can turn a game and for the trio of Smith, Steel, and Dellandrea, it provided a real chance to even the series. Phenomenal job by them.

I will cut it short as it has been a long night, but I do know this: Dallas is back to even in a series where a lesser team would never get back to this point. But, we could also argue the series is just beginning. If anyone thinks they know what happens next, it is pure delusion. These two teams are just getting warmed up.

Odds are pretty good this will be settled Sunday Night in a Game 7, but let's see what twists and turns are next. This hockey is too good right now.

Stars Stack

(2024 Playoffs, Round 1) Game 4 Stray Observations: Dallas ties it up with a 4-2 win over Vegas

By David Castillo
April 30, 2024

You unclench yet?

It's almost surreal. Maybe it's just me but does anyone else feel like this series has been going on for months? Maybe it's because the first round has been a slaughter — or at least looks to be for now — or maybe it's because this matchup felt official long before it became so, but it's hard to believe this is still just the first round. This was the only thing I could think of as Dallas managed to tie the series up.

After all, this wasn't the dominant win from Game 3. While the expectation was never that Dallas was gonna look like that more than once, you certainly hoped that a pattern might emerge; that the new top six would once again lead the charge, and that they would continue to dictate play. Instead Dallas reverted back to the old lineup, but this time — to positive results.

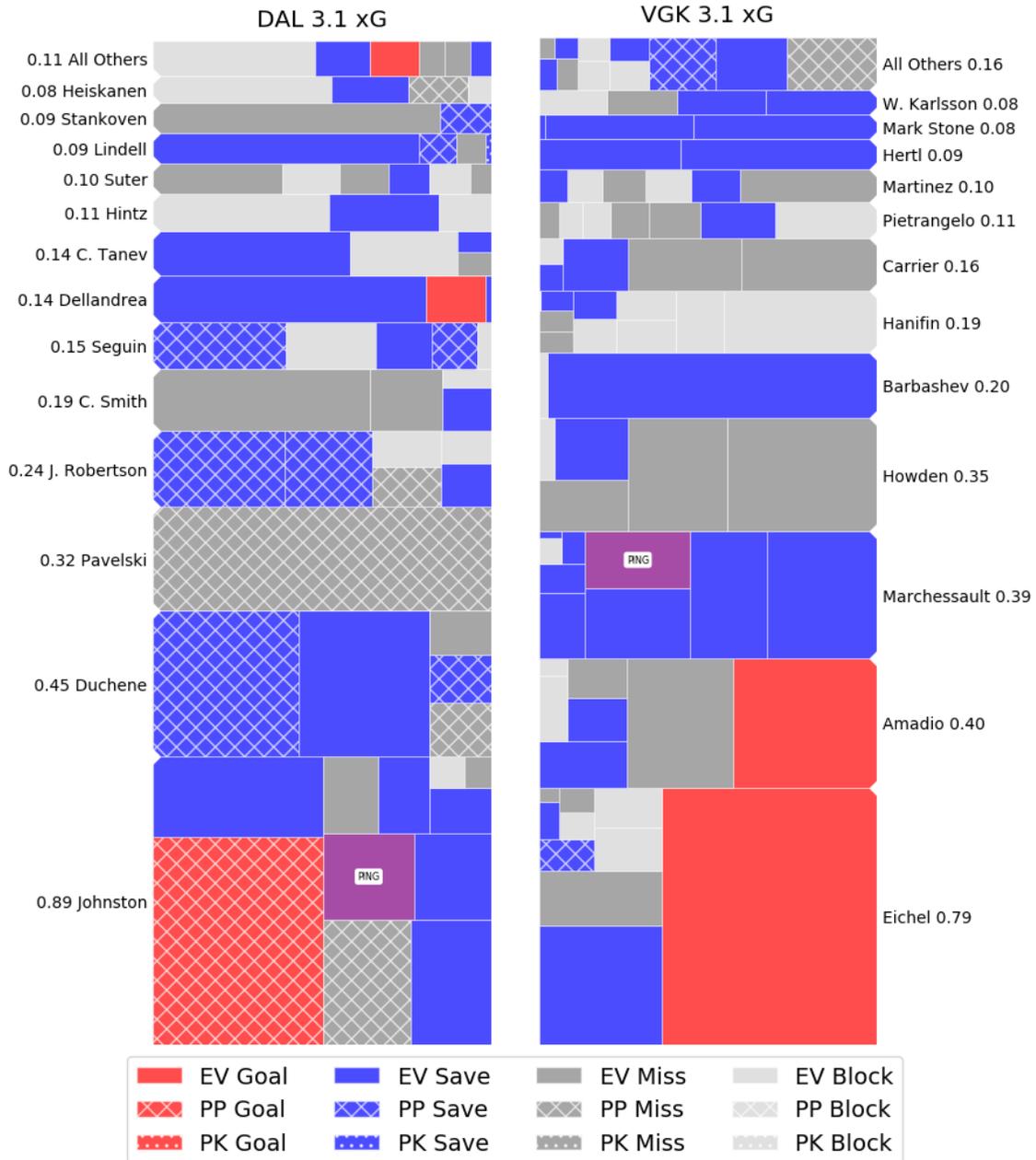
I don't know where to begin, really. The good news is that the series is tied. The bad news is that the series is tied. (Think about it: if Dallas had won their two home games, and then lost their two away games, we'd look at things a little differently would we not?)

