



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*Saturday, February 2, 2013*

## **Vanek is making it look easy**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

February 1, 2013

MONTREAL – Thomas Vanek has always been good at hockey. Always. From youth games to juniors to college to the pros, he's been a standout on every team for which he's played.

But there's something different going on now. He's making the game look like child's play. In fact, it's almost exactly like he's back to his childhood.

While growing up in Austria, Vanek quickly outgrew his country's hockey system. He played on teams with 16- and 18-year-olds when he was 12 and 13. He dominated so much that he had to leave.

He moved to Canada when he was 14 so he could find competition, and he dominated there, too, recording 76 goals and 112 points in 40 games.

The Buffalo Sabres' high-scoring left winger isn't quite on that pace this season, but he's not far off. Vanek has 15 points in his opening six games, numbers that made the NHL name him the Third Star of January on Friday.

He's making everything look easy.

"Even when things look easy, it's never easy," Vanek said after practice in Bell Centre, where the Sabres visit the Montreal Canadiens this afternoon.

A return to Austria may have helped Vanek recapture that childhood dominance. He played 11 games overseas during the lockout, putting up five goals and 15 points, but the style of play was more important than the numbers.

European rinks are 210 feet long and 98 feet wide, much bigger than the 200-by-85 that are customary in the NHL. Vanek needed to be more creative to get closer to the net. Creativity is helping to carry him with the Sabres.

Twice during Buffalo's 7-4 victory over Boston on Thursday night, Vanek bounced the puck off the boards and danced around a defender to retrieve the carom. The first led to an assist, the other to his third goal in a five-point night.

"A lot of guys can make plays at slow speeds, but he makes some of the best plays when he's moving full speed or the play's moving quickly," center Cody Hodgson said. "That's really when you see some of the brilliant plays he makes."

Vanek entered Friday's schedule as the top point-producer in the NHL, and he ranked second in goals (six) and assists (nine). He's had two five-point games, becoming the

first player since Hall of Famer Mario Lemieux (Pittsburgh, 1992-93) to accomplish the feat in his team's first seven games, according to Elias Sports Bureau.

"It would be more fun if we had a better record," said Vanek, whose club is 3-3-1 after the comeback victory in Boston. "It's probably not where we want to be, but at the same time it was a good game for us. We just have to build off at that."

The 29-year-old has been extremely calm during his chart-topping start.

He's experienced hot and cold streaks during his eight seasons in Buffalo, and he knows ice can follow the fire. Still, his efforts have been pulse-quickening.

He's been physical, knocking down players to start scoring plays. He's been tough, withstanding whacks in front to deflect pucks into the net. He's been deft, making on-the-tape passes while skating on the rush or flying through air after getting tripped. He's been accurate, scoring on 21.4 percent of his shots and burying one-timers.

"He's playing at a high level, but it's just what Thomas has always been capable of doing," said goaltender Ryan Miller, who has been Vanek's teammate since they played in Rochester in 2004. "It's not a surprise for anybody."

Vanek has been quick to credit his linemates, Hodgson and captain Jason Pominville, for making him look like an MVP.

"I was in a good spot for a lot of the plays," Vanek said. "I've made plays like that before, but the puck just wasn't going in for whoever was shooting it. I think right now it gets magnified because whenever I'm passing guys are scoring and I'm getting credit for an assist. As far as that, I just take them as it comes."

"I think the biggest thing as a line is we talk so much – in practice, off the ice, on the ice, between shifts. I think that's a big difference. When you can communicate, be honest with your linemates, it's just going to help us out, and right now it's going well."

## **Sabres' notebook: Birthday wish for Myers: Better play**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

February 1, 2013

MONTREAL – The Buffalo Sabres proved they are not ready for “The Voice.” Their coach showed he might be eligible for “Last Comic Standing.”

The Sabres ended practice Friday in Bell Centre by gathering at center ice to serenade Tyler Myers. The defenseman turned 23, and his teammates sang a raspy, off-key “Happy Birthday.”

Coach Lindy Ruff was asked if he got Myers anything for the occasion.

“I got him some advice,” the coach said.

The joke worked because Myers' game is no laughing matter. The Sabres' franchise defenseman is in a season-long slump that got worse during Thursday's 7-4 win over Boston.

Myers and partner Jordan Leopold were on the ice for three of the Bruins' goals. Brad Marchand undressed Myers and eluded Leopold to give Boston a 2-1 lead. Myers' turnover early in the third period enabled the Bruins to go up, 4-3.

The duo remained together during Friday's skate, but it's unclear whether they will be linked this afternoon when the Sabres visit Montreal. T.J. Brennan could replace one of them.

“I've got one healthy defenseman, and the option is to use him, to buy a little bit of time,” Ruff said. “We know they both can play. They struggled. It's no different that a lot of teams will have a guy struggling, and we've got to try to get them through it.

