**FLORIDA PANTHERS DAILY CLIPS**

**OCT. 17, 2015**

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**Age-less Jaromir Jagr off to fast start for Florida Panthers**

By George Richards

Miami Herald

A few days before the Panthers started their season, Jaromir Jagr sat in front of his locker and said he disliked the first few games of a new year.

“The toughest part of a season is the start of it,’’ Jagr said. “Once you get going, get into game shape, you feel better and good about your game. I love it then. But the start is tough, it’s tough to get going. This is the toughest part.”

Well, the Panthers sure hope Jagr gets going soon.

Coming into Friday, Jagr was tied for fourth in the NHL in scoring (three others have seven points) with four goals and two assists.

On Thursday, Jagr had a hand in all three Florida goals in a 3-2 victory over Buffalo. Jagr gave the Panthers a 2-0 lead with a pair of first period goals then Sasha Barkov finished off a Jagr rebound in the third for the game-winner.

The 43-year-old Jagr didn’t score his fourth goal with New Jersey last year until his 23rd game. With the Panthers, he continues to climb up the NHL record book.

With 726 career goals, Jagr is five behind Marcel Dionne for fourth all-time and 15 goals behind Brett Hull for third.

Jagr needs 42 more points to tie Gordie Howe for third all-time and is 79 points behind Mark Messier for second.

With his devotion to fitness and staying on top of his game — “I try to become a better player every day. I have to.” — no one knows how long Jagr will continue to play at a high level.

“He’s always working on something whether it’s working out or walking around with weights on his ankles or a weighed vest,’’ goalie Roberto Luongo told SiriusXM Radio on Friday.

“He’s always doing something to push himself. ... It’s something you don’t see anywhere else, really. I don’t know how long he can play but probably until he’s 50.’’

Jagr appears to have been rejuvenated since joining the Panthers in February and paired with youngsters Jonathan Huberdeau and Barkov.

The trio were all scoring at about a point a game pace at the end of last season and have picked up where they left off.

Barkov, 20, has scored in each of the past two games and has five points.

Huberdeau, 22, has yet to score a goal but his play has been praised by coach Gerard Gallant. It seems to be only a matter of time before Huberdeau starts putting up points as well.

The Panthers have won 15 of 24 games since Jagr joined the team.

“He’s incredible out there and to see him at 43 still be one of the best players in the NHL is crazy,’’ Huberdeau also told SiriusXM Radio on Friday.

“He’s a legend in the NHL, you know the records. Last year, he was setting something every other game. It’s cool to have the chance to play with this guy.”

▪ Former NHL defenseman Hal Gill officially joined the Panthers organization on Friday by being named manager of player development.

Gill, who played in over 1,100 NHL games and won the Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh in 2009, will work with former Florida captain Bryan McCabe in working with the Panthers’ prospects.

▪ The Panthers announced Friday they would match all donations up to $100,000 this fiscal year for the Boys & Girls Club of Broward County to benefit math, reading and homework help programs in Broward.

**SATURDAY: STARS AT PANTHERS**

▪ When, Where: 7 p.m.; BB&T Center, Sunrise

▪ TV/Radio: FSN; WWNN 1470, WMEN 620, WNMA 1210

▪ Series: Tied 13-13-3

▪ Scouting report: This will be the first of two meetings between the two within a week as Florida visits Dallas next Saturday. The Stars swept the two-game series last season. Florida and Dallas came into Friday tied for second in the league with three wins each. Dallas’ 15 goals are tied for third in the league; Florida’s 14 are sixth.

**Panthers center Barkov coming of age**

Harvey Fialkov  
Sun Sentinel

Most likely the Finnish-born Sasha Barkov has never heard of Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th president of the United States.

But the shy 20-year-old, third-year center of the Panthers certainly embodies the legendary Rough Rider's iconic quote: "Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far."

Barkov, the second overall pick of the 2013 NHL draft, is evolving into one of the game's top two-way forwards and his teammates don't believe he has even scratched the surface of his potential.

"The sky's the limit for him," veteran center Derek MacKenzie said after practice Friday at the BB&T Center. "Not knowing [Barkov] last year at the start and then quietly becoming a fan of his, he came into training camp this year really ready to take on the role, to want the puck and be the guys in those [big] situations.

