



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Saturday, January 27, 2024**

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Coming off knee surgery, Mitchell Chaffee makes mark with Tampa Bay Lightning **Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)**

TAMPA – Mitchell Chaffee woke up Friday morning realizing that, no, in fact, Thursday wasn't a dream.

And that was quite the birthday present for Chaffee, who turned 26 on Friday.

"I think I had at least a few hundred text messages," Chaffee said. "Just from everyone whether it's people back home, old teammates, coaches, pretty much everyone texting, which I think is pretty special. And getting a lot of birthday text messages on top of everything else."

Chaffee had a long road to get to scoring his first career NHL goal, which he accomplished in Thursday's victory against Arizona. For good measure, he added his first career assist on Luke Glendening's third period goal.

"It's obviously an exciting moment and something you'll never forget," Chaffee said.

The road to reaching that point was definitely off the beaten path.

Chaffee was undrafted out of the USHL, where he played for Bloomington Thunder and Fargo Force. After junior he went on to the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. It was in college his game started to blossom.

While in the USHL, he combined to score 14 goals and 29 points in 103 games. As a freshman at UMass-Amherst, he scored 13 goals and 24 points in 39 games. His sophomore year, Chaffee had 18 goals and 42 points in 40 games to lead Hockey East in scoring and was named First Team All American. Following his junior year, Chaffee signed a two-year free agent contract with the Minnesota Wild.

In his first season with the Wild, he played 28 games for Iowa of the AHL and made his NHL debut with at the end of the season, appearing in two games, registering one shot on goal and a plus-1 rating in 14:53 of total ice time.

His career path was trending up after scoring 23 goals in his second season in Iowa

But after being among the final cuts from training camp before the start of the 2022-23 season, Chaffee injured his right knee at Milwaukee in the 10th game of the season. After initially trying to rehab the knee, an MRI showed that he tore his ACL which required surgery.

"We got that done in Minnesota and then the long, long journey – long journey – after that," Chaffee said. "But obviously I had a lot of help from family and friends and especially the Minnesota Wild organization to help me out."

The knee injury put Chaffee at a bit of a crossroads in his career, which was just in its third year as a pro. It was a lot to process.

"It's a lot of disappointment and frustration," Chaffee said. "Sometimes even I guess thoughts crossed your mind, am I going to make it back to where I was before. That's kind of the hard part. But I feel like after a few days of kind of 'poor me' and stuff like that, it was kind of just getting back to work and doing that rehab before surgery and making sure I was going to be better than it was before."

That was followed by the uncertainty of the offseason. Chaffee was set to be a Group 6 unrestricted free agent (based on number of games played compared to age of signing the first contract). Chaffee said, despite the knee surgery, there was interest from a handful of teams when free agency opened.

It didn't take long to zero in on Tampa Bay.

"I was fortunate to have some options and just kind of felt like Tampa was a great organization to come to," he said. "I felt like there was an opportunity here for a bottom six, so trying to find my way and hopefully have a chance. ... I knew that they were an organization and team that produce a lot of NHLers through their minor league and I felt like that was a big fit, too."

When training camp came around, Chaffee didn't feel he put his best skate forward. There were some mental hurdles to clear coming off the knee surgery that he felt held him back. He was sent to Syracuse early in training camp.

But all he did with the Crunch is build his game back up. Once he pushed past any questions about his knee, he became a top performer for Syracuse as a top six forward. His 11 goals lead the Crunch.

When Conor Sheary was injured last month, it was Chaffee that earned the call up to make his debut with the team in Vancouver on December 12. He logged just 6:56 of ice time with two hits and a blocked shot. and was sent back to Syracuse the next game.

He just kept working, even as Gage Goncalves, Cole Koepke and Waltteri Merela were brought up to play games with Tampa Bay. But on Wednesday, he was called back up.

"I'm happy that we could bring him back up," Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said. "He kind of got a bit of a raw deal when he came up for one game and didn't play that much. He didn't really deserve that. So it's great to get him in, because I know he can help us."

While Chaffee spent a good portion of Thursday's game with Merela – who he didn't play with much while the two were in Syracuse – along with rookie defenseman Emil Lilleberg and Max Crozier, it was veteran center Luke Glendening that he was the most familiar with.

"We are from pretty much the same hometown in Grand Rapids," Chaffee said. "So I've known him. I probably grew up watching him play for the Griffins as a kid ... and we work out together in the summer so we're close. It makes you more comfortable. We're out there talking after every shift and just making sure we just talk to each other."

Though it's only been two games – with a goal and assist – with the Lightning, Chaffee has already seen the benefits of joining the organization while playing with Syracuse.

"It's something that, for me, it was a big part of my career and process," Chaffee said. "Continuing to learn and grow down there and just continue to get better. And I felt like this organization is a great organization to do that. They give you all the tools. They've given me every resource and I'm trying to take advantage of all of them to keep getting better."