“There's different ways of getting through it. Sometimes if you rest them, let them watch a game, it helps them. Sometimes you can let them work their way.”

Myers has just one point in seven games, and it was the game-winner in the opener when his shot from the point hit a Philadelphia defender. Ruff had a long one-on-one with the defenseman on the morning of the Boston game, and Myers knew he had to be better.

“I know it's not good enough,” he said. “Two slipups could really get me in trouble. It's something I have to clean up.”

...

Montreal might get a huge boost on the blue line. P.K. Subban, who missed the first six games while negotiating a new contract, skated with Francis Bouillon on defense and the power play at practice for the Canadiens.

“You can practice game situations, but being in a game is different,” Montreal coach Michel Therrien told reporters. “You can’t just say, ‘He’s a good athlete, let’s throw him out there.’ It doesn’t happen like that.

“We’ll make the decision on what’s best for the team and what’s best for the return of a defenseman.”

...

A beatdown at the hands of John Scott has put Boston forward Shawn Thornton on the sidelines. The Sabres’ 6-foot-8 enforcer pummeled Thornton on Thursday, and the Bruins announced Friday that he’s out seven to 10 days with a concussion.

“It is tough,” Boston coach Claude Julien told reporters in Massachusetts.

“Unfortunately, there’s always a risk in that job. He took on a pretty big man, as we all know, 6-8, maybe around 280 pounds. He handles himself as best as he could, but those things are going to happen, and at the end of the day he still was willing to do it for his team.”

...

The Sabres host Florida at 3 p.m. Sunday, so backup goaltender Jhonas Enroth may get a start this weekend. Ruff refused to say.

Ryan Miller, meanwhile, rebounded from a forgettable 4-3 overtime loss to Toronto with a 38-save night in Boston.

“For getting scored on four times, I felt good in net,” he said. “They weren’t horrible goals. I would have maybe liked Marchand’s back where I bit really hard. I think Leo and I both bit really hard on that. Everything else was just stuff that happened night in and night out. I was happy to be there when I needed to be, and I was happy to respond.”

## **Sabres: What to do with Myers and Leopold**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 2, 2013

Montreal, QC (WGR 550) -- Despite the Sabres winning 7-4, a couple of players had miserable evenings. Tyler Myers had a very nice first period, but fell apart in the final two stanzas. He and his partner Jordan Leopold have struggled for a while now.

I was thinking the Sabres should go down to four D. They did have their ice time reduced with Myers getting 16:08 and Leopold 15:55. Lindy Ruff said, "I think you see the minutes were down, it almost seems like there's mistakes in every game. If a goaltender covers up that certain pair's mistakes, uh we made plenty of them. Ryan covered up quite a few, so the answer is we cut back, we tried to keep them away from the one line for sure (Bergeron, Marchand and Seguin) after a while and we got through it which I think is a test of character for them."

Last season Leopold was paired Mike Weber during the long January losing streak and they played as bad as what you're seeing now. Leopold took a long time to get out of it, but he eventually did. As far as this time, there aren't a lot of options with Robyn Regehr hurt. Ruff said, "I've got one healthy defenseman and the option is to use him to buy a little time. We know they both can play, they've struggled, a lot of teams have players that struggle and we've got to try to get them through it and there are ways to do it. Sometimes if you rest them and let them watch a game it helps them, sometimes you can let them work their way."

The Sabres have picked up three out of four points and have broken a four game losing streak. Ruff said, "I think the last two games the team has shown a lot of character coming back in a game and getting a point against Toronto and then again coming back in Boston, a tough building against a team that was undefeated and it showed the boys were digging in."

Robyn Regehr is back in the walking boot as he said progress has stopped on his high ankle sprain. The defenseman did say he was told to expect that.

## **Sabres: Not Retaliating was the key to Sabres turnaround on Bruins**

By Chris Parker

WGR 550

February 1, 2013

Fans have been mostly universal in their praise of the Sabres for defending one another so far this season. Some examples for you.

Drew Stafford fighting Scott Hartnell in the opener after Hartnell hit Tyler Ennis from behind.

Patrick Kalets punching Phil Kessel in the back of the head a half a dozen times after Kessel ran into Ryan Miller.

Mike Weber chasing down Mike Brown after a hit from behind on Kaleta.

The exception to the praise would be what we watched Tyler Myers do, or actually, not do, after Drayson Bowman ran Nathan Gerbe from behind. Myers skated up and tapped the Hurricanes player on the shinguard and got shredded for it.

