



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres-Wild Preview

Associated Press

January 1, 2014

There has been no such thing as a favorable opponent for the Minnesota Wild lately, but seeing the worst team in the NHL on the schedule as their first opponent of 2014 could have them feeling better about ending a franchise-record losing streak.

The Wild host the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night as they try to snap a stretch of six straight regulation losses in a matchup of two of the worst offensive teams in the league.

"It feels a little bit like Groundhog Day right now, the difference is that every game has been a different story," coach Mike Yeo told the league's official website. "Every game is different and you got to find a way to win. It's making a play here or there, it's whatever it takes. We've got to find a way."

The futile stretch for the Wild (20-17-5) continued Tuesday with a 2-1 home loss to St. Louis. Defenseman Ryan Suter scored with nine seconds left to avoid the shutout for Minnesota, which hasn't dropped seven in a row overall since an 0-5-2 slide Feb. 4-18, 2012.

"When things go bad, usually you have to hit the bottom before you can start going, and we're as close to the bottom as we can get," Suter said.

Suter has goals in consecutive games after going the first 40 this season without one, and he has a point in nine of 10. The team's only two wins in that time have come in shootouts.

"There were a lot of things that were much better tonight, but we're not in a position where we can feel good about those things," Yeo said. "We'll build off them, look at them, but there's still other things that we're not doing well enough to win hockey games."

Josh Harding made 21 saves and lost consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season.

The Sabres (11-25-4), meanwhile, have been shut out six times after Tuesday's 3-0 loss at Winnipeg.

"Get bodies in front, try and get sticks on pucks," forward Drew Stafford told the Sabres' official website. "We were close, but just not enough to get in so it's unfortunate. That's a tough one to take."

They're averaging a league-worst 1.65 goals while the Wild are right above them with 2.19 per game.

"We're the type of team that can't have any kind of turnover or mistake and get caught trying to fight back," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "Our offense, it's tough to score goals. It's just one of those things."

Though he had the night off against the Jets, Ryan Miller has kept the Sabres in games lately. He's won four of five starts and hasn't allowed over three goals in his last 12.

Buffalo heads to Minnesota short-handed. The Sabres lost forward Ville Leino to a lower-body injury Tuesday and defenseman Henrik Tallinder is expected to miss at least a week with an unspecified injury.

They also placed Cody Hodgson, who has already missed five games, on injured reserve Wednesday with a wrist injury and recalled forward Johan Larsson and defenseman Brayden McNabb from AHL Rochester.

The Wild won 2-1 at Buffalo on Oct. 14 behind Harding's 22 saves.

Sabres send Hodgson to injured reserve, recall 2

Associated Press

January 1, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- The Buffalo Sabres have placed center Cody Hodgson on injured reserve and recalled two players from their AHL affiliate in Rochester.

Hodgson has missed five games since injuring his left wrist and thumb after blocking a shot against the Boston Bruins on Dec. 19. He has eight goals and 11 assists in 33 games.

Larsson returns to the team after being assigned to Rochester for the Spengler Cup tournament in Switzerland. He has an assist in 18 games for the Sabres this year.

McNabb is back in Buffalo after being sent to Rochester on Dec. 17. He has not recorded a point in five NHL games this season.

The team announced the moves Wednesday.

Sabres' Miller picked for U.S. olympic hockey team

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 1, 2014

ST. PAUL, Minn. — When he went to the Team USA orientation camp in August, Ryan Miller was simply hoping to start the path that would get him back into contention for a spot in the Olympics. As it turns out, he's done far more than that in the first half of the NHL season.

Through one of the worst seasons in Buffalo Sabres history, Miller has been as dependable as ever. At 33, he's re-established his claim to being an elite goalie and likely the top American in the net.

In the wake of his solid season, the expected became official Wednesday night as Miller was selected for the United States team that will compete in February in Sochi, Russia.

Miller, the star of Team USA when it lost the gold-medal game in overtime to Canada in 2010 in Vancouver, will be joined in net by Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick and Detroit's Jimmy Howard. Western New York natives Patrick Kane of Chicago and Brooks Orpik of Pittsburgh were also chosen to the 25-man roster.

