



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Monday, October 9, 2023**

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Lightning waive Stanley Cup winner Zach Bogosian, Gabriel Fortier Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)

TAMPA — On the eve of the NHL's deadline to set opening-night rosters, veteran defenseman Zach Bogosian was among the players the Lightning placed on waivers Sunday afternoon, the organization potentially parting ways with another member of a Stanley Cup championship team.

Heading into Monday's 5 p.m. deadline, Tampa Bay faces a unique roster crunch because it has to carry three goaltenders on its 23-man, opening-night roster before it can place starter Andrei Vasilevskiy on long-term injured reserve on Day 2.

Because of that, the Lightning can have no more than 20 skaters for Tuesday's 5:30 p.m. game against the Nashville Predators at Amalie Arena. So if they carry 13 forwards, they can keep only seven defensemen.

For now, the odd man out appears to be Bogosian, a member of Tampa Bay's 2020 Cup squad who has played 102 regular season and 47 playoff games with the team during two stints over the past four seasons.

The Lightning also waived center Gabriel Fortier, their second-round pick in 2018. Fortier, with just 11 games of NHL experience under his belt, is expected to clear and be assigned to AHL Syracuse.

But putting Bogosian on waivers makes him available to any NHL team seeking to round out its blueline corps with a veteran right-shot defenseman. Teams have 24 hours to put in a claim.

Tampa Bay is taking a calculated risk that teams will pass on Bogosian, and players are more likely to go unclaimed at this time of the year after an entire preseason focused on their own organizational roster.

The move also indicates that the Lightning are content to start the season with just seven defensemen.

Bogosian, 33, initially signed with the Lightning as a free agent in February 2020, just before the start of their first of back-to-back championship runs. He missed the second, spending the year in Toronto, before rejoining Tampa Bay in July 2021.

Bogosian missed the first six weeks of last season with a shoulder injury, then had one goal and four assists and a minus-4 plus/minus rating in 46 regular-season games. He played in five of the six games of the opening-round playoff series, which the Lightning lost to the Maple Leafs.

With Vasilevskiy expected to be out for the first two months, Tampa Bay can get salary-cap relief while he is inactive by placing him on long-term injured reserve. But he must be on the active roster for the first day of the season.

The Lightning's main roster crunch is at forward, where longtime prospect Alex Barre-Boulet, international free-agent signing Waltteri Merela and veteran Austin Watson are battling for the 12th and 13th spots.

Barre-Boulet, 26 and in his sixth training camp with the Lightning, has been a mainstay on the third line and second power-play unit during the preseason. Merela, a former standout in Finland, made a quick impression on the organization with his tenacity, both with and without the puck.

Watson, in camp on a personal tryout, has fit easily into the dressing room and adds an enforcer equivalent the team could use following the trade of Pat Maroon to Minnesota in July.

Lightning's Erik Cernak recovered from concussion, eager to contribute **Kristie Ackert (Tampa Bay Times)**

BRANDON — It took Erik Cernak a long time to get over it.

Maple Leafs forward Michael Bunting not only knocked Cernak out of the playoffs with an illegal hit to the head in Game 1 of last season's opening-round series, he left the Lightning defenseman dealing with concussion symptoms well after the season ended.

What stung Cernak most was having to watch his teammates lose the series without him.

"Obviously, that was hard, because it's playoff time," Cernak said. "You want to help your team, and when you get hurt it just kind of sucks for you especially and for the team, because you can't go out there, you can't help them. You are just watching the game, and you're not producing anything there.

"So, it was hard for me, but I feel like everybody around me in the organization, my teammates, coaching staff, trainers, everybody was so supportive."

At the time, Cernak's teammates were angry that Bunting's suspension was just three games, allowing him to return for Game 6 while Cernak remained sidelined. (Bunting was a healthy scratch for Game 5.)

However, Cernak, speaking about it for the first time earlier this preseason, said he had no feelings about Bunting's suspension.

"I don't care," he said. "I didn't care about him or his suspension. I just cared that I could not help my team."

The early playoff exit gave Cernak and his teammates more time to heal and rest this offseason. The 26-year-old is healthy again and back on the ice looking to build on what may have been his best season to date.

