



PENGUINS 4



SHARKS 6

PENGUINS DREWED IN TIGHT BATTLE

Drew Gibson scores five as Sharks edge out Penguins
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Dubai, The first game of the New Year went right down to the wire as the Sharks, led magnificently by Drew Gibson, narrowly prevailed over the Penguins.

Played in the shadow of the recently inaugurated Burj Khalifa, the Penguins were once again without the reliable services of Swedish star David Dokakis, whose mushy love life seems to have distracted him from his true love of hockey.

Despite Dokakis's absence, the Penguins put up a brave fight against a full strength Sharks lineup consisting of Drew Gibson, Diego Kleckner, Jason Eid, Sam Padmore, Eric Zurcher, Alex Caneborg, Pinggoy Alcantara, and others.

The Penguins opened up the scoring when Iranian winger Amir Asad zipped by the Sharks defense faster than Usain Bolt fuelled by steroids, and netted his wrist shot into the bottom corner of the goal.

Mohamed got the Penguins up by two when he received a perfect lead pass from Toby Oakley and slid his shot by the Sharks Stephen Doucette.

It was about then that Drew Gibson awoke from his extended New Year holiday mood and put on a show so spectacular, so comprehensive, so spellbinding, that the Penguins could only watch and accept that a genius was truly at work.

Gibson's first goal was a dandy, a wicked wrist shot from the slot that pinged the crossbar before settling into the goal, leaving the Penguins goaltender Mathew Jones utterly helpless. Minutes later, Gibson was at it again. After dancing around a hesitant Mohamed, he wristed a shot that clanged off the corner of the post and crossbar, before dropping into the goal.

At the conclusion of the first period, the Penguins two goal cushion had evaporated into nothingness. Gibson's league leading 12th and 13th goals of the season had leveled the score in a space of just three breathless minutes. His laser like shots, laced with pinpoint accuracy were too hot to handle for the legless Penguins.

Little did they know that it was just the starting of a performance that would see the most goals scored in a game by a single player so far this season.

The second period started on a rather scrappy note, as players from both teams were penalized for petty crimes like tripping and hooking. The Penguins Belgian winger Maxime Rosez took advantage of the extra ice and found an opening past the Sharks defense. Rosez coolly put the puck past Doucette to give the Penguins the lead again.

This was, however, short lived as Gibson struck again. This time he pounced like a panther on a clearance error from goaltender Jones, to level things at three a piece.

Soon, the man from Canada was celebrating his fourth of the game when he was able to sneak a backhand shot under Jones's pads for his 15th goal of the season. It seemed like everything Drew touched would turn into gold.

With the Sharks up by one and half a period left to play, Diego Kleckner of the Sharks was sent to the sin bin after an interference offence on Mohamed. This was immediately followed by a fiery verbal exchange between the two players, but the referees were quick to intervene.

Speaking after the game, Mohamed gave his remarks on the incident: "I was just giving him directions to the penalty box," he said sheepishly.

On the ensuing power play, the Penguins bombarded the Sharks net with a flurry of shots, but goaltender Stephen Doucette was equal to the task, making several fine saves.

The Penguins continued to pressurize, and were finally rewarded with an equalizer with seconds left in the man advantage. Olivier VanDurme, playing his first game after breaking his hand, fed Mohamed with a centering pass in front of the net, and the Tanzanian made no mistake from five feet out to level the score at 4-4.

Diego Kleckner charged out of the box, eager to make amends for his penalty and almost did so when he absolutely smashed a rolling puck from the blue line. The wobbling rubber disc, traveling at the rate of knots, was caught in thin air by the Penguins goalie, Mathew Jones.

But then again, it was Drew Gibson Day. What with his girlfriend watching from the stands, and a new wakeboarding contract on its way, it was only fitting that Gibson scored the all important GWG (game winning goal).

After snaking past the defense as though they were mere pylons, Gibson pulled off a nifty deke before shelving the puck upstairs for his 5th of the game, and 16th of the season.

Although the Penguins tried hard to tie things up in the last few minutes, Diego Kleckner hammered in the final nail in the Penguins coffin when he broke free of the defense, and scored on Jones with just over a minute remaining in the game.

The goal rounded off the Sharks second win of the season, and second consecutively. They'll be looking to extend their winning streak to three next Saturday, when the two teams meet again at 6:30 am at the Dubai Mall. Caffeine will very much be the order of the day come next Saturday.

Mohamed Suleman (a.k.a. Mohamed Mohamed)