"That's fun to watch and exactly what you want. It's exciting to see how far he'll go."

Barkov has two goals and five points in four games. Since Future Hall of Fame right wing Jaromir Jagr joined the team in February to play on a line with Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau, Barkov has nine goals and 20 points in 25 games.

Preview: Stars at Panthers, Saturday, 7 p.m.

Built similarly at 6 foot 3 and 213 pounds, Barkov also protects the puck like a mother hen protects her chick. And with Jagr urging him to shoot more, the centerman is putting a lot more pucks on net this season. He has six shots on goal in each of the last two games, giving him a team-leading 16.

"I didn't have a lot of shots last year. But this year I try to shoot more," Barkov said. "I think I had six shots last game; that's good.

"It's a lot of fun to play that's why we all three feel pretty confident. That's why I worked hard this summer. I want to play a lot of minutes and try to produce and try to defend well."

In Thursday's 3-2 victory over the Sabres, Barkov's slick, cross-crease saucer pass right to Jagr's stick resulted in a first-period power-play goal. With the Sabres closing to 2-1, Barkov steered in a rebound off Jagr's shot for the clinching goal on another power play in the third period.

He also helped kill off five of Buffalo's six power plays, an added role he has assumed this year and why he leads all Panthers forwards in time-on-ice at 19:19 per game.

"The first time I saw him I'm, 'that could be a young Hossa,' "Panthers coach Gerard Gallant said of Blackhawks forward Marian Hossa, who has helped Chicago win three Stanley Cup titles. "He's a big, strong guy; he handles the puck well. Obviously, Hossa had great years and won some Cups and got a lot of points. That's the player we'd love him to be.

"[Usually] kids that age come into the NHL and their offensive skills are there, but they don't play well defensively. But this kid has defensive skills first and offensive skills second. … You could tell the kid's father was a coach because he taught the kid to play the game the right way on both ends of the rink."

Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo has a perfect perch to observe Barkov.

"Other than his skills he's got great hockey sense. He's in the right place at the right time, not only in the offensive zone but in the defensive zone," Luongo said. "It's scary to think at his age that he's so good already and what he can do as he gets older."

Panthers general manager Dale Tallon announced that former NHL defenseman Hal Gill will be the team's manager of player development and work closely with Bryan McCabe, the director of player development.

Gill, 40, has played 1,108 games and recorded 36 goals and 184 points with 962 penalty minutes for six different teams. He won a Stanley Cup with the Penguins in 2009.

**Preview: Stars at Panthers, Saturday, 7 p.m.**

Harvey Fialkov

Sun Sentinel

When/where: 7 p.m.; BB&T Center, Sunrise

TV: FSF Radio: 560-AM

Notable: The 3-1 Panthers are coming off a 3-2 victory over the Sabres on the strength of two goals by Jaromir Jagr, who leads the team with four goals and six points. The Panthers had two power-play goals and have 14 goals in four games while allowing five. It's the second-best goal differential (plus-9) and second fewest goals allowed in the NHL. ... The Panthers were 0-1-1 against the Stars last season, including a 2-0 loss in Dallas behind Kari Lehtonen's shutout. A low check by D Dmitry Kulikov injured Stars F Tyler Seguin's knee and knocked out the NHL's third leading scorer at the time for several weeks. Kulikov was suspended for four games for clipping and Seguin's absence severely damaged the Stars' playoff hopes. ... Former Panthers G Dan Ellis made his season debut in the rematch because both Florida goaltenders, Roberto Luongo and Al Montoya, were injured in the previous game. The Stars won a 4-3 shootout. ... The Stars, also 3-1, are tied for third in goals (15) and their fifth-ranked power play added two more PPGs in a 5-3 victory over host Tampa on Thursday. ... Stars F Jamie Benn, who led the NHL with 87 points last season, has five points in four games. F Jason Spezza and F Ales Helmsky pace Dallas with six points apiece.