Also, it's hilarious that both teams are winless at home, and I'm not even sure this isn't precedent.

xG Breakdown

DAL 4 at VGK 2, 29 Apr, 2024

Micah Blake McCurdy, @IneffectiveMath, hockeyviz.com



All in all, this series is shaping up to go seven games because of course it will. Outside of the series being tied, I don't know that there are positives or even negatives. These are two great teams. All the winner can hope for is that they still have something left when it's all said and done. And with that, onto the strays.

The unhoused avengers

It was good to see Craig Smith and Ty Dellandrea get on board. All year I've been a proponent of Dellandrea as an option on the fourth line. Smith, to me, had done nothing to get taken out of the lineup. They do something that I think an optimal fourth line can do: speed, north, south, rinse, repeat. Smith in particular leveraged his fresh legs the way we're used to seeing from Vegas, which is a good sign. Nobody expects the fourth line to score, but you do expect them to be more than a breather shift for the top lines, and Dellandrea line was definitely that.

Top line reunited

I'm not a big fan of seeing Joe Pavelski back up there with Roope Hintz and Jason Robertson, but it doesn't feel like the kind of move that will kill the series or anything. Besides, Dadonov has looked good next to Seguin and Duchene, and Benn next to Johnston and Stankoven keep doing their thing. While it was good to see Hintz finally get on the scoreboard, he's a player to watch closely. If Dallas expects to win this series, Hintz will need to be a factor. Outside of the garbage time goal, he was more or less visible...just in a bad way. He looks frustrated at times, which is understandable, but also flustered, which is less. He's getting the tough matchups, which isn't easy, but so is Jack Eichel and he still continues to take over shifts wholesale (better player, granted).

