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Leafs edge Canadiens in regular-season finale to set franchise points record

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TORONTO — Bring on the 2018 Stanley Cup playoffs.

The Maple Leafs will enter the post-season tournament in record-breaking fashion, as their 4-2 victory against the Montreal Canadiens on Saturday night at the Air Canada Centre brought them to 105 points to end the regular season. The record of 103 points had stood since 2003-04, when the Leafs amassed that total under Pat Quinn.

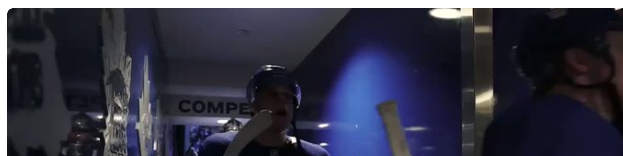
The Leafs finished with a record of 49-26-7, with 29 of those wins at home. The wins in total and at the ACC also are records. Now, it's four days off until the first round starts in Boston or Tampa.

The expectation is that Game 1 will be on Thursday.

"To get that points record is great, it's a milestone, but it's something you put in you back pocket and you look forward to the playoffs," Leafs forward Zach Hyman said.

"That's where everything really matters. Everybody remembers the good playoffs teams and the teams that win in the playoffs, not the good regular-season teams."

The win was goalie Frederik Andersen's 38th of the season, breaking the Leafs record of 37, held by Andrew Raycroft and Ed Belfour.



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"I think it's fantastic for him to have the Leafs record," coach Mike Babcock said. "I think it's a real big deal for him and he has been a huge part of our team since he's come here. The guys were pumped for him and proud of him. That was special."

For the first time, the Leafs completed a season sweep of the Canadiens in a season series that was at least four games.

A moment of silence was held before the game for the members of the Humboldt Broncos organization who died in a crash involving their team bus on Friday afternoon. During the game, the Leafs and Canadiens wore Broncos decals, made by the Leafs in-house, on their helmets.



Toronto Maple Leafs
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We play for Humboldt. #PrayForHumboldt

1:02 AM - Apr 8, 2018

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"What happened is tragic," said Leafs centre Auston Matthews, who had not talked to reporters in the morning about the crash. "It's tough to put into words. The hockey community is a tight-knit close family, so when something happens like that, somebody knows somebody who is involved and it's very sad."

Before a crowd of 19,525, Matthews scored his 34th goal and assisted on Zach Hyman's goal at 37 seconds of the third period. Matthews will start the playoffs on quite the run: He has at least one point in all nine games since returning from a shoulder injury and has a point in his past 10 games overall.



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NHL

Thu, Apr 12


7:00 PM ET

TORONTO (49-26-7)

BOSTON (50-20-12)

Hyman scored his 15th goal when he drove to the net and put a Matthews rebound past Canadiens goalie Carey Price.



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Find the gap. Find the goal. #MTLvsTOR | #TMLtalk

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With under three minutes to play, Nazem Kadri scored on a Toronto power play. Montreal's Mike Reilly and the Leafs' Patrick Marleau scored in the final minute.



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The Leafs lineup is expected to be the one that takes the ice in the playoff opener. The lone questions regarded the third pair on the blue line — Travis Dermott was back beside Roman Polak after missing two games with a bruised ankle — and on the fourth line. Though some would have preferred rookie Andreas Johnsson get a shot, it appears that's not going to happen initially, as Babcock is likely to go with Leo Komarov and Kasperii Kapanen flanking Tomas Plekanec.

"That's what I'm thinking," Babcock said when asked if his Game 1 lineup would be the same that played against the Canadiens. "That's my thought, if we were starting today."



Komarov's experience and ability to kill penalties in the heat of the post-season can't be shelved by the head coach, certainly not to start. There's no reason to delete Kapanen either.

Babcock was reminded of his comment upon being hired in May 2015 that "there is pain coming." Less than three years later, the Leafs have moved into the top echelon of the National Hockey League.

That's in the regular season. As Hyman said, it's what transpires in the playoffs that is paramount.

"Normally what happens with a young team is you get in the playoffs and then you start thinking like you might be one of the favourites — who knows what happens to our team this summer? — and then you end up having some playoff failures and then everyone is telling you how bad you are and then you fight through that and you find a way," Babcock said.

"Winning the ultimate prize is not an easy thing. As much as we're now a team in the league that looks like a good hockey club, you've got to do it year after year after year and you've got to be a team that can win at playoff time.

"It's a grind and I'm prepared for that totally."

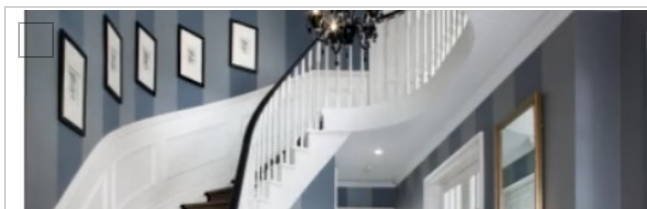
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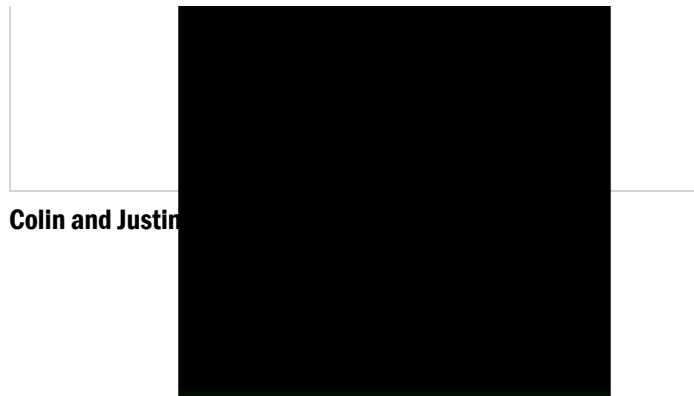
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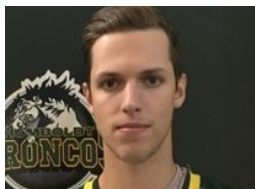


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