In 2022-23, Cernak played a career-high 70 games, scoring two goals and compiling 16 points. But Cernak, 6-feet-4, 224 pounds, isn't measured by highlight-reel stats. He does the hard, physical work in the corners and in front of the Lightning net. More telling: his career-high 100 blocked shots and 209 hits last season.

That is the play the Lightning missed most when Cernak was out of their lineup.

"Everybody likes to score. But there are guys that are invaluable in how they keep pucks out of the net, how hard they are to play against," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "Every team's got some superstars, some offensive guys. Everybody likes to navigate their way around the offensive zone, but when you have guys like Cernak out there, everybody's got kind of one eye looking for him.

"So, you love to have those guys. He's hard. He's heavy. He's big, and he's strong. He kills penalties, and when you go to the playoffs and you start losing guys like that, it's going to cause a trickle-down effect. And so it's great to see him back and healthy."

Cernak spent time in his native Slovakia during the offseason and returned to Tampa Bay to join the informal team skates a month before camp opened. He not only is recovered fully from the concussion, he is becoming comfortable in his growing role on and off the ice in his sixth NHL season.

“I feel like the longer you are in the league you know your spot, you know your role, and you know what you are doing on the ice better, especially positioning,” he said. “You kind of understand the game much more than before, and that’s what’s helpful and you’re just trying to be better every game.

“Now this year, of course, I just feel like I have probably more, like, the role of the leader. I should know and try to help everybody. I am trying to be the guy who the younger guys are following, and it’s just nice to be in that position. I’m just working harder every single day, doing my best to be better in my roles.”

Can't stop the hustle: 5 questions with the Lightning's Brandon Hagel **Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

BRANDON — When you have learned to grind for everything you have achieved in life like Lightning forward Brandon Hagel has, there's little time left to celebrate your achievements.

Hagel arrived in Tampa at the 2021-22 trade deadline still trying to establish himself as an NHL player. His first full season in a Lightning uniform was a breakout — setting career highs with 30 goals and 64 points while playing a two-way game that earned him the team lead in plus/minus at plus-23 and established him as a key piece of the Lightning's future.

Coach Jon Cooper often calls Hagel the team's Swiss Army knife because he can play on the top scoring line with Brayden Point and Nikita Kucherov, and skate on a matchup line with Anthony Cirelli.

Over the summer, the 25-year-old was rewarded with a \$52 million extension that keeps him in a Lightning uniform for the next nine seasons, longer than any other player.

Following a recent training camp practice at the TGH IcePlex, we sat down with Hagel to discuss his new deal, what has made him the player he is and how he's found a home in Tampa. (Some comments were edited for clarity and brevity.)

Because of your path to the NHL, you've always played with a chip on your shoulder. (Buffalo didn't sign him after drafting him in the sixth round in 2016, and he spent four seasons in juniors before Chicago signed him as a free agent.) Now here you are, a \$52 million man with the security of an eight-year extension. How do you keep that same drive?

I think the biggest goal for myself is always to win a Stanley Cup, and whether I've got a contract or not, that's just the way I play. I believe that the way I'm going to help this team get to that point is with my work ethic. That's just who I am, and that's what I believe in. This is my job and I'm going to come to work and give 100%.

I don't think anything changes from the contract. I'm still here. I still want to win. The reason why I want to stay in the league for another, I guess nine years you can say, is to try and win. I come to the rink every single day wanting to get better, wanting to try and help and give 100%. I think I've said it before. My parents go to work and give 100%. I might as well do the same.

You now carry the distinction of being a 30-goal scorer. Because opponents have to account for you, do you anticipate that will make it more difficult to duplicate last season's success?

I never honestly came into a season seeing myself as this big goal scorer who is always going to put up these crazy numbers. And that was never my goal. Obviously, it worked out that way for me, but I've gotten to play with some unbelievable players. And a lot of credit goes to them. Who knows what I would have done without them? They're superstars, they're All-Stars. They're players that not many people get to play with.

