

Washington Capitals

Caps Host B's Before Break

Mike Vogel - WashingtonCaps.com Senior Writer

Date	Vis/Home	Final
Dec 18, 2010	WSH@BOS	BOS, 3 - 2
Nov 5, 2010	BOS@WSH	WSH, 5 - 3
Oct 21, 2010	WSH@BOS	BOS, 4 - 1
Oct 19, 2010	BOS@WSH	BOS, 3 - 1

January 24 vs. Boston Bruins at Verizon Center

Time: 7:00 pm

TV: Comcast SportsNet

Radio: 1500AM, 820AM, XM and Caps Radio Network

Pre-Game: Pre-Cap Podcast at 2 p.m., Two-Man Advantage at 5 p.m., John Walton's one-on-one audio with Dale Hunter at 5 p.m., all on washingtoncaps.com.

Boston Bruins (31-13-2)

Washington Capitals (25-19-3)

Washington meets the defending Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins on Tuesday night at Verizon Center, the first of four meetings between the two clubs this season. The game is also the first of consecutive home games against the Bruins; Boston returns to the District on Sunday, Feb. 5 for a Super Bowl Sunday matinee contest.

The Caps will take on the defending champs without the services of captain Alex Ovechkin. The NHL banished Ovechkin for the next three games because of a hit to the head of Penguins defenseman Zbynek Michalek in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss to the Pens in Pittsburgh.

Tuesday's game will mark the first time in nearly six years that Washington will play a game without both Ovechkin and center Nicklas Backstrom in the lineup. Backstrom has been sidelined for the better part of a month after absorbing a hit to the head from Calgary's Rene Bourque in a Jan. 3 game at Verizon Center.

Since Ovechkin's NHL career began in 2005-06, a 5-3 loss to the Islanders in New York on Jan. 31, 2006 is the only game in which neither he nor Backstrom participated.

Washington played Sunday's game without center Marcus Johansson, who came down with an illness on Sunday morning. He is feeling better and expected to be back in the lineup on Sunday.

"There is always a lot of pressure," says Johansson. "I think everybody needs to focus on still playing their own game and playing the way they always play. Alex is obviously a big part of our offensive game and we have to find a way to score goals and all that anyways. It's going to be tough with both Nicky and Alex out, but it's something we have to deal with."

Tuesday's home game against the Bruins is the Capitals' only Verizon Center appearance in a span of 18 days. Immediately after the game against Boston, Washington's all-star break commences. The Capitals will be off from all hockey activities until Monday afternoon, Jan. 30. They'll hold a practice that day prior to departing for Tampa Bay to take on the Lightning in the first of three straight games on the road.

The Caps just returned from a three-game road trip that started on a positive note with a 3-0 win over the Canadiens in Montreal. Two nights later, the Caps found themselves on the short end of the same score against the last-place Hurricanes in Carolina. Washington closed the trip on Sunday in Pittsburgh, rallying to take a 3-2 third-period lead over the Pens after digging an early 0-2 hole with a dismal first-period performance. The Caps ended up losing the lead and the game, dropping a 4-3 overtime decision to the Pens to finish the trip 1-1-1.

Playing without their top two scorers, the Caps will try to generate offense against the league's third-stingiest defensive team. The Bruins have allowed an average of just 2.09 goals per game this season, although they have been nicked for 28 goals in their last nine games (3.11 per game).

"They have a really good team," says Johansson of the Bruins. "They play very hard. That's a good test for us to be able to play them in a tough game through 60 minutes. It's going to be tough game to get that lead and to be able to play with it against a team like that.

"They have a really good lineup. They're strong and tough. They're hard to play against; they're big guys. But it's fun. It gets a little tougher and it gets a little more physical. I think it's all part of the game. We have to go out and play our game and see how far it goes."

Johansson scored his first NHL goal against the Bruins' Tim Thomas on Oct. 19, 2010.

Washington's special teams play has been anything but special of late. The Caps are just 1-for-15 (6.7%) with the extra man in their last five games, and they are 27-for-36 (75%) on the penalty kill in their last nine contests. Washington has been outscored on a special teams by a combined 7-1 in its last five games.

Tuesday marks Boston's third game in four nights. On their day off on Monday, the Bruins went to the White House where they were honored for their 2011 Stanley Cup championship, the team's first in 39 years.

In attempting to become the first NHL team to repeat as Stanley Cup champions in more than a decade, the Bruins got off to a sluggish start. They opened with just three wins in their first 10 games (3-7), but have laid waste to the rest of the league since.

Boston is 28-6-2 in its last 36 contests, dating back to Nov. 1. The B's have nearly doubled up their opponents in even-strength scoring this season, 123-65. The Bruins are the league's most prolific offensive outfit with an average of 3.54 goals per game.

Boston is 15-6 on the road in 2011-12. The Bruins have the fewest regulation losses on the road in the NHL and the fewest total road losses in the league as well.

The Bruins have had winning streaks of 10, seven and four games this season, accounting for two-thirds of their victories on the season. The B's are currently in the midst of a more sedate 3-2-1 stretch of hockey in which they've earned two of their last three triumphs via the shootout.

Stick tap to Carter Myers for the primary assist on several notes contained within.

Washington Capitals

Capitals Assign Tomas Kundratek to Hershey

Monday, 01.23.2012 / 2:59 PM / News

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Washington Capitals have assigned defenseman Tomas Kundratek to the Hershey Bears of the American Hockey League (AHL), vice president and general manager George McPhee announced today.

Kundratek, 22, made his NHL debut on Jan. 11 versus the Pittsburgh Penguins at Verizon Center and played in five games with the Capitals this season registering two penalty minutes.

He recorded eight points (six goals, two assists) and 14 penalty minutes in 21 games with Hershey this season after being acquired by Washington from the New York Rangers for Francois Bouchard on Nov. 8, 2011. Prior to the trade, Kundratek collected two assists in seven games with the Connecticut Whale.

The 6'2", 200-pound defenseman registered 12 points (two goals, 10 assists) and 42 penalty minutes in 70 games with the Hartford Wolf Pack during the 2010-11 season.

Kundratek made his professional debut for the Wolf Pack on April 23, 2009 in Game Five of 2009 Atlantic Division Finals versus Worcester. The native of Prerov, Czech Republic, was drafted by the Rangers in the third round (90th overall) of the 2008 NHL Entry Draft.

Washington Capitals

Dump 'n Chase

By Mike Vogel

Ovechkin Hit With Suspension

One of the best things – and there are a lot of “best things” – about my job is that every day is different. Every day is interesting.

Today was more interesting than most. First, the whole Tim Thomas flap, where it was reported that he took his option on the Bruins’ team visit to the White House today. There was a lot of insightful and stimulating banter on both sides of the subject going round and round on Twitter.

We’ve all got our opinions on what we think he should have done and what he actually did, and folks on both sides of the political spectrum came down on both sides of the argument, which made it all that much more fascinating for me.

Some time after that embers of that furor began to dim, the NHL got around to announcing its decision on the Alex Ovechkin hearing. Ovechkin had a 1:30 p.m. hearing with the NHL powers that be to answer for a hit he made on Penguins’ defenseman Zbynek Michalek in Sunday’s game.

Ironically enough, Michalek had a hearing of his own at 10:30 a.m. today as well, to answer for a hit of his own on Washington’s Matt Hendricks in the same game.

I get that the NHL is trying to rid the game of both types of hits, and that protecting players is of utmost importance. I don’t like to see any players miss games for any injuries, but injuries do happen in the course of NHL games. Certainly, there are far too many players on the sidelines now for head injuries incurred from hits both accidental and deliberate.

I also understand that prior violations play a part in the issuance of discipline resulting from hits to the head, and that was one of NHL discipline czar Brendan Shanahan’s reasons for suspending Ovechkin for three games for his hit on Michalek.

Hockey is a game of mistakes and referees make mistakes, too. Ovechkin wasn’t penalized during the game for his hit while Michalek was. That doesn’t excuse either incident from further disciplinary action.

What I don’t get is why Michalek didn’t receive as much as a fine for his own transgression. The maximum fine allowable is \$2500, which is a lot to you and me, but the equivalent of a parking ticket to most NHL players. Shanahan issues informative video explanations for suspensions, but doesn’t do the same for hearings that don’t result in any disciplinary action. We’re left to assume that the hit was “okay,” beyond the two-minute penance served in-game.

Michalek has no prior record. And the next time he elbows one of his fellow NHLPA members in the head, he still won't have one. The NHL wants head hits out of the game, but I guess you get freebie or two before you have to start paying the piper.

Michalek and Hendricks both remained in the game and weren't hurt, which is very fortunate for both players and their teams. That, according to Shanahan, also figures in the punishment.

And now we're back to irony. Because if an NHL player punches another NHL player in the head in a fight – which, by the way, occurs during a stoppage of play – there is no punishment.

Just to review: the NHL wants to protect players' heads and get head hits out of the game. If you finish your check and come up high, or leave your feet, or are guilty of boarding or charging or the like, you run the risk of a suspension. As it should be. I'm just not exactly sure why body contact to the head with the clock running is subject to discipline and fistic contact to the head with the clock stopped is not.

Body contact to the head can be deliberate or not. Fistic contact is always deliberate.

I understand the existence of fighting in hockey. But it seems a little odd to me that the NHL is being so vigilant in one area and so lax in another. Maybe it's just the NHL being the NHL.

Ovechkin getting five games and Michalek getting a token fine would have made more sense to me than Ovechkin getting three and Michalek getting a hall pass. I figured Ovechkin would get one, two games max. Figured Michalek would get a fine. Wrong and wrong.

It is strange to me is that two incidents in the same game receive such disparate discipline. I would think Ovechkin might have reasonable grounds for appealing for a shorter sentence, were he to pursue such a route through the NHLPA. It's an avenue rarely pursued by suspended players.

Finally, the Ovechkin suspension extends beyond the NHL's All-Star Game on Sunday, and the league recently named the Caps' captain as one of the league's all-stars.

Naturally, the league wants Ovechkin to play in the All-Star game. Me, I wonder why he should.

He is suspended without pay. He was not voted into the All-Star game by the fans. He is currently tied for 36th in the league in scoring and was quite clearly named to the game for his star appeal more than his 2011-12 résumé.

Ovechkin was quoted as saying that he had to cancel vacation plans when he was somewhat surprisingly named as an all-star anyway, so now that he is suspended without pay, why shouldn't he be able to do as he was planning on doing, do what most NHL players do during the break.

