



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

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Sabres are getting what they bargained for

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

February 18, 2013

Christian Ehrhoff helped his team recapture some pride, set up two goals and delivered another minute-hogging performance.

He walked away from it with a bruised midsection and battered psyche.

Like the rest of the Buffalo Sabres, Ehrhoff spent Monday recuperating from a bitter 4-3 loss to Pittsburgh. The new collective bargaining agreement requires teams to give their players four days off during every full calendar month, and the Sabres stuck with their plan to take a respite. They'll return to First Niagara Center today to host the Winnipeg Jets.

Although there's no telling what to expect from the Sabres – they've lost three of four but were minutes away from a weekend sweep of elite teams – it's nearly certain Ehrhoff's involvement will be significant.

The defenseman led the Sabres with 24 minutes, 18 seconds of ice time Sunday against Pittsburgh. He's played at least 23 minutes in 11 straight games and paced the team in all of them.

"I feel comfortable," said Ehrhoff, whose average of 24:33 ranks 23rd in the NHL. "Obviously, I like playing a lot."

It works out because the Sabres have needed him on the ice. In an uneven start by the blue-liners, Ehrhoff has been the steadiest performer. He leads the Sabres with a plus-6 rating, is tied for second with eight assists and ranks fifth with 10 points. He's also the runaway leader in Corsi rating, which tracks how many shots are directed at the opposing goalie versus how many a player's own goalie faces whenever that player is on the ice.

It's essentially what the Sabres expected when they acquired him prior to last season and negotiated a 10-year, \$40 million contract.

"My game hasn't changed over the offseason," he said. "Obviously, having the first year over, I know the guys now and that's the only difference. Other than that, nothing."

Ehrhoff was on his way toward a game to remember Sunday before a forgettable ending. He assisted on the Sabres' first two goals, allowing them to tie the game after falling in a 2-0 hole after 87 seconds. He got plunked in the ribs by Deryk Engelland's first-period slap shot but came right back.

"I'm sure your cameras can't see the contusion on his body, but the blocked shot he had, sacrificing himself probably speaks for itself," left wing Steve Ott said. "The rest of his

game was phenomenal, getting shots through, creating chances. Those are the big things we need from him, and he's very solid."

Ehrhoff, however, was on the ice when Pittsburgh scored the winner with 2:04 to play.

He was the last Buffalo player to see the puck. He was standing in front of goaltender Ryan Miller and missed the chance to block Paul Martin's shot.

"I'm in front screening Millsie," Ehrhoff said. "He doesn't have a chance on that, and it's frustrating.

"I couldn't really move. It went too quick. I wish it would have hit me, but obviously it went in."

Another area where Ehrhoff has struggled to deliver is on the power play. Buffalo is tied for 27th in the 30-team league with a 13.6 percent success rate. Ehrhoff set up Thomas Vanek's power-play tally Sunday, but they have just two goals in 34 chances during the last nine games.

During Ehrhoff's two seasons on a talent-laden Vancouver team, he totaled 12 goals and 51 points on the power play.

He has no goals and three assists this year after a one-goal, 10-assist debut in Buffalo.

"Overall, we can be better there," he said. "We just need to improve."

They seemingly get a glorious opportunity tonight. The Jets' penalty killers rank last at 65.9 percent.

By comparison, Carolina is 29th at 70.9 percent, and Columbus was at the bottom of the NHL last year after killing 76.6 percent.

Like the 6-9-1 Sabres, Winnipeg has struggled early.

The Jets are just 5-8-1 and are playing the first game of a five-game road trip.

"I don't want to say this is the most important road trip of the season, but the next five or six games are going to be huge," Jets goaltender Ondrej Pavelec told reporters in Winnipeg. "If we don't play well on the road, we could be in big trouble."

Sabres vs. jets: Faceoff: 7 p.m., First Niagara Center

TV: MSG, Radio: 550 AM

Last season: Jets, 2-1-1

Despite Sheen's criticism, Sabres' Ehrhoff enjoying strong season

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 19, 2013

BUFFALO – Charlie Sheen's a baseball guy, you know. He starred in two "Major League" movies as pitcher Rick "Wild Thing" Vaughn and played centerfielder Happy Felsch in "Eight Men Out," the story of the 1919 Chicago Black Sox.

The bad-boy actor has never hidden his affection for America's pastime. He once bought all the outfield seats in Anaheim to try to grab a home run ball from an Angels game.

But what does he know about hockey? And what the heck was he doing tweeting about the Sabres on Sunday afternoon during their 4-3 loss to Pittsburgh?

