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WILD

No Swoon – Yet – As Wild Start Canadian Road Trip



Credit: Brad Rempel-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - December 4, 2018

The last time the Minnesota Wild headed out west for some road games, they have a solid 5-2 record on a franchise-long seven-game trip. Things were great. Now they're headed back out for a Canadian swing needing to not let a few frustrating games turn into a December swoon.

Yes, that's the word swoon, a word Wild fans probably hate by now but also one that's become common at some point during Wild seasons.

Just hold the phone though. The Wild (14-10-2) haven't reached swoon territory yet. Sure, they've dropped three games in a row and 5-of-7, but they haven't reached that falling-off-the-cliff status yet. Though to be clear, they have slipped in the Central Division standings a bit since being near the top.

As of Monday night, the Wild occupied the sixth position with 30 points, behind Dallas with 33 points and two more games played. The good news is there is plenty of distance ahead of the struggling Chicago Blackhawks (23 points) and St. Louis Blues (21 points) – both teams who have made coaching changes and haven't made it to double-digits in the win column yet.

The current skid started with a pretty abysmal loss to a struggling Arizona Coyotes team. The Wild grabbed a quick lead but then fell apart for a 4-3 loss. That's two points on the table the Wild needs to have – a home game against a bad team. It also came just a few days after the Wild inspired confidence with a physical, dominating 4-2 win over the rival Winnipeg Jets. So goes the Wild roller coaster.

Then there was a 4-2 loss on the road in Columbus with plenty of mistakes and missed chances.

Bruce Boudreau: "We are not a team that can be a cute team"



The Wild played a great game Saturday night against a very talented Toronto Maple Leafs team near the top of the Eastern Conference standings. Minnesota found itself in a 2-0 hole in the first period, despite playing well and generating chances. Along with that, the Mikael Granlund-Jason Zucker combo also missed a bunch of opportunities – one of which had Zucker shaking his head on the bench before he expressed his frustration by slamming his stick against the bench wall.

Chalk this game up to one of those where the losing team outplayed the winning team. The Wild tied the game at 2-2 and 3-3 before the Leafs won it 5-3 when the puck on the game-winning goal went into the net off Wild defenseman Nick Seeler. It was actually the second time that happened in the game, plus another Toronto goal deflected in off a glove. Oh, and former Wild player Tyler Ennis scored for Toronto.

So yeah, it wasn't exactly the Wild's night.

But it still was a missed opportunity to get points in the standings. A loss like that one to Toronto isn't so bad in itself, especially the way the Wild played and kept the puck in the offensive zone. A third loss in a row makes it tougher to swallow. This is why a loss like the one to Arizona is so difficult, too.



Giles Ferrell
@gilesferrell

For the second time tonight, a puck goes in the [#mnwild](#) net off Nick Seeler.



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So they'll turn the page to this week, the Wild will look to bottle up some of its solid play during that Toronto game as they face Vancouver (11-15-3), Calgary (16-9-2) and Edmonton (13-12-2). It's well known that the Wild are a solid home team in front of the best fans in the league at Xcel Energy Center. But they're at .500 on the road through 12 games, sitting at 6-6-0, with five of those wins coming on the successful road trip previously mentioned.

The Wild were riding a season-long five-game winning streak the last time they visited Vancouver to kick off the road trip. The Wild dropped that decision 5-2, though the loss wasn't as ugly as the score might indicate. It had the feeling of a "can't win 'em all" game to end a long winning streak. The Wild defeated the Canucks at home 6-2 a few weeks ago with goals from six players, two on the power play.

They'll need that kind of effort again to get back on the winning track. That was a game Nino Niederreiter even scored a goal.



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A 2 on 1 that the [#mnwild](#) convert!

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The Flames could present a tougher challenge, as they lead the Pacific Division with 34 points. Johnny Gaudreau leads the team in assists with 21 and points with 31. It's the first time these two teams will meet up this season. Wild goaltender Alex Stalock went 2-0-1 with a .928 save percentage against the Flames in three games (two starts) last season. It's an interesting stat (even though it's from last season) as the Wild's goaltender situation has been under the microscope lately with Devan Dubnyk not looking quite as sharp, even getting pulled in a tie game against Ottawa just before Thanksgiving.

The Wild have 7-0-1 in their last eight games against Calgary.

The second game of that long road trip was in Edmonton, where the Wild went 3-for-3 on the power play in a 4-3 win. The Wild are 14-2-0 in their last 16 games in Edmonton and 15-5-1 against the Oilers overall. But as usual, they'll have to contain the young stud Connor McDavid with his team-leading 14 goals and 35 points.

So while any talk of swoons should be kept at bay for now, the Wild have the potential to bring that word to the forefront if they don't take care of business and get some points against their Canadian friends.

TIDBITS

- Whenever Stalock gets into the net for his next game, it will be the 100th of his NHL career. He'll be the seventh Minnesota-born goaltender to reach the milestone.
- Speaking of 100, Zach Parise is one goal away from 100 even-strength goals scored with the Wild. He'll join Marian Gaborik and Mikko Koivu in the Wild ranks as players to reach that mark.
- With the game against Toronto and a home game against Montreal on Dec. 11 plus the three-game road trip in Canada, it will be the first time in franchise history that the Wild will face five different Canadian teams in a row.
- Eric Staal has four goals and one assist in his past five games.
- Granlund has 26 points in 26 games with six assists in his past five games. His 11 goals rank him second in the team behind Parise (12).

- Koivu has two goals and eight assists in his last nine games.
- The Wild have scored the first goal in just nine of their 26 games this season.

Bruce Boudreau: "I think it was as good a game as we could play"



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Heather is a freelance sports reporter and blogger covering everything from the Minnesota Wild to high school sports to IndyCar racing. She's also a social media guru for MLB. She has a background in news reporting but can usually be found watching/Tweeting about sports. She's a journalism graduate from the University of St. Thomas.