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WILD

## Dubnyk Shines While Offense Slides in Wild's Opening Games



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By [Heather Rule](#) - October 9, 2018

Two games into the 2018-19 season and the Minnesota Wild have a total of two goals. Just two, from veteran Zach Parise in the 4-1 opening-night loss in Colorado and a snipe-shot from the point off defenseman Matt Dumba's stick in a 2-1 shootout loss to Vegas in Saturday's home opener.

In a script that's nothing new, the Wild's effort was not exactly where it needed to be at the start, and even in the middle, of the first couple of games. If they could bottle up the third periods they had and release those in games going forward, it might serve them pretty well.

Saturday, the Wild got the first goal 9:23 into the game on Dumba's shot after all the pomp and circumstance a home opener can offer. With the thumping rock music blaring through the speakers, the player introductions and light show in the pregame, what's not to be excited about? In game two of the season, it shouldn't be difficult to come out flying when the skates hit the ice.

Then again, maybe it is.

The Wild didn't seem to have their best start, letting the Golden Knights pound shot after shot on goaltender Devan Dubnyk. The usual chorus of "Dooooob!" rang out multiple times as fans voiced their appreciation for keeping the Wild in the game. Dubnyk played well and kept his team in it. Without him, the Wild could have easily been behind by a lopsided margin.

### Postgame: Locker room vs. Vegas



Still up 1-0 late in the third, the Golden Knights pulled Marc-Andre Fleury from his cage. The Wild missed the empty net with a long-range shot down the ice, resulting in an icing with 1:40 left in

regulation. Vegas took its timeout to talk things over, and whatever was said worked.

Max Pacioretty tied the game nine seconds later.

Had the Wild held on for victory, one Dubnyk deserved for his 30th career shutout, it would have been their first 1-0 home win since Nov. 17, 2016, against Boston.

A cautious overtime period didn't break the tie, so the Wild found themselves in a shootout. Parise (42-for-103 in his shootout career), Jason Zucker (0-for-3 career) and Mikko Koivu (41-for-105 career) all failed to score before former Wild player Erik Haula tallied the winner as Vegas' third shooter, with a little help from Dubnyk as he rolled back into the net trying to corral the puck.



**Giles Ferrell**

@gilesferrell

Erik Haula, whom you may have heard of, tallies the shootout winning goal for the Golden Knights. #mnwild



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The first victory of the season for the Wild quickly turned into a shootout loss. They earned their first point, and nobody was really that excited about it. The Wild went 3-3 in shootouts last season (67-63 in franchise history), with their last shootout win coming Jan. 30 in Columbus last season when Parise netted the winner.

Saturday was the first time the Wild have ever lost to Vegas, actually, after a 3-0 mark last season against the team that eventually won the Western Conference. The Wild outscored the Golden Knights 13-6 last season with a pair of victories in St. Paul and one on the road.

Last year is a distant memory though, and the only record that's staring Wild fans in the face at the moment is 0-1-1. Want some other numbers worth noting? How about the 1.45 GAA and .962 save percentage for Dubnyk through two games? He didn't allow a goal until the final two minutes against Vegas. Against Colorado, defenseman Nick Seeler screened Dubnyk on one of the goals, plus the Avalanche added a pair of empty-netters. The bottom line is Dubnyk has played very well with not much to show for it.

Goaltenders are going to have their off nights, just like any player, so not getting the Ws when a goalie is on top of his game is a regrettable offense.

Dubnyk is one of the success stories when it comes to trades, and it's been well documented. He's been the team's top goaltender since coming over Jan. 15, 2015. He put up a 2.52 GAA and a 0.918 save percentage during last year's regular season. So now, the team in front of him has to do a better job, mostly at the other end of the ice.

Two goals in two games is not going to cut it; 1-0 victories don't come around that often. Sure, there's the old standby line that it's only two games into the season and therefore too early to panic. But at the same time, it's not like the Wild haven't encountered these coming-out-flat issues in the past. Finding a way to play 60 minutes of hockey at the level they're capable of playing shouldn't be that big of an ask early in the season with a healthy, fresh lineup.

Plus, Dubnyk could use a breather in net and would probably love the chance to cheer on his teammates when they put the puck in the other net.

## Postgame: Bruce Boudreau vs. Vegas



## TIDBITS

- While the Wild have been pretty healthy, Luke Kunin was still sidelined on his recovery from a torn ACL he suffered back on March 4 in a game against Detroit; he had surgery April 3. However, he was reinstated by the Wild on Sunday and will report to the Iowa Wild. The 20-year-old forward and 2016 first-round draft pick of the Wild made his debut with the Wild last October and played 36 games with Iowa last year.
- Defenseman Gustav Olofsson had a rough go with the Wild, mostly because of injury bugs that keep biting him. Last week, Olofsson was dealt to Montreal in exchange for 20-year-old forward Will Bitten, who was assigned to Iowa. Olofsson played 56 games with the Wild over three seasons and tallied 11 assists. He was a second-round draft pick of the Wild in 2013.
- The Wild host the Blackhawks after the layoff on Thursday before welcoming their first Eastern Conference foe of the season to Xcel Energy Center, the Carolina Hurricanes. The Wild also played the Blackhawks in game No. 3 of the season last year, in Chicago. The immediate result was a 5-2 victory, but the long-lasting results weren't as good. Nino Niederreiter, Marcus Foligno and Charlie Coyle all sustained injuries in that game. Niederreiter and Coyle went on to have disappointing, injury-filled 2017-18 campaigns.

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