

NHL Finals

Defensemen starring in tense Stanley Cup

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

BRANDON, Fla. — After Steven Stamkos stepped off the Lightning’s practice rink on a 90-degree June day, the Tampa Bay captain calmly made it clear he is well aware that he hasn’t scored a goal yet in his first Stanley Cup Final.

“Keep playing the game the right way, and eventually you’re going to get rewarded,” Stamkos said Friday.

When Jonathan Toews and the Blackhawks flew through a Florida rainstorm and landed in Tampa several hours later, the Chicago captain placidly confirmed that he and Patrick Kane also know they have one combined goal.

“We just know you’ve got to keep working, keep finding ways to create chances, and eventually believe that a bounce is going to go your way,” Toews said.

The captains are mirrors of calm in an increasingly tense situation, accepting the spotlight that comes in those inevitable stretches when their outsized skills don’t light up scoreboards. They’re determined to preserve their teams’ cool and focus when this exceptionally even series begins its sprint to the finish in Game 5 on Saturday night.

After all, somebody will get a big goal this weekend at Amalie Arena, where either the Lightning or the Blackhawks will end the 2-2 series tie and move one win away from a title. Why not them?

“You don’t get this far without having that character, and I think this is where it has to come out as much as possible,” Chicago defenseman Duncan Keith said.

The Lightning and the Blackhawks realize the enormous stakes on every shift of Game 5 in a series that still hasn’t featured a two-goal lead. The captains and the coaches are attempting to direct that excitement into motivation instead of intimidation.

“You’ve got to get caught up in

Game 5



Chicago Blackhawks at



Tampa Bay Lightning

- Saturday
- 5 p.m.
- TV: NBC
- Series tied 2-2



Chicago Blackhawks goalie Corey Crawford (50) keeps his eye on the puck along side teammate Duncan Keith (2) and Tampa Bay Lightning’s Ryan Callahan (24) during the first period in Game 4 of the NHL hockey Stanley Cup Final Wednesday, June 10, 2015, in Chicago.

the moment,” Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. “You have to embrace where we are. It’s the middle of June, and we’re still playing hockey. The Stanley Cup is up for grabs in the best-two-out-of-three. I don’t think we should be afraid of that. I don’t think we should walk around being tense and looking at the magnitude of where we are, being afraid of the moment. This is the time of our lives.”

Keith and Tampa Bay’s Victor Hedman have embraced this moment better than anyone. Stamkos, Kane and Toews have been upstaged through four games by their star defensemen, who are both turning in dominant playoff performances.

In a postseason missing a breakout offensive performance or a dominant goaltending run, Keith or Hedman are the odds-on favorites to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as the playoffs MVP. Barring a spectacular pile of goals from playoff scoring leader Tyler Johnson or another forward, the series winner seems likely to feature the first defenseman to claim the Conn Smythe since Anaheim’s Scott Niedermayer in 2007.

Keith and Hedman are 1-2 in the NHL in postseason plus-minus ratings and total minutes. Keith leads the playoffs with 18 assists during his incredible extended ice time, while Hedman has set franchise playoff records for assists and points by a defenseman.

Although they play the game differently, they’re filling a similar do-everything role for their respective teams.

“In a lot of ways, yeah, (Hedman) is a guy like Duncan,” Toews said. “He makes, more times than not, the players he’s out there with better. He’s a catalyst when he’s in his own zone or the offensive zone.”

Only four defensemen in NHL history have recorded more than Keith’s 18 assists in this postseason, and nobody has done it since Brian Leetch’s 23 during the New York Rangers’ Stanley Cup run in 1994.

Keith’s sheer minutes are the most jaw-dropping aspect of it all: He has played 655 minutes and 55 seconds in the postseason, averaging 31:14 per game. Chicago coach Joel Quenneville’s top four defensemen are all averaging more ice time per game than Hedman, although the Lightning have played more games.

It’s tough to quantify whether those extra minutes have affected the Chicago defensemen’s overall aggressiveness, particularly on the offensive end. But with the season’s end in clear view, the Blackhawks’ big four say they won’t let up.