Which brings us to last night. The Sabres are reeling late in the 2nd having watched the Bruins score 3 straight goals. Milan Lucic hits Alexander Sulzer from behind. It's not the filthiest hit by any means, but it is clearly from behind and Sulzer stays down, likely in an effort to make sure a penalty is going to be called. A penalty is called and eventually another call on Chara is made before the whistle and the Sabres end up with a 2 man advantage that helps them get off the mat with a power play goal. Buffalo scores another shortly after to tie the game after 2 periods.

None of that happens if some Sabres player challenges Lucic after the hit on Sulzer. I know all about picking your spots and down by 2 reeling in Boston isn't the best spot and maybe that's obvious to most fans. You need the power play goal to try and get back into it. Any coach or player would tell you that all day long.

You know what I think? I think if the Sabres don't score on that power play I'm spending my day fielding dozens of phone calls about how the Sabres were scared of Lucic again and this team is still soft and oh my god would they please fire Ruff and Regier already.

It's a little like how football fans feel about their coach deciding whether or not to go for it on 4th down or not. With no regard to analytics, we want the coach to be aggressive until it doesn't work and then we think he's crazy and irresponsible and sending messages to his defense and blah blah blah blah.

Last night in Boston the Sabres ignored the questionable hit, got the benefit of another penalty being called on the Bruins and got back in the game because of it. Let's all try and remember that the next time a Sabres player doesn't jump an opposing player and they don't score on the ensuing power play and they lose.

Or just forget about this and enjoy whatever narrative you like about how tough the Sabres are or are not. Last night I think they get marks for being tough in the fighting sense, tough in that they battled back in a game that looked lost, and smart for knowing when to try and right a wrong.

## **Sabres-Canadiens Preview**

By Taylor Bechtold

Associated Press

February 1, 2013

After coming up short against one of the NHL's top goalies, the Montreal Canadiens will have to deal with one of the league's leading scorers.

The Canadiens will try to bounce back from their first loss in five games Saturday when they host a Buffalo Sabres team looking for its sixth straight win in Montreal.

The Canadiens were riding high during a four-game winning streak before Ottawa goalie Craig Anderson denied them their first five-game run in nearly two years in a 5-1 loss Wednesday.

Montreal (4-2-0) scored four goals in each game of the streak but couldn't do it again despite getting off 32 shots. Anderson, though, has been tough on everyone, leading the NHL with a 0.99 goals-against average.

Now Montreal takes on a much different challenge as it tries to contain Buffalo's Thomas Vanek, who had his second five-point game of the season with three goals and two assists in a 7-4 victory at Boston on Thursday.

The left wing has six goals and nine assists, but he's scored one goal in his last 21 games against the Canadiens.

"Pucks are going in right now for me," Vanek said. "There's going to be stretches where nothing goes. So you like it right now, but you know it's going to head the other way."

After winning its first two games, Buffalo lost four straight before beating the Bruins, who entered 5-0-1.

Right wing Jason Pominville has also enjoyed a fast start with five goals and 12 points, including a goal and two assists Thursday.

Montreal's Carey Price, who has won four straight starts, will try to slow Buffalo (3-3-1) after sitting out at Ottawa. Price has a 1-4-2 record in his last seven home games against the Sabres despite a 1.55 GAA.

Canadiens defenseman Andrei Markov may also play a key role after notching eight points in his last five games - all on the power play. Markov had his fourth assist Wednesday, setting up Tomas Plekanec's fourth goal in five games.

Fellow defenseman Raphael Diaz ranks among the league leaders with eight assists.

Montreal, however, went 1 for 6 on the power play against the Senators after converting 8 of 27 in its first five games.

"Special teams are key if you want to win hockey games," coach Michel Therrien said.

The Canadiens may have a tough time getting back on track in that area against the Sabres, who have killed eight of nine penalties over their last three games.

Buffalo's Ryan Miller allowed five goals in his first three games but has given up 11 in his last three. Miller, though, is 6-0-1 in his last seven starts against the Canadiens, including three straight wins with a 0.67 GAA in Montreal.

He had 34 saves in a 3-0 home win March 21 that gave the Sabres an 8-0-1 record in the last nine meetings between the Northeast Division rivals.

## **Subban return possible as Habs try to stop Sabres**

By Arpon Basu

NHL.com

February 1, 2013

SABRES (3-3-1) at CANADIENS (4-2-0)

TV: CBC, RDS, MSG-Buffalo

**Season series:** This is the first of five meetings between the Northeast Division rivals. The Sabres won five of the six games they played against the Canadiens last season.

**Big story:** Will P.K. Subban make his season debut on defense for the Canadiens? It looked that way at practice Friday, but coach Michel Therrien would not commit to inserting the flashy defenseman in his lineup. The Canadiens could use his help to slow down Thomas Vanek, named the third star for January after compiling an NHL-leading 15 points in six games.

