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# Mikael Granlund Has Arrived



By [Heather Rule](#) - February 6, 2017

We're finally seeing what Mikael Granlund can do. He's having a career year, complete with his first career hat trick Saturday night in Vancouver. It's great to finally see him doing well. He even cracked a smile to mark the occasion.

It's 51 games into the season and he already has a career-high in goals (15), points (48) and tied his career-high assist mark (33). Compare that to last season's 82 games and his 13-31-44 clip. Fans were told that this young Finn would become an NHL superstar. He made his debut in the 2012-13 season and really hadn't been overly impressive for a long period of time.

Now, he's riding a franchise-record 12-game points streak – longest in the NHL this season – as a winger on a line with Jason Zucker and fellow-Finn Mikko Koivu.

Granlund had some success as an Olympian playing with Teemu Selanne. It was to the point that you'd watch him at the Olympics and then see his mediocre game with the Wild wondering what is so different. Sometimes, he'd coast along in games without really getting noticed.

He just wasn't jumping out as the offensive player and solid goal scorer that was promised. He's had some success in the playoffs, most notably the on-his-belly, sprawling goal in overtime to beat the Colorado Avalanche in Game 3 of the opening round in 2014.

### Granlund dives to score OT winner in mid-air



That is still probably his most famous goal with the Wild.

This season, it's like he's finally arrived. His game the other night in Vancouver was particularly great. He had a four-point game and jumped into plays like he was determined to crash the net and score. He even had a puck bounce perfectly to his stick and then into the net for a goal. That's when you know things are really going your way, those type of right-place, right-time goals.

His first goal Saturday was a picture-perfect rebound shot. He was just waiting on the outside of the crease to shoot the puck into the net.

His second tally came shorthanded and on a 2-on-1 opportunity with Marco Scandella driving hard to the net. Instead of a pass to Scandella or waiting for a teammate to catch up from behind, Granlund fired a slapshot past the goaltender.

*It may seem easy, but that's a play that in years past might have turned into a mishandled puck or a shot wide*

The hat trick came with some hard work on that line. Zucker worked to get a shot off and get toward the front of the net. Granlund found himself in the right place at the right time, and he poked his stick in there as the puck bounced around.

It's hard to put my finger on what exactly has changed with Granlund. Overall, he's doing what all his teammates are doing: Going to the net. He's setting up his linemates, Zucker and Koivu, plus he's proven he's a talented goal scorer, too.

The key is creating opportunities, using speed and heading to the front of the net. I don't see a lot of tentative play from him anymore, or skating the puck behind the goal. As often happens when teams are rolling, he just looks more confident with his game.

The past few seasons, fans have been told to be patient and wait for the young "kids" to develop into solid NHL players. Granlund was one of those guys. He's one of those guys that fans have waited to see turn into an offensive threat with the Wild. He's one of those guys that fans have waited to see score some true highlight-reel goals.

It seems like the wait is over.

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## HEATHER RULE



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