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WILD

Wild Rally in Third Period, Grab Road Win in Calgary



By [Heather Rule](#) - October 22, 2017

It could have been over in the first minute of the third period. With a quick momentum shift, the Wild were down a goal early and could have let another game slip away. Instead, the Wild (2-2-2) rallied for three third-period goals and a much-needed boost to end the road trip with a 4-2 victory over the Calgary Flames (4-4-0) Saturday night at the Saddledome.

The Wild improved to 12-5-2 against the Flames, a former division rival, in their last 19 games.

It was a 1-0 lead turned into a 2-1 deficit that could have broken the Wild. This is a team that came into the game with just one victory and had held plenty of leads or ties in the third period before giving those games away. They could have let the Flames take control with a 2-1 lead, but they didn't.

The Wild were looking for a 1-0 lead at the second intermission before Sean Monahan scored with 28 seconds left in the period. Wild coach Bruce Boudreau challenged the call, saying the Flames were offside when they entered the zone on the play. It was a good goal. With a new rule this year, a lost challenge results in a delay of game penalty for the challenging team. It wasn't a close call, and Boudreau knew it right away.

"Crap, it's not offside," Boudreau said in his postgame comments.

That turned into a 1-1 game with Flames power-play time to start the third period. Wild defenseman Ryan Suter took a slashing penalty right away. The Flames capitalized with a Kris Versteeg 5-on-3 goal for a 2-1 lead just 43 seconds into the third period.

The Wild didn't let it turn into a momentum-crusher.

Suter tied the game with 9:27 left in the third. He accepted a drop pass from Eric Staal and took a shot upstairs from the top of the circle. Less than a couple minutes later, the Wild took the lead for good with another goal from a defenseman. Jared Spurgeon sent a slap shot up high in the small space separating the goalie and the pipe for a 3-2 lead with 7:52 left in regulation.

The goals were the first of the season for the duo. Luke Kunin got his first NHL assist with the Suter goal.

The Wild still had to kill another penalty before the night was over, as Kyle Quincey took a slashing penalty with 3:37 left in a one-goal game. They succeeded and then Daniel Winnik added an empty-netter with 1:03 left to seal the Wild's second victory of the season. Kunin earned his second assist of the night on Winnik's goal.

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Alex Stalock was one of the best stories of the night. The Wild could have easily been down a couple of goals within the first few minutes of the game without his solid goaltending. This is a backup goaltender who hadn't played in two weeks — partially because he's a backup, partially because the Wild haven't played much — with his last game a shootout loss in Carolina.

“Alex, that’s how he played in Carolina, and he didn’t get rewarded,” Boudreau said. “Tonight, he got rewarded.”

Stalock was spectacular in between the pipes, especially early, and kept the game scoreless after the first 20 minutes. He helped weather the storm of three Flames pressured-filled power plays. He made save after save. He played without a stick for a time. He made 18 saves in the first period alone and 35 for the game.

He just seemed happy for his team’s win.

“Any win of [second game of] back-to-back says a lot about the group in the room,” Stalock said.

In goal:

- Stalock (1-0-1) with 35 saves. Mike Smith with 28 saves.

Tidbits:

- The Wild got the job done on the penalty kill, allowing just one goal on six chances for the Flames. That’s a big step for a team that entered the day 30th in the league on the kill.
- Chris Stewart has a point in each of the first six games. The only other Wild players in franchise history to achieve that? Andrew Brunette and Pavol Demira. Stewart scored the Wild’s first goal for his sixth of the season. It came on a 5-on-3 chance in the second period.
- “He’s unbelievable right now,” Boudreau said, of Stewart. “I just want him to keep doing what he’s doing.”
- Mikael Granlund (groin injury) joined his teammates on the trip but did not play in either game. Instead, the Wild called up Cal O’Reilly and sent Mike Reilly back to Iowa.

Up next:

It will be home-sweet-home for the Wild after five-of-six games on the road. They’ll head to St. Paul for six games in 12 days and the longest homestand of the year. They’ll host Vancouver at 7 p.m. Tuesday night.

“This is our opportunity to get over .500,” Boudreau said.

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