**Team Scope:**

**Sabres:** Buffalo is coming off a big 7-4 win in Boston on Thursday, a game in which Vanek notched his second five-point game of the season with a hat trick and two assists.

His line with Cody Hodgson at center and Jason Pominville on the opposite wing has combined for 33 points, or better than five per game.

"Pucks are going in right now for me, and with Pominville, I've always had good chemistry, and Cody fits right in," Vanek said after the game in Boston. "Again, there's going to be stretches where nothing goes, so you like it right now, but eventually it's going to hit the other way. So you just leave the game here today, and it's a new day tomorrow."

As well as that line is playing, the Sabres snapped a four-game losing streak with their win in Boston, and they've allowed 20 goals in their last five games.

**Canadiens:** Montreal suffered its first blowout loss of the season on Wednesday, losing 5-1 in Ottawa to the Senators, but the imminent return of Subban could make a big difference for a club that has opened the season with four wins in its opening six games.

Subban would give the Canadiens defense incredible depth, allowing Therrien to have one of him, Andrei Markov and Josh Gorges on the ice at all times.

Therrien is well aware of how dangerous a team the Sabres can be, particularly after their effort in Boston.

"They're a good team," Therrien said Friday. "You always have to be aware of when guys like Thomas Vanek's on the ice. He had a great game yesterday, and [Ryan] Miller seems to always play well against Montreal."

Who's hot: Aside from Vanek, Pominville has 12 points this season and Hodgson has four goals in six games for the Sabres. ... Markov has points in each of his last five games, all eight of his points this season coming on the power play. Canadiens goaltender Carey Price has a 1.98 goals-against average and a save percentage of .924 in five games this season.

Injury report: The Sabres are missing defenseman Robyn Regehr and forwards Patrick Kaleta, Cody McCormick and Ville Leino. Regehr is listed as day to day after missing the last two games. ... The Canadiens are without top line left wing Max Pacioretty (appendicitis), though he took part in Friday's practice and looks close to a return. Center Petteri Nokelainen (back) remains on injured reserve.

## **NHL Preview from The Sports Network**

The Sports Network

February 2, 2013

(Sports Network) - The Buffalo Sabres hope to have gained some momentum from an impressive victory in their last outing when they visit the Montreal Canadiens for Saturday's battle at the Bell Centre.

The Sabres had lost four straight games heading into Thursday's contest in Boston, but Buffalo halted the slide with a 7-4 rout of the Bruins. It marked the first time Boston had lost in regulation this season.

Thomas Vanek was the star for Buffalo, tallying a hat trick and two assists to lead the way in the blowout at TD Garden. It was Vanek's second five-point game of the season after he posted two goals and three assists against Philadelphia to kick off Buffalo's campaign on Jan. 20. He is the first player since Pittsburgh's Mario Lemieux in 1992-93 to record five or more points twice in his team's first seven games of the season.

The Austrian winger has recorded a point in every game he has played this season, notching six goals and nine assists over his six contests while missing one game with a lower body injury. Vanek's 15 points are currently tops in the NHL.

"Pucks are going in right now for me," Vanek said. "There's going to be stretches where nothing goes my way. So you like it right now, but you know it's going to head the other way."

Cody Hodgson added a goal and two assists for the Sabres, who fell behind 4-3 early in the third period before scoring four unanswered goals to finish the game. Hodgson centered a line with Vanek and Jason Pominville, who is second on the team with 12 points this season.

"It was pretty easy. Just get open and wait for the puck," Hodgson said of Buffalo's top unit. "They battle hard on every puck and we played well together."

Alex Sulzer, Tyler Ennis and Jason Pominville also lit the lamp, while Ryan Miller made 38 saves.

Buffalo has won eight of its last nine games against the Canadiens and the Habs have dropped five straight as the host.

While Buffalo snapped a four-game slide this week, the Canadiens had a four-game winning streak come to an abrupt halt Wednesday evening in Ottawa. Daniel Alfredsson, Mika Zibanejad and Chris Phillips scored for the Senators during a span of less than four minutes in the second period as Ottawa breezed to a 5-1 triumph.

Tomas Plekanec recorded the lone goal for Montreal, which allowed Ottawa to score twice on five power-play chances.

"The penalties broke our rhythm," Montreal coach Michel Therrien said. "We lost a lot of fights in front of the net and that didn't make it easy on Peter [Budaj]."

Budaj was tagged for all five goals on 27 shots in his first start of the season for Montreal. Regular No. 1 netminder Carey Price is 4-1-0 on the year and will be back in net against Buffalo.

The Habs are 3-1-0 as the host this season and are beginning a three-game homestand on Saturday.

## **Sabres coach Lindy Ruff fuels rivalry**

By Allan Muir  
Sports Illustrated  
February 1, 2013

Lindy Ruff's decision to call a timeout with 14 seconds left and a 7-4 lead on Thursday night didn't go over well with the Boston Bruins.