Nuts & Bolts: Lightning aim to stay hot at home **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

Everything you need to know ahead of Tampa Bay's matchup against the New Jersey Devils on Saturday.

When: Saturday, January 27 - 7:00 p.m. ET

Where: AMALIE Arena - Tampa, FL

TV coverage: Bally Sports (check local listings)

Radio coverage: 102.5 MHz-FM, Lightning Radio 24/7

Where to stream it: BallySports.com

Lines from Friday's Practice (subject to change)

Steven Stamkos - Brayden Point - Nikita Kucherov

Brandon Hagel - Anthony Cirelli - Nick Paul

Mikey Eyssimont - Tyler Motte - Conor Sheary

Mitchell Chaffee - Luke Glendening - Walteri Merelä

Defensemen

Victor Hedman - Darren Raddysh

Calvin de Haan - Nick Perbix

Emile Lilleberg - Max Crozier

Goaltenders

Andrei Vasilevskiy

Jonas Johansson

Saturday's Matchup

The Lightning and Devils are playing the second of three matchups this season and the second of two meetings at AMALIE Arena...The Bolts skated to a 4-3 overtime victory over NJD in the first meeting of the season Jan. 11 at AMALIE Arena...Darren Raddysh(1-0—1) scored the game-winning goal in overtime Jan. 11 vs. NJD, while Luke Glendening (2-0—2), Nikita Kucherov (0-2—2) and Nick Perbix (0-2—2) each picked up two points in the win...Kucherov is riding a five-game point streak vs. NJD (3-4—7) and has found the scoresheet in nine consecutive home games vs. NJD (5-13—18)...Brayden Point has recorded 23 points in 18 career contests vs. NJD (8-15—23), including 13 points in his nine career home games vs. NJD (6-7—13)...Steven Stamkos has points in four of his last five contests vs. NJD (3-3—6)...Brandon Hagel has picked up seven points in six career games vs. NJD (4-3—7)...Victor Hedman has found the scoresheet in six of his last 10 contests vs. NJD (2-5—7) and seven of the last 10 meetings at AMALIE Arena (3-6—9)...Over his last six starts vs. NJD, Andrei Vasilevskiy has posted a 5-1-0 record with a .913 save percentage and 2.63 goals against average...The Bolts are 7-3-0 in their last 10 home games vs. NJD and 7-3-0 in the last 10 meetings overall...Tampa Bay is 41-53-8 with seven ties all-time vs. NJD, including a home record of 22-23-3 with five ties...Vincent Lecavalier (16-28—44) and Martin St. Louis (18-26—44) are tied for the most career points vs. NJD in Lightning franchise history, while Lecavalier leads the way in assists and Stamkos (23-20—43) ranks first in goals.

Injuries

Erik Cernak – Upper-body, day-to-day

Haydn Fleury – Upper-body, week-to-week

Mikhail Sergachev – Lower-body, week-to-week

Tanner Jeannot – Lower-body, week-to-week

Austin Watson – Lower-body, week-to-week

The Road Ahead

Wednesday, February 7 at New York Rangers

Thursday, February 8 at New York Islanders

Saturday, February 10 at Columbus Blue Jackets

The Backcheck: Bolts defeat the Coyotes at home

Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)

The Tampa Bay Lightning returned to AMALIE Arena and collected a second-straight victory with a 6-3 win over the Arizona Coyotes Thursday night.

After scoring just one goal on 78 shots against Connor Ingram over the previous two meetings, the Bolts came out firing and got on the board immediately with Darren Raddysh netting his fourth goal of the season on the Tampa Bay's first shot of the game.

Just 24 seconds into the contest, Raddysh took a pass from Brandon Hagel and fired a quick wrister from the point that got through traffic and snuck through the five hole of Ingram to give the Lightning the early 1-0 lead.

Clayton Keller evened the score 8:16 later after Andrei Vasilevskiy made the initial save on a shot from Nick Schmaltz, but Keller was right there to jump on the rebound and bury his 20th goal of the season to make it a 1-1 game.

As it looked like the game may go to the first intermission tied at one, Brayden Point found the back of the net with 33.6 seconds remaining in the opening frame to give Tampa Bay a 2-1 lead after 40 minutes.

Collecting the puck near the Lightning blue line, Nikita Kucherov sent a backhand pass across the neutral zone and off the boards for Point to use his speed, collect the puck and streak into the Arizona zone before ripping a shot off the glove of Ingram and into the back of the net for his 23rd goal of the season.

Opening the second period up by one, the Bolts pushed the lead to 3-1 when Kucherov scored his 32nd goal of the year at the 7:36 mark of the frame.

After Victor Hedman sent a pass to Steven Stamkos near the top of the Coyotes zone, Stamkos fed Kucherov near the bottom of the right circle before the All-Star winger hammered a one-timer past Ingram, giving Stamkos his 1,100th career point.