After his 2009-10 Vezina Trophy season that included a division championship and his fabulous Olympics, Miller has had three mostly pedestrian campaigns. Meanwhile, the Sabres have now sunk to the bottom of the NHL standings in rebuilding mode, leaving the 33-year-old Miller uncertain of his future as he heads toward the trade deadline and free agency.

But the potential off-ice distractions haven't impacted his play at all.

"You can't trust things always to really go quite like you plan. I've just tried to continue to do my job and have things take care of themselves," Miller told The News Wednesday following the roster's announcement. "The first checkpoint for me is done. Get on the team.

"I have to stick to my plan here, continue to play hockey and earn the spot. There's a fair amount of hockey left before we take off for Sochi. You want to be at the level they want you to play at leading into the Games."

Miller is expected to be in goal tonight in the XCel Energy Center when the Sabres meet the reeling Minnesota Wild – losers of six straight in regulation for the first time in their 13-season history. He did not play in the opener of this road trip, Tuesday's 3-0 loss to the Winnipeg Jets.

Miller is just 10-17-1 but has a .927 save percentage and 2.69 goals-against average. The save percentage is remarkable considering the Sabres' record and is just behind the .929 he posted in his Vezina Trophy season.

Miller really picked up his play in December, going 5-2-1 with a 1.82 GAA and .949 save percentage. He's 5-1-1, 1.65 in his last seven games and was named the NHL's Second Star of the Week on Monday.

"My focus has been to continue to show I belong in the NHL, show I belong back in the Olympics and give myself an opportunity and a chance to get back to where we were the last time," Miller said. "And my hope would be to finish the job."

Miller's NHL honor came in the wake of one of the best games of his career. In Sunday's 2-1 win over the Washington Capitals, Miller stopped 49 of 50 shots through regulation and overtime and then went 6 for 6 in the shootout.

"I'm trying not to be unnecessarily aggressive. That's not my game," he said. "I'm trusting myself a little bit more and I'm actually finding I keep making saves I need to make without being two or three feet out of the net at all times.

"When I was younger, there was a lot of high athletic ability and I butterflyed quite a bit. I think over the last two years especially, I've gotten a lot better with my hands, my stance and in my ability to play around the posts. Those have been focuses for sure.

Quick is 10-5-0, 2.35 and .905 and has not played since suffering a groin strain during the Kings' shootout loss to the Sabres in First Niagara Center on Nov. 12. He may go on a conditioning assignment to Manchester of the AHL in the next few days.

Howard, who took a shootout loss in Wednesday's Winter Classic against Toronto in Ann Arbor, Mich., is a relatively controversial pick based on his poor stats (6-9-8, 2.72 and .907). He's widely expected to be the No. 3 goalie and thus not play much if at all in Sochi.

Howard was somehow chosen over Tampa Bay's Ben Bishop - who is 20-5-3 with a 1.89 GAA and .935 save percentage.

Miller made 12 saves off Caps star Alex Ovechkin in Sunday and could play Ovechkin twice more before Team USA and Russia meet Sochi on Feb. 15. The Sabres also meet Sidney Crosby-led Pittsburgh Jan. 26 in Consol Energy Center.

"If people want to hype those games, I have to approach them as another hockey game because that's how you have to feel at the Olympics," Miller said. "You can't play differently. You play the way you know how and hope that's good enough."

Sabres, Wild each searching for offense

By Dan Myers

NHL.com

January 1, 2014

SABRES (11-25-4) at WILD (20-17-5)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, FS-N

Last 10: Buffalo 5-3-2; Minnesota 2-8-0

Season series: This is the second and final game of the season between the Buffalo Sabres and Minnesota Wild. Jason Pominville scored the game-winning goal in his first game back in Buffalo since being traded to Minnesota last April and the Wild defeated the Sabres 2-1 on Oct. 14 at First Niagara Center.