Where should Ovechkin's allegiances lie here?

The Caps are in eighth place, in the – in recent seasons, anyway – uncustomary position of fighting for a playoff spot. What scenario does Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals more good, him going to Ottawa and facing down a phalanx of reporters and cameras asking more questions about the

suspension, or him resting up and getting his mind off the game for a few days like 95% of the rest of the league and his teammates?

As a kid growing up, I always wanted as few of the players on my favorite team as possible in the All-Star game, whether it was hockey or baseball. The regular season is a grind. The goal is to make the playoffs and win a championship, not to be named to some glorified beauty pageant of an exhibition game.

Time off is precious. I hope Ovechkin takes some here.

Washington Capitals

Updated: Matt Hendricks on Zbynek Michalek's elbow: 'I don't think it was a clean hit'

By Katie Carrera

Update 4:58 p.m.: According to Dave Molinari of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, Zbynek Michalek was not fined or suspended for his elbow against Matt Hendricks.

It's believed that the league did not discipline the defenseman because Michalek's knee hits Hendricks just prior to the hit causing him to lose his balance and lunge forward.

Original post: Capitals winger Matt Hendricks said he was "feeling good" Monday and that he suffered no ill effects from the elbow Pittsburgh defenseman Zbynek Michalek delivered in the second period of Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss.

Michalek, who was scheduled to have a hearing with NHL disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan this morning, received a two-minute minor for elbowing in the contest. Afterward, Michalek said that the penalty was warranted.

Here is Hendricks's breakdown of what happened on the play:

"I knew he was in the vicinity, I knew he was coming but I didn't expect that," Hendricks said. "I tried to play the puck behind the boards to [Troy] Brouwer, behind their net. You try to put yourself in good position to take hits and stuff; the same time I was a couple feet off the boards going towards the puck. I don't think it was a clean hit but he got an elbowing penalty for it, put us on the power play."

Via Seth Rorabaugh from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's Empty Netters blog, Michalek spoke about his hit this morning:

"It was a hockey play," Michalek told reporters in Pittsburgh. "It was a hit, I guess from behind. I had my hands up, I guess. We'll see how it goes."

The gritty fourth liner didn't want to comment on whether he believes Michalek should be suspended but that as a hitter himself, Hendricks wants to see the game stay physical without the dangerous plays.

"You do you want it to be physical, you don't want head shots," Hendricks said. "You don't want guys going hunting for each other -- trying to put them out with concussions, things like that. But at the same time, if this game isn't played physically, it's not a very good hockey game. You see the all the skill take over; makes the game easy on a lot of the players."

Michalek was the recipient of a questionable hit by Alex Ovechkin roughly five minutes earlier in the period, and questioned whether the discipline was being distributed to all players evenly regardless of their role in the league.

"It's not the first time he's hit me or somebody else like that," Michalek said. "Some players are more protected than the others. It should be an even field. Next shift I took a penalty. It was a good call. I

elbowed the guy. I just told the ref that if he's going to make the call on me he should make it on him, too. It should be an even field no matter who makes the hit."

Washington Post LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Update: Capitals preparing for possible Ovechkin suspension

By Katie Carrera

Capitals practice is underway at KCI this morning and it appears as though the team is preparing a contingency plan in case Alex Ovechkin is suspended for his leaping hit against Pittsburgh's Zbynek Michalek.

There are four players wearing red jerseys, which signifies the top line, Ovechkin, Marcus Johansson, Mathieu Perreault and Alexander Semin. One would assume if Ovechkin is suspended, the other three will suit up as a unit against the Bruins; if he isn't, they will adjust accordingly.

As mentioned above, Johansson, who missed Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss to the Penguins with an illness, is indeed on the ice for practice. Looks like he'll be ready to go against Boston on Tuesday.

With the exception of Nicklas Backstrom (concussion) and Mike Green (sports hernia) all of the Capitals are on the ice for practice.

Here are the lines the Capitals are using:

Ovechkin-Johansson-Perreault-Semin

Hendricks-Laich-Brouwer

Chimera-Halpern-Knuble

Beagle-Eakin-Ward

Update: 2:26 p.m.: In other lineup news, rookie defenseman Tomas Kundratek has been reassigned to the AHL's Hershey Bears. Kundratek appeared in five games since he was recalled on Jan. 10 and did not record a point.

He saw a range of ice time from as little as 7:25 on Jan. 13 against Tampa Bay to as much as 11:09 in his debut against Pittsburgh on Jan. 11.

Washington Post LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Updated: Nicklas Backstrom skates briefly in his first time on the ice since Jan. 6

By Katie Carrera

Update: 1:46 p.m.: Coach Dale Hunter said that Backstrom will remain in Washington during the upcoming All-Star break to continue working on his rehab with the team's head athletic trainer Greg Smith.

Backstrom has been taking part in off-ice workouts and Hunter said it was a positive sign for the center to be on the ice.

Original post: Nicklas Backstrom skated for five minutes Monday at KCI in what was the center's first appearance on the ice in 17 days.

The 24-year-old Swede was wearing warmups, not any of his full gear or pads, for the brief skate that did not involve anything strenuous. Given the length and intensity of Backstrom's stint on the ice, it's tough to gauge his progress at this stage.

Backstrom, who hasn't skated since Jan. 6, has been out indefinitely with a concussion suffered when he was elbowed by then-Calgary forward Rene Bourque on Jan. 3.

Backstrom took part in two practices in the three days after he absorbed the elbow and both the center and Coach Dale Hunter expressed optimism at that time that he might not miss a game.

But after his practice on Jan. 6 in San Jose, the mood altered sharply and it appears as though Backstrom suffered a setback.

Washington Post LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Capitals' Alex Ovechkin, Pittsburgh's Zbynek Michalek face disciplinary hearings

By Katie Carrera

Update, 12:45 p.m.: Ovechkin declines to comment on hit

Washington left wing Alex Ovechkin and Pittsburgh defenseman Zbynek Michalek will have disciplinary hearings with NHL vice president of player safety Brendan Shanahan for hits in the Capitals' 4-3 overtime loss to the Penguins on Sunday.

Ovechkin laid a crunching check on Michalek in the corner 4 minutes and 5 seconds into the second period. On the play, Ovechkin appeared to leap off the ice prior to contact, but Michalek might have been falling before contact was made. There was no penalty on the hit, and Michalek's head did not appear to be the principal point of contact. Ovechkin's hearing is scheduled for early this afternoon. He did not address the hit following the game.

Ovechkin has been suspended twice in his career, but neither has been in the past 18 months, so he will not be considered a repeat offender under the NHL's rules. Both suspensions came in the 2009-10 season. He received one two-game suspension after a knee-on-knee hit against Carolina defenseman Tim Gleason and another three months later for a hit on Chicago defenseman Brian Campbell.

Check out the video of Ovechkin's hit here:

Not long after Ovechkin's check Sunday, Michalek elbowed Matt Hendricks into the boards deep in the Pittsburgh zone, 8:36 into the second period. Hendricks chased the puck into the corner, and he crouched down just prior to absorbing the hit from Michalek's forearm. Michalek received a minor penalty for elbowing on the play.

Afterward, Michalek had some strong words about the two hits. The defenseman acknowledged he deserved a penalty for the elbow against Hendricks but wasn't happy that Ovechkin didn't receive any type of penalty for his check.

"I was a little surprised. To me, when the play happened, he just went for my head. I've been told that he left his feet. Hit my head," Michalek said. "To me, it's a definitely a penalty. They didn't call it. It should have been called for sure."

"It's not the first time he's hit me or somebody else like that. Some players are more protected than the others. It should be an even field. Next shift I took a penalty. It was a good call. I elbowed the guy. I just told the ref that if he's going to make the call on me he should make it on him too. It should be an even field no matter who makes the hit."

Below is the video of Michalek's elbow on Hendricks.

Washington Post LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Ovechkin suspended 3 games for hit on Michalek

By Stephen Whyno

The Washington Times

Monday, January 23, 2012

It wasn't a penalty Sunday afternoon, but Alex Ovechkin is paying significantly for his hit on Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Zbynek Michalek.

The NHL on Monday suspended the Washington Capitals' captain three games for leaving his feet and hitting Michalek during Sunday afternoon's game. He will forfeit \$154,677.75 in salary and be eligible to return to game action Feb. 4 at the Montreal Canadiens.

This is the third and longest suspension of Ovechkin's career. He got two games for a knee-on-knee hit against Tim Gleason in late 2009 and then two more for a hit on Brian Campbell in March of 2010.

While Ovechkin is eligible to participate in Sunday's NHL All-Star Game, it is unclear if he will still participate. A team spokesman declined comment Monday night.

In announcing the three-game ban, NHL vice president of player safety Brendan Shanahan made it clear that despite no minor penalty being assessed on the play, what Ovechkin did was charging.

"As the video shows, Ovechkin has Michalek lined up for what could and should be a clean and hard body check," Shanahan said. "However, he launches himself to deliver the hit on Michalek."

Ovechkin first hit Michalek's shoulder, but that the head was not the principal point of contact was negated by the superstar leaving his feet.

"While we accept Ovechkin's assertion that he did not intend to hit Michalek in the head, the moment Ovechkin launches himself in the air prior to the hit, he becomes responsible for any contact to the head," Shanahan said.

Washington Times LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Win before break would boost Capitals' morale

By Stephen Whyno

The Washington Times

Monday, January 23, 2012

It might be hard for the Washington Capitals to get up for the New York Islanders or Carolina Hurricanes. Bottom-feeding teams don't exactly engender a lot of enthusiasm, even though Tomas Vokoun disagrees.

"You want to win. I think last week we had a couple stinkers, and there's no excuse for that," he said. "I think one thing is you should always have the effort."

Those two stinkers — both shutouts — and a 4-3 overtime loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Sunday have the Caps stumbling. Tuesday's showdown with the Boston Bruins already was a big game as it's the first matchup with the defending Stanley Cup champions, but it's even more important because it's the final game before the All-Star break. It's crucial to the Caps' psyche.

"Right now, they're sitting as the class of the East. We don't want to go home for five days on a [three]-game losing streak," forward Brooks Laich said. "So we have to have a good game."

Playing the past nine games without Nicklas Backstrom, Washington has gone 4-4-1 and fluctuated up and down the Eastern Conference standings. A .500 road trip and the Florida Panthers' inability to go on a run have combined to keep the Capitals in the thick of the Southeast race.