“It’s not as bad as you would think,” said Chicago defenseman Niklas Hjalmarrsson, who is averaging a measly 25:56. “Personally, I could have played (Thursday). I could have skipped these two days in between games, but we’re not making the schedule here. It’s just at the most three games left here to do something great, and it’s pretty easy to get motivated and forget about that stuff.”

Hedman has the second-most total minutes of any players in the Stanley Cup playoffs, yet he has logged nearly 82 fewer minutes than Keith. Hedman’s two-year evolution from a project left off the Swedish Olympic team into a star culminated with his game-winning assist in Game 3.

“I’ve always said this, (and I’ve) been around a long time: I’ve never seen a guy 6-foot-6, 230 (pounds), skate like he does,” Tampa Bay associate coach Rick Bowness said.

WNBA

Dream snag narrow win

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Angel McCoughtry scored five of her 21 points in the final 27.9 seconds to help the Atlanta Dream beat the Washington Mystics 64-61 on Friday night.

Tiffany Hayes added 12 points for the Dream (2-2), who trailed 49-38 at the end of the third quarter before scoring a season-high 26 points in the fourth.

Mission native Shoni Schimmel hit two 3s to spark a 17-6 run, which was capped by a 3-pointer by Roneeka Hodges and pulled Atlanta within one with 4:41 to play. Those were Schimmel’s only two field goals of the game.

Sancho Lyttle’s steal set up McCoughtry’s 3 which gave the Dream a 62-61 lead, their first since midway through the second quarter. Two free throws by McCoughtry capped the scoring.

Ivory Latta rimmed out a potential tying 3-pointer in the final second.

Emma Meesseman had 21 points and grabbed nine rebounds for the Mystics (2-1).

NASCAR

Kahne wins first pole since 2012

Associated Press

BROOKLYN, Mich. — It’s hard to believe for those who follow NASCAR, but Kasey Kahne had not won a pole since 2012.

That drought is finally over.

Kahne took his first NASCAR Sprint Cup pole in nearly 32 months Friday, topping qualifying at Michigan International Speedway with a lap of 201.992 mph.

It’s the first pole for the 35-year-old driver since October 2012 at Kansas, but it’s the 27th of his career, tying him with NASCAR Hall of Fame inductee Terry Labonte for 25th on the career list.

You Rocked it
Pilot Rock Rockets!





Way To Go ROCKETS!



HOME LOAN CENTER
of Washington

American Pacific Mortgage Corp.

1 East Main St.
Walla Walla
509-527-3353
gobestloan.com

MLO-WA#535927 / MLO-OR#535927 • 816535/1850



Congratulations!
2A/1A State Champs!

Birch Creek
TROPHIES & AWARDS

65675 E. Birch Creek Rd.
Pilot Rock
443-8631
OWNER: JULIE HUMPHREYS

Stellar Job
Rockets!



One
Responsible
Source

The
Stratton
Agency



Nationwide
is on your side

Pendleton / Hermiston • stratton-insurance.com

Facebook 541/276-2302 • 800/225-2521

Congratulations
Rockets!

Pendleton
Book Co.

125 S. Main St.
Pendleton
541-276-9292

WAY TO GO
ROCKETS!



WHEATLAND
INSURANCE COMPANY, INC.

Serving Eastern
Oregon Since 1958

www.wheatlandins.com

Pendleton • Athena • Hermiston
Heppner • Ione • La Grande • Enterprise
Elgin • Baker City • Condon



Bisnett
INSURANCE

Protect Your Passion

• Farm & Ranch • Crop

• Home • Auto • Business

121 S. Main Street • Pendleton
541.276.1418

Locations also in Lake Oswego, John Day,
Hood River, Milton-Freewater, Baker City,
Ketchum, ID & Scottsdale, AZ

Online at bisnett.com

Congrats Rockets!



Community
BANK

Local Money Working For Local People

Pendleton
157 S Main St
541-938-6361

Member FDIC

Great Job at State!

ZEIGLER TRANSMISSION
& AUTO REPAIR, INC.

Transmission Specialists
Automotive Experts



541-276-8024
401 Westgate, Pendleton

DOHERTY RECYCLING LLC



Irish Iron

PROUD OF
YOU
ROCKETS!

Doherty Welding LLC



Paddy Built



541-443-3234