Following Paul Martin's winning goal, Sheen wrote, "Watching the best goalie in the world Ryan Miller, stand on his head, then some (lousy) teammate got in his way. #sux." For good measure, Sheen tweeted a photo of his television with Miller on the screen.

That teammate, Christian Ehrhoff, happens to be the Sabres' best defenseman entering their tilt against the Winnipeg Jets tonight inside the First Niagara Center.

Hey, if Ehrhoff, who just joined Twitter, ever wants to diss Sheen, he's got plenty of ammunition, right?

Sheen knows Miller because the goalie's wife, actress Noreen DeWulf, stars on Sheen's sitcom, "Anger Management."

The next time Miller sees Sheen, maybe he should explain how well Ehrhoff has been performing this season. Screening Miller late Sunday shouldn't mar a strong, workhorse campaign from the slick-skating German, who's in the second season of a 10-year, \$40 million contract.

Ehrhoff's skating a team-high 24:33 a game, the NHL's 24th-highest ice time. He played 26:58 in Friday's 4-2 win over Boston, scoring the winning goal from the slot before assisting on the insurance goal. He had two assists Sunday while skating 24:18.

"Yeah, I like ... to play a lot," Ehrhoff said. "It keeps you in the game when you go out there and you just get a good rhythm."

That rhythm has been vital to the Sabres. Right now, with almost every other defender struggling, the 30-year-old is arguably the lone bright spot on Buffalo's blue line.

This is nothing new, though.

On the surface, Ehrhoff underwhelmed last season, when \$10 million got the Sabres five goals, 32 points and a minus-2 rating in 66 games. Ehrhoff had averaged 14 goals, 47 points and a gaudy plus-29 rating the previous two seasons in Vancouver.

But Ehrhoff, a supreme puck-rusher who possess a lethal shot, still made his presence felt. The Sabres went 36-22-8 with him the lineup and 3-10-3 when he was injured.

“I thought I had an impact here,” Ehrhoff said last month.

Losing power-play points has hurt Ehrhoff, who had 12 goals and 51 points on the man advantage during his two seasons with the Canucks. Of course, playing with the talented Sedin twins, Daniel and Henrik, certainly helped.

Ehrhoff only has one power-play goal and 14 points since coming to Buffalo, including three assists this season with the Sabres’ awful, 27th-ranked power play.

But through 15 appearances this season, Ehrhoff has two goals, 10 points a plus-6 rating, a six-goal, 32-point pace. He’s looking like the elite, difference-making defenseman many had envisioned he would be when the Sabres jumped the gun and traded for his rights prior to the start of free agency in 2011.

“My game hasn’t changed over the offseason,” said Ehrhoff, who played 32 games for the Krefeld Penguins in Germany during the NHL lockout. “For me, it’s not much different. Obviously, having the first year over, I know the guys now. That’s the only difference.”

Ehrhoff hasn’t played less than 20:40 in a game this season. He also appears to be using his shot, something teams usually key on, more effectively.

On Sunday, Ehrhoff’s laser from the point created a juicy rebound in front for Cody Hodgson’s score. Thomas Vanek tipped his quick wrist shot on the power play in later on.

Ehrhoff also blocked a Deryk Engelland shot with his chest.

“The cameras can’t see the contusion on his body, but the blocked shot he had sacrificing himself probably speaks for itself,” Sabres winger Steve Ott said. “The rest of his game was phenomenal, getting shots through, creating chances. Those are the big things that we need from him and he’s very solid.”

Still, as Sheen pointed out, it wasn’t a perfect game.

“I’m in front screening Millsie,” Ehrhoff said about Martin’s one-time blast from the point. “Yeah, he doesn’t have a chance on that. It’s just frustrating.”

Just ask Sheen.

Next five games could tell Sabres' story

By Allan Muir
Sports Illustrated
February 18, 2013

There aren't any easy answers anymore in Buffalo.

No team loses more draws than the Sabres. No team allows more shots per game, on average. The Sabres rank 27th in goals-against. They might have the least effective breakout in the league. Their stagnant power play is a disgrace, although a sweet Thomas Vanek deflection on a five-on-three chance Sunday against Pittsburgh snapped an 0-for-14 skid with the extra man.

Even Ryan Miller has battled inconsistency, vacillating between a 38-save win over the Bruins and a 17-save loss to the Habs. But he'd been on a bit of a roll, putting together a .944 save percentage over his previous four games coming into Sunday's tilt with the Pens.

