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## Wild Riding High After Seven-Game Road Trip



Mandatory Credit: Jeff Curry-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - November 13, 2018

The weather in Minnesota brought an early dose of winter this month. For those who need frigid temps to get into hockey season, now is about the perfect time to jump on the Minnesota Wild bandwagon – for multiple reasons.

The Wild returned home after a very successful, franchise-long seven-game road trip after a 3-2 victory Sunday afternoon in St. Louis. It was the second time the Wild defeated the Blues on the trip. The Wild couldn't have done much better during their lengthy stay away from home, going 5-2 to improve to 11-4-2 on the season good enough for 24 points and second place in the Central Division.

Those 24 points are the most the Wild have ever had through just 17 games.

The way the Wild are playing at the moment, it's almost too good to be true. They're back in St. Paul riding a three-game winning streak, though they've won their last four played at Xcel Energy Center. That's a building where they're 5-0-2 and are the Wild are the only NHL team who hasn't lost in regulation on home ice yet this season. Yes, the Wild find themselves having won 10 of their last 12 games and will host the defending Stanley Cup Champion Washington Capitals (7-6-3) on Tuesday night.

Not only did the Wild play good hockey on the road trip, but the confidence boosters were fully charged. Fourteen Wild players scored goals, including four getting some big "firsts." Mikael Granlund stepped up his play big-time and has turned into one of the league leaders in offensive categories; he had a team-high five goals on the trip and has 10 goals this season. Zach Parise tallied four in four different games. Eric Staal hit a round-number milestone.



**Giles Ferrell**  
@gilesferrell

With his goal today, Zach Parise has 16 points in 17 games. That averages to 0.94 PPG.

The last time his PPG was up over 0.9 was in 2009-10 (1.01). via [@hockey\\_ref](#) [#mnwild](#)

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Devan Dubnyk is still solid in goal, and so is Alex Stalock when he's there to play backup. Goaltending helped the Wild allow only one goal each in three of the seven games on the trip.

Let's break down this historic road trip and see how the Wild managed to fare so well. And granted, a few of their opponents have not exactly played solid hockey either.

## **OCT. 29: 5-2 LOSS AT VANCOUVER**

The road trip got off to a tough start for the Wild with a loss to Vancouver. The good news is it wasn't a particularly awful game for the Wild. With a team having so much success, a loss is bound to happen at some point. The loss ended their season-long five-game winning streak.

Mikael's brother Markus Granlund got Vancouver on the board in the first period, though Jordan Greenway scored his first goal of the season 35 seconds later to tie the game. With the retirement of the Sedin twins, they can no longer burn the Wild with their offense. But a few youngsters could make a run to continue the tradition. Elias Pettersson scored a pair of goals for the Canucks in the game.

## **OCT. 30: 4-3 WIN AT EDMONTON**

No back-to-back, on the road hangover here. This was a classic comeback story. After Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl scored first in the opening period, the Wild were chasing the entire game. They never let the Oilers get more than a one-goal lead, and the teams were knotted at 3-3 after two periods.

Granlund came through on the power play in the third period with what turned out to be the game-winning goal. Staal had a three-point night.

The Wild's power play went 3-for-3 and the penalty kill was a perfect 5-for-5.

## **NOV. 3: 5-1 WIN AT ST. LOUIS**

This was one of the most complete games the Wild have played all season, despite the fact that the Blues were a bit of a mess. The Wild controlled the puck from the start of the game and really didn't give up much. They won the puck possession, and it showed on the scoreboard.

Staal scored his 400th career goal on a helluva deflection to give the Wild a 1-0 lead at 4:42. Less than a minute later on the same shift, Nick Seeler tallied his first goal. The Wild got production from unlikely sources as J.T. Brown and Eric Fehr also scored in this one.