Only 4:26 later, Stamkos got a goal of his own with Kucherov collecting the primary assist.

With Tampa Bay snapping the puck around on the power play, Point sent a pass to the right circle for Kucherov, who feathered the puck across the offensive zone for Stamkos to wire his patented one-timer past Ingram to push the Lightning's lead to 4-1 with 7:58 remaining in the second period.

The Bolts continued to pour it on and extended the lead to 5-1 when Mitchell Chaffee lit the lamp for his first career NHL goal and point with 4:42 remaining in the second period.

Positioning himself in front of the net, Chaffee showcased some nice hands and roofed a shot over Ingram after a rebound from a Max Crozier shot popped right out into the slot. Emil Lilleberg picked up the secondary assist to complete a stat line featuring three players that are all on call-up from the Syracuse Crunch.

Sean Durzi got Arizona back within three when he scored at the 16:59 mark of the second period to make it a 5-2 game after 40 minutes.

With 12:28 remaining in the third period, Luke Glendening scored Tampa Bay's final goal of the contest to push the lead to 6-2. Getting in on the forecheck, Waltteri Merela and Chaffee forced a

Coyotes turnover, allowing Glendening to quickly collect the puck in the slot and beat Ingram to the far post for his eighth goal of the season.

Lawson Crouse added a late tally for Arizona to wrap up the 6-3 final.

Bolts by the Numbers

- Darren Raddysh's game-opening goal was scored 24 seconds into the opening frame, marking the second-fastest tally by a Lightning defenseman to start a contest in franchise history. Cory Sarich holds the record after scoring 12 seconds into Tampa Bay's 4-3 win over the New York Islanders on December 14, 2002.
- Anthony Cirelli skated in his 400th career NHL game and recorded a secondary assist on Raddysh's game-opening goal.
- Brayden Point scored his 23rd goal of the season and picked up his 29th assist to extend his point streak to three games (2-3—5). He has collected 13 multi-point efforts this season.
- Nikita Kucherov scored a goal and added two assists for his 13th three-point game this season and passed Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon to regain the NHL lead in points with 83 (32-51—83).
- Kucherov posted his fifth career 50-assist season and passed Steven Stamkos (4) for the second-most in Lightning franchise history. Martin St. Louis (6) is the only skater with more.
- Kucherov has now recorded 50 assists prior to his 50th game in three separate seasons. He is the only active player to achieve the feat multiple times. Wayne Gretzky (15x), Mario Lemieux (9x), Bobby Orr (6x) Paul Coffey (4x), Denis Savard (4x), Bryan Trottier (4x), Adam Oates (4x) and Peter Stastny (3x) are the only other players in NHL history to accomplish the feat three times.
- Kucherov has recorded three points in each of Tampa Bay's last three home games, tied with Chris Kontos (3 GP in 1992-93) for the second-longest streak in Lightning franchise history, trailing only Steven Stamkos (4 GP in 2021- 22).
- Steven Stamkos scored one goal and added one assist to become the first player in Lightning franchise history to record 1,100 career points with the club.
- Mitchell Chaffee scored his first career NHL goal and recorded his first career NHL point in the process.
- Andrei Vasilevskiy made 17 saves on 20 shots against to improve to 15-10-0 on the season. Vasilevskiy is 6-1-0 over his last seven starts.

Bolts Quotes

- Steven Stamkos on Mitchell Chaffee's first goal: "The youthful energy that has been brought into this room in the past few weeks has been great and not for just the way they played on the ice. They've done an amazing job on the ice but just that anxiousness, that nervousness, that energy that you have in the room for these young guys. They are all great, young guys. I think that has been a help as well, maybe a little jolt. They've certainly played extremely well for us."
- Mitchell Chaffee on his first NHL goal: "It doesn't seem too exciting anymore after Stamkos's 1,100 points, but congrats to him. Crozier just kind of banked it off the goalie and it came back

to me and the biggest thing was trying to elevate the puck and get it upstairs and it found the back of the net.”

- Chaffee on Max Crozier and Emil Lilleberg getting the helpers on his first goal: “It's awesome. I walked to the rink with them today. I'm close with them and they are great guys and it just makes it that much better.”
- Stamkos on hitting 1,100 points: “I don't take for granted any point that I get. I've been very fortunate to play with some amazing players in my career. Like I always say, it's pretty cool to have done it all with one team so, also, helps to do it in a win. Everyone is in a good mood and, hopefully, we can keep that going.”

Krenner's Three Stars

1. Nikita Kucherov
2. Steven Stamkos
3. Mitchell Chaffee

Lightning Look Ahead

- Saturday, January 27 vs. New Jersey Devils, 7 p.m. ET, AMALIE Arena
- Wednesday, February 7 at New York Rangers, 7 p.m. ET, Madison Square Garden
- Thursday, February 8 at New York Islanders, 8 p.m. ET, UBS Arena