



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Blue Jackets-Sabres Preview

By Jon Palmieri
Associated Press
October 9, 2013

The potential return of No. 1 goaltender Ryan Miller should instill some confidence in the struggling Buffalo Sabres.

Unfortunately, he won't be able to do much to improve the league's worst offense.

With Miller likely to return, the Sabres aim to notch their elusive first win Thursday night when the well-rested Columbus Blue Jackets visit.

After opening the season with three consecutive losses and scoring two goals in those games, Buffalo doubled its output in a 3-2 overtime loss to Tampa Bay on Tuesday. The Sabres (0-3-1) earned their first point and avoided becoming only the 15th NHL team to open a season with three or fewer goals through four games.

Both goals came on the power play after Buffalo began the season 0 for 13 with the man advantage.

"We were able to get some more pucks through," coach Ron Rolston said. "I thought we had some more plays at the net and around the net. I think whenever that happens, you're going to have some success."

Jhonas Enroth made 32 saves in his second consecutive start but could give way to Miller on Thursday.

Miller did not dress Saturday against Pittsburgh and served as Enroth's backup Tuesday while nursing a lower-body injury. Miller, though, was a full participant in practice Wednesday and Rolston said he is healthy and available to play against Columbus.

"I knew it was pretty minor. I was just being cautious," Miller told the team's official website. "Jhonas was going to play in Pittsburgh anyways so I just took that opportunity to rest completely and guarantee some rest."

Miller, who has stopped 77 of 80 shots in his first two games, has a 2.12 goals-against average in five starts against the Blue Jackets (1-1-0).

Buffalo hasn't gone this long without a win to start a season since opening 0-5-0 with two ties in 1999-2000.

One of the many players Rolston hopes to see more from is second-year center Mikhail Grigorenko, the 12th overall pick in the 2012 draft. The 19-year-old has no points this season and one goal in 29 NHL games.

Rolston reiterated an earlier comment that Grigorenko's compete level was getting closer to where the coaching staff would like it to be.

"It's getting there, but it needs to continue to improve, I think," he said. "That's that last hurdle for him and that's something that he's got to work on."

This will be the first game for Columbus since a 3-2 shootout victory over the New York Islanders on Saturday after a season-opening 4-3 loss to Calgary a night earlier.

Mark Letestu and Nick Foligno scored 4:19 apart in the third period as the Blue Jackets erased a two-goal deficit before Cam Atkinson's goal in the fourth round of the shootout sealed the win.

"We pull for each other," Foligno said. "We played hard, the way we expect to play every night. We were rewarded for it. We kept pressing and wound up with a great result."

Sergei Bobrovsky figures to be back in net after stopping 28 shots through overtime and three of four shootout attempts Saturday.

This will be the teams' first meeting since the Blue Jackets' 5-1 home victory Nov. 25, 2011, ended a three-game losing streak in the series.

Sabres waiting for Grigorenko to show competitive fire

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 9, 2013

Tomas Hertl became a highlight-show sensation Wednesday after putting an exclamation point on his four-goal performance. While moving right on a breakaway, the San Jose rookie put the puck and his stick between his legs, then roofed a laser into the top left corner. The video became must-see TV that was witnessed by millions.

Meanwhile, with about five people watching in Buffalo, Mikhail Grigorenko made the same exact play.

A few Sabres remained on the ice following practice, and they worked on close-range shots and rebounds. Grigorenko went up Hertl's avenue with the trick shot, beating Jhonas Enroth and earning a big cheer from Marcus Foligno.

Displays of Grigorenko's skill are never far away. The difference is Hertl is making an impact during games and Grigorenko only shows morning glory.

Grigorenko's tenuous hold on a lineup spot may slip away tonight when the Sabres host Columbus in First Niagara Center. Rookie Johan Larsson practiced in Grigorenko's spot between wingers Zemgus Girgensons and Brian Flynn. Grigorenko filled in for absent center Cody Hodgson alongside Steve Ott and Thomas Vanek. Hodgson will play after taking his maintenance day, which would leave Grigorenko out of the lineup if the forward groups stay the same.

"You have to find a way to be an impact in a game," coach Ron Rolston said. "It's his ability to put himself in positions where he can use those skills. That means you've got to go to the puck, you've got to get the puck, you've got to support the puck, you've got to be around the puck, you've got to battle for the puck. You can stickhandle in a phone booth and that doesn't really translate unless you can be an impact on the game.

"He's a young player. He's still learning those things and how to do that, be impactful at this level, and how that's changed from junior hockey to pro hockey. It's a learning process."

Grigorenko's ice time has steadily dwindled through the opening four games, bottoming out at 8:07 during a 3-2 overtime loss to Tampa Bay on Tuesday. He has no points and only five shots, including none against the Lightning.