## Wild leading goalscorer Mikael Granlund on win over Blues



### **NOV. 6: 4-3 LOSS AT SAN JOSE**

The only other blemish on the trip came in the Shark Tank as the Wild kicked off the California swing. The Wild were down 3-1 after two periods but, ever the comeback-kids, tied the game at the 1:22 and 3:27 marks of the third period on goals from Jared Spurgeon and Matt Dumba. Unfortunately, the Wild allowed the Sharks to re-take the lead for good a few minutes later with a goal from Barclay Goodrow as he deflected in a quick point-shot from old-friend Brent Burns.

### **NOV. 8: 3-1 WIN AT LOS ANGELES**

In the growing trend for the Wild this season, they got behind 1-0, just 4 minutes, 42 seconds into the game. But the biggest not about this game was Nino Niederreiter finally getting his name in the goals-scored column with his tying tally later in the first period.

Niederreiter is still working his way back to his 100-percent game after dealing with plenty of injuries last season. Then this year, it was obvious he was in quite the slump. He came into the game with just six assists and no goals this season. His celebration after he scored was a mixture of relief and jubilation, with his teammates being just as excited for him.

Parise gave the Wild a 2-1 lead in the second period with a nifty backhand shot. Granlund added another goal on his resume this season with a shorthanded, empty-netter after Mikko Koivu

unselfishly passed up the shot and sent the puck over in Granlund's direction. Koivu finished the game with three helpers.

## NOV. 9: 5-1 WIN AT ANAHEIM

It was clear from watching even just a little of this game that Anaheim is not playing good hockey. The Wild skated circles around the Ducks and produced goals from four different players to get the win. Greenway got the Wild on the board when he slid the puck through the blue paint and past goaltender John Gibson.

Granlund and Jason Zucker combined for the next two goals, with Zucker scoring first on a behind-the-net feed from Granlund. It was just the opposite on Granlund's goal, as the Wild put on a goal-scoring clinic with the Ducks flatfooted.



**Giles Ferrell**

@gilesferrell

Granlund with a filthy pass out front to Zucker who buries it to give Minnesota a 2-0 lead. #mnwild



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## NOV. 11: 3-2 WIN AT ST. LOUIS

This was a much different game than when these teams met the week before. At that time, it was doubtful if head coach, and former Wild head coach Mike Yeo would be behind the bench for much longer.

But the Blues responded with some better play.

Actually, the Blues took a 1-0 lead just 59 seconds into the game. Being down is nothing new to the Wild, however, and it's seemed to become a non-issue during their winning streak. Parise tied the game just 1 minute, 19 seconds into the second period, and the Wild took a 2-1 lead just 25 seconds later when Joel Eriksson Ek pumped in his first goal of the season.

### Wild leading goalscorer Mikael Granlund on win over Blues



Again, it was Granlund who came through with the game-winner, on a quick shot from the high slot at the 7:43 mark of the third period to break a 2-2 tie. Granlund did something on this play that he should really do more of in the offensive zone, and that's not only shoot the puck, but fire off a quick shot. He didn't waste any time once the puck hit his stick. The blast went in and the Wild held onto the lead.

Of course, credit goes to Dubnyk for another quality start in net, especially keeping the lead intact in the final seconds as the Blues tried for the equalizer with their goaltender Chad Johnson pulled. Add this game to the list of ones the Wild have won after the opponent scores first; the Wild scored first only twice on the trip, winning both of those games. The Wild went 3-2 on the trip when falling behind 1-0.

It was a gutsy win in a competitive game so the Wild could end the road trip on a high note and head home with a bit more confidence than before they left. And that's saying something considering they were already riding a winning streak before the trip started.

## TIDBITS

- The Wild are 8-3-1 when the opponent scores first and 3-1-1 when they score first. They're first in the NHL in comeback wins.
- Parise's next goal will make him the leader among Minnesota-born NHL players with 341 career goals.
- Granlund is the fifth player in Wild history to reach 10 or more goals in the first 17 games of a season. Zucker did it last year.
- Fehr is three games away from skating in No. 600 in his NHL career.

### Bruce Boudreau on the Wild's road trip: "They're a determined group"



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