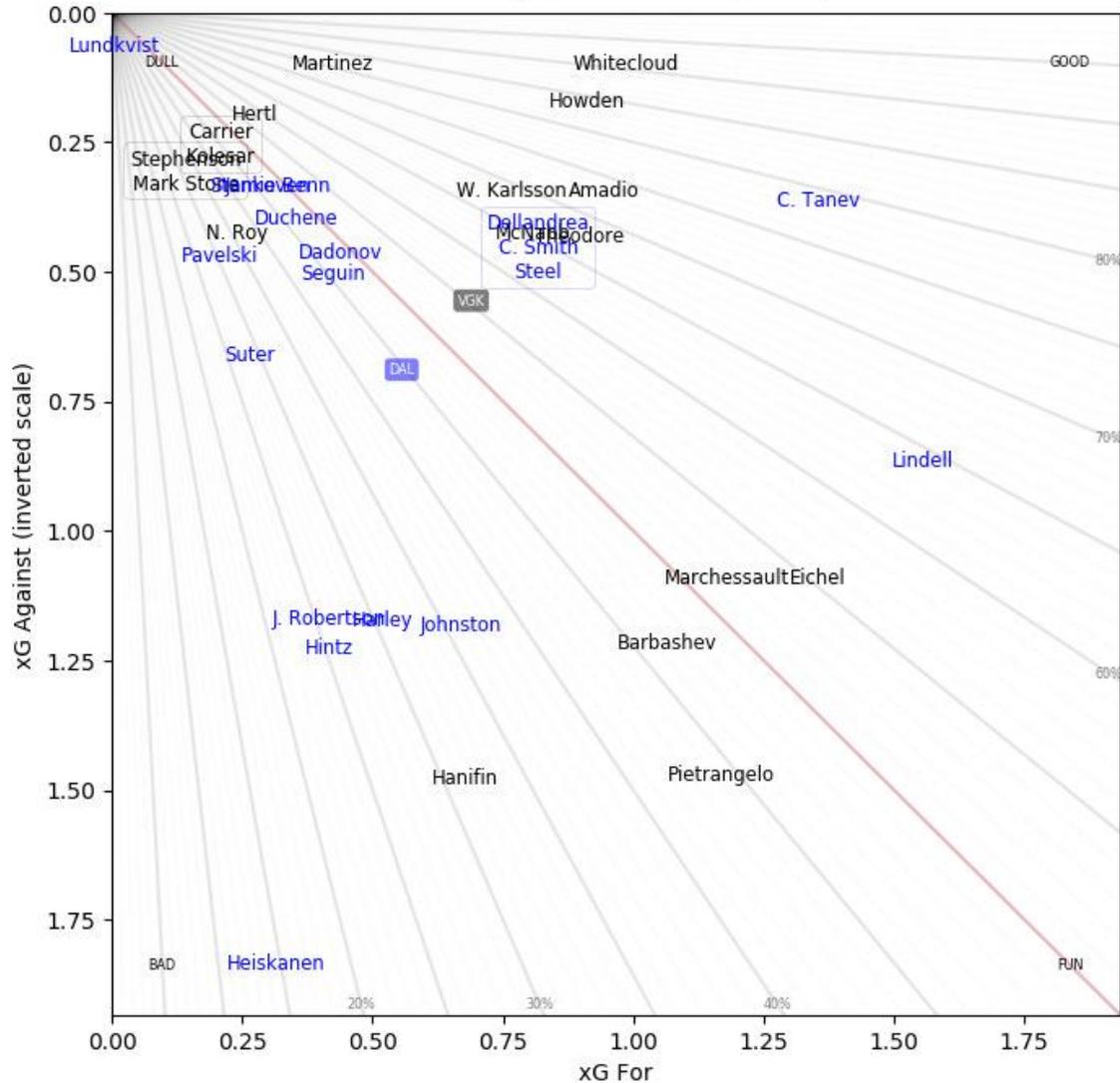
Five defenders

A win's a win, and I don't want to downplay what was otherwise a very good performance in a series as tightly matched as it gets. But you have to wonder if it's gonna catch up to the others. It sure looks like it's getting tough on Miro Heiskanen.

5v5 xG

DAL 4 at VGK 2, 29 Apr, 2024

Micah Blake McCurdy, @IneffectiveMath, hockeyviz.com



I realize the Nils Lundkvist discussion is its own beast, but if Pete DeBoer has no intention of playing him, Dallas needs to either dress someone else, or roll with five defenders.

Granted, dressing five defenders is hardly optimal. In fact, it happened this season when John Tortorella made that decision in Philly. The Flyers gave up four goals in the first 11 minutes and he got tossed out of the game.