Big story: The Wild have lost a franchise-record six consecutive games in regulation and the Sabres haven't won on the road since a 5-4 shootout win against the San Jose Sharks Nov. 5, so something has to give. Buffalo has won once on the road in regulation and their 3-13-2 record away from home is last in the NHL.

Team Scope:

Sabres: A big part of Buffalo's struggles has been their inability to score goals. The Sabres' 113 goals against is middle of the pack, but their League-low 71 goals scored is 24 behind the Nashville Predators. Their minus-42 goal differential is also last in the League.

"We're the type of team that can't have any kind of turnover or mistake and get caught trying to fight back," Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said. "Our offense, it's tough to score goals. It's just one of those things."

Wild: Minnesota called up forward Jason Zucker on Wednesday to try and inject some offense into a lineup that has scored 97 goals, third-worst in the Western Conference. The two teams behind the Wild, the Predators (95) and Calgary Flames (96), have each played two fewer games.

"It feels a little bit like Groundhog Day right now, the difference is that every game has been a different story," coach Mike Yeo said. "Every game is different and you got to find a way to win. It's making a play here or there, it's whatever it takes. We've got to find a way."

Who's hot: Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller has won four of his past five starts, including a 49-save performance in a 2-1 shootout win against the Washington Capitals on Sunday. Miller hasn't allowed more than three goals in a game since

Nov. 19 ... Mikko Koivu has scored at least one point in three straight games and leads the Wild with 31 points in 42 games.

Injury report: Sabres center Cody Hodgson (left wrist, thumb) has missed the past five games and was placed on injured reserve Wednesday. Forward Kevin Porter (leg) and defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body) are also out... Wild forward Zach Parise (fractured left foot) is out and defenseman Clayton Stoner (lower body) is questionable.

Gameday preview: Buffalo at Wild

By Michael Russo

Minneapolis Star Tribune

January 1, 2014

7 P.M. VS. buffalo • xcel energy CENTER • FSN, 100.3-FM

Preview: The only road team worse than the Wild and the only lower-scoring road team invades the X. The Sabres are 3-13-2 away from home and have one regulation road win all season; they are 0-8-2 on the road since Nov. 5, including 0-6-2 under new coach Ted Nolan. The Wild, without a regulation win since Dec. 8, has lost six in a row in regulation for the first time in team history and is 5-12-1 in its past 18 games. Former Sabres captain Jason Pominville scored the winning goal in a 2-1 Wild win at Buffalo on Oct. 14.

Players to watch: F Jason Zucker was recalled for the fifth time this season and fourth since Nov. 20. He has no points in his past 17 NHL regular-season games. He has eight goals and 13 points in 22 games for AHL Iowa. D Ryan Suter has goals in back-to-back games and has picked up a point in nine of his past 10 games. C Mikko Koivu has six points in the past seven games and is minus-9. Sabres G Ryan Miller is 10-17-1 with a .927 save percentage. C/LW Johan Larsson, a Wild 2010 second-round pick who went to Buffalo in the Pominville trade, was recalled Wednesday and will play his second career game at Xcel Energy Center.

Numbers: The Sabres are 30th in the NHL at 1.23 goals per game on the road and 30th with 1.65 goals per game overall. The Wild ranks 29th at 2.19 goals per game overall. ... The Wild is 12-4-5 in one-goal games. Ten of the Wild's past 12 wins are by one goal.

Injuries: Wild D Clayton Stoner (lower body) practiced Wednesday and is questionable. D Jon Blum was reassigned to Iowa. LW Zach Parise (broken foot) is out. Sabres C Cody Hodgson (finger), C Cody McCormick (upper body), F Kevin Porter (undisclosed) and D Henrik Tallinder (upper body) are out. F Ville Leino (lower body) is questionable.

Minnesota Wild: Buffalo seems to be right opponent for struggling team

By Chad Graff

Saint Paul Pioneer Press

January 1, 2014

If the Wild's losing skid continues, coach Mike Yeo will be relieved of his duties.

After the team lost its sixth straight game in regulation Tuesday, a franchise record, there's no hiding from talk of a possible coaching change, even in the team's locker room.

