

Leadoff hitter Leonys Martin, w

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Captain Steven Stamkos and high-scoring Nikita Kucherov garner lots of attention. However <http://www.panthersauthorizedshops.com/authentic-dj-moore-jersey>, the Tampa Bay Lightning are hardly a two-man show.

The top seed in the Eastern Conference got early goals from four players – none of them named Stamkos or Kucherov – before holding off the New Jersey Devils for a 5-2 victory Thursday night in Game 1 of the first-round series.

Ondrej Palat, Tyler Johnson and Yannick Cournoyer scored, helping the Lightning build a 3-0 lead that New Jersey trimmed to one goal before Alex Killorn and Kucherov, who added an empty-netter with 1:12 remaining, finished off the win before a crowd of 19,092.

"Not the outcome we wanted," Devils goalie Keith Kinkaid said "That's why it's a series and not a game."

Taylor Hall scored an unassisted goal off a turnover in the second period, then assisted on Travis Zajac's power-play goal that trimmed the Devils' deficit to 3-2 midway through third against Andrei Vasilevskiy, who had 29 saves for Tampa Bay, which held off Boston in the final week of the season for the best record in the East.

For the Devils, a shaky opening period was too much to overcome.

"I don't know what happened. That's the way hockey goes sometimes. Starting on time is a big part of hockey, and especially playoff hockey," Hall said. "We have to be a team that's ready to battle right off the bat and just be aware that they have more than one line; more than Stamkos and Kucherov. They have a lot of dangerous guys and we have to be aware."

The line of Palat [Youth Nyheim Hines Jersey](#), Johnson and Brayden Point, matched up against New Jersey's top line, produced a pair of first-period goals and finished with six points.

Killorn's shot over Kinkaid's glove restored a two-goal lead before Kucherov, who led the Lightning with 100 points this season, ensured there would be no comeback.

"I thought we played really well. I thought we played within our structure," said Johnson, who also had an assist on Palat's goal. "You've got to give Jersey credit. They pushed in that second period. That third period, I thought we took it back over. If we continue to play like that, I like our chances this series."

Game 2 is Saturday at Amalie Arena.

Tampa Bay beat the Devils for the first time this year. The Devils won all three meetings between the teams during the regular season, with each game decided by one goal.

Kinkaid entered his first career playoff game as one of the hottest goalies in the league, going 7-0-1 over his last eight starts to help New Jersey grab its first playoff berth since the Devils reached the Stanley Cup Finals in 2012.

The Lightning, on the other hand, have been driven all season by failing to make the playoffs last spring after making deep runs previous two years.

With Kucherov and Stamkos leading the way [Authentic Thomas Rawls Jersey](#) , Tampa Bay paced the NHL in scoring and Vasilevskiy set a franchise record and tied for the league lead with 44 victories in his first season as a No. 1 goaltender.

But after reaching the Stanley Cup Finals in 2015 and coming within one victory of a return trip two years ago, this season ultimately will be judged on whether the Lightning can put together another strong bid to win it all.

"Last year was the first year that I missed the playoffs in any league. I've never had a long summer like that and that summer felt like forever," said Johnson, who has 22 goals in 48 career playoff games.

"So I'm glad where we're at right now. I'm excited to be back at this time," Johnson added. "It's the best hockey. It's the most fun you can play in."

While the Devils did a nice job of containing the high-scoring Kucherov and Stamkos, Palat, Johnson, Killorn and Gourde, who set a Lightning rookie record with 25 goals this season, showed why it's so difficult to totally shut down Tampa Bay's offense.

The momentum shifted on New Jersey's first power-play opportunity. Even though the Devils didn't score, they got off five shots against Vasilevskiy, who weathered the barrage before Hall broke through after Palat turned the puck over in the Lightning zone.

"We looked a little bit tentative, a little bit unsure [Barkevious Mingo Color Rush Jersey](#) , but I thought we settled into the game, particularly in the second period," Devils coach John Hynes said. "I thought the second half of the game was a little more of how we wanted to play. We'll regroup and we'll be a better team Saturday."