Sunday was one of those days that reminded you just how good Miller once was, and how good he could be again. His game was colored by patience, not desperation. His movement was calm, precise and he kept his rebounds under control. He made big stops at big moments to keep the game within reach, none bigger than this save on James Neal that left the Pens shaking their heads or laughing on the bench:

And then, just 64 seconds after that save, Miller allowed Paul Martin's point shot to float by him, handing the game to the Penguins after they'd fought back from an early 2-0 deficit.

After the game, Miller went on the sort of stammering, expletive-filled rant one normally hears only after a leg lamp has mysteriously broken.

"It's just a [expletive] way to lose. I don't understand. Your guard has to be up at all times. They get right back in the game, one broken play to seal it for them. [It's] just preventable and not what we need to be doing right now.

"Just [expletive] losing at the end. It's 3-3, get to overtime. It's 3-2, [expletive] make him come all the way down, worked too hard, I don't know."

It seemed like Miller was on the verge of blaming his teammates for using up all the glue on purpose, but he recovered. Sort of.

"I thought from a couple tough bounces to start, good goals by them, a tip and a play of the end wall. We recovered and we played really well. It was our best second period we've had. We're neither competent enough or experienced enough with the lead in the third period. It burned us. It's not acceptable."

He's right, of course. Outside of Cody Hodgson, this isn't a team that counts on young players to do the heavy lifting. The Sabres simply shouldn't be this fragile, but there's the captain, Jason Pominville, playing what had to be his worst game of the season, making a boneheaded decision in the defensive zone that led to Pittsburgh's tying goal. There's Tyler Ennis bailing on his assignment on the fourth.

And there was Miller himself, who might benefit from a glance in the mirror after allowing Martin's goal.

It's getting too easy to point fingers in that room. Too many nights of too many mistakes. It's has to be getting old.

On the other side of the room, Steve Ott wanted to focus on the team fighting back from that early deficit in his post-game comments. That makes sense. He's new. It's not his place to rip anyone.

But the long-timers have to know better. This is a group that's lost its way, just three points out of eighth, but only three points out of the cellar, too. And the cellar feels a whole lot closer.

Fair to say then that the next five games will reveal everything we need to know about this team. Five winnable games: the Jets and Islanders at home, the Leafs, Lightning and Panthers on the road.

Come out of this 4-1, maybe even 3-2, and this group buys itself time to look inside the room for the answers that should be there.

Anything less, and even Terry Pegula should understand that something has to change.

And don't bother looking for the easy way this time.

Jets-Sabres Preview

By Alan Ferguson

Associated Press

February 18, 2013

After coming up empty on a homestand, the slumping Winnipeg Jets will try to get back on track by adding to their recent success against another struggling team.

The Jets will seek a fourth straight win over the Buffalo Sabres when they begin a season-high, five-game road trip Tuesday night.

Winnipeg (5-8-1) continued its string of lackluster offensive performances while dropping three straight home games, with two of those losses coming by one goal. The Jets haven't scored more than two times in any of their last five games and are a combined 0 for 12 on the power play.

They got only two chances with a man advantage Sunday against Boston but still managed to take a 2-1 lead late in the second period. Winnipeg, though, gave up the tying goal with two seconds left in the period and a power-play goal 36 seconds into the third while dropping to 2-7-0 in its last nine.

"We are battling hard, but at the end of the day, we've got to string some wins together," defenseman Zach Bogosian said. "I think we need to get back to the basics."

The Jets, who will play nine of their next 11 on the road, won their final three games against the Sabres last season and snapped an 0-2-2 skid in Buffalo with a 2-1 overtime victory Jan. 7, 2012.

Ondrej Pavelec gave up one goal in each of those three matchups and might be in net against a Sabres team that's dropped three of four.

Buffalo (6-9-1) couldn't hold on to a one-goal lead in the third period in a 4-3 defeat to Pittsburgh on Sunday. The Sabres fell behind 2-0 in the first 1:27 before rallying to take the lead, but they allowed the tiebreaking goal with 2:04 remaining.

Goaltender Ryan Miller was so angry with his team's performance that he used several profanities when talking to reporters.

"Either we're not confident enough or experienced enough with a lead in the third period," said Miller, who went 1-2-0 with a 3.94 goals-against average versus the Jets last season. "That burned us. That's not acceptable."

Among the NHL leaders with 12 goals and 25 points, Thomas Vanek's play has been a bright spot for the Sabres, but even he hasn't helped solved their power-play woes.

Buffalo is 2 for 34 in nine games this month, and Vanek had one of those power-play goals Sunday while adding an assist.

"Our power play has to do a better job every single time we're out there," center Steve Ott said. "We know we need to continue to get better."