But psychologically it means a lot to leave on winning note.

"When you have five days off and you finish with a win you're a little bit happier when you go and you're a little more excited to come back so it's real important," right wing Troy Brouwer said.

"Especially given where we are in the standings, we want to leave ourselves in a good spot going into the break."

That Boston sits second in the East and has spent much of the season bowling over opponents seems to make this a hard game to win, especially without Backstrom and suspended captain Alex Ovechkin. But the Capitals have thrived against elite opponents, beating the New York Rangers and Detroit Red Wings at home, and often played to the level of their competition.

"On paper it sure looks that way. We've put in some good efforts against the top teams," veteran right wing Mike Knuble said. "It's the signal of maybe a team that's inconsistent. In a perfect world, we'd love to play great every game, but we're not going to. Good teams play well eight out of 10 times or nine out of 10 times."

All it takes is one good game against the Bruins to make a troublesome week or so feel not so bad. It also could vault them back into first place in the division.

Facing Boston comes at the perfect time. Hockey players like to talk about measuring sticks, and this is the perfect game for a team still trying to find an identity and some consistency.

“You want to measure yourself against good teams, and they’re a team that plays well,” Laich said.

“They play well on both sides of the puck — they can score and they can defend. It’s going to be a tough game.”

Following the loss at Pittsburgh in which Washington surged to a 3-2 lead after surrendering the first two goals, Tuesday’s game is yet another chance to face an opponent at the top of its game.

“It’s still the NHL, and every team is good in the NHL; you can’t say there’s a tiered system in our league. Anybody can beat you on a given night and when you’re not on that right edge and not playing with that extra passion then you have a chance to be beat,” Knuble said. “I still feel that with our group, if we play with the right edge and the right passion we’re not going to be beat.”

Washington Times LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Capitals down but not really out

By: Brian McNally | 01/22/12 8:05 PM

PITTSBURGH -- Already without star center Nicklas Backstrom, the Capitals appeared in deep trouble Sunday morning when fellow center Marcus Johansson took ill and was scratched.

On the road against the Pittsburgh Penguins, that appeared to be a devastating blow to a team already thin down the middle of its lineup. Yet somehow Washington managed to survive and earn a standings point.

Alex Ovechkin scored just 68 seconds into the third period to put the Caps ahead, but a goal by James Neal midway through the third period and then another by Evgeni Malkin in overtime lifted Pittsburgh to a 4-3 victory at Consol Energy Center.

Washington fell behind 2-0 before the game was six minutes old thanks to goals from defenseman Kris Letang on the power play and from Neal off a faceoff. Things looked dire for the Caps (25-19-3), who had been shut out last week 3-0 by both the Carolina Hurricanes and New York Islanders, two of the worst teams in the Eastern Conference.

So the point was nice. But there was a reason forward Brooks Laich, who was late getting over to Malkin at the right doorstep on the game-winning stuff attempt after a shot rebounded off the end boards, had his head buried in a towel in the locker room after the game.

"It's a frustrating loss, but I think it was a good game," Washington goalie Michal Neuvirth said. "We battle hard, and they got the lucky bounce at the end."

The Caps didn't let the lineup changes affect them. Instead, Washington fired 10 shots at Penguins goalie Marc-Andre Fleury (17 saves) in the second period, Mike Knuble hit a post and Matt Hendricks was denied on a breakaway as he flew out of the penalty box and tried to deke Fleury.

But in between those near misses, defenseman Dennis Wideman fed Laich in front for a goal at 11:02 of the second. Just 3:36 later, Hendricks disrupted Letang in the Pittsburgh offensive zone, and that turnover allowed Alex Ovechkin to push the puck ahead to Mathieu Perreault. His shot was stopped by Fleury, but Alexander Semin was there to convert the rebound and tie the game at 2-2.

Ovechkin, waiting at the left circle, later finished a beautiful cross-ice feed from Semin 1:08 into the third. That play started with a nifty drop pass from Perreault -- on the top line in place of Johansson -- as he and his teammates entered the offensive zone. It was goal No. 20 for Ovechkin and his first three-point game of the year.

"We got some guys out of the lineup right now. And that team does, too," Wideman said. "That team's been playing a short lineup all year. But I think for us to hang in there and play as hard as we did was

good. We showed some emotion. We got in there and mixed it up a little bit, and that's good for our team to get in and stand up for each other."

Washington Examiner LOADED: 01.24.2012

Washington Capitals

Boston at Washington

TIME: 07:00 P.M. EST

VENUE: Verizon Center

During their trip to the nation's capital, most of the Boston Bruins spent more time with Barack Obama than they will with Alex Ovechkin.

That doesn't apply to Tim Thomas.

While the Washington Capitals superstar will begin serving a three-game suspension as these teams open their season series Tuesday night, the reigning Vezina Trophy winner could be in net after a controversial decision to skip the Bruins' White House visit.

For a team already playing without leading scorer Nicklas Backstrom (concussion) and high-scoring defenseman Mike Green (abdominal surgery), Ovechkin's absence doesn't figure to help the Capitals (25-19-3) establish some elusive consistency.

They seemed to have found a groove by winning three straight earlier this month, but they've since dropped three of four - including a pair of shutout defeats against the last-place Hurricanes and Islanders - to slip back behind Florida in the Southeast Division.

Washington was somewhat satisfied with one point Sunday after rallying from an early 2-0 deficit in a 4-3 overtime loss at Pittsburgh. Ovechkin had a goal and two assists for his first three-point game of the season, but he also earned his third career suspension for a high hit on Penguins defenseman Zbynek Michalek.

"It was a hit," Ovechkin said before the NHL ruling. "I don't want to comment on my hit."

Boston (31-13-2) has also dealt with a pair of bans lately, with Brad Marchand having finished a five-game suspension and Andrew Ference in the midst of a three-gamer.

Those could be among the reasons coach Claude Julien's team is just 3-2-1 to begin a stretch of seven games - six on the road - in 11 days leading up to All-Star weekend. The Bruins had been 25-4-1 in their previous 30.

"We need to improve," Thomas said Sunday after the Bruins blew a two-goal lead in the second period and a one-goal advantage in the third during a 6-5 shootout win at Philadelphia. "We played some real good hockey a majority of the year. We've found a way to get points. It's nice to win, but we want to do it the right way."

Critics have said that Thomas did not go about an apparent political protest the right way Monday, when the Conn Smythe winner skipped a White House event honoring the Bruins for the franchise's first championship since 1972.

Thomas made a brief statement about his absence.

"I believe the Federal government has grown out of control, threatening the Rights, Liberties, and Property of the People," the statement read. "This is being done at the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial level. This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers vision for the Federal government.

"Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a Free Citizen, and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an INDIVIDUAL."

The Bruins hope the distraction doesn't prevent them from entering All-Star weekend with at least a share of the Eastern Conference lead. They're tied with the New York Rangers atop the East, with each club playing its final game before the break Tuesday. The Rangers host Winnipeg.

Boston will be facing the Capitals for the first time since a 3-2 home win Dec. 18, 2010, its third victory in four meetings last season. Thomas made 39 saves in that game, improving to 13-4-2 with a 2.49 goals-against average in 20 career games versus Washington.

It's unclear if Boston will have Nathan Horton on the ice after he missed the third period Sunday following a high hit from Philadelphia's Tom Sestito.

Washington hopes to get second-year center Marcus Johansson back after he sat out Sunday with an illness.

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Washington Capitals

Ovie out for three: Caps star Ovechkin suspended for three games for charging

Monday, 01.23.2012 / 7:05 PM / News

The Canadian Press

NEW YORK, N.Y. - The NHL suspended Washington Capitals forward Alex Ovechkin for three games Monday for his hit on Pittsburgh Penguins defenceman Zbynek Michalek.

Ovechkin left his feet to hit Michalek against the boards in the second period of Washington's 4-3 overtime loss to the Penguins on Sunday, making contact with the defenceman's head in the process. No penalty was assessed on the play but after further review, the league felt it was a charging incident that violated Rule 42.

"Often on big hits or collisions, a player's feet will come off the ice slightly as a result of the impact. This, however, is not one of those occasions," NHL disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan said in a video posted on the league's website. "Ovechkin drives up, launching and recklessly making contact with Michalek's head.

"While we accept Ovechkin's assertion that he did not intend to hit Michalek in the head, the moment Ovechkin launches himself in the air prior to the hit, he becomes responsible for any contact to the head."

Ovechkin is a repeat offender, who has been suspended twice and fined twice for physical fouls on the ice, Shanahan added.

The 26-year-old had a goal and two assists in the game for Washington, which trails Florida by one point in the Southeast Division. He will eligible to return on Feb. 4 against Montreal.

Ovechkin will forfeit US\$154,677.75. The money goes to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

The Russian star has 39 points (20 goals, 19 assists) in 47 games this season.

Washington Capitals

Ovechkin suspended three games

January 23, 2012, 6:26 pm

Already without leading scorer Nicklas Backstrom (concussion) and star defenseman Mike Green (sports hernia surgery), the Capitals learned Monday they will be without All-Star left wing Alex Ovechkin until Feb. 4, when they visit the Montreal Canadiens.

Ovechkin received a three-game suspension Monday for leaving his feet and ramming his shoulder into the head of Penguins defenseman Zbynek Michalek in the second period of the Capitals' 4-3 overtime loss in Pittsburgh Sunday afternoon.

The fact Ovechkin is a repeat offender certainly played into NHL vice president Brendan Shanahan's ruling.

Ovechkin has been suspended twice and fined once by the NHL for previous hits. During the 2009-10 season, he was suspended two games for a hit on Carolina's Tim Gleason and two more games for a hit on Chicago's Brian Campbell. He was also fined \$1,000 for hitting Buffalo's Danny Bieri from behind in 2007 and fined \$2,500 for slew-footing Atlanta's Rich Peverley in 2009.

Ovechkin's suspension will raise some eyebrows from Capitals fans, especially when considering Michalek got off without a fine or suspension for his elbow to the back of Matt Hendricks' head less than five minutes after taking the hit from Ovechkin.

Before his hearing with Shanahan, Ovechkin said he would continue to play his physical brand of hockey, a stance strongly supported by his coach and teammates.