I want to come out, work hard, trying to be good on the offensive and defensive side of the puck, and hopefully the chances come. I will never sit here and say that I'm a 30-goal guy every season. Do I want to do that? Am I going to try to do that? Of course I am, but I wouldn't say I come into every season like, 'Hey, I need 40 this year.'

For myself, it's just come in and work hard, do what makes me successful and hopefully opportunities come and I am able to put in 30 again.

When you signed your extension, you talked about how great it was to have a team to call home for the long term. We've talked about how tough it was getting traded at first and having to start over. What does the current stability mean to you?

It's not easy living out of a suitcase all the time. You never know what can happen obviously, but you just feel a little bit more secure and a little bit more comfortable and you have a home instead of bouncing around all over the place. It's never easy (when you're new). You don't know where to go to eat. You don't know anything about the city.

So (when I was traded), I was kind of struggling with some off-ice stuff. Personally, it was never easy, but being able to come in last year and kind of have a home and I was used to the city, was able to start training camp with everyone, got here a little early, played some golf with the guys and got to know them better, just made me feel so much more comfortable and I believe that was a big part of the success I had last season.

When did you see Tampa as a place where you might want to be for the long term?

You come to games, they're sold out. Outside the arena, you see Bolts stuff everywhere. That's a big part of it, too. It's not just like the city and the weather. It's the fans and the people around all of it. It's how the community is.

I mean, you want to play in front of a sold-out barn. It doesn't matter if it's a nice place or not a nice place. It's my job. That's what I love to do. And that brings excitement to the game and makes you get up for a game. So I think that was a big part of it and obviously, it's Tampa, it's Florida. You can't complain. You get the best of both worlds.

You want to win, so how important was it that the Lightning locked up their young core players with lengthy extensions?

That's huge. Obviously I'm still young. You want to come into a team that's going to be together for a long time and you know you're going to have success. You've got guys like (Cirelli), (Mikhail Sergachev), Kuch, Pointer, (Nick Paul), you go down the list. You know these guys are supposed to be here for a long time.

Obviously things change and you never know. But the way the picture is, right now for a long time, you've got a ton of incredible players locked up. The team has a plan to continue being good and I believe the next nine years I have here that I have to live my dream and win a Stanley Cup.

Lightning wrap up preseason with a win in Sunrise **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

The 2023 NHL Preseason is officially over.

The Tampa Bay Lightning wrapped up their preseason with a 5-2 record after a 4-2 win over the Florida Panthers Saturday night at Amerant Bank Arena behind 27 saves from Jonas Johansson and goals from Tanner Jeannot, Anthony Cirelli, Brandon Hagel and Brayden Point.

The Bolts got on the board early in Sunrise when Waltteri Merela sent a backhand pass to the point for Darren Raddysh, who hammered a slap shot towards the net that got redirected by Jeannot and past Sergei Bobrovsky 2:37 into the game.

The goal was Jeannot's second of the preseason, while Raddysh picked up his team-leading third assist and Merela collected his fourth point, tied for the most among all Lightning skaters.

"The kid's gotten better with every game," said Tampa Bay head coach Jon Cooper after the game. "He looks more comfortable out there. The big thing is, you look at the puck battles and he wins them.

"Sometimes when you're a little bigger, you can put yourself in those positions to win those battles. He's got a big body. You have to be able to use it and he does. He's definitely going to make decisions tough on us."

Florida evened the score with 8:26 left in the first period with Ryan Lomberg firing a wrist shot from just inside the blue line that got past Johansson to make it 1-1 with the Panthers on the penalty kill.

Just over five minutes later, the Bolts regained the lead after a Florida turnover ended up on the stick of Conor Sheary and he sent a pass to the slot for Cirelli, who made a nice move to the backhand to beat Bobrovsky and grab the 2-1 lead with 2:59 left in the first.

Florida had an immediate answer 32 seconds later when Matthew Tkachuk found Eetu Luostarinen, who fired a shot past Johansson to even the score at two going into the first intermission.