# Nichushkin returns to lineup when Stars face Panthers

# Adam Kimelman NHL.com

**STARS (3-1-0) at PANTHERS (3-1-0)**

**TV: FS-SW, FS-F**

**Season series:** The Dallas Stars beat the Florida Panthers twice last season. In their most recent game, March 5 at BB&T Center, Colton Sceviour scored the only goal of the shootout in a 4-3 Stars victory. Panthers defenseman Dmitry Kulikov led the Panthers with two points in two games against the Stars.

**Stars team scope:** Forward Valeri Nichushkin will be in the lineup Saturday after being scratched the past two games, coach Lindy Ruff told the Dallas Morning News on Friday. In two games, Nichushkin had five shots on goal. "I just think his decisions with the puck haven't been quick enough," Ruff said. "I want to see his feet going more and his decisions to be quicker. For him to be effective he has to move his feet and he has to think the game quick." Nichushkin said he knows what he has to do. "I had a couple of mistakes and I don't want to make those," he said. "I watched a couple of games, and I think I learned." Ruff said forward Curtis McKenzie was returning to Dallas for further evaluation. He was hospitalized because of a lower-body injury sustained Thursday against the Tampa Bay Lightning. He will be placed on injured reserve and there is no timetable for how long he will be out.

**Panthers team scope:** It's a small sample size, but one big reason for Florida's strong start has been its defensive play. In four games, they've allowed 1.25 goals per game, down from the 2.60 goals per game they allowed last season. A big reason has been the play of goaltender Roberto Luongo, who has allowed four goals in three games. It's also been solid play from the defensemen; the Panthers returned the same top six they used last season. "Everyone is playing their position really well, keeping it simple in the [defensive] zone, not trying to beat guys 1-on-1," defenseman Alex Petrovic told the Panthers website Friday. "Just getting the puck out when we need to. Just think we've been really consistent."

**Dallas at Florida**

CBS Sports

Time: 07:00 P.M. EST

Venue: BB&T Center

Jaromir Jagr was 40 years old when the Dallas Stars signed him to a one-year deal in July 2012 hoping to get contributions from a future Hall of Famer during what many figured to be the tail end of his career.

Three years later, Jagr still is playing in the NHL - and at a high level to boot.

He'll look to continue his hot start as the Florida Panthers try to win four of their first five for the first time in 20 years when they host Dallas on Saturday night.

Jagr had 26 points in 34 games for the Stars during the lockout-shortened 2013 season before being traded to Boston and helping it reach the Stanley Cup Final. He signed with New Jersey before last season, then was dealt to the Panthers shortly after his 43rd birthday in February and recorded six goals and 12 assists in 20 games.

The Panthers (3-1-0) inked him to a one-year contract April 12 - the day after their 2014-15 season ended - and Jagr has delivered. He had two goals in a season-opening win over Philadelphia on Oct. 10 and scored twice while adding an assist in Thursday's 3-2 win over Buffalo.

Jagr has six points in his first four games for the first time since posting 11 during a six-game streak to begin the 2006-07 season while with the New York Rangers. His solid run this year has helped bring the Panthers to the verge of their first 4-1-0 start since 1995-96, when they made the franchise's lone appearance in the Stanley Cup Final.

''Sometimes the puck goes in, sometimes it doesn't,'' Jagr said. ''It doesn't matter what you do. I learned that over 25 years. Right now the puck is going in, so I'm trying to shoot it.''

His former team also is off to a 3-1-0 start after Jason Spezza, Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn and Cody Eakin finished with a goal and an assist apiece in Thursday's 5-3 win at Tampa Bay.

The Stars last won four of their first five during a 6-1-0 opening run in 2011-12.

Spezza has four goals and two assists after following up Tuesday's hat trick against Edmonton with another solid effort to begin Dallas' trip.

''It's been a good week for me,'' Spezza said. ''I'm just trying to keep it going.

"It's a tough league, and you have to win games when you can. When you have a four-game trip against Eastern teams you don't know well, it is good to start it off with a win."

The Stars are facing injury concerns, though. They recalled Curtis McKenzie from the AHL on Wednesday after Patrick Eaves was placed on injured reserve with a lower-body injury, but McKenzie suffered an apparent leg injury when he was hit hard by Tampa's Nikita Nesterov, who was given a game misconduct.