"I hope he's not pulling back," teammate Brooks Laich said. "I mean, the rest of the league is probably hoping he pulls back. But I don't think you can ever really take the nature out of a competitor. Alex always plays physical. Maybe it will slow him down for a day or two, but I don't think you're ever going to take that out of him."

Some would say Ovechkin's physical play backed off a bit after his two suspensions in 2009-10. Mike Knuble said he hopes that doesn't happen when Ovechkin returns.

"There might be moments where he has to pull back a little bit," Knuble said, "but [hitting] is a big part of his game, and you hate to see it go away."

As for their ability to cope with the loss of Ovechkin, Backstrom and Green, nearly everyone in the Capitals locker room referenced the Penguins, who have spent parts of this season without stars Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang.

“Look at Pittsburgh,” Capitals coach Dale Hunter said. “They had their top two centers out, they had Letang out. You just have to keep battling through it. Other players will come up. With Greenie out, [Dmitry] Orlov came up and has played well and established himself as a good player.

“I thought Matty [Perreault] did a good job [Sunday] playing on a top line. It’s a big job playing against their top checking line, and he did a good job.”

With Ovechkin out of the lineup, the Capitals will turn to Mathieu Perreault, 24, who is expected to center a top line with Marcus Johansson on his left and Alex Semin on his right.

“Instead of feeling sorry for yourself as a team and wondering what’s going to happen, it’s a chance for guys to play more and to do well and to have a bigger role than they normally would,” Knuble said.

“Alex takes up a big chunk of ice time on our power play and during the course of a game. It’s got to be dispersed, and it gives somebody else a chance to step up. You don’t want to go through a long run without a guy like that, but on a game-to-game basis, some players have to look forward to that opportunity.”

Washington Capitals

Backstrom skates on his own

January 23, 2012, 11:15 am

While bracing themselves for bad news on Alex Ovechkin the Capitals welcomed a burst of sunshine on an otherwise cloudy day.

About 30 minutes before his teammates took the ice at Kettler today center Nicklas Backstrom hit the ice for the first time since Jan. 6. He skated casually for about five minutes before leaving the ice.

Just how long it will be before Backstrom participates in a full practice is anyone's guess. He has not played since taking an elbow to the jaw from Rene Bourque on Jan. 3 and will need at least a week of heavy skating before he is cleared for contact.

In other words, Backstrom's return to the lineup could be a few games after the Caps return from their All-Star break. A return trip to Montreal against Bourque on Feb. 4, perhaps?

Meanwhile, Marcus Johansson returned to the ice after missing Sunday's game in Pittsburgh with an illness. Johansson was on the left side of a top line with Mathieu Perreault and Alex Semin, an indication the Caps are preparing to face the Boston Bruins Tuesday night without Ovechkin.

Ovechkin will have a hearing with the NHL's vice president of player safety Brendan Shanahan later today, when he will be asked to give his description of the big hit he put on Penguins defenseman Zbynek Michalek.

--NBC announced today that it has selected the Capitals' Feb. 12 road game against the New York Rangers as the NHL's Game of the Week as part of the NHL's and NBC's flexible scheduling policy. The matchup, which will be broadcast in high-definition, will air in NBC's exclusive broadcast window starting at 12:30 p.m. The game was originally scheduled for 3 p.m.

Hershey Bears

AHL All-Stars in A.C.: Keith Aucoin of the Hershey Bears

Keith Aucoin of the Hershey Bears will tie a league record with his sixth All-Star appearance next Monday night at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City.

Posted: Tuesday, January 24, 2012 12:00 am | Updated: 12:04 am, Tue Jan 24, 2012.

Susan Lulgjuraj, Staff Writer |

The AHL All-Star Classic will be played next Monday (7 p.m.) at Boardwalk Hall. Each day leading up to the game, The Press will take a look at some players to watch. Boardwalk Hall also will host the AHL skills competition Sunday at 3 p.m.

Keith Aucoin, C, Hershey Bears

Aucoin, 32, will tie a league record with his sixth AHL All-Star appearance. He began his career in 2005 with the Lowell Lock Monsters. He has spent the last four with the Bears. Aucoin led the league with 68 points (11 goals, 57 assists) in 41 games through Sunday.

Aucoin won consecutive Calder Cups (league championships) with the Bears in 2008-09 and 2009-10 and was the league MVP in '09-10.

He has split time between the AHL and NHL over the last several years, most recently making the Washington Capitals' opening day roster this season.

Others to watch

Corey Locke, C, Binghamton Senators: The AHL's reigning MVP also will make his record-tying sixth All-Star game appearance. He has four goals and 23 assists in 23 games this year.

Colin McDonald, RW, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins: Playing in his fifth season in the AHL, McDonald will make his consecutive All-Star appearance. He has 11 goals and 23 assists in 38 games this season.

Hershey Bears

Bear Tracks

Patrick Wellar remains injured; Joel Rechlicz leads AHL in PIMs

By DON SCOTT

For the Daily News

Updated: 01/24/2012 12:38:37 AM EST

WEEK IN REVIEW

It has been quite some time since Hershey dropped consecutive home games to the same team, but that's what happened as part of an 0-for-3 weekend that started with a 4-3 loss in Binghamton on Friday.

Manchester came to the Giant Center on a seven-game losing streak and took both tilts by 5-4 and 4-2 counts. That, combined with Wilkes-Barre/Scranton's Sunday win in Syracuse, put the Penguins (25-12-1-4) in a tie with the Bears (24-11-4-3, 55 points) in the East Division.

A third-period, shorthanded goal by Jim O'Brien gave Binghamton a 4-3 win over the Bears that ended a five-game win streak. The Senators led 3-0 after 20 minutes before Hershey's Julien Brouillette and Jacob Micflikier made it a one-goal deficit in the second.

Chris Bourque tied it at 11:28 of the third, then O'Brien wristed a shot over Braden Holtby's shoulder through a screen at 13:52. Hershey had a power-play goal with 1:11 remaining in regulation, got Holtby off for a 6-on-4 advantage, but Sens goalie Robin Lehner hung on for the win.

Manchester snapped its losing streak on a third-period goal by Marc-Andre Cliche with 2:04 left in regulation to grab the 5-4 win Saturday. The teams traded first-period goals between Keith Aucoin and Justin Azevedo 10 seconds apart, then 65 seconds into the second Linden Vey was credited with a goal to put the Monarchs up 2-1.

"On their first goal it was kind of a broken play where they dumped the puck and my man beat me to the puck, so I'll take the responsibility for that one," Jacob Micflikier admitted. "They responded well and that was our downfall."

Seven minutes later, Micflikier tied it, and Boyd Kane made it 3-2 24 seconds later.

Jordan Nolan and Cam Paddock reclaimed the lead for the visitors before Micflikier pulled the Bears even at 14:23 of the third then Cliche split the defensemen to flip the puck past Dany Sabourin for the win.

Dwight King, brother of Hershey's D.J. King, gave the Monarchs the lead 3:29 into the game. Julien Brouillette's unassisted tally tied it, and Stefan Legein's shorthanded shot beat Braden Holtby from the right-wing circle with 49 seconds remaining.

"We made it hard on ourselves this weekend, having to try and come from behind and play emotional games where we expended a lot of energy," Hershey coach Mark French said. "I thought early tonight we didn't have the intensity level and the urgency that's needed."

Legein connected on a power-play and Keith Aucoin did likewise for the Bears in the middle period with Justin Azevedo hitting an open net at 19:51 of the third.

"Obviously, this weekend didn't go our way, but we're going to keep on working and making strides to get better as a team," Zach Miskovic said about the weekend losses.

Hershey will finish the month with a pair of road games in Norfolk on Friday and Saturday. The All-Star Classic takes place Sunday and Monday in Atlantic City, N.J., and the Bears return to action Friday, Feb. 3, in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

BEAR TALK

Patrick Wellar talks about his injury: "It happened early in the first period of the outdoor game when I was going to the puck in our end and a guy checked me. My foot got caught in the ice, and I rolled over. It's been frustrating, but I'm happy it happened in January and not later. There are still a few things I'm not 100 percent at, but it is coming along. I've been skating all week and feel we're shooting for me to return next weekend.

"It's a long season, so sometimes it is refreshing to get a look from up top and it makes you appreciate how much you enjoy being out there. It has allowed me to learn things about positioning that I can use when I get back, so I feel it could be a positive thing in the long run. As you get older, you start watching what other teams do so maybe some day if coaching would be a possibility I can make use of it."

FRONT RUNNERS

Keith Aucoin leads the league in points (68), assists (57), power-play assists (30), power-play points (36), shorthanded assists (5) and shorthanded points (6).

Chris Bourque is fourth with 21 goals, second in points (62), assists (41), power-play points (31) and power-play assists (22); first in shorthanded goals (5) and shorthanded points (6).

Jacob Micflikier is fourth in points (47) and third in power-play points (26).

Graham Mink and Micflikier are tied for first in power-play goals (11).

Christian Hanson is second with three shorthanded goals.

Defenseman Patrick McNeill is third in points (28) and goals (8).

Joel Rechlicz leads the AHL with 184 penalty minutes.

Hershey leads the league in power-play percentage (30.2) and is fourth in penalty kill percentage (85.6).

FOR THE RECORD

Keith Aucoin saw his point streak extended to 16 games Sunday but had his 14-game assist streak end Saturday.

Jacob Micflikier scored his 11th power-play goal of the season Saturday, moving within one power-play goal of his AHL career high, set last season.

Boyd Kane leads the team with a plus-12.

The fastest two goals between the Bears and an opponent were eight seconds on March 9, 1997, in the third period with Carolina.

AHL NEWS

Portland defenseman Dean Arsene was suspended for four games for an illegal check to the head on Jan. 15. The last one will be Jan. 27.

FAST FACTS

On this date in 2007, Chad Wiseman scored the first natural hat trick of his career in a 6-1 win over the Philadelphia Phantoms.

The Hershey record for most power-play goals in a season is 111 set in 2005-06.

For a chance to win an autographed item or Hershey player photo email your name and address to: dscottsports@verizon.net.

Boston Bruins

Obama Welcomes the Bruins

Monday, 01.23.2012 / 4:09 PM / Features

By John Bishop - BostonBruins.com

WASHINGTON, DC -- The Boston Bruins visited the White House earlier this afternoon as President Barack Obama greeted the Stanley Cup Champions and congratulated the team on their successful playoff run last Spring and lauded the group on their charitable efforts in New England.

