

THE 1996 NHL PLAYOFFS

Penguins break through, Panthers up 2-0 on Bruins

The Bruins were without their top goaltender.

The Penguins forged their first win of the series.

Beranek and Odjick stunned the Avalanche.

MIAMI (AP) — Dave Lowry scored two goals and goalie John Vanbiesbrouck made 37 saves as the Panthers, taking advantage of a Boston team playing without its top goaltender, beat the Bruins 6-2 Monday night.

The victory gave Florida, playing in its first postseason, a 2-0 lead in their Eastern Conference series. Boston has been outscored 12-5 in the two games.

LANDOVER, Md. (AP) — Mario Lemieux assisted on all four Pittsburgh goals and Tom Barraso stopped 38 shots Monday night as the Penguins beat Washington 4-1, cutting the Capitals' playoff lead to 2-1.

The Penguins, who scored on two of their first three shots, are striving to become only the 10th team in NHL history to win a best-of-7 series after losing the

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Fourth-line players Josef Beranek and Gino Odjick scored unexpected goals in the second period to inspire the Vancouver Canucks to a 4-3 victory over the Colorado Avalanche, tying the NHL playoff series Monday night.

Beranek played for the first time in the Western Conference quarterfinal and fired in the go-ahead goal before setting up



Ray Sheppard continued to victimize the Bruins, scoring one goal and assisting on three others, while Stu Barnes notched three assists and Jason Woolley had a goal and assist. Rookie Ed Jovanovski and Johan Garpenlov completed the Panthers' scoring, while Ray Bourque and Steve Heinze scored for Boston.

Playing without goalie Bill Ranford, a late scratch due to a sore ankle, Boston turned to Craig Billington, who had not started a game since a Feb. 7 loss to Buffalo.

Ranford had sparked Boston since being obtained in a trade in January, going 12-3-2 in his last 17 decisions.

Lemieux's four assists tied a franchise playoff record and Barraso didn't allow a shot to get past him until Sylvain Cote got a power-play goal with 7:31 left.

Ron Francis and Glen Murray scored first-period goals against goaltender Jim Carey, who was pulled in Game 1 and did not play in Game 2. Carey got the start over Olaf Kolzig despite coming in with a 7.74 goals against average.

Pittsburgh led after the first period despite being outshot 10-3. The Penguins didn't take a shot on goal until the 8:29 mark, when Francis took a cross-ice pass from Lemieux and beat Carey with a wrist shot.

Odjick for the winner.

Game 5 in the best-of-7 series will be Thursday in Denver and the sixth game Saturday in Vancouver.

Beranek scored at 13:18 of the second on a rebound to give the Canucks a 3-2 lead, then set up Odjick in the last minute of the period.

Esa Tikkanen and Jyrki Lumme earlier scored power-play goals for the Canucks, who also got three assists from Alexander Mogilny.

Mike Keane, Adam Deadmarsh and Joe Sakic scored for Colorado.

The Avalanche were blanked during six power plays.

Wilkins' big bat slays Giants, 11-8

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Rick Wilkins homered, doubled and singled twice, driving in two runs and scoring three, as the Houston Astros took advantage of five San Francisco errors to defeat the Giants 11-8 Monday night.

Orlando Miller added two doubles and two RBIs for the Astros, who have won five of six. Derrick May and Brian Hunter also had two hits each for Houston, which had 15 hits, reaching double figures for the ninth time in 11 games.

Shane Reynolds (3-1) won his third straight road start, allowing five runs and nine hits in six innings. He struck out six.

Shawon Dunston made four errors on ground balls at shortstop for San Francisco and first baseman Mark Carreon had a throwing error, giving the Giants 16 errors in their last eight games.

Carreon drove in three runs with a two-run double in the first and a run-scoring single in the sixth. Glenallen Hill added a sacrifice fly in the first and Steve Decker had an RBI single in the sixth.

David McCarty hit a three-run homer in the ninth for the Giants, his first hit of the season. The Giants loaded the bases with two outs but Decker grounded out.

The Giants scored three in the first, and the Astros got five in the second on a bases-loaded double by Miller, an RBI grounder by Hunter that was booted by Dunston, an RBI single by Craig Biggio and a passed ball.

Wilkins homered over the center-field fence leading off the third.

Mediocrity looms in NFL offseason

(AP) — The year when 30 NFL teams all finish 8-8 may get here before the turn of the century.

What other conclusion can there be when the only teams that have demonstrably improved on paper during the first two-thirds of the off-season are:

— The Jets, easily the NFL's worst team.