"Obviously, I didn't have as much time as the first couple games, but it's up to coach," Grigorenko said. "At this time of the game, he probably would rather put out other guys. We almost won the game, so I'll just keep working and hopefully I'll get back my ice time."

Rolston has not been enamored with the Russian, who was selected 12th overall in the 2012 NHL draft. The coach has repeatedly knocked Grigorenko's lack of competitiveness.

"It's getting there, but it needs to continue to improve," Rolston said. "That's that last hurdle for him. That's something that he's going to work on."

Grigorenko is in a unique position regarding his age and contract status. He showed enough flashes at the beginning of last season that General Manager Darcy Regier decided to keep Grigorenko past the nine-game tryout limit for teenagers. The decision started the clock on Grigorenko's entry-level contract, and once it starts it doesn't stop.

Though the center is eligible to return to his Quebec junior team, the second year of his three-year contract would go by the wayside, multiple sources said Wednesday. The nine-game tryout (and resulting contract slide) doesn't apply in the second year if a player goes past the cutoff during the first year.

"We have really good vets on this team, so every day I could learn a lot of good things from them on the ice and off the ice," said Grigorenko, who added his NHL lessons have helped. "Last year, I just remember I was working a lot on those around-the-net rebounds, and I scored exactly the same goal in the world juniors in the semifinals against Sweden. It for sure helps with the reflexes.

"I'm pretty sure I'm going to have these chances around the net and I'm going to score."

In order to score, Grigorenko will first have to prove that his practice prowess can show up when it matters most.

"We see it every day in practice, and he's just got to bring it to the game," Sabres center Kevin Porter said. "He's got great hands. He's got great vision. He makes guys miss. He's good one-on-one. When he gets those chances he's got to start shooting more and make the plays when they're available.

"Everyone in the NHL has skill. All the guys can make plays and score goals. It comes down to who wants to work the hardest."

Sabres' Miller available for next game, Tallinder back this weekend; Grigorenko may sit

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 9, 2013

Ryan Miller made it through another full workout today without feeling the effects of a recent groin strain, so the goaltender will be available for the Sabres when they host Columbus on Thursday.

"We're in a case where I really only missed one game in the schedule, and hopefully I get back in the rhythm where I was and we'll go again," said Miller, who didn't dress on his scheduled night off Saturday in Pittsburgh and served as the backup Tuesday.

Miller could soon be joined by another Buffalo regular. Henrik Tallinder (upper body) worked out with skating coach Dawn Braid this morning, and coach Ron Rolston said the defenseman should be available Saturday when the Sabres visit Chicago.

Nikita Zadorov, one of the Sabres' two first-round draft picks, practiced for the first time since suffering a finger injury during training camp. The 18-year-old defenseman is still likely to be returned to his junior team in London, Ont.

"He would be available if we wanted to keep him here," Rolston said. "We have to make that decision."

The coach also has a decision to make regarding center Mikhail Grigorenko. The 19-year-old started on the third line during Tuesday's 3-2 overtime loss but soon was benched and skated just 8:07.

Rookie Johan Larsson took Grigorenko's spot today in the middle of wingers Zemgus Girgensons and Brian Flynn. Grigorenko filled in for absent center Cody Hodgson alongside Steve Ott and Thomas Vanek, but Hodgson (maintenance day) will play Thursday, which would leave Grigorenko out of the lineup if the forwards stay the same.

"We're in a tough situation where we go back to just putting people in the right situations, and the matchup wasn't good," Rolston said of the benching before moving on to Grigorenko's competitiveness. "It's getting there, but it needs to continue to improve. That's that last hurdle for him. That's something that he's going to work on."

Sabres looking for first win of season against Columbus

By Andrew Mankiewicz

NHL.com

October 9, 2013

BLUE JACKETS (1-1-0) at SABRES (0-3-1)

TV: FS-O, MSG-B

Season Series: This is the first of three meetings between the Columbus Blue Jackets and Buffalo Sabres, who will host two of those matchups this season at First Niagara Center. Both teams should be fairly familiar with one another, as they faced off twice during the preseason, with Buffalo winning both meetings.

Big Story: The Sabres are still searching for their first win of the season, but there are reasons for optimism. All but one of their four games so far has been decided by a single goal, although their 3-2 overtime loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday was especially frustrating. The Blue Jackets topped the New York Islanders 3-2 in a shootout on Saturday and are playing their second game in a stretch in which they'll play four of five on the road.

Team Scope:

Blue Jackets: Now that his team has officially switched from the Western to the Eastern Conference, Columbus coach Todd Richards isn't looking to alter his game plan.

"[Our approach] is not going to change," Richards told the Columbus Dispatch. "We'll get into certain things, the differences between a Buffalo and a Boston and how they play. But how we play is not going to change. We want to be an aggressive forechecking team, and we want to be tough to play against."