"I am happy to welcome the Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins to the White House – I know you are all wicked happy to be here," said Obama to the large gathering in the East Room.

"Last year this team endured a long season, and even longer playoffs," continued Obama. "They are the first team in NHL history to win three full seven game series.

"They had some pretty long playoff beards to show for it and I appreciate them looking a little bit more clean cut as they come here today," he said.

Minus center Marc Savard (still recovering from the effects of a concussion), goaltender Tim Thomas (who opted out of the gathering) and winger Michael Ryder (who now plays for the Dallas Stars) the entire 2010-11 Bruins roster was present to meet and be introduced by the President.

"These Bruins finally brought the Stanley Cup back to Causeway Street for the first time since 1972 when Bobby Orr was leading the team – and obviously that was before most of the guys on this stage were born," said Obama. "Now Bobby Orr is obviously a hockey legend, he took the ice without a helmet – and kids don't try that at home – he attacked every puck and he lived by the motto, 'Forget about style, worry about results.'

"Well that's what this year's offense delivered – big time results. Brad Marchand, who went into the season playing on the fourth line, but the 'Little Ball of Hate' shrugged off the rookie jitters."

There, the President paused, and asked Marchand, "What's up with that nickname, man?"

He then continued on to marvel that Brad scored five goals in the last five games of the final series.

"After two series winning goals to lead the Bruins to the championships, Nathan Horton went down hard in Game 3 of the Finals but that didn't stop him from doing everything he could to help this team win," added Obama. "He even brought some Boston water all the way to Vancouver and poured it in the ice before decisive Game 7."

Obama, a Chicagoan, also talked about the success of the Red Sox, Patriots and Bruins, but focused on the B's Cup run.

"Beantown delivered," he said. "And there's no better image of the Bruins dominance, than the tallest player in NHL history – I'll let you guess which one that is – Zdeno Chara hoisting the cup above the ice in Vancouver which is I'm sure the highest that the Stanley Cup has ever been," he said.

The President also highlighted the Bruins for their charitable efforts.

"I know that loyalty is important in Boston, which is why the Boston Bruins foundation has raised and donated more than seven million dollars in charitable contributions for organizations all across New England," said Obama. "I want to thank them for bringing their spirit of service to Washington.

"These Bruins understand that winning the Stanley Cup is more than just men on ice.

"It's about the people that stand behind them and that's why since the last buzzer sounded in June, the Bruins have been taking the Cup all over the world to share it with their fans," he said.

And it sounds as if maybe the B's have one more fan residing at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

"Under the leadership of owner Jeremy Jacobs and Coach Julien, this team has shown a commitment to the game and to each other," he said. "That is a testament to them, but also a testament to fans that cheer for the Black & Gold all around the world.

"They know that being a champion doesn't end when you hang up your skates at the end of practice or at the end of the season. The new banner that hangs from the rafters of the Garden commemorates the place that they have earned in history. I know that this season is heating up again, so I don't want to be too long, I just want to make sure I wish everybody good luck on the ice tomorrow night and during the rest of the season as well.

"Congratulations gentlemen, great job," he said.

Boston Bruins

Statement from Bruins President Cam Neely

Monday, 01.23.2012 / 8:03 PM / News

Boston Bruins

"As an organization we were honored by President Obama's invitation to the White House. It was a great day and a perfect way to cap our team's achievement from last season. It was a day that none of us will soon forget. We are disappointed that Tim chose not to join us, and his views certainly do not reflect those of the Jacobs family or the Bruins organization. This will be the last public comment from the Bruins organization on this subject."

Boston Bruins

Bruins Humbled by White House Visit

Chara enjoys personal recognition in President Obama's speech

Monday, 01.23.2012 / 4:48 PM / Features

Boston Bruins

BostonBruins.com – The Boston Bruins historic Stanley Cup run and festivities came to an unofficial end Monday when the team was invited to join President Obama at the White House.

The championship team, including Mark Recchi, Shane Hnidy and Tomas Kaberle, stood proudly on the stage in the East room while President Obama gave a speech entailing the Bruins successes on and off the ice.

“This actually may be the conclusion of our Stanley Cup celebration and while it’s great, this is the end I think,” General Manager Peter Chiarelli said.

But nonetheless, the day ranks high on Chiarelli’s list and he was impressed by Obama’s headquarters.

“It may be the top of the list as far as meeting someone who makes such important decisions every minute of his life almost. On Thursday, I was at the UN in New York and I met the secretary general –so I guess [I get] to say in four days I met the secretary general and the President of the United States.

“There’s a lot of history, obviously a lot of significance. You see it in movies, you read it in books, you see it in magazines, newspapers – all over the media.

“But to actually come here and see the enormity of it and the significance of it was pretty impressive,” he said.

Head Coach Claude Julien was nearly speechless after the ceremony, and thoroughly enjoyed every minute.

“It’s hard to describe because you use the same words over and over again,” he said. “Honor is at the top of the list, privilege is another one – humbling. You can go on and on about this it’s unbelievable.

“You just have to look back many many years and probably never imaging yourself to get that opportunity and when you do, you have to cherish every moment of it. So I really enjoyed it, speaking to [President Obama] on the phone after winning the Cup was a big honor for me and it was an even bigger one today to meet him in person and shake his hand.”

And Julien wasn’t nervous about meeting the President of the United States either, he was rather ecstatic.

“To see the President of the United States walk into the room, the presence that he had or that he gives out is just amazing and shaking his hand is without a doubt the highlight of my day today,” Julien said. “If you’re nervous you’re not doing the right things. You got to be excited, you got to control yourself and for me, it’s not a nerve racking day, but an exciting day for me.”

Along with congratulating the Bruins on their Stanley Cup season, President Obama recognized the team for their community service and applauded the seven million dollars that has been raised and donated through the Boston Bruins Foundation.

Team President Cam Neely, who said he enjoyed viewing the White House and all the different rooms, took great pride in the compliment.

“I’m proud of our players, not just what they do on the ice but off the ice,” Neely said. “They’re great gentlemen, they do a lot in the community – our Bruins foundation does so much for so many great children and charities throughout New England.

“That tone has been set years ago by former Bruins players, and it’s great to see our guys are still carrying on the tradition. They have to carry on that tradition, they need to carry on that tradition and it’s nice – not that they look for recognition off the ice – but it certainly doesn’t go unnoticed as we witnessed today with President Obama’s remarks about it.”

President Obama also highlighted some of the Cup’s adventures after the victory, including captain Zdeno Chara’s celebration with his mailman and wheeling it around town in a baby carriage.

The President also said that there was no greater image of the Bruins dominance than Chara hoisting the Cup, and the B’s defenseman was humbled by his comments.

“Meeting the President and being on the stage at the podium with your name mentioned in the speech – that’s a great feeling,” Chara said. “It was great to be recognized as a team and then obviously as an individual. It’s an honor and a privilege to be in that kind of speech.”

While everybody enjoyed the day at the White House and meeting the President, after all the pictures were taken, it was back to business for the hard-working Bruins.

“We’re focusing on this year, we’re focusing on our game Tuesday night and that’s just the way we operate,” Neely said. “We don’t want to look too far ahead, and it’s nice to have the memories of what happened in the past, but we’re focusing on today.”

--- Anthony Gulizia

Boston Bruins

Bruins' trip to DC involves date with Capitals

Monday, 01.23.2012 / 6:47 PM

Dave Lozo - NHL.com Staff Writer

BRUINS (31-13-2) at CAPITALS (25-19-3)

TV: NESN (HD), CSN-MA

Last 10: Boston 6-3-1; Washington 5-4-1.

Season Series: This is the first of four meetings.

Big Story: The defending Stanley Cup champions are in town not just for a hockey game, but to meet with President Obama at the White House. Tuesday night's game against the Capitals will conclude a three-games-in-four-nights stretch and send the Bruins into the All-Star break.

Team Scope:

Bruins: Faced with back-to-back games over the weekend against the Rangers and Flyers, the Bruins captured three of four points by losing in the waning seconds of OT against the Rangers and winning in a shootout against the Flyers.

"It's good," Lucic said of the Bruins' successful weekend. "Two teams that are on top of the League and the Eastern Conference, two teams that have played well all season. It's great that we were able to get one yesterday and get that shootout win here today. We still want to end on a high note going into Washington on Tuesday."

Capitals: They're coming of an OT loss in Pittsburgh, but there was a lot to like about the way the Caps played. They rallied from a 2-0 deficit and had a 3-2 lead in the third period, but the red-hot Evgeni Malkin scored in OT to keep the Caps from earning the extra point.

Washington will also be without Alex Ovechkin, who received a three-game suspension Monday for his hit on Pens defenseman Zbynek Michalek during the second period.

"Obviously it's a frustrating loss," Michal Neuvirth told the Caps' website, "but I think it was a good game. We battled hard. They got a lucky bounce at the end ... it hit the boards and went right on (Malkin's) stick. It was an easy goal for him."

Who's Hot: David Krejci has 1 goal and 4 assists in the Bruins' last four games. ... Alex Ovechkin has 2 goals and 3 assists over the Capitals' last five games.

Injury Report: The Bruins enter the game without a serious injury, though they will be without defenseman Andrew Ference due to suspension. Washington will be without Nicklas Backstrom (concussion), Mike Green (sports hernia) and Tom Poti (groin).

Stat Pack: The Bruins went 3-1 vs. the Caps last year, with Tim Thomas winning all three games. Tuukka Rask took the only loss against Washington.

Puck Drop: "Our whole team could have been better. (Thomas) was bombarded with shots. There was a lot of traffic. We battled hard and did what we had to do to win." -- Boston coach Claude Julien after the Bruins' 6-5 shootout win in Philadelphia.

Boston Bruins

NBCSports.com / Thomas on skipping White House visit: "I believe the Federal government has grown out of control"

Mike Halford

Jan 23, 2012, 6:52 PM EST

Shortly after opting out of the Bruins' celebratory White House visit, Stanley Cup playoffs MVP Tim Thomas posted an explanation for his absence on his official Facebook page:

I believe the Federal government has grown out of control, threatening the Rights, Liberties, and Property of the People.

This is being done at the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial level. This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers vision for the Federal government.

Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a Free Citizen, and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an INDIVIDUAL.

This is the only public statement I will be making on this topic.

According to the Boston Herald, Bruins GM Peter Chiarelli said he discussed the White House visit for months with Thomas, but declined to reveal why the Conn Smythe-winning netminder opted not to attend.