"Yeah, [Ruff] wants to be a big shot, and that's not the best play to do," a fired-up Brad Marchand told NESN. "That's pretty disrespectful. If he wants to be like that, that's fine."

In most cases, Marchand would have every right to be redlining. Calling a late timeout, especially in a blowout, especially in the other team's barn, is a serious breach of the code.

At least, it would be if Boston coach Claude Julien hadn't forced Ruff's hand.

The Sabres left Jason Pominville, Jochen Hecht and five-point man Thomas Vanek on the ice for the draw after Pominville's late goal made it 7-4. As the home coach, Julien has the right of last change. He countered with Lane MacDermid, a player whose efforts had been so highly regarded throughout the course of the evening that he'd been rewarded with just over four minutes-worth of ice time.

Not much recourse for Ruff there.

"When I saw MacDermid was with one of our skill players, I didn't want anything to happen," Ruff told NESN. "That's all it was."

After the breather, Ruff sent John Scott — who had mopped the ice with Shawn Thornton earlier in the contest — over the boards to even the arms race. Amazingly, the final ticks came off the clock without further incident.

It was a clown move by Julien. His team had just been embarrassed on its own ice by a club that had lost four straight. He wanted to send one last message and he got called on it.

Can't blame Ruff for protecting his players.

## **John Scott knockout of Shawn Thornton just latest chapter in Bruins-Sabres rivalry**

By Chris Stevenson

Ottawa Sun

February 1, 2013

The first inclination after watching the Boston Bruins and the Buffalo Sabres go at it Thursday night was to look at the schedule and see when they play again.

For those interested, the Bruins are in Buffalo Feb. 10 and the 15th.

There are plenty of good rivalries around the NHL, but they ebb and flow according to the fortunes of the two teams.

The Battle of Ontario has lost much of its lustre with the Toronto Maple Leafs having not made the playoffs since two lockouts ago (you know it's been a while when you start talking in terms of lockouts, plural). Ditto for the Battle of Alberta with both the Calgary Flames and the Edmonton Oilers having their problems.

The Detroit Red Wings and the Colorado Avalanche went at it pretty good in the '90s, but that's waned now, too.

The Bruins and the Sabres, in the wake of what's happened the last two seasons, are right up there now in terms of the hottest rivalry in the NHL.

It'll be denied, but it looks like you can draw a straight line between the Bruins' Milan Lucic running Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller last year and the Sabres' acquisition of big John Scott and agitator Steve Ott in the off-season.

Scott kayoed Bruins tough guy Shawn Thornton Thursday night three minutes into the game in Boston leaving Thornton with a concussion (out 7-10 days, the Bruins say, which seems optimistic) and maybe giving the Sabres a little bounce.

"We both wanted to get our teams going," Scott told reporters afterwards. Scott said Thornton "told me in the box I got him pretty good when I knocked him out. It was a good fight and he stood in there. I was asking our trainers how he's doing. You never want to hurt somebody. I was kind of concerned after the first period we never saw him again."

You can't quantify what the outcome of a scrap like that does for a team.

Did Scott dropping Thornton help Thomas Vanek have five points and rally the Sabres to a come-from-behind win?

Did it help Miller have a stellar game?

Fighting advocates will say "it set the tone."

The pacifists against the fists will say it only served to debunk the idea nobody gets hurt in fights.

One thing's for sure: it'll guarantee a lot of people will tune in Feb. 10.

#### HEAR AND THERE

A young defenceman who is impressing some scouts is 19-year-old Jonas Brodin of the Minnesota Wild. Poised and mobile ... St. Louis Blues defenceman Wade Redden was questionable for Friday night's game against Detroit because of flu-like symptoms. After being bought out by the Rangers and rescued from the AHL by the Blues, Redden needs three games to reach 1,000 NHL games played ... Speaking of scrapping, Jordin Tootoo has been a hit in Detroit where the Red Wings haven't had a guy like him in a while. He fought Eric Nystrom of the Dallas Stars off the opening faceoff the other night. Wings fans don't seem to mind. "It sure wasn't our intention, I just expected him to get on the forecheck," said Wings coach Mike Babcock of the early fight. "But he took it upon himself to have a couple of bouts and we don't mind that either. He's a guy that gives us a different dimension than what we've had here and when he's out there guys know he's out there."

#### THE BUZZ

After the success of HBO's 24/7 Road to the Winter Classic, a few clubs have gone in for the behind-the-scenes documentary. Two more new ones: the English version of the 24CH series on the Montreal Canadiens will debut on TSN Monday at 8 p.m. "Beyond Blue & Gold" is the Buffalo Sabres self-produced video series on Sabres.com. The MSG Network has picked it up and is showing it before the Sabres-Montreal Canadiens game Saturday afternoon ... Hey, the good news is the Columbus Blue Jackets aren't in last place. They were 14th in the Western Conference going into Friday night's games. A big reason? They might want to try not getting outscored 10-2 in the first period so far this season ...