On the first day of 2014, Yeo addressed the possibility in a conversation with the team.

"I said, 'I know it's there. I know what they're writing. And I don't want anyone feeling sorry for me,' " Yeo said. " 'What I want is for you guys to know that I still believe in this group and you're going to see that I'm going to still come in here and I'm going to coach -- not to try to save my job.

" 'I'm going to coach to try to give us a chance to get things going, get back on track and get back in the playoff race and keep building toward out ultimate goal.' "

A day removed from a 2-1 loss to the Blues, the team's 13th loss in 18 games, players took the responsibility.

By now they know their coach is in danger of losing his job if the season doesn't turn around.

"The blame is on us," Keith Ballard said. "We're the ones not scoring goals; we're the ones turning pucks over; we're the ones having breakdowns in our coverage. It's up to us."

The Wild's next chance to start righting the ship -- and perhaps their last without a shake-up -- comes Thursday night against the worst team in the NHL, the Buffalo Sabres.

The Sabres are the only team in hockey to score fewer goals (1.65) than the Wild (2.19) and the only team worse on the road (3-13-2) than the Wild (6-12-3).

If there were a team to end a losing streak against, it's Buffalo.

"They've been playing better," Yeo said.

If the Wild win, Yeo's job likely will be safe for at least a few more days. If they lose, pressure will be at a season high for owner Craig Leipold and general manager Chuck Fletcher to make a move.

The question around Yeo's future has been around since the summer, when he didn't receive a contract extension heading into this season, the last on his current contract. But the questions have increased with every loss of late.

"I don't even want to answer the question anymore," Yeo said. "It's business as usual for me. This has been a question since before the season even started. So I'm actually quite happy with the way that I'm dealing with it."

Once again, Yeo changed the Wild's line combinations after calling up Jason Zucker from the American Hockey League.

Dany Heatley enters Thursday on the top line, and a trio of players 21 years old -- Nino Niederreiter, Mikael Granlund and Zucker -- are on the second line.

"We're trying to shake things up and see if we can't find something there," Yeo said. "There's been a lot of combinations thrown together, for sure. We're throwing a lot of stuff at the wall, but we need something to stick."

Not much has stuck for the Wild of late. On nights they score in bunches, the defense falters. When the defense plays well, the offense can't score. And there have been nights when neither played particularly well.

On Thursday, Yeo said, the Wild don't need anyone to play the best game of his life; they just need a lot of players to play well. If they don't, and the Wild lose a seventh straight game, jobs could be on the line.

"It's not overly complicated," Ballard said. "It gets complicated when you start thinking, 'Oh, gosh, we haven't won in six games, where we are in the standings, trying to do the math of how we're going to make the playoffs: We have to win this amount of games.'"

"(We need to) just take a step back and play a good game."

Sabres Miller on team USA

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 1, 2014

St. Paul, MN (WGR 550) -- After practice in St. Paul, most of the team hung around to watch the third period of The Winter Classic and to cheer for Ryan Miller when he was named to the U.S. Olympic team.

In my mind, Miller is having his best season. His .927 save percentage tells me a lot. He of course was humble after finding out, "I was pretty excited. I thought I had worked myself into a good position, but you don't know what the ultimate selection is going to be. They didn't put out what they were thinking, they wanted it to be a competition and keep the guys focused and I think they did that." Miller added, "There's still a lot of hockey left to solidify what they're going to do with the goaltending, so the job doesn't change for me."

Olympic hockey is played on a larger ice surface and Miller thinks they kept that in mind, "It looks like the team they picked is going to be a fast team, built for that open ice." As far as how it will affect his game Miller said, "I'll focus on it now more now that I made the team. I have to prepare for it. I'll get some film from USA Hockey maybe and just try to find some tendencies. I'm not sure I'll have much time to get on the ice at the Olympic sheet in Buffalo, so it's going to be quite the adjustment to go over there and have maybe one or two practices, if that and have to execute, so I'll have to mentally prepare and do the work in my mind first."