Notes: Stamkos returned to Tampa Bay's lineup after missing the final three games of the regular season with a lower body injury. ... It's the third time the Devils and Lightning have met in the playoffs. New Jersey won both previous series, advancing in the 2003 Eastern Conference semifinals in five games and ending a 2007 quarterfinal matchup in six. ... Zajac and captain Andy Greene are the only players remaining on New Jersey's roster from the Devils' 2012 postseason run.

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What the Detroit Tigers were hoping would be a very big week in Ohio is off to a very slow start.

With the surprising Tigers' biggest series of the season coming up this weekend, they're not getting much time to turn things around.

The Tigers brought a five-game winning streak and plenty of confidence into a week that's beginning with two games against the last-place Reds in Cincinnati and ending with three against the first-place Indians in Cleveland. They started out the week 2 1/2 games behind the Indians in the AL Central, and were talking openly of leaving Cleveland with the division lead on Sunday night.

But they're now four games back following the Indians' home-field wins over the Chicago White Sox on successive nights and the Tigers' 9-5 loss to the Reds on Tuesday night. The Tigers let their game get away from them in a hurry after Joey Votto hit a grand slam in the third inning off Detroit starter Matthew Boyd (4-5).

The Tigers put up the kind of late-inning outburst that often wins games — a five-run ninth inning, against Reds reliever Wandy Peralta — but the trouble was they were down 9-0 when the inning began. Reds starter Sal Romano (4-7) shut them out on four hits over seven innings and now has allowed only one run over 15 innings in his last two starts.

“This wasn’t a good game for us,” Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. “The other guy was throwing the ball well. ... It wasn’t one of our better nights. You walk a few people (six), give up a few hits and (have) some long innings, and there you have it.”

Now, the Tigers don’t have much time to bounce back as they face an afternoon game Wednesday in Great American Ball Park, with right-hander Michael Fulmer (3-5, 4.13 ERA) going up against the Reds’ best pitcher of late in Tyler Mahle (5-6 [Matt Holliday Jersey](#) , 3.96). The Reds right-hander has permitted only two earned runs over 16 1/3 innings in his last three starts.

“Detroit, you look at their record, they’re getting after it every night,” said Reds interim manager Jim Riggleman, whose team has won five of seven. “Ron Gardenhire’s got them playing hard and you’d better play the whole nine. They’re going to come after you.”

Neither pitcher in Wednesday’s game has faced the opposing team before.

Boyd hadn’t seen the Reds before, either, but Cincinnati made quick work of him, chasing him after getting five runs, six hits and three walks off him while he labored through four innings, throwing 80 pitches .

Some of the Reds’ low-average hitters did the most damage against Boyd and a Tigers bullpen that was almost flawless during the winning streak. Billy Hamilton, batting .203, went 2-for-4 with a home run and Adam Duvall, batting .196 [Marquis Haynes Color Rush Jersey](#) , was 3-for-4. Tucker Barnhart also was 3-for-3 as the Reds collected 13 hits.

Detroit wasted a big night at the plate by leadoff hitter Leonys Martin, who went 3-for-3 with a double and walked twice while reaching base five times.

Mahle got off to a rough start this season, losing six of his first nine decisions, but he pitched 6 1/3 shutout innings against the Kansas City Royals in a 7-0 win last Wednesday and five shutout innings against the San Diego Padres on June 1. In between, he gave up two runs to the Rockies in five innings on June 7.

"It's nice to put a couple (of no-run outings) close together like that," Mahle told reporters after beating the Royals. "I was able to put some zeros up there and our team is always going to be able to score at some point."

Fulmer is coming off a strong start, beating the Minnesota Twins 3-1 on Thursday while giving up only one run on five hits over seven innings. The win was Fulmer's first at Comerica Park in nearly a year, or since July 15.

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