#### JUST WONDERING

Is it just me or is it a little offputting for Senators fans that their number one centre is in Toronto to have his back fixed? Jason Spezza better do his due diligence and make sure the doc doesn't have a framed Tie Domi jersey hanging in the operating room ... Speaking of doctors, I wonder what ex-Boston Bruin Mark Recchi thinks about Montreal Canadiens winger Max Pacioretty being back on the ice with his teammates Friday, less than a week after having his appendix out. Recchi, you will remember, said the Canadiens embellished Pacioretty's injuries after he was hit by Bruins defenceman Zdeno Chara in 2011 in an effort to get Chara suspended. Recchi said Pacioretty's concussion was "a non-factor" and that earned him the nickname "Dr." Mark Recchi. There are Twitter accounts @markrecchiMD, @DrRecchi and @DrMarkRecchi.

#### JUST SAYING

The latest deal to buy the Phoenix Coyotes falls apart right when the new BlackBerry 10 comes out. Coincidence? I think not ... Bruins commentators chirping Scott for his lack of hockey skill? Really? ...

## THE LAST WORD

Hasso Plattner, the billionaire owner of the software company SAP, bought out a couple of his partners in the ownership group of the San Jose Sharks to increase his majority share in the club. Good thing he's worth \$7.2 billion, according to Forbes. "You cannot make money with a hockey team. You cannot make money with a hotel, either, and you cannot make money with a golf club. I have all three of them."

## GROUNDHOG DAY FOR COYOTES

The timing of the latest news on the Phoenix Coyotes ownership situation is interesting.

Saturday is Groundhog Day.

Here we go again.

Prospective owner Greg Jamison was unable to come up with the cash to close his purchase of the team from the NHL before his window on the sweetheart lease agreement with Glendale's former pro-Coyotes city council closed at midnight Thursday.

New Phoenix mayor Jerry Weiers has made it pretty clear that old lease deal, which would have paid Jamison about \$300 million over 20 years to run Jobing.com Arena, is gone.

Now Jamison, or some other new owner, faces the challenge of negotiating a new lease agreement the terms of which likely won't be nearly as owner-friendly as the last one.

That could be prohibitive to finding a new owner and keeping the Coyotes in Phoenix.

But don't write off NHL commissioner Gary Bettman finding a new owner to keep the team in The Valley. He's got a knack for finding rich guys who will buy NHL teams. As long as there's a chance somebody will buy and keep the Coyotes in Phoenix - including a regroup by Jamison - the league will stick with it.

But as was the case in Atlanta with the Thrashers, Bettman has shown he will cut bait if there aren't any fish.

Just a guess: the Phoenix situation will be resolved by the end of this regular season and the NHL will get its new alignment straightened out, too.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR PHOENIX?

In light of what has happened in Phoenix with Greg Jamison failing to buy the Phoenix Coyotes from the NHL by the expiration of the lease agreement with the City of Glendale Thursday at midnight, here are five observations on the situation and what could happen with the Coyotes and NHL hockey:

1. The lockout served to keep NHL governors occupied for the last few months. Now interest is going to shift to the Phoenix situation where the league will continue to hold the bag for whatever losses mount beyond those covered by its deal with the City of Glendale. "Some governors are going to be wondering where their money is going and more questions are going to be asked now that the lockout is over," said one NHL insider.
2. It's pretty clear the next lease arrangement between a prospective owner and Glendale is not going to be as favourable to the owner as the deal struck between the previous city council and Jamison. That is going to make owning the Coyotes even less attractive.
3. A big part of successful ownership is having control of the building and making money off other events at the venue. In Pollstar magazine's ranking of venues around the world based on concert and show tickets sales, Jobing.com (the Coyotes' arena) ranked 166th in the world. On the Jobing.com website, there are only a half-dozen events on the schedule through the end of May apart from Coyotes games. Jobing.com faces stiff competition from the venues in downtown Phoenix.
4. There's talk there is a solid group of five individuals or groups kicking the tires and contemplating NHL ownership right now, but none of them are interested in Phoenix.
5. All that said, never bet against NHL commissioner Gary Bettman.

## GO FIGURE

### 14.02

Going into games Friday night, that was the percentage of NHL players on the injured list. There were 91 players listed as injured according to NHL game notes. After Thursday night's games, there were 649 players who had played at least one game in the NHL this season. That's a lot of injured players and given the grind of this schedule, that number is only going up.