If they want to be tougher to play against, the Blue Jackets can start by taking the lead in a game. In two games this season, Columbus still has yet to lead. They played from behind most of the night in their season-opening 4-3 loss to the Calgary Flames and had to come back from a 2-0 deficit to beat the Islanders in the shootout.

Sabres: The best news this week is Ryan Miller's return to the ice Wednesday after Buffalo's star goaltender didn't dress for the team's 4-1 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday before serving as a backup Tuesday against the Lightning. Wednesday was his first full practice since sustaining a lower-body injury in a 1-0 loss to the Ottawa Senators on Friday. Coach Ron Rolston says Miller is ready and available to play Thursday.

"I knew it was pretty minor. I was just being cautious. Jhonas [Enroth] was going to play in Pittsburgh anyways so I just took that opportunity to rest," Miller told

the Sabres' website. "It just lingered a little longer and I wanted to make sure I clear up any issues because if you don't take care of it the right way it turns into weeks. Hopefully I get back in the rhythm where I was at and I'll go again."

Who's hot: Brandon Dubinsky has a point in each of the Blue Jackets' games while Mark Letestu scored a power-play tally against the Islanders before earning a shootout goal that put his team ahead. ... For the Sabres, both Cody Hodgson and Thomas Vanek have three points in their last two games

Injury report: Blue Jackets forward Jarred Boll (upper body) practiced Wednesday and is expected to play. Defenseman Fedor Tyutin (lower body) and forward Nathan Horton (shoulder) are both out. ... For the Sabres, Nikita Zadorov (hand) is questionable for Thursday while Ville Leino (ribs), Corey Tropp (jaw) and Henrik Tallinder (upper body) are out.

Olympic tracker: Who's rising, falling?

By Kevin Allen

USA Today

October 9, 2013

Every week, USA TODAY Sports hockey columnist Kevin Allen will analyze how candidates are helping or hurting their chances to make the U.S. Olympic hockey team, plus will take a brief look at the other countries. About 12 weeks remain before decisions will have to be made.

Ryan Miller's statistics are talking loudly about his intentions to play his way into the U.S. goaltending picture for the 2014 Games in Sochi.

Playing for the winless Buffalo Sabres, Miller has a 1.53 goals-against average and .963 save percentage.

Miller was the star of the 2010 U.S. team, but Jonathan Quick (Los Angeles Kings) has blossomed into the American goaltending darling. Plus, Jimmy Howard (Detroit Red Wings) and Craig Anderson (Ottawa Senators) had better seasons than Miller in 2012-13.

Based on Quick's Stanley Cup win in 2012 and trip to the Western Conference finals last season, he is the undeniable favorite to be No. 1. That hasn't changed, even though Quick (3.18 goals-against average, .893 save percentage) has struggled early.

Howard (2.31, .915) and Anderson (1.92, .948) have played well.

Team USA general manager David Poile has said the goalies who play the best the first three months will make the team. Miller has made it clear with his play that he wants to be in Sochi.

The wild card is Tim Thomas (Florida Panthers). Coming back after a year off, he's still shaking the rust out of his game, and it's tough to know where he fits in this mix.

Injuries: Thomas has a groin pull but isn't expected to be sidelined for very long. The team did call up goalie Scott Clemmensen.

Stock rising: Chicago Blackhawks wing Brandon Saad. He had two goals and two assists in the first two games. Saad, 20, has skill and poise and has demonstrated he can skate with premium players. He might be playing his way into contention to be a fourth-liner or the 13th forward.

Stock rising II: Winnipeg Jets defenseman Dustin Byfuglien. The questions are whether his offensive game will translate on the wider European ice surface and whether he is effective enough as a defender. But there is no denying his offensive skills, particularly his booming slap shot. He has four assists in his first three games.

Stock rising III: San Jose Sharks forward Joe Pavelski is a lock to make the team, but with five assists in three games he's playing like he might be America's No. 1 center. Team USA is short on high-quality centers, and he's competing against Derek Stepan, Ryan Kesler, Paul Stastny and David Backes. Backes could end up playing on the wing in Sochi. Right now, Pavelski and his playmaking skills might be the USA's best option for the top line.

Stock falling: Ottawa's Bobby Ryan has been one of the USA's most productive scorers in recent years, but the Americans are deep on the wing. He needs a good start and had no goals in his first two games. While that is hardly cause for concern, Olympic decisions will be made after about 35 games this season so every game matters.

Stock falling II: New Jersey Devils goaltender Cory Schneider likely won't play enough to grab a spot, because Martin Brodeur remains a major presence.

Keep an eye on: Defensemen Seth Jones of the Nashville Predators and Jacob Trouba of the Jets. At 19, they're considered unlikely to make the team. But Jones is playing 23 minutes a game and Trouba is at 22. They aren't behaving like young players.