— The Bucs, who haven't had a winning season since 1982 and only last year broke a streak of a dozen straight years of 10-loss seasons.

— The Cardinals, who rival the Bucs in futility and will have to dump some of their best players, and the Bengals, the worst team in the NFL the last five years.

— The congenitally mediocre Rams and Falcons.

— The expansion teams, Carolina and Jacksonville.

Ultimate parity is almost upon us.

"In this era of free agency, you can't have enough high draft picks," Rich McKay, Tampa Bay's general manager, said after taking an offer he can refuse from San Diego — the Chargers' No. 1 pick next year for one of the Bucs' two No. 2s this year.

"It's hard to make sense out of keeping the No. 1 if there's a player there you want," said Bobby Beathard, the San Diego general manager, who three times now has dealt away a No. 1 even up for a No. 2.

1996 NFL DRAFT First-round selections

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	POS.	COLLEGE
1.	N.Y. Jets	Keyshawn Johnson	WR	USC
2.	Jacksonville Jaguars	Kevin Hardy	LB	Illinois
3.	Arizona Cardinals	Simon Rice	DE	Illinois
4.	Baltimore Ravens	Jonathan Ogden	T	UCLA
5.	N.Y. Giants	Cedric Jones	DE	Oklahoma
6.	St. Louis Rams (from Washington)	Lawrence Phillips	RB	Nebraska
7.	New England Patriots	Terry Glenn	WR	Ohio State
8.	Carolina Panthers	Tim Blakabuka	RB	Michigan
9.	Oakland Raiders (from Houston)	Rickey Dudley	TE	Ohio State
10.	Cincinnati Bengals	Willie Anderson	T	Auburn
11.	New Orleans Saints	Alex Molden	DB	Oregon
12.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	Regan Upshaw	DE	California
13.	Chicago Bears (from St. Louis)	Walt Harris	DB	Mississippi St.
14.	Houston Oilers (from Seattle)	Eddie George	RB	Ohio State
15.	Denver Broncos	John Mobley	LB	Kutztown
16.	Minnesota Vikings	Duane Clemons	DE	California
17.	Detroit Lions (from Oakland)	Reggie Brown	LB	Texas A&M
18.	St. Louis Rams (from Seattle)	Eddie Kannon	WR	LSU
19.	St. Louis Rams (from Chicago)	Marvin Harrison	WR	Syracuse
20.	Indianapolis Colts (from Atlanta)	Daryl Gardner	DT	Baylor
21.	Miami Dolphins	Pete Kendall	T	Boston College
22.	Seattle Seahawks (from San Diego through Detroit)	Marcus Jones	DT	North Carolina
23.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers (from Ind.)	Jeff Hartings	G	Penn State
24.	Detroit Lions	Eric Moulds	WR	Mississippi St.
25.	Philadelphia Eagles	Jermone Mayberry	T	A&M-Kingsville
26.	Baltimore Ravens (from S.F.)	Ray Lewis	LB	Miami (Fla.)
27.	Green Bay Packers	John Michels	T	USC
28.	Kansas City Chiefs	Jerome Woods	DB	Memphis
29.	Pittsburgh Steelers	Jamain Stephens	T	N. Carolina A&T
30.	Washington Redskins (from Dallas)	Andre Johnson	T	Penn. State

"Why wait a year and do without the player?"

There are 30 different approaches and all seem to lead to the same place: 8-8.

If the worst teams have improved, the two teams that played in the Super Bowl, Dallas and Pittsburgh, have major leaks.

The Cowboys lost four defensive starters, making it 22 major defections since the first of their three titles in four years. They plugged some of the holes but depth is gone and so is cohesion.

They may finally be without one of their triplets, depending on the outcome of Michael Irvin's drug case in the courts.

The Steelers? They not only lost quarterback Neil O'Donnell for an overblown \$25 million and a \$7 million signing bonus in the Jets' attempt to get well quick, but offensive tackle Leon Searcy left for Jacksonville. Bam Morris' status is questionable because of drug charges, which led the Steelers to trade for Jerome Bettis on the first day of the draft.

San Francisco has been hurt by the defection to Carolina of Eric Davis, its only proven cornerback, and Green Bay hasn't lost much, but hasn't gained much either.

Most rivals think the Jets overpaid for O'Donnell in an effort to gain credibility. Once they meet the demands of Keyshawn Johnson, they'll have to cut veterans to get under the salary cap.

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Procedure To Order A Ring:

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