Chiarelli also said Thomas could be suspended for not showing up for a team event, but will not be.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Criticizing Government, Bruins' Thomas Skips White House Visit

By CHRISTOPHER BOTTA

Tim Thomas, the most valuable player in last year's playoffs, declined to visit the White House on Monday with the rest of the members of the Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins.

Thomas released a statement Monday evening:

"I believe the federal government has grown out of control, threatening the rights, liberties and property of the people. This is being done at the executive, legislative and judicial level. This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the founding fathers vision for the federal government. Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a free citizen, and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an individual. This is the only public statement I will be making on this topic."

Thomas was one of three American players on last season's Stanley Cup team. He is an active Republican and has the Gadsden flag - a symbol of the Tea Party - on his goalie mask. In a Bruins media guide, Thomas cited Glenn Beck as the person he would most like to have dinner with.

Bruins management supported Thomas's decision not to attend.

"He chose not to come," Bruins General Manager Peter Chiarelli told reporters at the White House. "I had some discussions with him over the last couple months. We're like a family. We have our issues, and you deal with them and move on and try to support everyone."

Cam Neely, the team's president and a former star player for the Bruins, said: "Everybody has their own opinions and political beliefs. He chose not to join us. We certainly would have liked to have him come and join us, but it's his choice. It's obviously not a choice most of the guys - well, all of the guys came except for Tim. But it's his decision and his choice."

In a speech before Bruins players, coaches and executives, President Obama praised Thomas for his contributions to the championship run, saying, "He was only the second American to be recognized as the Stanley Cup playoffs M.V.P."

New York Times LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Tim Thomas skips White House trip due to 'out of control' government

eric duhatschek

From Tuesday's Globe and Mail

Published Monday, Jan. 23, 2012 3:51PM EST

Last updated Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2012 3:16AM EST

Leave it to the Boston Bruins' eclectic goaltender Tim Thomas to turn a routine meet-and-greet into a polarizing national incident.

On Monday, the Bruins were feted en masse at the White House by U.S. president Barack Obama for winning the 2011 Stanley Cup, which is standard fare in the 21st century, where politics and sports constantly overlap. They all showed up, all except for goaltender Tim Thomas, who happened to win the playoff MVP award and was the single biggest reason they defeated the Vancouver Canucks in seven games.

Thomas was a mysterious no-show and Twitter ran rampant all of Monday afternoon, speculating about why he gave it a pass. Politically, Thomas is known to lean toward the right and even finds some merits in the rants of commentator Glenn Beck. However, when Thomas finally explained his absence on his Facebook page, he took care not to make it a statement about Obama's presidency, but at his dissatisfaction with American politics on the whole.

Thomas wrote: "I believe the Federal government has grown out of control, threatening the Rights, Liberties, and Property of the People. This is being done at the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial level. This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers vision for the Federal government.

"Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a Free Citizen, and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an INDIVIDUAL."

Thomas concluded by saying "This is the only public statement I will be making on this topic."

If Obama had any issues with Thomas's absence, he didn't let on, making the usual quips that one would expect about Boston's sporting supremacy from a diehard Chicago fan.

"The Bruins, the Sox, the Celtics, now the Patriots. Enough already, Boston," Obama said. "What's going on, huh?"

Obama didn't mention Thomas's absence, but did refer to his two shutouts and the fact that he was just the second American to win the Conn Smythe after New York Rangers defenceman Brian Leetch in 1994.

However, he did note there was no better image of the Bruins' dominance than when Slovakia's Zdeno Chara, the team's 6-foot-9 defenceman, hoisted the Stanley Cup above his head in Vancouver in celebration last spring.

"Which is, I'm sure, the highest that the Stanley Cup had ever been," he said.

Obama drew laughter from the crowd when he cited the scrappy play of Bruins forward Brad Marchand, who emerged as a star with five goals in the last five games of the finals against Vancouver.

"The 'Little Ball of Hate' shrugged off the rookie jitters," said Obama, adding "What's up with that nickname, man?"

Peter Chiarelli, the team's general manager, tried to convince Thomas to attend the ceremony, but did not succeed.

"We're like a family. We have our issues," Chiarelli told the Boston Globe when asked if Thomas's decision overshadowed the visit. "You deal with them, move on, and try and support everyone."

Thomas is one of only two American-born players on the Bruins' roster (the other is Steven Kampfer).

"I can require someone to attend a team event. If they don't, I can suspend him," added Chiarelli. "I'm not suspending Tim. Whatever his position is, it isn't reflective of the Boston Bruins nor my own. But I'm not suspending him."

Three members of last year's Bruins team who no longer play for Boston also attended the event, including Montreal Canadiens defenceman Tomas Kaberle, Mark Recchi, who retired after the Bruins' Stanley Cup win, and spare defenceman Shane Hnidy. The event took place in the East Room of the White House.

Thomas is not the first athlete to cause a stir when his team was honoured at the White House, according to the Associated Press. Following the Pittsburgh Steelers' Super Bowl victory over the Seattle Seahawks in 2006, linebacker Joey Porter announced that he had "something to tell" President George W. Bush, although the Steelers' visit to the White House went without incident. A year earlier, the Northwestern University women's lacrosse team sparked a controversy when several players chose to wear flip-flops to a White House ceremony honouring the year's NCAA championship teams. The team eventually auctioned off the offending footwear to raise money for a 10-year-old girl battling brain cancer.

Thomas will rejoin the rest of his teammates at the Verizon Center on Tuesday night, when the Bruins face the Washington Capitals, and then leave for Ottawa, where all-star festivities begin Thursday.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

On a day for team, Thomas left them shorthanded

By Kevin Paul Dupont

January 24, 2012

Tim Thomas separated himself from his Bruins' teammates yesterday afternoon when he refused to join them at the White House, a day meant to celebrate their 2011 Stanley Cup championship.

The two-time Vezina Trophy winner later in the day issued a statement, released by nhl.com and on Thomas's Facebook page just after 6 p.m., noting his disillusionment with the United States government and offering that as his reason not to stand with his team.

"I believe the federal government has grown out of control," he stated, "threatening the rights, liberties, and property of the people."

We must all celebrate that Thomas, born in Flint, Mich., nearly 38 years ago, has the right to say all of that and more, and we've grown accustomed to hearing near-identical dogma from the right wing/conservative/Tea Party end of our political spectrum for the last 2-3 years. He is a free man, living in a free country, and he can sing that blatherall from his hotel room, his crease, and the corner of Causeway and Staniford if he so chooses.

As a country, we're not yet so deep in the handbasket that any of us has been denied that right. Thankfully.

But yesterday was not about politics and government until Thomas made it about politics and government. The day, long set on the calendar, was a day when the Boston Bruins were asked to visit Pennsylvania Avenue to celebrate what they did as a team last season. It was their day in the national spotlight, until Thomas didn't show, and then the focal point became, much the way it would be in a hockey game, on the guy who was no longer standing in goal.

Shabby. Immature. Unprofessional. Self-centered. Bush league. Need I go on? All that and more applies to what Thomas did, on a day when Cup teammates Mark Recchi (now retired), Shane Hnidy (a radio guy these days in Winnipeg), and Tomas Kaberle (a member of some Original Six team in Canada), all gladly joined the red-white-blue-black-and-gold hugfest at the White House.

Thomas needed to be there in solidarity, and celebration, with his team. It was the same government yesterday, and will be today, that protected his country, his security, his family, and his right to make \$5 million a year, all last season. In his absence, he stole his teammates' spotlight. Win as a team. Lose as a team. And when asked to stand up and take a bow, then stand up there and suffer if need be, even if you don't like the setting, the host, or any of the political trappings and tenets that come with it.

Team guys don't opt out of team meetings or celebrations. Tyler Seguin goofed up earlier this season, missed a team breakfast and X-and-O session in Winnipeg, and found himself sitting in the press box

that night. The importance of being on time, being present, was made clear to the 19-year-old winger. There's no way for coach Claude Julien or GM Peter Chiarelli to do it, but their 37-year-old goalie is in need of the same kind of reminder.

Not a lot has changed in the US over the last two years, although it appears the economic picture is brightening at least a little bit, despite those in charge of our various governmental nuthouses. Unemployment has eased some and the Dow Jones industrial average has improved considerably. Politically, our nation is a mess, but the material Property of the People at least seems to be getting better. Not every house in the Lower 48 is up for short sale.

If Thomas is feeling the way he is today, it could not have happened overnight. He must have felt much the same just shy of 24 months ago when he sounded so proud to wear that Team USA sweater at the 2010 Olympics, and so proudly dipped his head to accept that silver medal. Or was he doing all of that under governmental duress, the pain of knowing our leaders were acting, as he wrote yesterday, "in direct opposition of the Constitution and the Founding Fathers' vision of the Federal government."

Someone so disgusted with our government ought to turn in the sweater and the medal. It must be a horrible burden, if not a pox, to have them in his house.

Thomas didn't need to issue a written statement yesterday, not when he could have made one by showing up at the White House and quietly picking his moment to utter a few simple words of disappointment to President Obama.

How easy, how far more courageous and honorable, it would have been to say, "Hi, I'm Tim Thomas, and I appreciate the fact my team was invited here today. I don't like what's going on in this country. I'm not the least bit impressed with your leadership. But I am proud of what we did, I'm proud to be an American, proud to be a Boston Bruin, and I'd like to see everyone in the government do a better job of adhering to the Constitution. Oh, and I've got a question for you about power plays . . ."

There isn't a lot of that kind of honesty or directness in our country anymore. Rather than walk up to people in charge, most of whom don't make themselves available anyway, we settle for silly ways to convey our point. We e-mail. We tweet. We drop a dime to a local newspaper reporter. We talk to the fifth in command, who we hope has the brass to talk to the fourth in command, who . . . well, it just seems we rarely get the chance to say what we really want to say, and say it directly to someone who counts.

Tim Thomas yesterday had a chance to tell the leader of the free world what he thinks it means to be an American today. Not just any American, mind you, but an Olympian, a multimillionaire, a hero in the city where he works, and a member of a championship team that has been a source of joy (and sorrow, too) to millions of Bostonians for nearly a century.

Instead, Thomas took his pads and blocker to another end of town and issued his statement. He could have talked to the president. Instead, he mailed one in from the pizza stand. I think he missed his chance. I think he missed the point of the day. I think he mistreated teammates.