Foreign market

If Sharks rookie Tomas Hertl is still leading the NHL in scoring in December, you can assume he'll make the Czech team. He might qualify just based on scoring six goals in his first three NHL games, including a spectacular between-the-legs shot to cap off a four-goal night Tuesday. Can you imagine his magic on the wider ice? ... Who's Finland's best NHL goalie? That's not easy to answer. In the early going, Antti Niemi (San Jose) and Tuukka Rask (Boston Bruins) have spectacular numbers. But don't count out Pekka Rinne (Nashville).

Tyler Ennis ready to lead young Sabres teammates, confident he'll start scoring

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 10, 2013

BUFFALO – Tyler Ennis spoke confidently. That missing offense, “It’s going to come,” the Sabres center said before repeating the words again.

“There’s always stretches,” the pointless Ennis said Wednesday after the Sabres prepared for tonight’s tilt against the Columbus Blue Jackets inside the First Niagara Center. “It’s only been four games.”

Of course, the 24-year-old’s hardly alone right now. Seventeen players on the winless Sabres (0-3-1) haven’t recorded a point yet. The team only has four goals.

But the Sabres are leaning on Ennis more than ever.

Believe it or not, only six Sabres forwards have played more NHL games than Ennis’ 191.

That experience is being reflected in Ennis’ ice time. He skated a career-high 24:27 in Tuesday’s 3-2 overtime loss to Tampa Bay. So far, he’s averaging 19:21 a contest.

As a four-year veteran on a rebuilding team, Ennis is cognizant he has become one of the Sabres’ go-to players.

“I think I have to be,” Ennis said. “You look around the room, it’s a young team. ... I have to be that guy.”

To be that guy, to be a leader, Ennis is remembering the lessons he learned as a rookie three years ago from Mike Grier, a respected veteran who “was good for every young guy,” he said.

“I’m an older guy,” Ennis said. “I remember when I came in it was pretty crazy seeing guys like Mike Grier and older guys. We don’t have many of the older guys. As a 24-year-old, I have to step up and be a leader. I’m trying to work my hardest every single day and show that as an example.”

Simply producing points consistently could be Ennis’ greatest example of leadership.

Right now, he’s back skating between big wingers Marcus Foligno and Drew Stafford, his linemates from a rollicking run in which he compiled eight goals and 19 points in 12 games at the end of 2011-12.

The Sabres' desperate search for offense made coach Ron Rolston reunite the three Tuesday.

"They're a line right now that overpasses and they need more people at the goal," Rolston said. "They got size. They got skill. They got to do some little things better, but I think that's going to come."

If the line recaptures its 2011-12 chemistry – remember, it was broken up twice last season – Ennis is confident his play could jump to an elite level.

At his best, the speedy Ennis is lethal, arguably one of the NHL's most exciting players.

He's proven he can produce about 20 goals and 50 points. But he's never reached that next level. He compiled 10 goals and 31 points in 47 games last season.

"I think when we were going there (in 2012) ... it seemed like we were scoring every game," Ennis said about his line. "I think when you average that out it's a better season all together. So if we get this chemistry going like we can, I think that's a huge part."

Foligno looked sharp while skating 20:21 in his season debut Tuesday, thumping an opponent, fighting and nearly scoring.

"I think we can bring back that same chemistry," Foligno said. "It's just little things that we did two years ago where we held onto pucks, and I think that's what we're learning again."

Meanwhile, the pointless Stafford said "there's no excuse" for the trio to falter.

"We're getting ... the chance to play out there," he said. "At the same time, though, we're earning it. Ron's not going to put you out there if you're not going."

Ennis believes the line will "get it back."

"I think there's a lot there," he said. "Marcus looks great right now. Staff's ... confident. He's going to make plays. He's going to get it back. I think we're going to click."

Ennis added: "I feel really good with this group at center. They're big on either side of me. So if I come up with speed, there's a lot we can do with it. ... If we have good talent, good size to make plays in the offensive zone, I think it's a good mix, a good blend, a good chemistry. We can do some damage."

Sabres prospect Mikhail Grigorenko could become healthy scratch again

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 9, 2013

BUFFALO – History is repeating itself. Just like last season, Sabres center Mikhail Grigorenko's ice time dropped dramatically in his fourth appearance.

On Tuesday, the 19-year-old Russian played only 8:07, down from the 12:30 he had been averaging. The prospect even skated several shifts on the fourth line during the 3-2 overtime loss to Tampa Bay.

Why?

“Just putting the people in the right situations,” Sabres coach Ron Rolston said this afternoon following practice inside the First Niagara Center. “The matchup wasn't good.”

He might not get any matchup Thursday against Columbus. Grigorenko spent part of today's session filling in for Cody Hodgson between Steve Ott and Thomas Vanek, a sign he could be scratched.