Obviously, I wouldn't expect the same fate for Dallas unless DeBoer is feeling extra grumpy, but nothing about this decision feels anything other than tenuous at best. Beyond just the ripple effect

of this series, it also feels like a broad hazard long term, with the few defenders they have blocking more shots, and taking more hits. If this were an easy series, that would be one thing. But the Stars are up against one of the best teams in the league, at their absolute peak; a team with one Cup already.

The Vegas perspective

If you're the Golden Knights you probably don't feel too busted up. Yea, the series is tied, but the home teams suck this series, and you proved to have an answer for the new-look top six — so much so that Pete DeBoer reverted back to your original top nine. In addition, Dallas scored two goals from the goal line, which isn't exactly a recipe for sustainable success.

I wouldn't expect Vegas to change much. They've lost control of the series only on paper, losing the momentum, but for the most part they feel like the team that has nominal control thus far. Still, I wouldn't say they're feeling good either. They have more than a few forwards who have been absent. Vegas' top four feels like the engine driving them — well, that and Logan Thompson.

The player they want to put in the spotlight is Jake Oettinger, who has looked good, but also hasn't been challenged enough.

Stars Thoughts

Game 4 WCQF After Thoughts: Best of Three

By Robert Tiffin

April 30, 2024

After watching Vegas coil around Dallas's supposed depth for two games (and nearly a third), the Stars have suddenly made this a first-to-two series.

It's a good reminder of what it takes to go on a long playoff run. Don't get too high, don't get too low. Keep your hand steady on the plow, and only make changes when you've got good reasons to do so. And Dallas made them in this one. If they were a farmer, they could look over their shoulder and see crooked rows, some a bit fallow, but well-plowed ones, nonetheless. I have chosen this analogy.

For all of Dallas's vaunted depth, they spent the first two games of this series not really having four dangerous lines, and not even playing six defensemen. Evgenii Dadonov looked lost on a line with Sam Steel and Radek Faksa, and Ty Dellandrea and Craig Smith watched from the press box.

In Game 1, the Stars gave up an unfortunate penalty with the fourth line on the ice just over a minute into the game. Vegas immediately scored on the power play, and Dallas never got back to level.

In Game 2, Dallas struggled to get going for long stretches, with a Jason Robertson power play goal their only bit of offense as the fourth line didn't even play ten minutes.

But after Faksa and Mason Marchment couldn't go for Game 3, the Stars built a new fourth line with Dellandrea, Smith, and Steel, and they've been a huge asset for Dallas as the series has evened up, playing significant minutes in both games. And for much of Game 4, they were Dallas's most effective line, constantly finding ways to get the puck into the Vegas zone and generate shots and chances.

Of course, the player who never should have been on that line was the one to open the scoring, as Dadonov (starting with Pavelski and Seguin) may have saved the Stars' season with an optimistic shot from along the red line that conked Logan Thompson, following a similar trajectory of Wyatt Johnston's overtime winner in Game 3. The Stars were clearly shooting high and often on Thompson, and he vindicated that approach even further with Wyatt Johnston's goal, getting a little too fancy with the windmill glove, only to see the puck get scooped back off his pads by Matt Duchene, then falling to Johnston, who potted it.

It was a nice little bit of work by Duchene, who curved his stick just a bit extra in order to ensure the puck wouldn't die in Thompson's pads, and instead continue on to Johnston. Intentional or not, it was crucial.

Duchene had a great game after starting out rough. He wasn't the only one to start out rough, with the Stars incredibly fortunate not to be down 3-0 after the first. The different with Duchene and Pavelski and others, however, is that they continued to get shifts, unlike Nils Lundkvist, who only got one shift after a disastrous turn that saw him lose a race to a puck in his zone despite a huge head start. I don't know why you don't just start Derrick Pouliot at this point, if only to spare Lundkvist the embarrassment of sitting through 40 minutes of intense, playoff hockey without ever hearing his name called. Try to imagine what that's like for a hockey player, to see defense pairings being madly managed and remixed in order to cover for the fact that they don't have three pairings they can consistently roll, by choice. You have to feel for the player, but I'm starting to get more annoyed that they haven't attempted to find Joel Hanley 2.0 yet. This benefits no one.