The game-winning goal would come 12:18 into the second period with the Panthers on the power play and Hagel recording his second shorthanded tally of the preseason. In typical relentless fashion, Hagel intercepted an entry pass from Evan Rodrigues and bolted down the ice before an attempted move to his backhand went off the skate of Mike Reilly. But as Rodrigues went to collect the loose puck, Hagel lifted his stick, regained possession at the left circle and immediately fired a quick shot to the far post to give Tampa Bay the 3-2 lead.

Following two consecutive shutouts to open the preseason, Johansson stopped 18 straight Florida shots following the Luostarinen goal in the first period. In his three appearances this preseason, Johansson went 3-0-0 with two shutouts and 94 saves on 96 shots.

"The one thing for a goalie, they've got to be calm in the net," said Cooper. "I think both guys, JJ and [Matt] Tomkins, have been really calm in the net. They're letting pucks hit them and then our guys are doing a good job in clearing those rebounds.

"Sometimes you have to make that save we need and he made those early in the first period. The one thing for me, he just looks comfortable in there. You can tell on our bench, they're pretty comfortable with either one of those guys in there.

“Good sign for me that he’s not playing an uneasy game and that’s a good sign for him.”

The Lightning added an insurance goal 40 seconds into the third period with Nikita Kucherov sending a pass down low to Steven Stamkos, who found Point in the slot before he quickly fired a shot top shelf to increase the lead to 4-2.

As the team has done so well in years past, Tampa Bay shut things down in the third period, outshooting the Panthers 10-6 and keeping the chances against to a minimum.

“Today, especially that third period, we started to look like a team,” Cooper said. “We were doing all the right things. What you're going to have to do in the regular season, we started doing.

“You talk about the last thing that's fresh in your head going into a game, that was the period I wanted to be fresh in our head, so overall pretty happy with the way things played out.”

Now, the real fun begins. With the preseason in the books, the Lightning will have the day off Sunday then get back on the ice for practice ahead of their NHL season-opening contest against the Nashville Predators at AMALIE Arena on Tuesday.

“Overall, I think pretty good preseason,” said Hagel. “Worked hard. I thought the whole group worked. Obviously, new things are happening so nothing’s going to be perfect, but I thought we worked hard at it, and I guess we’ll see on Tuesday.”

The Man Behind The Camera **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

Over the past decade, video coverage of professional sports teams has come a long way. With shows like HBO's Hard Knocks and Netflix's Drive to Survive, fans can learn more about their favorite athletes than ever before.

And it's not just major production companies giving fans behind-the-scenes access. Teams across all major sports are creating series of their own, like the Tampa Bay Lightning with Recharge, Bolts Beginnings and New In Blue. Those projects didn't come to life overnight, and one of the biggest pieces in making sure they eventually did was Gabe Marte, the Lightning's Director of Video and Media Production.

The son of two Dominican parents, Marte was born in New York before his family moved to Tampa when he was two years old. He still has family in Washington Heights, which at one time was the largest Dominican community in the United States.

After gaining video experience at Alonzo High School and Florida State University, Marte accepted a position as an intern with the Lightning organization during the summer of 2012, spending most of his time working on in-game video production for the Arena Football League's Tampa Bay Storm. Hoping to land at least a part-time role heading into the 2012-13 NHL season, Marte's plans hit a snag on September 15 when the NHL deadline for a new collective bargaining agreement passed without an agreement, resulting in a lockout.

"Fortunately, there were always rumors of them coming back," Marte said. "They kept me on part-time with the Storm and I've been here ever since. We were slowly getting ready for the Lightning's 20th anniversary year, so I was lucky enough to work on a lot of historical pieces and other projects that would be shown during the games in-bowl."

Thankfully, the rumors were true. A tentative deal on a CBA was reached in early January, allowing the NHL to have a 48-game regular season that began on the 19th. The following season, Jon Cooper's first full year behind the Bolts bench, Marte was rewarded with an offer for a full-time position with some different responsibilities, including traveling with the team and primarily focusing on video coverage for the Lightning website.

After accepting the job, he was all set for his first road trip with the team, a back-to-back set against the Buffalo Sabres and Detroit Red Wings. But it didn't get off to the hottest start.

