

With Chara hurt, Bruins need help on D in Stanley Cup Game 5

By JIMMY GOLEN
Associated Press

BEDFORD, Mass. — The Boston Bruins reached the Stanley Cup Final despite a run of regular-season injuries that prevented anyone on the roster from playing all 82 games.

Now comes the real test.

The Bruins are preparing for Game 5 against the St. Louis Blues without captain and No. 1 defenseman Zdeno Chara, who did not return after he was hit in the face by a deflected puck on Monday night. The St. Louis Blues won 4-2 to even the series at two games apiece.

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy offered no update on Chara's condition after arriving in Boston on Tuesday except to say the 2009 Norris Trophy winner was on his way to see a doctor. The fact that Chara returned for the third period wearing a full

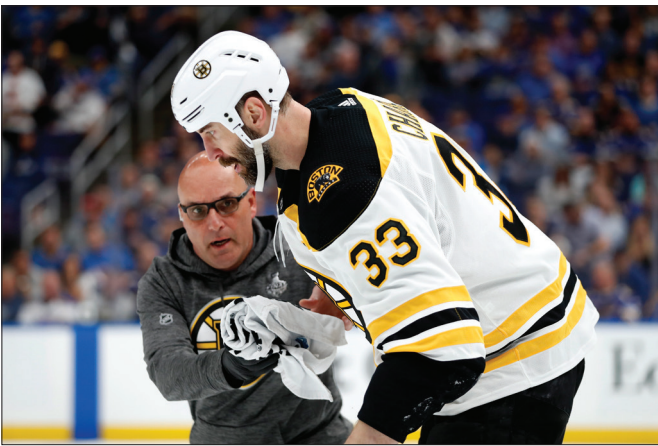
face shield — and never got back on the ice — suggests it is more than the lost tooth or busted lip that usually only keeps a hockey player out long enough to get it stitched up.

“Right now, I’ve got nothing,” Cassidy said. “But we don’t play for two more days.”

Although the 42-year-old Chara is the team’s elder statesman and emotional leader, Cassidy said he is less worried about Chara’s leadership than his 6-foot-9 presence on the ice.

“Taking great players out of the lineup, that’s the part that hurts the most,” Cassidy said. “I’m not worried about our mentality.”

The Bruins have made it through the playoffs without defenseman Kevan Miller and also lost Matt Grzelcyk when he took an elbow to the head in Game 2 and needed to be helped off the ice. John



Jeff Roberson

Boston Bruins defenseman Zdeno Chara (33), of Slovakia, is helped off the ice after getting hit in the face with the puck during the second period of Game 4 of the NHL hockey Stanley Cup Final against the St. Louis Blues on Monday in St. Louis.

Moore filled in for him in the third game, which the Bruins won.

But they were down to five men on the blue line again Monday night when Chara took a deflected shot from Brayden Schenn off the right

side of the face. He crumpled to the ice, face-first, and then skated off, with blood dripping from his mouth. He returned at the start of the third wearing the shield but never went back in the game.

“Very uncomfortable, was advised not to return to play,” Cassidy said after the game. “Had some stitches, probably some dental work in the near future. He wanted to come out on the bench and be with his teammates.”

His teammates knew how difficult it was for him to just sit there.

“He’s our leader, and the biggest part of our leadership,” forward David Pastrnak said. “Anything that comes out of his mouth ... everybody is listening to him.”

Blues coach Craig Berube said he had a broken jaw when he was a player and was out six weeks. But if Chara has the same injury and misses the rest of the series, it won’t change the Blues’ approach.

“Nothing from our standpoint,” he said.

A six-time All-Star and the perennial team leader in minutes played, Chara played a career-low (not counting

lockout years) 62 games this season because of an unspecified injury that kept him out six weeks in November and December.

Although it’s too early to rule him out for Game 5 — or perhaps longer — Cassidy said the most likely replacements would be Steven Kampfer or rookies Urho Vaakanainen, Jeremy Lauzon, and Jakub Zboril. Only Kampfer, with two games of playoff experience, has appeared in a postseason game.

“If both guys (Chara and Grzelcyk) are out, it’s not an easy decision,” Cassidy said. “It’s not one I want to make, but you have to do what you have to do.”

But don’t rule them out just yet.

“Both of those players, they’re warriors,” defenseman Charlie McAvoy said. “They’ll do whatever it takes to play.”

Here we go: Just like old times, Federer vs. Nadal in France

By HOWARD FENDRICH
AP Tennis Writer

PARIS — Roger Federer knew when he returned to the French Open that, if things went exceedingly well, he eventually would find himself face-to-face with Rafael Nadal.

Here we go.

Just like old times.