Three Western New York natives also made team USA, Pat Kane of Blackhawks, Ryan Callahan of the Rangers and Brooks Orpik of the Penguins.

The Sens Bobby Ryan only trails Kane and the Leafs Phil Kessel with 18 goals. Former Sabre Jason Pominville of the Wild is fourth with 17 goals, but they lost out to the Rangers Derek Stepan and the Jets Blake Wheeler.

Sabres back to goal drought

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 1, 2014

St. Paul, MN (WGR 550) -- After scoring eight goals in two games the Sabres are back to being the Sabres.

Buffalo has eight goals in five games and is being shut out by backup, journeymen goalies.

Going into Winnipeg, they were getting away with it going 2-1-1 in those four games, but enter Jhonas Enroth. He's now 1-8-3 and in those 12 starts, the team has scored just 16 goals. In seven of the 12 games they've scored one or less. They give him 1.33 goals per game in his starts.

You have to wonder if they play differently in front of their backup. Enroth said, "The stats don't lie. Maybe the guys feel they can take more chances with Ryan in net, he's an All Star goalie, so you can risk a little bit more when he's in net, so maybe that's why, I don't know."

There have been times during the season that Enroth has been frustrated with it, but he said, "It's a team sport. I think I've been playing pretty good, I'm pretty happy with my game so far, but it's a team sport and it's tough to win if you only score 16 goals in 12 games."

There are some things that are hard to explain and Drew Stafford said this is one of them, "I don't know, but the statistics are there, but at the same time, it's just unfortunate we couldn't find a way to get one in."

The team had a short meeting after the game in Winnipeg. Stafford said, "The shorthanded game against Phoenix we were playing back a little bit and the Caps game, Washington's such a skilled team, we wanted to play a little more defensive minded, keeping them out to the perimeter, so our focus wasn't as much trying to play offense as it was making sure we were solid in the D zone. Usually if you're solid in your own end it will lead to more offensive chances, but it hasn't led to that lately."

Ted Nolan tends to scale it back to simple things. He said, "We have to get back to doing what we've been doing and that's driving to the net, stopping in front of it and try to have some net front presence and if we do that, we'll have a chance to score some goals."

The Sabres will play a team that has lost six straight games and is without the injured Zach Parise. In those six games the Wild scored one against St. Louis, four vs the Islanders, four at Winnipeg, one against Philadelphia, one against the

Rangers and two vs Pittsburgh. Maybe Buffalo can break through because in those games the opposition has scored 26 goals.

Thursday's game will be Jason Pominville bobblehead night for the Wild fans.

Buffalo's practice in St. Paul Wednesday was later as they waited for called up players Johan Larsson and Brayden McNabb to get here from Switzerland.

MILLER NAMED TO TEAM USA

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 1, 2014

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Ryan Miller has been working hard all season for the chance to represent the United States in the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia next month.

That effort has paid off as USA Hockey announced Wednesday afternoon after the 2014 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic that the Buffalo Sabres goaltender had made the men's hockey team roster.

Miller, who backstopped the Americans to a silver-medal performance at the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, is 10-17-1 this season with a .927 save percentage and a 2.69 goals against average. He stopped a career-high 49 shots in his last game, a 2-1 shootout win over the Washington Capitals on Sunday.

“I worked myself into a good position, but you don't know what the ultimate selection's going to be. They actually played it really close to their chest,” he said after the Sabres' practice at Xcel Energy Center. “No one really contacted us or put out any indication of what they were thinking. They wanted it to be a competition to keep the guys focused and I think they did that.”

Jonathan Quick of the Los Angeles Kings and Jimmy Howard of the Detroit Red Wings were the other goaltenders selected to the team. The questions will now turn to which netminder general manager David Poile and head coach Dan Bylsma will start.

“There's still a lot of hockey left here to solidify what they're going to do with the goaltending. The job doesn't change for me,” Miller said.

In Vancouver in 2010, Miller was named the Most Valuable Player by the media and the goaltender of the tournament by the Tournament Directorate. Those games, however, were played on a standard NHL-sized ice rink. In Sochi, the teams will skate on a larger sheet of ice so that's one thing Miller will have to work at adjusting to.

