

THE 1996 NHL PLAYOFFS

Opening Night: Gretzky great again, Montreal works overtime, Flyers roll past Tampa Bay

Gretzky's three assists sparked St. Louis, 3-1

The Lightning had a playoff debut to forget

Damphousse's OT goal gave Montreal the win

Two goals in 25 seconds put Colorado over the top

TORONTO (AP) — Wayne Gretzky, making his first playoff appearance in three years, assisted on all three St. Louis goals Monday night to lead the Blues to a 3-1 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs in the opening game of their playoff series.

Gretzky, traded to the Blues earlier this season from the Los Angeles Kings, set up goals by Brett Hull, Shayne Corson and Steve Leach as the Blues took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

Game 2 will be played Thursday night before the series shifts to St. Louis for Games 3 and 4.

Mats Sundin was the only Toronto player to beat St. Louis goalie Grant Fuhr, who made 33 saves.

With the score tied 1-1 in the third period, Gretzky sent a pass from behind Toronto's net through the legs of defenseman Mathieu Schneider. The puck deflected into the middle to the Leafs' zone to Hull, who put a wrist shot past goalie Felix Potvin at 11:13.

Leach then beat Potvin from the faceoff circle at 12:32 to give the Blues a 3-1 lead.

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Eric Lindros and Pat Falloon each had a goal and two assists as the Philadelphia Flyers made Tampa Bay's playoff debut one to forget, beating the Lightning 7-3 to take the first game in a best-of-7 playoff series Tuesday.

While Philadelphia goalie Ron Hextall didn't see a lot of early action, the Flyers chased Tampa Bay goalie Daren Puppa after assuming a 4-0 lead on 14 shots early in the second period.

Trailing 6-0 with eight minutes left in the second period, the Lightning, playing the first playoff game in their four-year history, made it respectable with goals by Jason Wiemer, Mikael Andersson and John Cullen.

The Flyers' first line of Lindros, John LeClair and Dale Hawerchuk each scored, but Philadelphia also picked up goals from Joel Otto, Rod Brind'Amour and Trent Klatt while outshooting the Lightning 32-17.

Philadelphia pressed Tampa Bay's inexperienced defense from the start and was able to keep play in the Lightning end for most of the first period. The result was a 3-0 lead seven minutes into the game.

NEW YORK (AP) — Vincent Damphousse's second goal of the game at 5:04 of overtime Tuesday night gave the Montreal Canadiens a 3-2 victory over the New York Rangers in the opener of their first-round playoff series.

Damphousse took a drop pass from Benoit Brunet at the blue line, skated down the right side and beat Mike Richter from the right circle with the Canadiens' only shot of overtime.

The shot broke up a brilliant goaltending duel between Richter and the Canadiens' Jocelyn Thibault, who made 43 saves. Richter made 29, many of them from close range.

The victory gave the Canadiens a 1-0 lead in the best-of-7 Eastern Conference series, which continues with Game 2 in New York on Thursday night.

The Rangers took a 1-0 lead at 7:17 of the first on a power-play goal by Adam Graves, who scored on a rebound. Rangers captain Mark Messier, returning to action after missing the last five games of the season with a rib injury, had an assist on the play.

DENVER (AP) — Joe Sakic and Valeri Kamensky scored goals 25 seconds apart in the second period, and Peter Forsberg added two goals and two assists Tuesday night as the Colorado Avalanche opened the Western Conference playoffs with a 5-2 win over the Vancouver Canucks.

The Avalanche scored four goals in the second period en route to winning the first NHL playoff game in Denver since 1978.

Claude Lemieux had three assists for the Avalanche. Patrick Roy stopped 29 saves to win his 71st playoff game.

Russ Courtnall and Esa Tikkanen scored for the Canucks.

Kirk McLean, the Canucks' starting goalie, was replaced after Kamensky's goal by Corey Hirsch.

The teams exchanged first period goals with Courtnall giving the Canucks a 1-0 lead at 11:30. Trevor Linden picked up a loose puck inside the Canucks' zone and found Courtnall at center ice. He skated into the Colorado zone and flipped the puck over Roy's left shoulder.

