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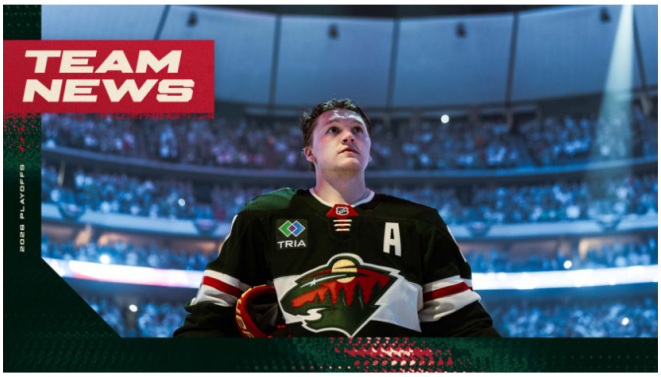
Kirill is an 'ultra competitor'

Kaprizov is one of the top scorers in the playoffs



By **Heather Rule / Wild.com**
May 13, 2026

Turning the page from winning the first playoff series for the franchise in more than a decade to starting a new series against the league's top team in Colorado could be considered a tough task.

But after two games in Denver, the teams had three full days before Game 3 at Grand Casino Arena. It was a much-needed break, and a physical and mental reset.

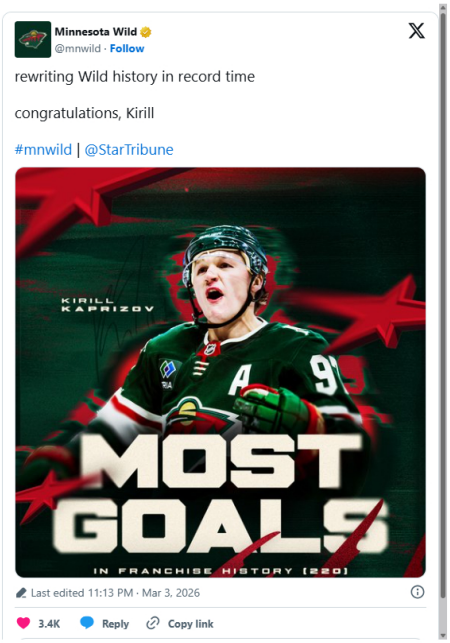
That didn't stop Kirill Kaprizov from keeping hockey on the brain.

"Oh yeah. Of course. It's playoffs," Kaprizov said with a laugh while speaking to the media following a 5-1 Game 3. "When you're a hockey player, I think you think every day about hockey.

"You still always remember it's playoffs, and it's your job and fun."

Kaprizov is in his sixth Stanley Cup Playoff series in five seasons, with 19 goals and 35 points in 35 career games. With five goals and four assists in six games last season, this is the first time he's reached a double-digit point total.

He's following up his successful regular season in which he became the franchise's all-time leading goal scorer, now with 230 regular-season NHL goals to his name.



Through 10 playoff games this spring, Kaprizov has a trio of three-point games, each with a goal and two assists. His five postseason multi-assist games in his career are the most in Wild franchise history. His 19 career playoff goals are also the most in franchise history, after he surpassed Zach Parise (16) with an empty-net goal in Game 5 of the first-round series in Dallas.

He also found himself leading all playoff skaters in points after Game 3 of the second round (4-10=14). A team's star players need to step up in the playoffs, and Marcus Foligno noticed how Kaprizov "just had that look in his face" in Game 3, adding that it was Kaprizov's best game all year.

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"It's the one-on-one plays is what everyone wants to think Kirill can do," Foligno said. "But it's the battle level that is just so infectious for our group, and it's insane.

"There was one on the wall in the third where he stick-lifted two guys that probably should have got the puck out. Kirill does that, it lifts our bench, and today he was definitely the driving force behind the win."

Kaprizov was on his game Saturday and played an extremely competitive game. His goal for a 1-0 lead during 4-on-4 play set the tone. He came flying into the zone, and Brock Faber fed him the puck in the slot. Kaprizov drove the net, deked goaltender Scott Wedgewood and seamlessly lifted the puck into the top corner from a sharp angle.

"When he does that, you can see the type of impact that he has on the game," Wild coach John Hynes said after Game 3. "I think he was indicative of the team, that we knew we had to be better in certain areas."

Kaprizov at his best is a player who can take over a game. Don't blink, or the puck might be in the back of the opponent's net.

No greater example of that than when he tied Game 2 against Colorado just six seconds after facing an early 1-0 deficit. Kaprizov went right into the offensive zone to accept a pass from Ryan Hartman and popped the puck on the top shelf in business-like fashion.

For defenseman Faber, he sees how much of an "ultra competitor" Kaprizov is in the way he digs into the game and wins those individual battles. It's what Kaprizov expects of himself, Faber added.

"He wants to win as bad as anyone," Faber said.

Hynes spoke in the Dallas series about what Kaprizov is like on the ice when he's at his best. The winger is playing a fast game, driving plays deep in the offensive zone and off the rush, and he's difficult to play against below the goal line, Hynes said.

"He's a really threatening guy, and I think when he does that, he's a dynamite player, right?" Hynes said.

When players like Kaprizov deliver with early goal scoring, that trickles down momentum to the entire team, including goaltender Jesper Wallstedt, who said after the Game 3 win over the Avalanche that he and his teammates fed off that momentum for the entire game.

Whether starting the offense early or being a noticeable player on the ice throughout a game, Kaprizov has the ability to turn score quickly, make plays and tilt a game in the Wild's direction.

"He's going to get his chances, his looks, but when he brings you into battle, it's the most exciting version of Kirill," Foligno said.

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