Grigorenko's slick skill set is apparent just by watching him practice a few minutes. But so far, that hasn't translated into game action.

“You have to find a way to be an impact in a game,” Rolston said. “It's his ability to put himself in positions where he can use those skills. So that means you got to go to the puck. You got to get the puck. You got to support the puck. You got to be around the puck. You got to battle for the puck. You can stickhandle in a phone booth. That doesn't really translate unless you can be an impact in a game.

“He's a young player. He's still learning those things and how to do that and how to be impactful at this level.”

Grigorenko's pointless this season and has one goal and five points in 29 NHL games.

When his ice time first dipped last season, he started receiving more fourth-line duty or even getting scratched. Eventually, the Sabres sent him back to junior before recalling him again.

Grigorenko deserves to be in the NHL, Rolston said.

“He's got the ability,” Rolston said.

Grigorenko centered John Scott and Patrick Kaleta some of Tuesday after starting the game with Zemgus Girgensons and Brian Flynn.

Sabres goalie Ryan Miller set to return; rookie Nikita Zadorov back practicing

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 9, 2013

BUFFALO – Sabres goalie Ryan Miller could return from his groin injury Thursday against Columbus.

“Just have to see how it goes tomorrow,” Miller said this afternoon after practicing inside the First Niagara Center.

Miller participated fully today for the first time since injuring himself while making 45 saves in Friday.

“He’ll be available, for sure,” Sabres coach Ron Rolston said. “He’s healthy.”

Miller felt well enough to dress for Tuesday’s 3-2 overtime loss to Tampa Bay.

Meanwhile, 18-year-old defenseman Nikita Zadorov practiced today, his first team session since hurting his finger Sept. 27.

Would the Sabres keep the rookie, the No. 16 pick in June?

“He would be available if we want to keep him here,” Rolston said. “We have to make that decision.”

Zadorov added: “I want to stay here.”

The Sabres could play the Russian nine games before the first year of his entry-level contract kicks in. He could also be sent back to junior.

In other injury news, center Cody Hodgson enjoyed a maintenance day today but will play Thursday, Rolston said.

“We’re monitoring some things,” Rolston said. “So he’ll be out there tomorrow and ready to roll.”

Rolston also said defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body) could return Saturday. The veteran has missed the last two games.

Sabres Sulzer must wait his turn

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 9, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Alex Sulzer's season ended last year after just 17 games due to a knee injury. It was a bad break for him. He said, "It was the worst possible timing for an injury like that in my career. It was really unfortunate and really disappointing."

Sulzer decided to re-sign with Buffalo, but he wound up being 8th on the depth chart and sent to Rochester. He was called up after just one game with the Amerks after the injury to Henrik Tallinder. Sulzer always been right on the edge of playing and sitting. He said there's a reason he wanted to come back to Buffalo, "This is the place where I got the first chance to actually play and be in the line up every night and I like it here, I feel comfortable here. It's a good team, a good group of guys and playing a lot made my decision."

Sulzer of course is a competitor and thought he would've been in after last year, "Obviously I'm not happy I haven't played a game so far. First game waived and I was sent to Rochester for one game and that's nothing I can control. I can just play at my best when I get the chance either here or in Rochester and then just don't give them a reason not to play me."

Sulzer wasn't thinking he was going to the minors, but he also knew there was a numbers crunch here, "I wouldn't say shocked, I would say surprised. Looking at the numbers I kind of knew that it was a possibility, but I didn't think the chances were really high."

Injuries happen in professional sports and that's what it will take for Sulzer to get his chance, "That's what it is, I mean I'm probably the best guy to talk to about how quick injuries can happen and it's a part of the game unfortunately and I'm just trying to wait to see what's going to happen."

Sulzer at times has meshed very well with Christian Ehrhoff. Ehrhoff has struggled at times lately which could play in Sulzer's favor.

Sabres Miller and Hodgson should play Thursday

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 9, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Cody Hodgson was given another day off from practice due to soreness. Ryan Miller was back and said he felt good. Ron Rolston said both should be available on Thursday against Columbus.

Mikhail Grigorenko has not shown well in the first four games and took Hodgson's place. Johan Larsson jumped in between Zemgus Girgensons and Brian Flynn. Rolston needs more out of Grigorenko, "You have to find a way to be an impact in the game. It's his ability in a game to put himself in those positions where he can use those skills. That means you've got to go to the puck, you've got to get the puck, you've got to support the puck, you got to be around the puck, you've got to battle for the puck or you can stickhandle in a phone booth and that doesn't really translate unless you can be an impact on the game." Rolston added, "He's a young player, he's still learning those things, how to do that and how to be impactful at this level and how that's changed from junior hockey to pro hockey."

