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## Wild Find the Right Combo for Now with Parise-Coyle-Kunin



Mandatory Credit: Eric Bolte-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - January 8, 2019

Scoring depth from all four lines on a hockey team can seem like a solid scenario. Get balanced scoring efforts from the whole roster, and life is good. But sometimes, particularly when a team is climbing out of a slump, having even one line that's excelling and producing points is all a coach can ask for each game.

That's been the case lately with the Minnesota Wild's line of Zach Parise, Charlie Coyle and Luke Kunin, who was recalled from Iowa in early December as captain Mikko Koivu missed a few games with a lower-body injury. In the first four games since the line was joined together Dec. 29 in Winnipeg, these three players accounted for exactly half of the Wild's points with 18. They scored five goals and 13 assists as the Wild (21-17-3) have rattled off three straight wins, all on the road, and have won four of the past five games.

This is all on the heels of a five-game losing skid.

Parise (3-5-8 since Dec. 29) has a goal in four of the past six games and had nine points on his five-game points streak before it was halted on Monday. Coyle (2-4-6 since Dec. 29) keeps showing that moving over to center agrees with him and looks like a brand new player on the ice at times. Kunin (0-4-4 since Dec. 29) is still in search of his first goal this season but has to be happy to be contributing with the big club again, especially after his ACL injury last March.

This same line – at least two-thirds of it – has been successful for about a month now.

First, it was Parise, Coyle and Nino Niederreiter lighting things up earlier in December, a line put together when Koivu went down with his injury. But since Niederreiter scored four goals in three games Dec. 7-13, he doesn't have a goal in the past 10 games and has just two helpers. He has just seven goals and 20 points this season as the struggles continue in what he certainly hoped would be a bounce-back year after 2017-18 was derailed with injuries.

Still, the 21-year-old Kunin has slipped into the spot at right wing on the line quite nicely. He tallied a pair of assists in the 4-3 win over Ottawa to bump his assist total to a career-high four in a season. He scored two goals and two assists in 19 games last year; he was recalled from Iowa five times throughout the year. Kunin also finished the Iowa game with a career-high plus-3 rating.

## Luke Kunin: "It shows the resiliency of the group"



How much has being on a line with Parise and Coyle had an effect on Kunin? Well, he went seven games without a point last month starting with the Dec. 11 game against Montreal. It wasn't until he was placed on the new line that he started getting points.

Kunin was recalled Dec. 9 after scoring eight goals and 15 points in 21 games with Iowa this season, ranking second on the team in goals at the time of his call-up. He's worked his way back to Minnesota after a torn ACL in his left knee on March 4 last year against Detroit. He was in his second game back with the Wild before the injury, with surgery that followed in April. The Wild's first-round pick in 2016 was an AHL All-Star for Iowa last season, and it seemed like only a matter of time before he'd be back with the big club.

Kunin also showed what a scrappy player he can be with a feisty fight against Dallas' Roman Polak on Dec. 22.

Then there's the veteran 34-year-old Parise. A healthy Parise – please, go pound some wood – this season has been fun to watch. He leads the team with 19 goals – Eric Staal is the next teammate behind him with just 13 tallies – and came into Monday's game tied for the team points lead with Mikael Granlund at 38 points. Parise has already bested his goal total from last season (15) when he missed the first half of the year after surgery and played just 42 regular-season games. He hasn't scored this many goals in a single season since he put up 25 in 2015-16.



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Parise's one goal, two-assist effort in Ottawa marked his team-leading 10th multi-point game of the season. He also leads the team with six power-play goals and three game-winners – two of which came recently in Ottawa and Toronto in one-goal, 4-3 wins.

Like Niederreiter, Coyle is looking for better results this season after injuries hampered his 2017-18 campaign. With Coyle's pair of assists against Ottawa, he pushed his point streak to a season-long four games. He also scored a goal and assist in Toronto last week, giving him his first multi-point games in back-to-back fashion in two years (Dec. 23-27, 2016).

While it's great for the Wild to see a line like Parise-Coyle-Kunin succeed, scoring at such a rapid pace doesn't seem sustainable either. It will be good to see what they can produce while they can, or until coach Bruce Boudreau decides to change things up in a second period because of a lackluster effort by the club as a whole. It's happened before.



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Zach Parise has three goals and three assists in the last four games.

His goals per game (0.47) and points per game (0.92) is the highest he's produced in a [#mnwild](#) uniform.

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The line didn't produce in a 1-0 victory in Montreal on Monday, but then again, nobody really did. The Wild earned its first shutout of the season on an unassisted goal from Granlund. Devan Dubnyk stopped all 32 shots that came his way.

Once again, it appears the Wild are at the top of the roller coaster at the halfway mark of the regular season. It's not new territory.

## TIDBITS

- After the Wild scored just five goals during the five-game losing streak, they scored 13 goals in the next four games to break out of the overall team scoring slump.
- Backup goaltender Alex Stalock is expected to get the starting nod in net for Tuesday's game in Boston. With Dubnyk getting most of the work in the cage this season, Stalock is 5-3-0 with a 2.60 GAA and .903 save percentage and has appeared in 10 games.
- With his next goal, Koivu will become the second player in Wild history to reach 200 career goals. Marian Gaborik scored 219.
- Dubnyk was selected to represent the Wild at the NHL All-Star Game, his third appearance in the past four seasons for the Wild. He was traded to the Wild nearly four years ago from Arizona.
- The Wild have won four straight games on the road and have defeated Montreal nine times in a row, outscoring Montreal 36-10.

### Parise on win in Toronto: 'Hopefully it's the start of something'