Coach Lindy Ruff said after the game that McKenzie was in "excruciating pain" and taken to a local hospital for evaluation. There's been no official word on the extent of the injury or how much time he'll miss.

Kari Lehtonen made 30 saves Thursday in his second straight start. He had a 37-save shutout in the first meeting with the Panthers last season but was removed after allowing three goals on 14 shots before Dallas rallied for a 4-3 shootout victory March 5.

Roberto Luongo hasn't faced Dallas since making 35 saves in a 3-2 victory April 6, 2014. He has a 1.34 goals-against average while starting three games this season.

**Panthers Hire Hal Gill in Player Development Role**Jason Brough   
NBC Sports

The Florida Panthers have hired former NHL defenseman Hal Gill to be their manager of player development.

“We are very pleased to welcome Hal to our organization,” said GM Dale Tallon in a release. “We are honored to have someone with his level of hockey experience work with our prospects and assist them in developing their young careers.”

Gill retired in April after 16 seasons in the NHL. He won a Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh in 2009.

**Ex-Flyers exec Peter Luukko sees bright future for Panthers in new role**Alex Prewitt  
Sports Illustrated

PHILADELPHIA – It was a foolish mission, truly, standing in the press box hallway at Wells Fargo Center and expecting uninterrupted conversation with Peter Luukko. Not here, in the rink he oversaw as president of the Philadelphia Flyers. Not now, with warm-ups underway for the home opener and Luukko visiting for the first time in his new job, as executive chairman for the Florida Panthers. Not with so many passing back-slappers, hand-shakers, thumbs-uppers and—hang on, hold that thought. Here come two more.

“Seanny!” Luukko says.

“Peter! What’s going on? How’s it being back?”

“Good, good.”

The new gig that coaxed Luukko back into the NHL, 14 months after his abrupt resignation, following more than a quarter-century as the COO of Comcast Spectacor, surprised many of those now seeking him out this Monday night. At the time, Luukko’s rationale involved cashing out from various ventures, investing in new ones and spending more time watching his two sons – Nick, a Flyers prospect currently in the ECHL, and Max, a defenseman playing on their affiliated junior team. His decision stunned them too, but soon Luukko was seeking their advice about this other project in Florida. They told him he should accept the offer, that missing their games was okay.

So on Feb. 5, Luukko formally became the executive chairman of Sunrise Sports and Entertainment, charged to, in his words today, “build it back.”

The initial nudge came from Commissioner Gary Bettman, who asked his friend—a member of the NHL’s Board of Governors—to connect with Panthers owner Vinnie Viola. Around that time last winter, the franchise was moving toward its 13th playoff absence in 14 seasons, asking Broward County for hefty financial support, and enduring what would become its worst attended season at BB&T Center by more than 3,000 tickets per game. It wasn’t unreasonable to wonder whether the Panthers were long for their current home, even though their lease at BB&T Center wouldn’t expire until 2028.

“Early on, I had some of the questions and my answer was simple: We’re committed to Florida,” Luukko said. “I use the fact that I came in and bought a condo. We cleared that up pretty quick, that relocation wasn’t in the cards.”

Luukko came with an enthusiasm rooted in his time taking over arenas and stadiums with another company, Global Spectrum, and in Florida he found a similar challenge. According to the Sun-Sentinel, the Panthers lost $36 million last season and $27.3 million in 2013-14 after Viola and partner Doug Cifu bought the team in Sept. 2013. But between the late-February trade for the enduring—and now re-mullet-ing—Jaromir Jagr; the league’s largest year-to-year standings improvement at 25 points; a promising young core led by former No. 1 pick Aaron Ekblad; a solid turnout when they hosted the NHL draft this June and a reported sellout of 19,434 for last Saturday’s opener (114% of capacity), Luukko had no reason for anything but optimism.

“I think people see the future of the team,” he said. “I think our messaging has been consistent and honest. I think you have to be honest with the fans. The fans have one hell of a b---s--- meter. If you’re just honest, telling them what you’re doing and what your plan is, how you’re going to grow the core along with some solid veterans, they’ll believe in that. Then you have to have success.”