Colorado tied the game at 16:52 on Forsberg's first goal. He picked up the puck behind the Vancouver net and put it in.



McCray

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your top maximum speed and being able to maintain it."

McCray said although he competed in both events in high school, it is different when you are playing Division I college sports.

"In college football, the season does not end until January, and then the track season starts around the third week of January."

McCray said playing two sports definitely keeps him very busy.

"You are always competitive and it gives you an edge," McCray said. "You are never bored."

McCray has not had the same amount of training as other athletes in the nation. However, he is confident he will be ready for the national championship meet in two weeks.

"The next two weeks are very important," McCray said. "We are coming on to crunch time."

Among McCray's accomplishments are a national indoor team championship and a 4x400 meter relay championship in 1994.

Nelson said there are both pros and cons to being a two-sport athlete.

"You get the mental toughness from football," Nelson said. "But the time football takes away is a deficit. However, you have to have talent and speed to be a wide receiver and track helps with your speed."

McCray qualified for the Olympic Trials in 1992, but in joining the football team, he had to miss them. However this year, McCray plans on competing in the trials, no matter what.

"I am not going to miss this opportunity," McCray said. "Only some people can dream about competing for a spot to represent your country in the Olympics."

Nottingham

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"I think that playing both helps me to stay in shape and keeps me wanting to compete." Nottingham said. "They basically just keep me doing something."

The two sports do keep Nottingham busy, but Nelson said that

the two sports are different enough to add variety to what could become a monotonous schedule.

"They are two very different sports," Nelson said. "Basketball is a team sport where there are five guys out there relying on each other. Track is more individual; it all relies on you to get points for the team. It's self-rewarding to know you've done it on your own."



Sykora

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given enough opportunity, she could probably qualify for the NCAA Nationals in the heptathlon."

When asked if competing for two sports was too much to handle, Sykora did not have much to say except for the fact that she has little time to concentrate on her studies.

"Of course it is going to be strenuous and hard," Sykora said. "I do it though, because I love to play volleyball and contribute to the team effort, but I also like the individuality of track."

"Sportwise, I can handle things, but I find myself behind other students who can spend more time following their degree plan."

Overall, coaches in both of Sykora's sports agree that she has a lot of talent to offer to

A&M athletics.

Both foresee a bright future for her filled with personal bests and highs, and peg her as being a huge contributor to team achievements in seasons to come.

"I hope to do whatever I can for both teams," Sykora said. "So far, I feel that I have a lot to do as far as improvements are concerned, and that I have yet to begin to accomplish all of the things I had planned when the year started."

When asked which sport she liked the best, Sykora said that she gets a lot out of both, but hopes that some day at least one of the sports will afford her the opportunity to earn a Big 12 championship ring.



Sykora

Jones

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attest to. "It takes a lot of time," Jones said. "You're almost always tired, then you have that test or paper you have to do, and you have to keep on going to keep up with all that school work. It kind of piles on to your troubles."

To say Jones has been a bit busy lately is an understatement. With football spring training in full swing up until last week, Jones found himself swamped in a sea of sports.

"It was kind of hard at first because I was working with first group (in football) and had to work more reps, so I was sore," Jones said. "It was hard to concentrate on one sport or the other."

With spring training behind, Nelson said Jones is primed for the track season's final month.

"He's been slow coming around in that he had spring training to go

through and that took a little bit of his focus," Nelson said. "He's through with that, and I think that he's going to get a lot better in the next month leading up to the Southwest Conference Championships."

Despite dealing with the pressure of trying to succeed in two sports, Jones said his top priorities lie elsewhere.

"I want to do good for the team and represent the school, but most of my goals are in academics," Jones said. "I came to college to get a degree and that's the main thing to focus on."

Nelson believes Jones can only improve as time passes.

"He has a lot of talent, it's just a matter of mixing the football talent with the track talent and seeing how that develops," Nelson said. "Probably as the years go by, he'll become more accustomed to going through both football and track and that's really going to help us." "It's a whole new experience for him."



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