Nikita Zadorov rejoined the team for practice. It's not a given that he'll go back to junior. Rolston said that decision has not been made yet.

Larsson showed what a tough kid he is. He got hit in the mouth with a shot and had to go to the room to stop the bleeding. He was back within five minutes.

Henrik Tallinder still isn't practicing, but Rolston said he's hoping to have him back Saturday in Chicago.

Sabres continue to the "process"

By Andy Young

YNN

October 9, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Sabres picked up their first point of the season Tuesday night, but lost 3-2 in overtime to the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Buffalo is winless in its first four games.

Head Coach Ron Rolston has said he's concerned with the process of winning - teaching a young team with many new faces how to do the little things to consistently be victorious in the bigger picture.

"We're young. It's going to take that commitment from everyone," said forward Tyler Ennis. "We've just got to build. Building Buffalo - that's us right now.

"We're just trying to keep everything real level here in the locker room and try and help everybody grow a little bit here," added goaltender Ryan Miller. "Once everybody gets comfortable, it'll be fine."

As the Sabres ride the wave of learning how to be successful as a team, goaltending can be a stabilizing force. Both Miller and Jhonas Enroth have done their parts, providing steady play between the pipes.

"We can rely on both those guys," said forward Marcus Foligno. "It doesn't matter, we have probably one of the strongest goalie tandems in the league and we're happy to have those guys back there."

"Both guys have done everything that they could when they're put in that situation," Rolston said. "It goes back to the process of winning. They're doing their part and making sure they take care of their part and they're not worried about other people's parts. They're just doing what they're supposed to be doing."

After missing the past two games with a lower body injury, Miller will be available to play Thursday against Columbus. Meanwhile, rookie defenseman Nikita Zadorov returned to the ice for the first since cutting his finger in the final preseason game. Center Cody Hodgson sat out practice with maintenance day.

MILLER RETURNS TO PRACTICE

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 10, 2013

Ryan Miller was back on the ice as a full participant in practice Wednesday morning at First Niagara Center.

The Buffalo Sabres goaltender did not dress against the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday and served as the backup on Tuesday against the Tampa Bay Lightning due to a lower-body injury. Jhonas Enroth started in his place, going 0-1-1 with a .912 save percentage and a 2.95 goals against average.

Miller took part in the morning skate on Tuesday, but Wednesday marked his first practice with the team since sustaining the injury.

Sabres coach Ron Rolston said after practice that Miller is healthy and available to play when the Sabres host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday.

Miller told reporters that he that he feels good and hopes he can pick up where he left off before the injury. In his two starts this season, Miller stopped 77 of 80 shots.

“I knew it was pretty minor. I was just being cautious. Jhonas was going to play in Pittsburgh anyways so I just took that opportunity to rest completely and guarantee some rest,” Miller said. “It just lingered a little longer and I wanted to make sure I clear up any issues because if you don’t take care of it the right way, it turns into weeks. Now we’re in a case where I only really missed one game in the schedule. Hopefully I get back in the rhythm where I was at and I’ll go again.”

Cody Hodgson was given another maintenance day and did not skate. Rolston said on Monday that Hodgson is day-to-day with a lower body. Hodgson played against Tampa Bay on Tuesday despite not practicing on Monday and scored his first goal of the season. Rolston said he’ll be in the lineup on Thursday against Columbus.

With Hodgson’s absence from practice, Mikhail Grigorenko centered the top line with co-captains Thomas Vanek and Steve Ott. Grigorenko bounced around on a few lines against the Lightning and played 8:07 in the game.

Rolston had commented last week that Grigorenko’s compete level was getting closer to where the coaching staff would like it to be. He reiterated that on Tuesday.

“It’s getting there, but it needs to continue to improve, I think,” Rolston said. “That’s that last hurdle for him and that’s something that he’s got to work on.”

The Sabres have quite a few options at the center position and it’s likely the lineup will change based on the opponent.

Tyler Ennis remains in the middle and practiced with wings Drew Stafford and Marcus Foligno. On the third line at practice, Johan Larsson served as the pivot for Zemgus Girgensons and Brian Flynn. Larsson was a healthy scratch last game. Kevin Porter and Cody McCormick rotated a bit down the middle on the fourth line alongside John Scott and Patrick Kaleta.

“Right now it’s just building up what we feel center-wise will be good matchup situations,” Rolston said. “You go into last night [against Tampa Bay], you’ve got [Steven] Stamkos, [Valtteri] Filppula and Tyler Johnson, who was the American Hockey League Most Valuable Player as their three centers. We were trying to make some adjustments there and moving [Ennis] to center helps us a bit there to be a little stronger in that spot.”

Rolston gave no indication as to which players might be out of the lineup against Columbus.