The thing about hockey is, the team with the better goalie tends to win. And Jake Oettinger is just a better goalie than Logan Thompson, as you saw tonight, and for most of this series. When the Stars aren't able to break through Vegas enough to score, or when Thompson goes on a heater like he did in Game 3, the temptation is often to blame your own team's goalie for not canceling out those problems with otherworldly play. But goalies can't think that way, because it would crush them. Overtry is toxic to good goaltending (think a young Mike Smith in Tampa), so goalies have to stay composed, confident, and indifferent. Oettinger spent most of Game 4 looking downright dismissive, and that's when you know your team can do things.

Thompson, meanwhile, is reminding Vegas that the stinker he allowed to Marchment back in Dallas wasn't some weird sort of alternate reality. He's still an NHL goalie capable of stealing games (or keeping you in one, at least), but Oettinger is of another caliber. If the other players can do their thing, then Oettinger looks prepared to do his. You might save yourself some heartache by not railing at him every time a team manages to capitalize on an odd-man rush. The ~Golden~ Knights' second goal felt like one of a dozen 3-on-2s Dallas surrendered in the first half of the game, and even then, it took a friendly bounce off the post and a perfect rebound play to score. Trying to find a way to blame Oettinger for not being in two places at once is just lazy criticism, not real insight.

Likewise, the first Vegas goal was a result of Lindell not quite locking up his man in favor of protecting against a backdoor pass. It was a hectic play with no time for a shoulder check, but Lindell would've been better off taking his man rather than trying to play the pass. But that's easy to say from up here, being able to see everything, rather than busting back up the ice and trying to keep track of where the puck, the goal, your teammate, and the guy you're defending all are. Hockey seems difficult, actually.

The Stars' fourth line was outstanding, relative to expectations, and that was especially crucial because of the lines that didn't look good. Wyatt Johnston couldn't get much going with Robertson and Hintz, so DeBoer starting loading previous save states before the third, putting the old 21-24-16 line back up top, with Stankoven and Johnston playing with Benn. Credit to DeBoer for making the changes when he needed to, both before the game and within it. Coaching seems easy to me, so long as you get the benefit of hindsight and don't have to face criticism, like I do.

Jack Eichel was less terrifying than usual in this game, even though he scored a goal. Perhaps it was the fact that he very clearly began to look pass-first, and the Stars very clearly have prepared for it. He's good enough to know that, of course, but I still think Oettinger is just as much in Vegas's heads as Thompson is (was?) in the Stars'. Oettinger is getting stronger as the series goes on, mirroring his season progression as well. You can't throw a parade just because you climbed back from losing two games on home ice to kick off your playoff run, but he's one of the biggest reasons Dallas has to feel confident about the remainder of this series. Even the good Vegas players (both of them) seem stymied. That's why the fourth-liners have been scoring, I guess. Michael Amadio? That's some real Joel Kiviranta energy, right there.

Chris Tanev has been a lifesaver. Even when he was getting himself into trouble by trying a bit too hard to break out cleanly from behind the net, Tanev was making up for it by closing gaps, stepping up, and shutting down the cycle along the boards. He and Esa Lindell, in fact, were the only defense pairing to allow fewer shots than they generated, as the Stars' top pairing of Harley and Heiskanen spent a good chunk of the night in their own zone. The numbers don't really tell the full story, however, because so much changed from period to period.

In the First, Dallas was incredibly lucky to escape with a tied game, much like Vegas in Game 2. Dallas started off all right, but Vegas got an early power play, and while Dallas escaped, the couldn't find the net before Vegas got rolling. William Karlsson bumped the puck back to make a 2-on-2 rush feel far more dangerous, and Michael Amadio (real person, remember) tipped McNabb's shot and found the rebound in an instant to beat Oettinger. From there, Dallas had a look or two, but it felt far too much like Game 1 and 2 for comfort, with Vegas just leaning heavily on the Stars without any answers coming back, until Dadonov's prayer (shot between the defender's legs, mind you) gave the Stars a fresh start they had hardly earned right before the intermission.

