
Final test

By **Barbara Matson**

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BEDFORD — The Bruins touched down at Hanscom Air Field yesterday into chaos.

With a large group of reporters and television cameras clustered on the edge of a noisy runway, only five players stopped to talk, and all were designated for the role. Call it the tarmac power play; it worked about as well as the Bruins' on-ice power play.

The Bruins did manage a marginal improvement on the power play in Wednesday night's 5-4 loss to Tampa Bay in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals, scoring once. But they are still a dreadful 5 for 61 in the postseason (8.2 percent), even as they are one victory from reaching the Stanley Cup finals.

They'll try one more time tonight to get past the Lightning in Game 7 at TD Garden.

"I don't think we're deterred," said coach Claude Julien. "We've got a Game 7, it's at home, and we're one game away from going to the Stanley Cup finals, and the opportunity's in front of us. So why shouldn't we be excited?"

"This is what playoffs is all about. I guess if you had told us at the beginning of the year that we had to win one game to go to the Stanley Cup finals, we would be excited about it, and that's where we're at right now."

Goaltender Tim Thomas led the players off the plane, walking calmly but purposefully, his eyes shielded behind sunglasses, giving away nothing.

Patrice Bergeron, perhaps the beating heart of the team, was the first to stop and answer questions.

"We've worked all year to win in front of our fans," said Bergeron, who added that the Bruins will draw on the experience of beating Montreal in Game 7 in the first round, as well as the more recent experience of pushing hard for a victory against the Lightning Wednesday, right through the game's last 10 minutes.

"We've got to forget about the first six games — it's all about one now," Bergeron said. "It all comes down to one game. I think pressure is on both teams, and we shouldn't allow pressure to get in your head. You've got to go out there and play your game."

"It's a huge game, that's for sure. I mean, obviously, we know what's at stake, and we can't wait for tomorrow."

David Krejci, who had a hat trick in Game 6, also stopped to talk, but he speaks softly and his words were quickly absorbed into the pavement, sort of like his hat trick was.

"We know it's going to be hard," said Krejci. "Even [Wednesday], it's never over until it's really over. So just go out there tomorrow . . . just play the game you know how to play and we'll be fine."

Zdeno Chara, as always towering above it all, was calm, even dignified.

"Look, if somebody was going to tell us that we were going to be — before the playoffs or before the season — somebody would tell us we would be one win away from the finals, for sure we would be all excited," said Chara. "So we have to take it that way. We have to embrace it, be excited, and have fun at the same time."

Gregory Campbell talked about striking a balance between playing with high energy and playing intelligently.

“If you can find that balance that we have throughout the playoffs, where we’re on our toes but we’re relaxed, I think that’s what’s good,” Campbell said. “I don’t think it’s a bad thing to look ahead and be excited about the opportunity.

“You only get yourself in trouble when you’re looking too far ahead.”

The excitement this playoff run has generated in Boston is something novel for Chris Kelly, who spent the first seven years of his NHL career in Ottawa.

“Boston is a great sports town and they want us to do well,” said Kelly. “And we want to do well just as much as they do, so hopefully we can have a great effort tomorrow night.

“I hope it’s really loud and crazy, I hope it’s an exciting game for them, and we come out with a win.”

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