"I was late to the plane," said Marte with a laugh. "I didn't even own a full suit. I was just wearing a shirt, tie and pants. I drove past the airport like three times and I'm calling our PR guy like, 'Where in the world is this place?' So, I'm the new guy showing up late, running onto the plane."

"But I'll always remember getting on the plane after the Buffalo game. I'm walking on and there's Steve Yzerman, sitting right in the front. He stands up, blocks me, shakes my hand, introduces himself and says, 'Welcome to the team.' I'll never forget that. He's a legend who needs no introduction and he made me feel welcome and feel like part of the team."

Almost 10 years later, the video landscape has changed quite a bit. Marte has gone from uploading game previews to the Lightning website at 480p to leading the shooting and production of four seasons of a cinematic, behind-the-scenes series in Recharge.

“It has definitely changed,” Marte explained. “Video is everywhere now. You’re watching on your computer or you’re watching on your phone. That’s where our fans are digesting all this awesome content, and now we’re able to get it to them so quickly.

“Fans don’t have to wait until a home game to watch this cool piece you made, or this awesome interaction between a player and a patient in a hospital, or two players just making fun of each other and having a good moment.

“Now, we can show our fans what our players are up to away from the rink. We can do a Question Cam and find out everyone’s favorite holiday song. It’s just given us an enhanced ability to humanize the players more, while still putting out the information that fans want on the hockey side of things.”

While the Lightning’s video content has grown immensely over the past 10 years, it doesn’t happen without the trust of players and coaches alike, and Marte has been one of the key cogs in gaining that trust.

“Gabe’s irreplaceable when it comes to what he means for the Lightning organization,” said Michael O’Halloran, who has worked under Marte for the last four years after starting with the Bolts in 2016-17. “You’d be hard pressed to find anyone more universally liked by the front office and locker room. He has great perspective. He’s passionate about what he does. His positivity and friendliness have been huge in building that trust with the team and hockey operations. That’s allowed us to take our video content to places we honestly never dreamed we could.”

Gaining all that trust has opened doors and allowed Lightning fans to see their favorite team in an entirely different way than ever before.

“The relationship and the trust that we have from the staff and Coop has been the biggest thing,” Marte explained. “I considered it a huge wall between us and the locker room when this all started. It’s all about chipping away at that wall, and we’ve done a lot of chipping away in my 10 years here.

“It’s been pretty cool to see just how far we’ve come, from not being able to go in the locker room to now being in there when Coop’s giving a big speech to the team or there’s tender moments with the group.

“One of those great moments was Pierre-Edouard Bellemare opening up to the team about the death of his mother. I thought that may be out of bounds and started pulling my camera down. Then Coop whistled at me and motioned for me to shoot it. Through that, we captured an incredible moment from that season. It’s been really cool to be part of moments like that and also be able to capture them.”

After all the long hours, hard work and consistent chipping away, Marte got rewarded in 2021 when the Lightning won their second-straight Stanley Cup on home ice at AMALIE Arena. With limited staff allowed to enter the COVID bubble during the 2020 NHL playoffs, he was unable to be in attendance in Edmonton when Tampa Bay lifted the Stanley Cup for the first time since 2004.

And while there were still COVID restrictions during the 2021 Final, Marte had full access when the Lightning won the Cup for a second-straight year.

“I just remember getting out on the ice and celebrating and hugging everyone,” he said. “I’ll always remember Alex Killorn grabbing me, hugging me and looking me right in the eyes like, ‘Gabe, congrats man. I mean it. Sincerely, congrats.’ It felt like you were part of the team.

“In retrospect, looking back on it, all that trust you've earned, all those long hours you worked on the road trips, slowly staying patient and slowly earning trust, it leads to those moments. It leads to Pat Maroon picking you up on the ice. It leads to attending Cup parties.

“Eventually, it leads to one of our PR guys calling my name out and telling me to come get the Cup. I'm like, ‘Well, I guess I'm going to do this. I'm actually going to lift the Cup on the ice.’

“It was a surreal moment. I couldn't believe I was doing that. I'm just thinking like, ‘Man, look at me. I'm this kid who just took an internship and wasn't really familiar with the intricacies and history of hockey. Now, I'm lifting the Stanley Cup.’