The Sabres scored four power-play goals on 12 chances in a 6-5 overtime win over the Jets on Nov. 8, 2011, but went a combined 1 for 8 in their three subsequent losses in the series. Vanek scored two goals in that home victory - including in overtime - but has only three goals and two assists in his last 11 matchups with the Jets.

Winnipeg center Bryan Little has two goals and five assists in his past four games against Buffalo.

Key two points on line for Jets, Sabres

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

February 18, 2013

JETS (5-8-1) at SABRES (6-9-1)

TV: TSN-JETS, MSG-B

Last 10: Winnipeg 3-7-0; Buffalo 4-6-0

Season series: First of three meetings. Thomas Vanek's overtime goal gave the Sabres a wild 6-5 win in their first matchup last season, but the Jets responded by taking the next three.

Big story: Neither team is trending in the right direction at the moment. Winnipeg has lost three in a row, while Buffalo has dropped three of four.

Team Scope:

Jets: This is the start of a five-game road trip for Winnipeg. That might not be such a bad thing after the Jets completed a three-game homestand with only five goals scored and not a single win in the books against Philadelphia, Pittsburgh or Boston. They were all close games, but again on Sunday the Jets couldn't pull it out as Brad Marchand's power-play goal in the opening minute of the third period was the difference in a 3-2 defeat. Evander Kane had put the Jets ahead 2-1 with 26.3 seconds left in the second, but they yielded Daniel Paille's tying goal just 1.5 seconds before the intermission.

"We have to start winning on the road," goalie Ondrej Pavelec said. "We lost a couple games at home in our building where we felt comfortable, so now we have to start winning on the road. I don't want to say this is the most important road trip of the season, but the next five or six games are going to be huge. If we don't play well on the road, we could be in big trouble."

Sabres: Playing in front of a national-TV audience on Hockey Day In America, the biggest U.S. hero from its Olympic run in 2010, goalie Ryan Miller, had Buffalo poised to deliver a key win Sunday afternoon against Pittsburgh and his personal nemesis from those Vancouver Games, Sidney Crosby. The Sabres rallied from a quick 2-0 deficit and went ahead 3-2 in the third on a Steve Ott goal, but the Penguins drew even and with 2:04 to play in regulation Crosby provided the screen as a Paul Martin shot from the point eluded Miller and dealt Buffalo a difficult 4-3 loss.

"We've got to learn how to bury teams when we have the chance," Cody Hodgson, who scored in the first period, told the Buffalo News. "We went up a goal, had momentum again. We were rolling there for a little while, and it's just too bad how it worked out."

Who's hot: Kane has a goal and two assists during a three-game points streak for the Jets. Alexander Burmistrov had a goal and an assist Sunday. ... Vanek snapped a three-game drought with his NHL-leading 12th goal for the Sabres. Hodgson has goals in consecutive games. Christian Ehrhoff has a goal and three assists over the last two games.

Injury report: Winnipeg defenseman Tobias Enstrom (shoulder) is day-to-day, while goalie Al Montoya (lower body) and forward Antti Miettinen (upper body) are on injured reserve. ... Buffalo defenseman Andrej Sekera (charley horse) is day-to-day, and forward Ville Leino (hip) is on injured reserve.

More on man selling bogus Sabres tickets

By George Richert

WIVB

February 18, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - With the shortened NHL season, tickets for Buffalo Sabres games are at a premium, and someone is using a popular website to take advantage of fans looking for seats.

News 4 first reported this on Friday night and it's caught a lot of interest. Now we have a much better description of the guy who is scamming Sabres fans using Craigslist.

One of at least four victims told News 4, "[The suspect is a] clean cut guy. Nothing suspicious about him at all."

Each victim handed the man \$150 after they responded to his ad on Craigslist for four Sabres tickets. The seller arranged a meeting place, gets the money and tells the buyer they can pick up the tickets at the will call window of First Niagara Center.

The victim News 4 spoke with on Monday said he had arranged to meet the suspect at the Washington Market on Ellicott Street. The victim thinks the scammer might live or work downtown because he was able to get there on short notice.

"The guy looked like he was in his late 20s, had a well-groomed beard, tall and thin, dark brown hair," described the victim.

The scammer even wrote up a receipt under the name John Bradley. This victim handed over the money and went straight to the will call window. When the ticket taker said there were no tickets under the name Presley Bradley, our victim sends the scammer a text.

"He replies and says, 'Let me call my wife...stay put,'" the victim said.

The scammer strung this victim along by text for three days until game time.

"He says he feels horrible that I have to wait, maybe he'll throw in an extra game," the victim said.

This scammer has used the same cellphone number starting in "348" to sell tickets to at least three games this month, and even some sports memorabilia online. He calls himself John Bradley and has told at least two victims he works at Ferguson Electric, which is also a lie.