And if I'm right, I think in the days ahead he'll hear a voice of America representative of a people, many who are equally fed up with government today, who believe he simply should have showed up for his team, respectfully said what he had to say, and gone back to living a pretty good life. In America.

Boston Globe LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Presidential appointment

Bruins celebrate Cup title with visit to the White House

By Fluto Shinzawa

Globe Staff / January 24, 2012

WASHINGTON - The Bruins partied on the Rogers Arena ice and in the visiting dressing room in Vancouver. They paraded through Boston with the Stanley Cup. They racked up a six-digit bar tab while celebrating their championship. They shepherded the Cup around the world. They raised the championship banner at TD Garden.

Yesterday, seven months after winning the title, the Bruins capped their 2011-12 run by celebrating last season's achievements at the White House with President Obama.

"We had kind of turned the page on the Stanley Cup, the whole celebration, and everything else. We had gotten ourselves into the season," said coach Claude Julien. "Now, to come back and be congratulated by the president, it just puts closure on that Stanley Cup season. To me, it makes it even more exciting to try and work our way back here."

Tim Thomas, one of two American players on last year's roster, chose not to attend the ceremony. During his six-minute speech in the East Room, Obama mentioned Thomas for his performance in the Stanley Cup Final and how he was only the second American to win the Conn Smythe Trophy as postseason MVP.

"I believe the federal government has grown out of control, threatening the rights, liberties, and property of the people," Thomas said in a statement on his Facebook page. "This is being done at the executive, legislative, and judicial level. This is in direct opposite to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers' vision for the federal government. Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a free citizen and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion, both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an individual."

Bruins president Cam Neely released a statement on the Bruins' website.

"As an organization we were honored by President Obama's invitation to the White House. It was a great day and a perfect way to cap our team's achievement from last season. It was a day that none of us will soon forget. We are disappointed that Tim chose not to join us, and his views certainly do not reflect those of the Jacobs family or the Bruins organization. This will be the last public comment from the Bruins organization on this subject."

General manager Peter Chiarelli spoke with Thomas several times about attending the ceremony over the last few months.

Chiarelli said the event was not mandatory. Ex-Bruins Tomas Kaberle, Mark Recchi, and Shane Hnidy were in attendance, as was Steven Kampffer, the other American from last year's roster. Kaberle's Canadiens are off until tomorrow. Michael Ryder couldn't attend because the Dallas Stars host the Ducks tonight.

First-year Bruins Joe Corvo and Benoit Pouliot were not present for the ceremony.

"I can require someone to attend a team event. If they don't, I can suspend him," Chiarelli said. "I'm not suspending Tim. Whatever his position is, it isn't reflective of the Boston Bruins nor my own. But I'm not suspending him."

Thomas, a native of Flint, Mich., backed up Ryan Miller on Team USA's silver-winning squad in the 2010 Olympics. Assuming good health and no significant drop off in performance, Thomas could be the No. 1 goalie for the Stars & Stripes in 2014 if the NHL allows its players to participate in the Winter Games.

"We're like a family. We have our issues. You deal with them, move on, and try and support everyone," Chiarelli said when asked if Thomas's decision overshadowed the visit. "If it does, I hope it doesn't. The guys seemed to enjoy it. I enjoyed it."

Prior to the ceremony, the Bruins toured the White House. Chiarelli marveled at dinnerware used by President Lincoln.

"It was pretty amazing," Chiarelli said. "It was pretty overwhelming, actually. It was a special visit."

Friends, family members, other members of the organization, and guests filled the East Room. Guests included NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, Senator John Kerry, and Boston's mayor, Thomas Menino. Kerry was sporting two black eyes. According to ABC News, he suffered a broken nose during a recent hockey game, although Milan Lucic was under suspicion.

At approximately 1:40 p.m., the Bruins filed into the East Room to kick off the ceremony. Adam McQuaid was the first person into the room. The players, wearing black suits and black ties, stood next to the Cup, then Obama entered and took the podium. Rumors were that all available Secret Service personnel were on hand, given the Bruins' first-place standing in penalty minutes in the league.

"They had some pretty long playoff beards to show for it," Obama said of the Bruins' Cup run. "I appreciate them looking a little more clean-cut as they come here today."

Obama mentioned Brad Marchand, whose playoff heroics helped vault the Bruins over the Canucks.

"Brad Marchand went into the season playing on the fourth line," Obama said. "But the Little Ball of Hate shrugged off the rookie jitters.

"What's up with that nickname, man?" Obama added, turning to Marchand.

"I definitely wasn't expecting a nickname like that," Marchand said. "But it's pretty cool hearing that from the president. Something I'll always be able to brag about."

The Bruins presented Obama with a black Bruins jersey with the No. 11 on the back.

“The whole thing was great,” Julien said. “The whole day, the tour, getting an opportunity to do this. Whenever you get a chance to meet the president in person, that’s pretty unique. It was a great honor. I don’t care if you’re Canadian or American. You’re meeting one of the most important presidents in the whole world. To shake his hand was certainly an honor and a privilege at the same time.”

Boston Globe LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Horton is doubtful

Winger might have a mild concussion

By Fluto Shinzawa

Globe Staff / January 24, 2012

WASHINGTON - In all likelihood, Nathan Horton will not play tonight against Washington because of a suspected head injury.

Following yesterday's ceremony at the White House, general manager Peter Chiarelli confirmed that Horton is doubtful tonight.

"I think it's a mild concussion," Chiarelli said. "From what I heard [Sunday] night and what I saw [Sunday] night. I talked to him earlier today. These things are day to day. So I would say it's day to day. It might not be. There's that gray area. You take your ImPACT test. You see how it is the following day. Then you make that determination. He's in that gray area there."

Horton was injured in the second period of Sunday's 6-5 shootout victory over Philadelphia. A moment after Horton shot the puck at the Philadelphia net, he was hit from the right side by Tom Sestito. Although Sestito's hit was late, video replay could not determine if the Philadelphia forward targeted Horton's head. Sestito was neither penalized nor disciplined after the game.

After absorbing the hit, Horton went after Sestito and was called for interference. Horton didn't play in the third period. He attended yesterday's ceremony.

During his speech in the East Room, President Obama referred to Horton's concussion in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final, and how he poured TD Garden water onto the Rogers Arena ice before Game 7.

"After two series-winning goals to lead the Bruins to the championship, Nathan Horton went down hard in Game 3 of the Finals," Obama said. "But that didn't stop him from doing everything he could to help his team win. He even brought some Boston water all the way to Vancouver and poured it on the ice before the decisive Game 7."

In 46 games, Horton has 17 goals and 15 assists. After the Bruins' 3-2 shootout win over Florida last Monday, coach Claude Julien said his club needed more from Horton.

The following night, Horton scored two goals in a 5-3 loss to Tampa Bay. After the game, Horton said Julien had the right to say anything he wanted, but he played for teammates.

Assuming Horton is unavailable tonight, Zach Hamill would re-enter the lineup. Hamill hasn't played since last Tuesday against the Lightning.

Rich Peverley would most likely skate in Horton's spot on the first line alongside Milan Lucic and David Krejci. Hamill would assume Peverley's position on the right wing on the No. 3 line with Benoit Pouliot and Chris Kelly.

No reinforcements

The Bruins have not promoted help from Providence, indicating that Steven Kampfer will be available tonight. On Sunday, Brayden Schenn cleaned Kampfer's clock with a clean but violent hit. Kampfer had the wind knocked out of him, according to Julien, and returned later in the second.

Andrew Ference will serve the second of his three-match suspension tonight. Ference is eligible to return Feb. 2 against Carolina.

Ovechkin suspended

Washington will be without Alex Ovechkin tonight. The NHL suspended the Capitals captain for three games, starting tonight. Ovechkin was called for charging Pittsburgh's Zbynek Michalek Sunday. NHL disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan ruled that Ovechkin launched himself into Michalek, causing his head to strike the glass. Ovechkin has 20 goals and 19 assists in 47 games. Ovechkin is a repeat offender, having been suspended twice previously . . . After tonight's game against the Capitals, the Bruins will pause for the All-Star break. They will resume play next Tuesday against Ottawa at the Garden. "We had a little bit of a dip lately," Chiarelli said. "But we're a deep team. We're a good team. We're hopefully going to go into the break with another win. Then you've got your stretch drive. Our guys know what stretch drives are now. They're better suited for them. I hope they'll be able to embrace that. Of course, the trade deadline comes up, so hopefully we'll be doing some things at the trade deadline. Then get ready for the playoffs." . . . The Bruins didn't practice yesterday. Following their White House visit, they had a charity event at a Washington-area Boys & Girls Club . . . Tuukka Rask should get the start tonight. Rask backed up Tim Thomas Sunday. Rask was in goal for Saturday's 3-2 overtime loss to the Rangers.

Boston Globe LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Nathan Horton most likely suffering from mild concussion

January 23, 2012 | Fluto Shinzawa, Globe Staff

Nathan Horton is most likely suffering from a mild concussion, said GM Peter Chiarelli. Horton, who attended today's White House ceremony, was hurt in yesterday's second period when he was hit from the side by Philadelphia's Tom Sestito.

Horton is doubtful for tomorrow's game against Washington, Chiarelli said.

Boston Globe LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Tim Thomas declines to attend White House ceremony

January 23, 2012 | Fluto Shinzawa, Globe Staff

WASHINGTON -- Tim Thomas, one of two Americans on the roster, chose not to attend today's ceremony at the White House, according to GM Peter Chiarelli.

"We're like a family. We have our issues," Chiarelli answered when asked if Thomas's decision overshadowed the visit. "You deal with them, move on, and try and support everyone. It may or may not. If it does, I hope it doesn't. The guys seemed to enjoy it. I enjoyed it."

UPDATE: Thomas has issued the following statement: "I believe the Federal government has grown out of control, threatening the Rights, Liberties, and Property of the People. This is being done at the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial level. This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers vision for the Federal government. Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a Free Citizen, and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an INDIVIDUAL."

Shortly after Thomas released his statement, Bruins president Cam Neely issued his own.

"As an organization we were honored by President Obama's invitation to the White House," Neely said. "It was a great day and a perfect way to cap our team's achievement from last season. It was a day that none of us will soon forget. We are disappointed that Tim chose not to join us, and his views certainly do not reflect those of the Jacobs family or the Bruins organization."