“And everyone was happy for me. No one was rolling their eyes when I did it. It was just really cool to share that moment and celebrate.”

But that wouldn't be the last time the Cup was in Marte's hands. That February, Brian Breseman, the Lightning's VP of Communications and Content, stopped by his office with some news.

“He was like, ‘The Cup's available if you want to have it,’” Marte explained. “He told me it wouldn't be for an entire day, but I'd be able to get a couple hours with it. He walks away and I'm just thinking how amazing it would be if that actually happened.

“I didn't think much about it and a few weeks later he stops by and he's like, ‘Are you still good for the 16th?’ I couldn't believe he was being serious.”

From there, the ‘Marte Partay’ was born, and plans were quickly thrown together for a night with the Stanley Cup at his childhood home. But before arriving at the house, he had one request – a stop at the barber shop.

“My best friend is my barber and every time I go in there, the guys are always asking about the Lightning and the playoffs and how things are going,” he said. “All the barbers working there are Latinos.

“The Cup Keepers let me walk it in, which was pretty amazing., I thought for sure I would kind of just guide them in and hold the door open, but they wanted me to hold it. I still didn't really feel worthy enough to be holding it. All I did was hit record.

“But it was an awesome moment. The picture of us is still hanging in the shop and people talk about it all the time.”

From there, it was time to party. With the Stanley Cup on a table near the pool in the backyard, roughly 75 people made their way to the Marte's for homemade food, drinks and a party with the Cup. Even Jon Cooper swung by.

“My family was freaking out when he showed up,” Marte said.

“It was just really cool to see everyone's support and validation. I'm thinking, ‘Damn, the Cup is at my parents' house. This is the place where I grew up and played NHL on SEGA Genesis inside. This is the place where we watched them lift the Cup in '04.’

“It's really special thinking about it. There it was, just sitting there for five hours at my parents' house. A bunch of my friends had their kids with them, and they took pictures with it. It's still the background on so many of their phones because they still can't believe it.

“Even just going through the education of the history of the Cup with my parents and sharing how special it is with my family and little cousins. It was amazing.”

Surrounded by family and friends, the highlight of the night came with a flag, some fruit and a few pieces of additional hardware. With his mother grabbing the Dominican flag and his brother running inside for green plantains from the kitchen, all that was left was the statues from the Suncoast Regional Emmy’s that were won through Recharge.

“It was unreal,” he said. “Everybody’s pulling their phones out and there’s just so much pride. You realize how rare and special it is. I still look at those photos on my phone when we’re on the plane. It’s just really special.

“We were nervous about the Emmy’s because we didn’t want it to make it about us, but we set them up around the Cup and got a really cool photo. But the coolest part was the Cup Keepers taking their phones out and taking pictures because they thought it was so cool too.

“The Cup has been everywhere and has so many stories. To know that we added to that a little bit is pretty special, especially for someone who doesn’t have their name on it.”

Telling the story of the Tampa Bay Lightning is what drives Gabe Marte. But beyond that, there are other responsibilities he firmly believes in. One of those is proudly representing his heritage.

“It’s important,” he said. “To know that I can maybe inspire another person, maybe another Latino videographer, and show them that they can do this is important to me.

“This game is phenomenal. The action, the history, the pageantry is unreal. This is something that can be enjoyed and shared by everybody.

“You don’t have to work in baseball or football or the main sports that you predominately see Latinos in. You can have an impact in anything that you want if you set your mind to it.

“If I can play a small role in growing this game, telling the wonderful story of these amazing human beings in that locker room, and maybe inspiring some people along the way, then I’m doing a good job.”

“It sounds cliché, but I honestly wouldn’t be where I am today without Gabe as my boss,” said O’Halloran. “His trust, confidence and incredible sense of honesty are what every leader should want to possess with their employees, and his passion for what he does makes coming to work every day a blast.

“Without Gabe’s leadership, content like Recharge and Bolts Beginnings just wouldn’t be where they are today. All the accolades, accomplishments, and recognition he’s received as an employee are incredibly well deserved and then some.”