One player that could possibly play on Thursday is rookie defenseman Nikita Zadorov. He practiced with the team for the first time since cutting his finger while blocking a shot in the team’s final preseason game on Sept. 27.

Zadorov is eligible to go back to juniors, but Rolston said there’s a possibility they could keep him in Buffalo a little while longer.

“He would be available if we wanted to keep him here. We have to make that decision,” he said.

Henrik Tallinder could be back for the team’s game in Chicago on Saturday, according to Rolston. Tallinder sustained an upper-body injury in the home opener on Friday. Rolston said he’s been skating in the mornings but he has yet to put in a practice with the team.

26 Thomas Vanek – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 9 Steve Ott
82 Marcus Foligno – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford
28 Zemgus Girgensons – 22 Johan Larsson – 65 Brian Flynn
32 John Scott – 12 Kevin Porter / 8 Cody McCormick – 36 Patrick Kaleta

6 Mike Weber – 57 Tyler Myers

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 3 Mark Pysyk
4 Jamie McBain – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
52 Alexander Sulzer – 61 Nikita Zadorov .

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth .

Did Not Practice: 19 Cody Hodgson, 20 Henrik Tallinder, 23 Ville Leino, 33 Joel
Armia, 78 Corey Tropp

Off-ice coverage:

Sabres reach deal to broadcast games in Ontario

Associated Press

October 9, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- The Buffalo Sabres are expanding their television reach into Canada.

The team announced Wednesday that Bell TV has agreed to broadcast 50 Sabres games this season to its customers in southern Ontario. The Sabres have spent several years attempting to broaden their exposure into the neighboring Niagara region, from which the team draws many fans.

Most Sabres games have previously been limited to being broadcast on U.S. cable networks not available in Canada. Sabres fans in Ontario instead had to purchase the NHL's Center Ice package to watch the team play.

Bell will not charge additional fees for broadcasting the games. The first broadcast will be Buffalo's home game against Columbus on Thursday.

Sabres notebook: Southern Ontario's TV blackout lifted

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 9, 2013

Ted Darling's play-by-play call used to echo in homes throughout Southern Ontario. The original "Voice of the Sabres" wasn't stymied by cable regulations, so folks in Fort Erie and St. Catharines could see and hear Buffalo's games on over-the-air channels.

That changed once the Sabres moved from Channels 2, 7 and 29. The cable stations that began carrying the team couldn't go north of the border, and the Sabres lost connection with a loyal segment of their fan base.

The sides are finally plugged in once again. The Sabres and Bell TV announced Wednesday that 50 games will be carried this season on Bell Fibe and Satellite TV services in homes from Fort Erie and Niagara Falls to Stoney Creek just south of Hamilton.

"This is a momentous day for our organization and, more importantly, the thousands of Sabres fans in Southern Ontario," Sabres President Ted Black said. "We have been aware of the very large number of Sabres fans in Southern Ontario for quite some time, and until now they have been able to see only a very small percentage of Sabres television broadcasts despite being geographically closer to us than Rochester.

"We are very proud of getting this done for our fans, and we're thankful to Bell TV and MSG for all the hard work that went into the negotiations."

The Sabres have been trying for years to get back on Canadian television. Though Black said he's not privy to Bell's subscription numbers, he hopes to grow its base to "a couple hundred thousand" through a yearlong marketing initiative aimed at improving viewership and subscriber numbers.

The game broadcasts and commercials will be identical on both sides of the border, with the pre- and postgame shows also available for everyone.

"Without going into specifics, there were a number of regulatory nuances that the legal folks from MSG, Bell TV and the Sabres had to navigate in this process," Black said via email.

...

Ryan Miller made it through another full workout without feeling the effects of a recent groin strain, so the goaltender will be available for the Sabres tonight when they host Columbus.

“We’re in a case where I really only missed one game in the schedule, and hopefully I get back in the rhythm where I was and we’ll go again,” said Miller, who didn’t dress on his scheduled night off Saturday in Pittsburgh and served as the backup Tuesday.

Henrik Tallinder (upper body) worked out with skating coach Dawn Braid, and coach Ron Rolston said he should be available Saturday in Chicago.

Nikita Zadorov, one of the Sabres’ two first-round draft picks, practiced for the first time since suffering a finger injury during training camp. The 18-year-old defenseman is still likely to be returned to his junior team in London, Ont.

“He would be available if we wanted to keep him here,” Rolston said. “We have to make that decision.”

...

Rookie center Johan Larsson is in line to play his third game of the season tonight, possibly in place of Mikhail Grigorenko. The appearance nearly was short-circuited.

A deflected puck caught Larsson in the face, forcing him to leave practice with a bloody mouth. He returned a short while later with a swollen lip.

Said Larsson: “I’ve got to work on my reaction time.”

Sabres expand TV coverage in Southern Ontario

Buffalo Business First

October 9, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres have expanded TV coverage in Southern Ontario.