### 5

The number of years Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane of the Chicago Blackhawks were roommates on the road. Under this new CBA, only players on entry level contracts have to share rooms. "It was five long years with '88' over there," Toews said with a rare chuckle. "I think we're both more than happy to part ways. We had some great memories and some bad ones."

4

The number of goals the Boston Bruins gave up in the third period to the Buffalo Sabres Thursday night as the Sabres came from behind for a 7-4 win. It marked the first time this season the Bruins had given up any goals in the third period. They had outscored the opposition 8-0 in the third period this season (they scored early in the third before the Sabres rally).

20

The number of years it's been since a player had two five point games in his team's first seven games of a season. Thomas Vanek had his second five-point game in the Buffalo Sabres' seventh game of the season Thursday night. The last player to do that was Mario Lemieux for the Pittsburgh Penguins in the 1992-93 season, according to Elias. Pretty good company.

## TOOL BOX

Todd Bertuzzi, Detroit Red Wings

The big winger got clipped in the eye by the stick of Dallas Stars forward Jamie Benn this week and while he would tell his son to wear a visor, it doesn't sound like he'll put one on despite the close call.

"It's a no-brainer. It should be mandatory. I believe in it," said Bertuzzi. Just not for him. "It's a personal decision," he told reporters. "I don't ask you what pencil you like to use. I'm not trying to be a jerk. It's just the way it is. It's our office and we wear what we wear ... It's an option we're given and some guys would rather not use it."

## AMBULANCE CHASING

Injuries that are or could have a big impact.

Ottawa Senators

If you were going to look around the league and point to a player a team could least afford to lose, centre Jason Spezza of the Senators would be high on the list. That was the opinion of some in wake of the news he could be out for up to two months after having back surgery to repair a herniated disc. But the numbers might surprise you. The Senators scored 243 goals last season meaning Spezza, who had 84 points, was in on 34.56% of all the goals the Senators scored. Among the NHL's top 10 scorers last season, that percentage ranked eighth. Steven Stamkos was in on 41.81% of the Tampa Bay Lightning's goals and John Tavares was part of 41.33% of the New York Islanders' goals to lead the way.

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

**New York Islanders**

**Power-play situations: 24**

**Goals: 9**

**Percentage: 37.5**

**Rank: 1**

**Don't look now but, yes, that's the Islanders owning the league's best power play going into Friday night's games. They are a sizzling 7-for-13 on the road (they have played five games on the road and only two at home so far). The Isles already have seven different guys with power-play goals led by John Tavares and Mark Streit with two each. Frans Nielson and Brad Boyes have also been keys to the Islanders' fast start with the man advantage.**

## **B's play to win games, not fights**

By Joe McDonald

ESPN Boston

February 1, 2013

WILMINGTON, Mass. -- It's pure ridiculousness to even suggest that the Boston Bruins did not respond in an appropriate manner after Shawn Thornton received a concussion during a fight against the Buffalo Sabres' John Scott on Thursday night.

The two heavyweights dropped the gloves at 2:53 of the first period. Scott hit Thornton with a right, and the Boston enforcer dropped to the ice. The fight was stopped and both men went to the penalty box. After their five minutes were served, Thornton went to the locker room and never returned. Thornton did his job. Scott did his.

On Friday, the Bruins announced Thornton would miss the next seven to 10 days with a concussion.

"It is tough," said Bruins coach Claude Julien. "Here's a guy who does everything for his teammates and his team and has done it very well. Unfortunately, there's always a risk in that job. He took on a pretty big man, as we all know, 6-foot-8 and around 280 pounds. [Thornton] handled himself as best as he could, but those things are going to happen. At the end of the day, he was still willing to do it for his team.

"Not only do we lose a guy who does it well, but he's a good teammate and he's great in the dressing room, so hopefully we'll get him back soon."

The Sabres signed the free-agent enforcer last summer to boost the team's toughness, especially in the Northeast Division. So after he did his job during Buffalo's 7-4 win over the Bruins on Thursday night at TD Garden, some think Thornton's teammates didn't do enough to respond.

That attention was focused on team captain Zdeno Chara, who is Scott's equal in size and stature.

The last thing the Bruins need in a lockout-shortened, 48-game season is to lose Chara for any amount of ice time, especially to an injury suffered during a fight.

On Friday, Chara was asked for his opinion whether or not he should have stepped up in defense of his teammate.

"Right now we're getting ready for our next game, which is Toronto. Those questions you guys should save for when we play [Buffalo]," Chara said.

The captain will be asked those questions soon because the Sabres host the Bruins on Feb. 10 and again on Feb. 15. Still, he appreciates what Thornton does for the Bruins.

"He's obviously the toughest guy we have," Chara said. "He's been such a warrior for us and he's done an incredible job for us for many years. It's a big loss, but I'm sure he's going to be OK."