Federer put away Stan Wawrinka after a 75-minute rain delay Tuesday, converting a break point for just the second time in 18 chances and quickly wrapping up a 7-6 (4), 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4 victory over his friend and Swiss countryman to reach the semifinals at Roland Garros.

And what a showdown comes next: Federer vs. Nadal for a spot in the final.

“Always,” Nadal said, “a big match.”

They are two titans of tennis, with Federer holding a men’s-record 20 Grand Slam titles, and Nadal next with 17.

Nadal, who won 11 of his trophies in Paris, has gotten the better of their rivalry over the years, leading 23-15 overall, 9-3 at majors, 13-2 on clay and 5-0 at the French Open, including four finals.

“My next opponent is not too bad. He can play on clay, unfortunately,” Federer joked to the crowd at Court Suzanne Lenglen.

They haven’t met at Roland Garros since 2011. Federer, who has won their most recent five matches, last entered the field in 2015, when he lost to Wawrinka in the quarterfinals. He pulled out with a bad back in 2016, then skipped the entire clay circuit in 2017-18.

“If you to do or achieve something on the clay, inevitably, at some stage, you will go through Rafa, because he’s that strong and he will be there,” said Federer, at 37 the tournament’s oldest semifinalist since 1968. “If I would have had a different mindset — to avoid him — then I should not have played the clay.”

The only time Federer won the French Open, in 2009, he didn’t need to face Nadal, who was knocked out in the fourth round by Robin Soderling. That’s one of only two losses for Nadal in 93 career matches at the place.

There was very little drama in Nadal’s quarterfinal victory this time, a 6-1, 6-1, 6-3 stroll against No. 7 Kei Nishikori, who went through a pair of five-setters the past two rounds.

“He didn’t let me play how I wanted to play,” Nishikori said, “and especially if I’m not fresh, it’s not easy to stay with him.”

Federer vs. Wawrinka, meanwhile, lived up to the



AP Photo/Michel Euler

Switzerland’s Roger Federer celebrates winning his quarterfinal match of the French Open tennis tournament against Switzerland’s Stan Wawrinka in four sets, 7-6 (7-4), 4-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4, at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris on Tuesday.

billing, a 3½-hour tussle between a couple of guys who won a Davis Cup title and Olympic gold medal in doubles together.

Coming in, Federer held a 22-3 edge head-to-head, but Wawrinka knew this: All three of his victories had come on clay, including four years ago in the same round, on the same court.

They were locked in a taut fourth set at 3-all when clouds grew thick and charcoal-colored. Thunder rumbled nearby. It was difficult to see, because there are no artificial lights. Play was suspended as a storm arrived. But it didn’t last long.



AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin

Spain’s Rafael Nadal celebrates winning his quarterfinal match of the French Open tennis tournament against Japan’s Kei Nishikori in three sets, 6-1, 6-1, 6-3, at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris on Tuesday.

When action resumed, Federer needed only 10 minutes to take control, getting his second break of the match by smacking a big cross-court forehand to a corner that Wawrinka couldn’t handle. It was 5-4, and Federer only needed to hold serve to end it.

That turned out to be a tad complicated.

He double-faulted for the only two times of the entire afternoon, once on his second match point. He was forced to deflect a break point for Wawrinka, doing so with a serve-and-volley winner. And then, finally, on his third match point, Federer closed it out with a vol-

ley, then hugged Wawrinka at the net.

“A tough, tough one, for sure,” said Wawrinka, who was coming off the longest singles match of his career, a 5-hour, 9-minute victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Wawrinka credited Federer, saying, “It was important to be aggressive, to be inside the court, and he did that better than me.”

Attacking the net at any opportunity, Federer won the point on 41 of his 60 trips forward. It’ll be fascinating to see whether he does that against Nadal, too.

“I’m looking forward to the test,” said Federer, whose last major semifinal was at last year’s Australian Open.

The quarterfinals on the other half of the men’s draw are Wednesday: No. 1 Novak Djokovic vs. No. 5 Alexander Zverev, and No. 4 Dominic Thiem vs. No. 10 Karen Khachanov. Federer and Nadal face off on Friday.

One women’s semifinal is set: 26th-seeded Johanna Konta vs. 19-year-old Marketa Vondrousova.

Konta eliminated 2018 runner-up Sloane Stephens 6-1, 6-4, grabbing 21 of the last 22 points she served, to become the first British woman in the French Open’s final four since Jo Durie in 1983.

The unseeded Vondrousova beat No. 31 Petra Martic 7-6 (1), 7-5.

Until this year, Konta had entered the clay-court major four times, losing in the first round each time.

So she has gone from 0-4 before 2019 to 5-0 over the past 1½ weeks.

“I’ve always said that whenever I step out onto the court, I’m always going to have a chance. I’m always going to have a shot,” Konta said. “I don’t think any player on tour can go on court against me and feel like they’ve definitely got it.”

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