A deal was announced Wednesday by the Sabres and Bell TV for a 50-game package effective Oct. 10, when the Sabres host the Columbus Blue Jackets at First Niagara Center.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

“Canada was a big dilemma for us,” said Ted Black, Sabres president.

Under National Hockey League bylaws, a team’s exclusive TV market is defined by 50 miles from the home arena. In the case of the Sabres, it took them just south of Hamilton to Stoney Creek, Ont. In year’s past, the Sabres’ games were only available in Southern Ontario 11 times per season through CBC’s Hockey Night in Canada, TSN or NBC games.

Now, the team has the potential to have as many as 68 games aired on Bell in Southern Ontario.

For the Sabres, it will help with marketing and opening the door for new ad revenues.

Of the 16,000 season ticket holders, 15 percent come from Southern Ontario. Some games, Canadians account for as many as 30 percent of the in-arena fans.

First time in team’s history games aired in Canada via cable.

“For us, it was a tremendous obstacle,” Black said. “Part of having an affinity for a team is the ability to watch them on TV. It’s hard to be a fan of a team, if you can’t see them on TV. This is as much about the future as it is about the present.”

Getting on Canadian cable was a top, off-ice objective since Pegula bought the team.

To make the deal happen, MSG had to agree and Bell had to agree.

“It was just a matter of timing, getting the right people together at the right time,” Black said.

CANADIAN SABRES FANS

By Rob Poling

Sabres.com

October 9, 2013

Name: Peter Faint

Age: 19

Location: Victoria, BC/Guelph, Ont.

When Peter was seven years old, he came across a puck with the Sabres black and red logo on it in a Victoria, BC, sports store. Not yet knowing anything about the team or hockey in general, he instinctively bought the puck. That puck stoked his interest in hockey growing up. Now 12 years later, Peter is a massive Sabres fan. While most of his Western Canadian friends were developing into Canucks, Flames and Oilers fans, Peter knew he was going to be a Sabres fan for life. Despite not having much access to Sabres games out west, he would listen to them on the radio and check the scores every morning in the newspaper. Peter has gone to great lengths to see the Sabres play, including trips by ferry from Victoria to see them play the Canucks in Vancouver. He also traveled to Ottawa with his dad to see a pair of games in the 2007 Eastern Conference Finals. Growing up, he would wear a Miroslav Satan jersey nearly every day, and he says everyone that knows him associates him with his extreme passion for the team. Peter now attends Guelph University in Ontario and is ecstatic to be much closer to the team and city.

Name: Andrew Paul Whyte

Age: 26

Location: Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

Andrew Paul Whyte grew up as a Sabres fan in Fort Erie, Ont., just across the border from Buffalo. He used to go over frequently to attend games. One of Andrew's favorite memories include when his minor hockey team got to play during intermission at HSBC Arena and getting to meet Dominik Hasek. Andrew moved to Australia when he was 18, and brought his love for the team with him. Andrew says it's difficult being a hockey fan in Australia, because equipment is hard to find and expensive to import. Watching Sabres games means he has to wake up very early in the morning, and usually has to stream them online as network coverage of hockey is minimal. Andrew has spread his passion for hockey and the Buffalo Sabres throughout Australia and he's even converted his girlfriend from New Zealand into a fan of the game.

Name: Bryan

Age: 26

Location: Burlington, Ont.

Bryan lives just outside the Greater Toronto Area, and enjoys getting into friendly battles with the many Maple Leafs fans that he knows. Bryan owns four Sabres jerseys, along with numerous other cards, flags, posters and Sabres memorabilia that are proudly displayed across his work bench. A loyal fan since he was very young, Bryan – who shares his birthday with Pat LaFontaine – resisted his father's attempts to make him a New York Islanders fan when he was growing up. Some of his greatest memories include some of the encounters he has had with former players like Dominik Hasek, and the opportunity to face the Sabres Alumni in a charity game with his minor hockey team. His best memory of attending a game was during the 1999 Stanley Cup Playoffs when Buffalo swept Ottawa and everyone was throwing brooms onto the ice. These days when Bryan makes his way down the QEW to First Niagara Center, he always stops at the Pearl Street Grill for dinner and drinks.

Name: Julian York

Age: 24

Location: Grimsby, Ontario

Julian is a Sabres fan who has been coming to games in Buffalo for nearly 10 years, despite living in a house full of Toronto Maple Leafs fans. When not attending games at First Niagara Center, he can usually be found in his man cave in the basement watching Sabres games on television. Julian says he attends as many games as possible, and likes nothing better than tailgating with other Sabres fans before the game, especially in the nice spring playoff weather. Proving that his fandom has no boundaries, Julian once skipped Easter Sunday to drive to Buffalo for a game against the Philadelphia Flyers.