He said he'll probably start preparing by watching film from recent international tournaments played on the Olympic-sized ice. However, he might not have a whole lot of time to actually skate on the bigger surface.

“It's going to be quite the adjustment to go over there and have maybe one or two practices maybe if that and have to execute,” he said. “I'll have to mentally prepare and do the work in your mind first. I'll try and squeeze some time in if I can get on the Olympic sheet [in Buffalo]. Maybe I'll get the keys to the building, sneak in, see what I can do.”

I am very excited to wear the Red, White and Blue to represent the USA in #Sochi2014

— Ryan Miller (@RyanMiller3039) January 1, 2014 Miller, 33, said he's looking forward to going to Russia for the first time and experiencing some new things.

"It's a new part of the world I've never seen before. I'm interested to see the difference in the culture. I know it's going to be a little more of a bubble where maybe you don't see all of the true Southern Russian culture," he said. "But it's fun to be around the people from different countries representing their sports and the village was great last time. I got to meet a lot of American athletes and just even spending time with guys on the team."

He also hopes to see friends who play on other teams and for other countries, like former teammate Thomas Vanek, who's expected to represent Team Austria in the Games.

A few Western New York natives also made the American roster. The Chicago Blackhawks' Patrick Kane, who grew up in South Buffalo, and Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Brooks Orpik, an Amherst native, will join Miller in wearing the stars and stripes.

Other players on the team from the state of New York include Los Angeles Kings captain Dustin Brown, who's from Ithaca, New York Rangers captain Ryan Callahan, who hails from Rochester, and Howard, who's from Syracuse. The full roster can be found [here](#).

The men's ice hockey tournament begins for Team USA on Feb. 13.

"It looks like the team they picked is going to be a fast team, built for that open ice," Miller said.

McNABB, LARSSON MAKE LONG JOURNEY BACK

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 1, 2014

ST. PAUL, Minn. – After approximately 10 hours in the air, Brayden McNabb and Johan Larsson were on the ice.

The two players, recalled from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League, joined the Buffalo Sabres for practice Wednesday afternoon at Xcel Energy Center after flying back from Switzerland.

The Amerks have been competing in the Spengler Cup exhibition tournament overseas, but McNabb and Larsson left early to serve as reinforcements for the Sabres.

Buffalo plays the Minnesota Wild on Thursday.

They took part in a practice in which Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan skated the team pretty hard and focused on net-front presence.

“I was happy that we were actually able to come and skate and get the cobwebs out,” McNabb said. “I’m excited to be back and I’m looking forward to it.”

Rochester went 0-3-0 in the Spengler Cup, but Larsson said it was good for the team to be a part of the tournament. He recorded one assist in those three games.

“It’s different hockey. It’s a bigger ice surface. It took a little time for us to adjust to that. I think the last two games we played pretty good, but we didn’t win. I think all the boys were really happy to go there and it was a good experience.”

McNabb and Larsson took a two-hour flight from Zurich to Amsterdam. McNabb said it was then another eight hours from Amsterdam to Minnesota.

Larsson will be in the lineup against the Wild as Ville Leino has a lower-body injury that will cause him to miss the game. He took a big hit from Thomas Wilson of the Capitals on Sunday and has missed practice time. This happened also as he was still working his way back from dealing with the flu.

“Ville tried it last night and just wasn’t good enough to go. We’ll give him a little bit more time. Hopefully he’ll get ready soon,” Nolan said. “I think right now it’s day-to-day. He took a pretty big bang there a couple days ago, but it’s getting better and better.”

For now, McNabb will serve as the seventh defenseman. Tyler Myers took a maintenance day and did not skate with the team Wednesday. The Sabres are already without Henrik Tallinder, who will miss at least a week with an injury.

Nolan said that Myers is “semi-questionable” for the game Thursday, but thinks that Myers should be ready to go.

To make room for the two players, the Sabres placed Cody Hodgson on injured reserve. Hodgson has missed four games with an upper-body injury.