

Stars earn 3-2 shootout win over Predators

Written by Administrator
Wednesday, 09 April 2014 11:12

DALLAS (AP) — Vernon Fiddler and the Dallas Stars are sure making their playoff chase interesting.

Fiddler extended a shootout when he recovered to score after almost falling down, and Tyler Seguin had the game-winner and the Stars beat Nashville 3-2 on Tuesday night to keep their hold on the Western Conference's eighth and final playoff spot.

"I just really thought that was part of his plan to distract the goaltender," coach Lindy Ruff joked. "But it was great to see him finish off the play."

The first two shooters for each team came up empty in the shootout before Nashville's Roman Josi shot and it appeared that Kari Lehtonen had made the stop. But the puck trickled under the pads and slid just past the line.

Needing to score to keep the game going, Fiddler slipped after taking off, but got upright in time to make a shot in the lower left side of the net.

"That was something else," said Fiddler, who had an issue with a skate. "They tried to fix it, our trainer did. He told me not to turn that way, but I didn't listen to him. Maybe I should have listened to him, but I was just thankful that it caught my other edge."

After Matt Cullen failed to score for Nashville, Seguin — who had been 1 of 6 in shootout chances this season — ended the game with his shot and eliminated the Predators from postseason contention.

"Going fourth tells you that the lack of success put him in that slot," Ruff said. "He's been great all year 5-on-5, overtime ... I think there's players that can seize the moment, and he seized that moment."

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Dallas has 89 points, two ahead of Phoenix after the Coyotes got a point for an overtime loss at Columbus. Both teams have three games left.

"It's huge. Obviously, you're scoreboard watching," Fiddler said. "We saw Phoenix picked up a point so we wanted to do anything we could to pick up any kind of points. It's a big two points."

The Stars play twice more at home, including the makeup Wednesday night against Columbus of the March 10 game when Stars forward Rich Peverley collapsed on the bench in the first period because of an irregular heartbeat. Dallas' regular-season finale is Sunday at Phoenix.

Jamie Benn scored his 34th goal for the Stars, who are trying to avoid another late-season collapse.

Dallas lost its 2011 regular-season finale with a playoff spot on the line, and missed the postseason again after losing its final five games in 2012 and then going 0-4-1 down the stretch last season.

Gabriel Bourque scored two goals for Nashville, which with 82 points and only three games left have no possibility of getting into the top eight.

"Played some good hockey, feel like we got better through the season, so we can obviously hang our hat on that," center Mike Fisher said. "But it's still disappointing."

Lehtonen had 27 saves in regulation and overtime. Pekka Rinne stopped 28 shots, and remained at 161 victories, tied for the most in Nashville franchise history.

The Stars missed a big chance in the third period when they had a two-man advantage for 1 minute, 38 seconds. They got three shots off.

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Dallas was up 1-0 less than 2½ minutes into the game when Alex Goligoski scored from the top of the circle.

Nashville got even when Bourque scored early in the second period, after Craig Smith worked the puck around the back of the net and passed out to the middle for the shot. Benn scored on a breakaway in the second period, but Bourque scored again midway through the third period.

"Obviously, desperate team over there, desperate team in here," defenseman Shea Weber said. "A little bit of a slow start in the first. Kind of weathered their storm and I think after that, we fought hard. ... We just couldn't find a way to get the win."

Notes: Ray Whitney missed his third game in a row for Dallas with a lower body injury. ... There was a brief delay with 3:16 left in the third period when arena workers had to replace one of the sheets of plexiglass that had a large star-shaped crack after a hard shot, apparently by Stars center Cody Eakin. ... Goligoski had a goal and six assists in the season series against Nashville that Dallas won 3-2. ... Dallas has won seven of its past eight games at home, the loss coming in a shootout.