Several days before the hiring was official, Panthers GM Dale Tallon met Luukko for lunch at Shula’s near Times Square, during a team road trip to play the Rangers. They talked for hours and quickly learned their beliefs aligned. “It was like we’d been together for a long time,” Tallon said. Change came fast. Luukko expanded a “limited sales staff, limited marketing staff” and “basically started from scratch” on the business side, making the media rounds and forming early-morning shinny hockey at the rink.

“He’s making them feel really like they’re a big part of it, and embracing their attitudes and their opinions,” Tallon said. “Plus he knows how to do it. He’s done it before. There’s belief there. Guys working in that side of it believe in what he’s doing because he has that history and that success.”

“We’re all in it together,” Luukko. “We’re feeling we’ve got a lot to prove, not only on the ice but on the business side. There’s that jump in everybody. We want to be significant in the league.”

By the time the Panthers pulled into the loading dock at Wells Fargo Center and Luukko spotted the window of his old office from inside his new team’s bus, that opening-night sellout crowd had already witnessed them crush the Flyers by six goals on Saturday, before flying here to return the home-and-home. (“I think the gods at the league fixed that one for me,” Luukko laughed of the scheduling. “The fix was in.”) It felt bittersweet, Luukko said, walking into a visiting locker room he had only previously seen while looking for Max and Nick, who would hunt there for broken sticks to play knee hockey. But it was also nice seeing everyone—Seanny in the hallway and Joe outside the locker room and the Diamond brothers on the ice crew.

“You come back to a town like this, you want to win, because obviously we need the points and we want to get those points in October, but it’s not like there’s this huge satisfaction beating the old team,” he said. “These guys all want to win. You’ve been through the wars with them. But from 7 to 10 o’clock at night, you want to win the game for yourself. It’s great.”

Before long, Brayden Schenn’s first-period goal would give the Flyers a 1–0 victory and some measure of revenge for the thumping they took in Sunrise two days earlier. Luukko would find his office window again as the bus nosed toward the airport. A public workshop to debate the latest $86 million request from Broward County, which owns BB&T Center, was scheduled for Oct. 20. The regular season would chug along, through two more wins and their best four-game start since 2008-09, and the…actually, could we pick this up later? Pregame warm-ups are about to start. It would be nice to see what the Flyers had in store.

**NHL Gameday: Dallas Stars continue road trip with Florida stop**

Star-Telegram

Stars at Panthers

6 p.m. Saturday, BB&T Center, Sunrise, Fla.

TV: FSSW Radio: KTCK/1310 AM and 96.7 FM

Records: Stars 3-1-0, 6 points; Panthers 3-1-0, 6 pts.

About the Stars: They started this four-game road trip with a 5-3 win at Tampa Bay on Thursday. … Valeri Nichushkin is expected to return to the lineup after being scratched the past two games. … The Stars recalled forward Radek Faksa from the Texas Stars to replace Curtis McKenzie, who was hospitalized with a lower-body injury after being checked into the boards by Tampa Bay’s Nikita Nesterov, who has been suspended for two games.

About the Panthers: Goalie Roberto Luongo has allowed four goals in three games. ... On offense, Florida is led in goals (4) and points (6) by 42-year-old Jaromir Jagr, who is playing his 21st season in the NHL, including the 2012-13 with the Stars. Jagr had two goals and an assist in a 3-2 win over Buffalo on Thursday.

**Stars recall F Faksa**

The Sports Xchange

The Dallas Stars recalled forward Radek Faksa from the Texas Stars of the American Hockey League, the team announced Friday.

Faksa, 21, will be with the NHL team for the first time. He was a first-round draft pick in 2012.

Faksa has seven goals in 41 career AHL regular-season games.

Dallas also placed forward Curtis McKenzie on injured reserve with a lower-body injury.

# Stars expect Patrick Sharp to be important piece of Cup puzzle By Scott Burnside

# ESPN

DALLAS -- The Dallas Stars have finished their last practice before the start of the 2015-16 season and the players are already moving through post-practice routines -- meeting with reporters, showering, playing pingpong at the end of the hallway.

Well, that's the routine for most players.