For the Bruins to be successful, Chara needs to be healthy, productive and on the ice. He prides himself on that.

"That's a priority for me, playing well defensively, shutting guys down, so like I said, it wasn't a great game for me [Thursday] night, so I've got to regroup and make sure I go back to how I can play."

Let's face it, if Chara needs to drop the gloves, he'll do it. He's done it plenty of times in the past, and the notion he, or his teammates, didn't respond to Thornton's injury is a nonissue for Julien.

"Again, you guys do your job, and we'll do ours," Julien said to the local media after Friday's practice. "Certainly this isn't about revenge more than it's two tough guys going at it. When we win our battles, I don't think other teams send a guy for revenge. It's just two big, tough guys going at each other. It just happens. Shawn has won most of his battles and he's done well."

"This was a fair one-on-one fight and it got decided by the other guy getting the upper hand on him, but we still played a solid game, we still had a lead. If anything, it was our play that was disappointing because we would've liked to have won it for the right reasons, and Shawn sticking up for his team would have been a good reason to do that."

The Bruins are one of those rare teams that have plenty of firepower when it comes to toughness. Even their top line has two players -- Milan Lucic and Nathan Horton -- equipped to handle any situation on the ice, and that includes dropping the gloves.

Second-line winger Brad Marchand likes to chirp and get under the skin of the opposition, but he's also not afraid to mix it up when needed. After all, he did go toe-to-toe with the Canadiens' P.K. Subban early last season.

Thornton's linemate Gregory Campbell is also experienced in the art of fisticuffs and has plenty of scares to prove it. Defenseman Adam McQuaid frequently makes his presence felt, too.

After the team's practice on Friday morning at Ristuccia Arena, players were questioned whether or not they felt the team did enough after Thornton suffered a concussion. Campbell said he's not concerned with the notion the team didn't react to Scott.

"Not really. Our team, we have a lot of team toughness. We do have team toughness," Campbell said. "At the end of the day, there's a game to win. Shawn did what he had to do."

Julien agreed.

"I don't know about team toughness; it's about playing hockey," Julien said. "We are team tough, and if you'd watch the game you'd know that. Certainly, we just go out and play and do what we have to do to win hockey games -- it's pretty simple."

Julien also made the decision on Thursday to insert forward Lane MacDermid into the lineup and have forward Chris Bourque serve as the team's healthy scratch. MacDermid, 23, made the team out of training camp and was a healthy scratch for the first six games of the regular season. The 6-foot-3, 203-pounder can handle himself physically, and that's probably what Julien was thinking, even though the coach said earlier in the day he wanted to give Bourque a night off because he thought he was pressing too much.

Julien explained his point again when asked about why MacDermid was in the lineup.

"I don't think Shawn was the only guy on our team that does that," explained Julien. "When you look back, Looch has already dropped the gloves a couple of times, and McQuaid [too]. We like to consider ourselves team tough. We stick up for each other. You've seen Ferenca step in there at times, and it's not about one guy, it's about our whole team being team tough and sticking up for each other. I think we've done that well, so no doubt Shawn is going to be missed for all the right reasons, not the wrong ones, and hopefully he'll be back soon."

With his limited ice time, MacDermid said he was more focused on playing his game and trying to help the Bruins win rather than dropping the gloves in retribution. But he said if the opportunity was needed and presented itself, then the mitts would have been off.

"I'm always ready when the chance arises," he said. "If I have to stick up for a teammate or if something happens out there, I always have that in the back of my mind. I was ready. I'm always usually ready."

MacDermid admitted he didn't think anything would happen in the closing seconds of the game and it didn't. Maybe that's because Scott was back on the ice for the Sabres.

Then there's the questionable timeout call by Sabres coach Lindy Ruff.

With Buffalo holding a 7-4 lead with 14 seconds remaining in the game, Ruff called for a timeout, which did not go over too well with the Bruins. Marchand called the move "disrespectful" after the game.

Ruff said he was only protecting his top players because Julien sent the Bruins' fourth line out, including MacDermid, to close out the game.

"We can call it what we want, but he's entitled to his timeout," Julien said after Friday's practice. "Maybe the only thing I'm disappointed in is the fact that he thought I sent MacDermid out. If that's his explanation, anybody who knows me knows better than that. I don't do that in the last seconds, it's not my style, nor is it wise to do those kinds

of things. I just sent that line out to finish the game, but [Ruff] wanted to be cautious and I don't think I'm a coach that will send a guy that can fight against the other team's top player to beat him up with 20 seconds left. That certainly wasn't going to happen.

"Having said that, [Ruff] decided to be cautious and that's his right, so I have nothing more to say about that other than he did what he was allowed to do."

The Bruins and Sabres will play four more times this season, so it's safe to say this rivalry will continue.