All other players were in attendance. Chiarelli said attendance today was not mandatory. Steven Kampfer is the other American player from last year's roster.

"I can require someone to attend a team event. If they don't, I can suspend him," Chiarelli said. "I'm not suspending Tim. Whatever his position is, it isn't reflective of the Boston Bruins nor my own. But I'm not suspending him."

Mark Recchi, Tomas Kaberle, and Shane Hnidy attended the event. First-year Bruins Joe Corvo and Benoit Pouliot did not participate in the East Room ceremony.

Boston Globe LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Bruins visit White House

January 23, 2012 | Matt Pepin, Boston.com Staff, Globe Staff

The Bruins visited the White House today and were greeted by President Barack Obama, who made some brief remarks about the players and was given a black-and-gold hockey jersey with No. 11 on the back.

"I am happy to welcome the Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins to the White House," Obama said. "I'm sure they are wicked happy to be here."

Obama noted the recent championships won by the Bruins, Patriots, Red Sox, and Celtics. Obama is a Chicago fan.

"Enough already, Boston," said Obama.

Obama singled out playoff hero Brad Marchand.

"The Little Ball of Hate shrugged off the rookie jitters," said Obama, then turned to the left wing.

"What's up with that nickname, man?"

Click the Full Entry button to read the full text of Obama's remarks.

Here's the text of President Barack Obama's comments about the Bruins at a White House reception today, provided by the office of the press secretary:

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, everybody! (Applause.) Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat.

Well, I am happy to welcome the Stanley Cup Champion Boston Bruins to the White House. (Applause.) I know you are all wicked happy to be here. (Laughter.)

I know there are some members of Congress, members of my Cabinet who are joining us today who are also pretty excited to see you. I understand we got Mayor Menino here. Where is he? There he is right in front of me. (Applause.) Great to see you.

The Bruins, the Sox, the Celtics, now the Patriots. (Laughter.) Enough already, Boston. (Laughter.) What's going on, huh?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Go, Boston. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Last year, this team endured a long season and even longer playoffs. They are the first team in NHL history to win three full seven-game series. They had some pretty long playoff beards to show it -- to show for it. And I appreciate them looking a little more clean cut as they come here today. (Laughter.)

These Bruins finally brought the Stanley Cup back to Causeway Street for the first time since 1972, when Bobby Orr was leading the team. And obviously, that was before most of the guys on this stage were born. (Laughter.)

Now, Bobby Orr is obviously a hockey legend. He took the ice without a helmet, and kids, don't try that at home. He attacked every puck, and he lived by the motto, "Forget about style; worry about results."

Well, that's what this year's offense delivered: big-time results. Brad Marchand went into the season playing on the fourth line, but "The Little Ball of Hate" shrugged off the rookie jitters and -- (laughter) -- what's up with that nickname, man? (Laughter.)

Scored five goals in the last five games of the finals series.

After two series-winning goals to lead the Bruins to the championships, Nathan Horton went down hard in Game Three of the finals. But that didn't stop him from doing everything he could to help his team win. He even brought some Boston water all the way to Vancouver and poured it in the ice before decisive Game Seven. So Beantown delivered.

And there is no better image of the Bruins' dominance than the tallest player in NHL history -- I'll let you guess which one that is -- (laughter) -- Zdeno Chara, hoisting the cup above the ice in Vancouver, which is I'm sure the highest that the Stanley Cup had ever been. (Laughter.)

This Stanley Cup was won by defense as much as by offense. Tim Thomas posted two shutouts in the Stanley Cup's finals; set an all-time record for saves in the postseason. He also earned the honor of being only the second American ever to be recognized as the Stanley Cup's Playoffs MVP.

And together, these players proved that teamwork is everything. It can overcome injuries, it can overcome long odds. The wise old man of the team, Mark Recchi, summed up the season by saying, "We played together, we drank together," -- how much did you drink? -- (laughter) -- "we lost together, and we never wavered."

I know that loyalty is important in Boston, which is why the Boston Bruins Foundation has raised and donated more than \$7 million in charitable contributions for organizations all across New England. (Applause.)

I want to thank them for bringing their spirit of service to Washington. They led a hockey clinic at the Boys and Girls Club -- or they're going to do that later this afternoon.

These Bruins understand that winning the Stanley Cup is more than just men on ice. It's about the people that stand behind them. And that's why, since the last buzzer sounded in June, the Bruins have been taking their Cup all over the world to share it with their fans.

Zdeno invited his mailman to check it out, wheeled it around town in a baby carriage. (Laughter.) Coach Julien's daughter ate her morning Cheerios out of it. (Laughter.) That's pretty cool. The Cup has traveled

from the back of a duck boat in the streets of Boston to the greens of Pebble Beach, and from a sauna in Finland to a Slovakian castle. Dennis Seidenberg even brought it to his son's christening.

Under the leadership of owner Jeremy Jacobs and Coach Julien, this team has shown a commitment to the game and to each other that is a testament to them, but obviously also a testament to fans who cheer for the black and gold all around the world. They know that being a champion doesn't end when you hang up your skates at the end of practice or at the end of the season. And the new banner that hangs from the rafters of the Garden commemorates the place that they have earned in history.

And I know that the season is heating up again, so I don't want to be too long. I just want to make sure that I wish everybody good luck on the ice tomorrow night and during the rest of the season as well.

Congratulations, gentlemen. Great job. All right.

Boston Globe LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Marchand has 'Ball' at White House

By Stephen Harris / Bruins Notebook | Tuesday, January 24, 2012 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Boston Bruins

WASHINGTON — It's safe to assume Brad Marchand has a new nickname, courtesy of some White House speechwriter who both has a sense of humor and knows something about hockey.

During his nearly seven-minute remarks about the Stanley Cup champion Bruins yesterday in front of the crowded White House East Room, President Barack Obama mentioned several players by name.

One was Marchand, standing with his teammates, coaches and bosses on some low stands just behind Obama and the Stanley Cup. Among those on hand were ex-Bruins Mark Recchi, Shane Hnidy and Tomas Kaberle.

"Brad Marchand," Obama said, "went into the season playing on the fourth line, but 'The Little Ball of Hate' shrugged off the rookie jitters and — what's up with that nickname, man? — scored five goals in the last five games of the finals series."

Little Ball of Hate? We're not quite sure where that came from, although no doubt there are plenty of guys across the NHL who'd regard the nickname as perfectly accurate.

"When I first heard my name, I kind of blacked out," Marchand said. "I got a little nervous. I didn't know what he was going to be (saying). Then Z (Zdeno Chara) gave me a little shot, and I blacked out even more.

"But it was a pretty special thing for him to give me a little bit of recognition and kind of joke around up there. It was a special thing. He called me a Little Ball of Hate. I haven't heard that nickname before. It might be now. I wouldn't be surprised if that one stuck.

"It was great to be recognized as a team and then as an individual. It's an honor and privilege to hear that kind of speech."

Marchand later tweeted: "I guess if the President of the United States gives you a nickname, you have to stick with it."

Obama also got in a crack about Chara's height.

"And there is no better image of the Bruins' dominance than the tallest player in NHL history — I'll let you guess which one that is — Zdeno Chara, hoisting the Cup above the ice in Vancouver, which is I'm sure the highest that the Stanley Cup had ever been," Obama said.

The ornate room was filled to overflowing with Bruins staffers, family and guests, along with a variety of government workers and politicians, including Boston Mayor Tom Menino and Sen. John Kerry.

Earlier, the Bruins party got a 45-minute tour of the White House (although not the Oval Office).

“It was great,” center Patrice Bergeron said. “You always see this place on TV. To actually be inside, have the tour and meet the president was very special. It’s something I’ll never forget. I’m very proud of this.

“There have been so many good memories from winning the Cup, and now coming here is another great one. We won together, and now we got to come here and do this together. This is very special.”

Horton’s head

General manager Peter Chiarelli had little news on winger Nathan Horton, who was knocked out of Sunday’s win in Philadelphia on a hit by the Flyers’ Tom Sestito.

“I don’t have an official update other than I think it’s a mild concussion,” Chiarelli said. “These things are day-to-day, so I would say it’s day-to-day. It may not be. There’s this gray area between when you have your ImPACT tests, and you see how it is the next day, the following day, and then you make that determination. He’s in that gray area.”

Chiarelli did say Horton is doubtful for tonight’s game against the Capitals. .??.

Team president Cam Neely made it clear the Bruins did not support Tim Thomas’ decision to skip the event, saying “his views certainly do not reflect those of the Jacobs family or the organization.” (See pages 2-3 for more on Thomas.)

Boston Herald LOADED: 01.24.2012

Boston Bruins

Thomas a no-show at White House

By Stephen Harris | Monday, January 23, 2012 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Boston Bruins

WASHINGTON — Goalie Tim Thomas, the Bruins' lone American player to get his name on the 2011 Stanley Cup, was a highly prominent no-show today as his team visited the White House.

At 6 p.m., Thomas posted the following explanation on his Facebook page:

"I believe the Federal government has grown out of control, threatening the Rights, Liberties, and Property of the People.

"This is being done at the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial level. This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers vision for the Federal government.

"Because I believe this, today I exercised my right as a Free Citizen, and did not visit the White House. This was not about politics or party, as in my opinion both parties are responsible for the situation we are in as a country. This was about a choice I had to make as an INDIVIDUAL.

"This is the only public statement I will be making on this topic."

General manager Peter Chiarelli said earlier in the day that he had discussed Thomas' position on this event for months . He said Thomas could be suspended for not showing up for a team event, but will not be.

Team president Cam Neely released a statement, saying, in part, "We are disappointed that Tim chose not to join us, and his views certainly do not reflect those of the Jacobs family or the Bruins organization. This will be the last public comment from the Bruins organization on this subject."

Thomas has said he's a fan of former Fox News Channel host Glenn Beck, once saying he aspired to appear on the conservative's talk show as a guest.

Thomas has also been celebrated as a "true Tea Party patriot" by Big Government, a Web site founded by conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart. The site referred to Thomas having "In God We Trust" and the Gadsden flag on his mask.

During a seven-minute address in the crowded East Room at the White House, President Barack Obama praised the Bruins for their Cup-winning season and for the good work by the Bruins Foundation.

As for on-ice news, Chiarelli said the team believes winger Nathan Horton probably suffered a mild concussion in Philadelphia on Sunday, and is doubtful to face the Washington Capitals tomorrow night.

Boston Herald LOADED: 01.24.2012