The victim said, "There are street cameras out there. It would be great if the police would at least run some footage of those street cameras."

The police, the Sabres and the Better Business Bureau all say you should never buy tickets this way from a stranger, but the victims all say this guy is a smooth talker. If we find surveillance video of the suspect, we will air it on television and post it on WIVB.com.

After our story aired on Friday, the suspect posted another ad on Craigslist.

SABRES PROSPECTS REPORT

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

February 18, 2013

A rested Joel Armia (2011, first round) emerged from a 10-day break last week, scoring two goals and five points as Assat Pori won all three of their contests to remain in the thick of the SM-liiga postseason hunt. The productive effort helped extend the Aces winning streak to seven games, placing them in the eighth playoff position with nine dates left on the regular season schedule.

Armia, who scored twice Thursday including the game winner in a 3-1 win over Karpat, kept the momentum going Saturday with three assists in a 5-1 win over HIFK. The big winger has gotten on the score sheet in two straight games for the first time since opening weekend in September, elevating his season totals to 15 goals and 25 points through 39 appearances.

WHL

Colin Jacobs (2011, fourth round) notched his third career hat trick Friday as Prince George was defeated by Medicine Hat 5-3. The native of Coppell, Texas, kept it going Saturday, securing the game-winning goal to go along with an earlier assist as the Cougars held on for a 5-4 triumph at Lethbridge. Jacobs continues to lead Prince George in goals (22), points (43) and penalty minutes (85).

Goaltender Andrey Makarov made 28 saves Saturday to win his 11th straight decision as Saskatoon rallied for a 4-3 victory at Medicine Hat. With just one regulation loss in his last 16 starts, the red-hot backstop has seen his record spike to 28-16-03 with a 2.52 GAA and .921 save%. The Blades enter Monday's matchup with Brandon in sole possession of first place in the East Division standings

Victoria forward Logan Nelson (2012, fifth round) returned to action for the first time since Dec. 28, going without a point in three appearances as the Royals' winless skid hit four games. Nelson had missed the previous 22 games with a lower-body injury.

OHL

Dan Catenacci (2011, third round) put his superb speed on display Saturday en route to collecting a goal, an assist and the game's number one star as Owen Sound edged Niagara 3-2. The even-strength goal was the 100th career OHL tally for Catenacci, whose 67 points (31+36) lead the Attack with a dozen games remaining on the regular season schedule.

Justin Kea (2012, third round) posted his fifth two-goal game of the year Saturday as Saginaw cruised past Windsor 7-3. The double helping gives the hard-working centerman 20 goals for the first time in his OHL career, with just two coming on the power play.

Barrie defenseman Alex Lepkowski (2011, fifth round) logged an assist and his second fighting major of the year as the Colts won two of three games to maintain their position atop the Eastern Conference standings. Lepkowski's Colts will play their third game in as many days on Monday when they host Belleville.

Brady Austin (2012, seventh round) accumulated a plus-three rating as the Belleville claimed six available points to climb within one of Barrie in the Eastern Conference standings. The East Division leaders ride a five-game winning streak into Monday's key tilt with the Colts.

NCAA

Jake McCabe (2012, second round) picked up a two assists over the weekend as No. 18 Wisconsin split a pair of decisions with No. 2 Minnesota. The sophomore rearguard, who punched a puck to the front of the net for a late power play strike in Friday's 3-2 loss, leads all Badger defenders with 12 points (2+10) through 26 games. Wisconsin forward Brad Navin (2011, seventh round) did not play in either of the two games.

Minnesota forward Christian Isackson (2010, seventh round) was credited with a helper on Sunday as the Gophers were defeated by Wisconsin 3-2 in an outdoor tilt at Soldier Field as part of the Hockey City Classic. The sophomore has three goals and 16 points at the 30-game mark.

USHL

Judd Peterson (2012, seventh round) did not factor in the scoring on Friday as Cedar Rapids dropped a 4-1 decision at Chicago. The St. Cloud State commit has nine goals and 23 points in 39 outings for the RoughRiders, who have won just twice in their last 13 games.

European Leagues

In SEL play last Tuesday, goaltender Linus Ullmark (2012, sixth round) allowed four goals on 26 shots before being relieved in the third period as MODO dropped a 5-4 shootout decision to the Vaxjo Lakers. MODO held a 4-2 lead after forty minutes, but Vaxjo struck for two quick goals at the start of the final frame, causing head coach Ulf Samuelsson to look for a momentum shift by switching goaltenders for the balance of the game.