Patrick Sharp, one of the newest and arguably most important Stars, has returned to the ice and is firing pucks at a net on the nearly empty sheet of ice at the team's practice facility.

Former NHLer Craig Ludwig, a two-time Stanley Cup winner and longtime broadcast analyst in Dallas, wondered if some of the younger players on this talented Stars team would take note of the extra work being put in by the 33-year-old.

"He just does all the little things," Ludwig said. "That's why [general manager] Jim [Nill] brought him here."

Such an interesting experiment unfolding in the state of Texas.

The Stars, once a league power before the introduction of a salary cap and the search for a new owner caused some lean years, are looking to reinvent themselves as a Stanley Cup contender.

Ownership is solid under Tom Gaglardi.

Nill, now in his third season at the helm after apprenticing in Detroit for almost two decades, has one of the league's most explosive teams, with defending scoring champ Jamie Benn (the franchise's first Art Ross Trophy winner), Tyler Seguin and Jason Spezza.

But after sneaking into the 2013-14 postseason, the Stars could not meet high expectations last season and were plagued by unreliable goaltending and suspect team defense.

Enter Sharp and Chicago Blackhawks teammate Johnny Oduya. The two have five Stanley Cup rings between them. (Well, technically three because both Oduya and Sharp have yet to receive their rings from last June's championship, the third in six years for the dynastic Blackhawks, but expect to later this month in a private ceremony with Chicago officials.)

The additions bring into focus the longstanding question of whether experience is crucial to a team's success.

Nill was in Detroit when things pretty much stunk all the time and was still there when the Red Wings got good every season, slowly turning over the roster but always ensuring there was a bridge connecting one generation to the next -- Steve Yzerman, Brendan Shanahan and Chris Chelios passing the torch to Pavel Datsyuk, Henrik Zetterberg and Niklas Kronwall, who are passing on knowledge and experience to Tomas Tatar, Danny DeKeyser and Justin Abdelkader.

In Dallas, Nill is hoping Sharp and Oduya can help build a similar bridge.

"Well, it's a big part of why we obtained those guys," Nill said. "That's something that just doesn't grow on trees. You have to live it. It has to be nurtured. It has to be passed on as you mentioned. And that's something that was maybe missing here a little bit. But we're starting to get it now.

"It's Jamie Benn now, the young captain, going to the Olympics and nobody really knew who he was and all of a sudden taking charge and being the guy. So he's starting to learn it. And all of a sudden you bring in a Patrick Sharp, a Jason Spezza, a Johnny Oduya, these guys that have been there and done it. It's important. It's so important. The coaching staff, the management team, we can tell them all we want, [but] in the end, it's the dressing room that's going to drive the boat."

Veteran Vernon Fiddler, a 35-year-old who has never played more than six NHL playoff games in a season, believes the impact of Sharp and Oduya can be felt among Stars young and old.

"Even for an older guy like myself, I'd give one of my fingers to win a championship and a Stanley Cup," Fiddler said.

And to watch Sharp and Oduya go about their business, listen to their thoughts on preparation and listen to how things were done in an environment where winning it all has become an annually attainable goal has tremendous value in a place such as Dallas.

"I think our young guys can learn from that; where it just doesn't happen that you get to the Stanley Cup finals almost every second year, that there's things that you have to do off the ice and on the ice to find those ways to get to the finals and make deep runs in the playoffs," Fiddler said.

"We thought we had a team last year that could do some damage, and it doesn't matter what you have on paper, you have to put the work in and play your system and follow through with that and I think that's been a big wake-up call for us here," Fiddler said.

The Stars don't need Sharp to score 80 points. They have players who can do that.

They need him to make plays when it matters most. They need him to speak up when players are looking to cut corners, because the easy path is not the path to a Cup.

And in Sharp, the Stars have a player who relishes the chance to lead this group to success.

"It's exciting," Sharp said in a nearly empty Stars dressing room.

"I feel that pressure. I feel those expectations. Expectations are something that are nothing new for myself, for Johnny Oduya. We come from an organization that has expectations to win the Stanley Cup every year."