The Second period started out badly, with Eichel scoring off another rush shifted when the Stars got on the power play. But once the Stars got on the power play (thanks to two unnecessary penalties by Pietrangelo and Stephenson), the momentum shifted, and Dallas found themselves back in a hockey game again. Johnston scored to tie things back up at 2, and Dallas built on that effort when Stephenson chose to take a silly cross-checking penalty on Duchene right in the official's line of sight. Bruce Cassidy then chose to complain about the calls being uneven when Vegas had been possessing the puck more (you know, the thing that automatically means you get power plays, apparently) to Leah Hextall, but kudos to the officials for not forcing a call to even things up. It's always easy to compliment the referees when things go your way, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't do it.

The Third period, however, was a bit of a turtlefest, but Dallas did it masterfully. You never really shake those Rick Bowness/Ken Hitchcock training sessions, I guess. High flips, blocked shots, extended periods of panicked defensive-zone coverage—this period had it all. It was a nice little bit of nostalgia, if that's the right word for something you really don't care to remember at all, useful though it may have turned out to be.

Dallas won two of three periods, and they drew the first at ones, if undeservedly. That'll win you a lot of playoff hockey games, it turns out.

This was a night of redemption for a few folks. Not Oettinger, who's been good all series, though imperfect (as so many human beings are). But Ty Dellandrea made up for a bad penalty early in the game by being at the front of the net at the right time in order for the puck to bounce in off of him. Evgenii Dadonov's shot reminded us why he was such a revelation on that Benn-Johnston line down the stretch last year, and even Matt Duchene and Joe Pavelski had a couple of hardworking and crucial shifts in the third period, when the Stars went into full hatch-battering mode.

But Roope Hintz is a player I want to call out here, because man, that's a shift you can feel good about when you're going to sleep, you know? Presuming Hintz can sleep after blocking a shot with his hand, at least. But if he can score a goal with that bruise, I'm sure sleep is a distant second on the list. That level of sacrifice, right or wrong, means something to your teammates, and Hintz basically got instant karma for his block, getting the puck with an empty net at the other end and icing the game one-handed from his end of the ice. Dallas had been trapped in their own zone a couple of times down the stretch (after playing a hardworking checking game that didn't involve as much terror for the first half of the final frame), so Hintz's goal was the release valve they all needed. No, it's not like scoring top-shelf on a breakaway, but if Hintz is good to go for Wednesday, I think he'll be able to build off that, using whatever is left of his hands to do so.

The level of commitment by Dallas in this one was noticeable. Jason Robertson won a huge board battle late in the Third to eventually get the puck back out, and Jamie Benn was throwing hits and getting to pucks with all the instinct of a hungry retriever in a Burger King. Wyatt Johnston continues to look like the Stars' best forward, and Thomas Harley began to look shockingly comfortable playing a simple checking game.

But Tanev and Lindell, man. That pairing is what the coaching staff always wished Lindell-Hakanpää could have been last year. But Tanev is indestructible, a sort of hockey rock 'em, sock 'em robot who also has great speed and intelligence with the puck in pressure situations. Vegas continued to give the Stars some bonus chances that they didn't usually capitalize on, but the Stars were more responsible for most of this game.

Taking care of details will out. And from Oettinger to DeBoer, the Stars both held steady and adapted when needed, and Vegas didn't have the answers for it. Dallas won't get crazy goals almost from below the red line every game, but they will get good chances if they work for them. Maybe the truest representation of Dallas's depth isn't that all the lines are always clicking at once, but that there is always a night where at least one of them is a real force for good, and they tend to drag others into the fight. This series is probably going to continue to be tight and tense, but the Stars have managed to undo every bad bounce, every rough break so far. Now, the question is whether they can maintain their focus and effort level on home ice again, or whether they'll find themselves getting stymied by the ~Golden~ Knights' simple-but-effect game plan for more than just one period, next time.