It's a fine line to tread, being ready to share experience, being a voice that resonates in a room; it's another to come off like a jerk.

Sharp chuckled at the notion of managing that tightrope.

"I know I have some experience," he said. "And I have played in some big situations, but at the same time I'm walking into a locker room to a team that I know some of the guys, but it's their locker room. I'm not going to come in here and change too much, but you look around the room, you see guys with great experience, guys that have been around the league a long time, the pieces are there. Whatever I can do to come in and improve the team, I'm going to try and do."

Not that these moves don't give a player and his family pause.

A decade ago, Sharp's college girlfriend moved to Philadelphia to go to nursing school and be with him, then a member of the Philadelphia Flyers. That December Sharp was traded to Chicago.

The girlfriend, who would become his wife and mother to his two young daughters, is now making a new life for the family in Texas.

"The family has transitioned a lot better than I thought it would," Sharp admitted. "My wife was a little upset leaving Chicago. She's been there for 10 years. People sometimes don't think about that. They just think about the hockey player and what's going on on the ice, but there's a lot more that goes on behind the scenes. My wife, the two girls, they've adjusted well. They're enjoying the weather. They're enjoying the city of Dallas. They've got no complaints, that's for sure."

On a personal level, there is also the not so small matter of moving on from his own relationships in the Blackhawks' dressing room.

"It's tough, whether you're playing hockey, professional sports, or working in an office," Sharp said.

"When you pack up and leave after 10 years, 10 fun years, 10 memorable years, there's going to be some emotion that comes with it, but my wife and I are looking at it like it's a new chapter, a new opportunity. At the end of the day, I'm a hockey player and Dallas presents an opportunity where I can hopefully come down here and be an impact player on a good team."

The motivation to win somewhere else is a strong one. In some ways as good as Sharp has been -- since 2009, he is sixth in the league with 80 postseason points in 117 games -- he has played in the large shadow cast by Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews and Duncan Keith.

Head coach Lindy Ruff has been impressed not just with the effort but the attitude of the veteran winger.

"I think what I like is how eager he is to get going and get playing," Ruff said. "He's not spending much time in the past. He's looking forward to this opportunity, a new opportunity. He would no more like to win a fourth Stanley Cup and be a big part of it and I think that's the part I like. He's not living on what went on in Chicago. He's moved on and says, 'I know I've got to do some things better to help these guys and to help myself.' I think that's all you can ask."

Ludwig saw first-hand what these kinds of moves can mean to a team looking to take the final step.

Ludwig moved with the franchise from Minnesota to Dallas in the summer of 1993. Over the course of the next few seasons, GM Bob Gainey brought in Brian Skrudland, Guy Carbonneau and Mike Keane, players who had won championships in Montreal.

Those players helped homegrown stars such as Mike Modano share the burden of leadership as the team became a Cup contender and finally a Cup champion in 1999.

Ludwig joked that when head coach Ken Hitchcock asked for a meeting of the team's leadership group, they needed to hold it in the dressing room because there wasn't room for all the players in Hitchcock's office.

Sharp and Oduya have the potential to be catalysts to something similar, Ludwig predicted.

These moves aren't without their risks.

Sharp has another year after this on his contract that carries an annual cap hit of $5.9 million. He saw his role diminish slightly last spring as he played mostly third-line minutes for the Blackhawks and, bothered by injury, his 16 goals during the regular season were down from 34 in 2013-14.

Still, former Stars assistant GM and longtime NHL executive Frank Provenzano, who has contributed to ESPN's hockey coverage in the past several years, believes the risk is an acceptable one for the Stars.

First, there's not a long-term commitment to Sharp or Oduya, both of whom have another year left on their current deals. And they are being asked to be complementary players who bring a wealth of big-game experience.

"If you're going to build your team around these guys, that's a different story," Provenzano said.

And while it's difficult to quantify -- and Provenzano warned that Cup experience can be overvalued -- there is value in adding that element to a locker room.

"Until you've won, you haven't won," Provenzano said. "There aren't many players relative to the whole player pool who have, players who are going to be able to play in a meaningful way on your team."

We'll see just whether that street cred can be a catalyst to something more meaningful, nay, memorable, in Texas.