



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

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## **Sabres-Panthers Preview**

By Jeff Mezydlo

Associated Press

February 27, 2013

TAMPA, Fla. – The Buffalo Sabres found salvation Tuesday night in a strange place — the penalty box.

The Sabres made trip after trip to the box, but their penalty killers repeatedly bailed them out. The struggling team has been looking for anything to make it feel good about itself again, and the short-handed unit did the job by carrying the Sabres to a 2-1 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning.

“Just the battle level and competitive nature we had was outstanding,” Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston said after his first NHL victory. “It was great, and I’m really happy for our team because we’ve seen a lot of good signs and we just needed something to keep us moving in the right direction.”

The Sabres ended a four-game losing streak and won for just the second in eight games. They’ve made a habit of celebrating in Tampa Bay Times Forum, improving to 26-9-3 in the Lightning’s home rink.

“It was more of the game we need to play, and we’ll see if we can take the confidence and turn it into something here,” said goaltender Ryan Miller, who made 30 saves against the NHL’s highest-scoring team.

The Lightning had plenty of opportunities to add to their goal total, but the Sabres’ penalty killers went 6 for 6 to shut them down.

“Our No. 1 penalty killer is Millsie, and he came up with some huge saves,” said defenseman Mike Weber, who played a game-high 6:46 of short-handed time. “Obviously, we don’t want to go to the box that much, but to get a great effort from our killers was amazing.”

The short-handed effort allowed the Sabres to open the third period in a 1-1 tie. Tampa had dominated final periods this season, outscoring opponents, 33-21, but Buffalo needed just 52 seconds to show it was tired of losing.

Thomas Vanek deflected a shot and followed it behind the Tampa net. He quickly dumped the puck toward the slot, and Tyler Myers fired a shot home before goaltender Mathieu Garon could set himself.

“It always feels good to score,” Myers said. “It felt unbelievable to get the win after the way things have been going.”

It initially looked like the downward trend would continue. The Lightning needed just 1:24 to put the Sabres in an all-too-familiar early hole. Miller stopped Teddy Purcell’s

long-range shot, but the rebound went to a driving Steven Stamkos. The All-Star center easily found the net for his NHL-leading 14th goal.

The Sabres caught a break to tie the game. Cody Hodgson collected a carom below the goal line and dumped the puck toward the crease. It struck Tampa defenseman Sami Salo and bounced into the net with 9:58 left.

“We got down early, and our guys came right back and got a goal,” Rolston said. “That’s a good sign for a hockey team.”

The Sabres killed two penalties in the first, but that was merely a warm-up for the second period.

Buffalo’s parade to the penalty box began with 5:15 gone when Myers departed for high-sticking. Miller’s best friends were the post, which stopped Stamkos, and Patrick Kaleta, who hit the ice to take a bullet from the stick of Marc-Andre Bergeron.

“I love to be able to contribute to the team that way,” Kaleta said.

Only 23 seconds after Myers came on the ice, Drew Stafford took his spot in the box for high-sticking. Myers trudged off again for hooking just 1:14 later, giving the Lightning a 5-on-3 for 46 seconds.

They repeatedly set up Stamkos for one-timers from the left side, but Miller read the play as if it were an elementary school picture book and easily made the stops.

“We were doing a good job of staying back and staying in the lanes, and they’ve got to move around the perimeter,” Miller said. “It makes his shot a little further out, makes his shot a little more predictable.

“We didn’t spend as much time running in our zone, and that translates to a game we can win.”

They Sabres will go for two in a row Thursday when they visit the Florida Panthers.

“They did a lot of things right and got rewarded for it,” Rolston said. “The goal now is to build on that.”

## **Miller happy to see Sabres hitting reset**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

February 28, 2013

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. – Ryan Miller, likely more than anyone on the Sabres, understands what a championship would mean for Buffalo. He's been in the organization for 11 years, and he's talked often about leaving behind a winning legacy.

With the Sabres near the bottom of the NHL and longtime coach Lindy Ruff sitting home unemployed, Miller's plan to be part of an established winner has taken a significant detour.

"We're almost starting from scratch here," said the goaltender, whose team visits the Florida Panthers tonight. "I've been pretty fortunate, pretty blessed in my career to be on good teams and be on teams that have good confidence. I still think I'm on a good team. We didn't have the confidence, and I don't think we were playing the smartest hockey we could play. We're going to keep working on the habits.

"It's unfortunate Lindy can't be here with us, but it gives us a chance to reset and look at it from a different perspective. We are finding a lot of habits where Lindy was talking about them, but it wasn't coming around.

"It's not a knock on Lindy. It's not a knock on these boys. You start from scratch and build the game you want to play. We're hoping that it makes a difference this season, for sure, but I think it will serve the organization much, much better to get the game where we want to have it. Our hope, obviously, is win, win, win as much as we can, but it's going to be about the process more than anything."

The Sabres finally experienced a victory Tuesday in Tampa Bay, and they'll go for a second straight in BB&T Center against the struggling Panthers. Even if Buffalo (7-12-1) rolls to six in a row, though, that merely gets the club near .500.

So, as Miller said, this season has become more about building toward that championship dream he has been holding since 2002-03.

"I'm just trying to smile, enjoy the moments when you can win some hockey games and carry that kind of stuff over," the 32-year-old said. "That's what's going to see us through here and give us a chance this season. It's not going to be about getting up or down. Just be happy we won, keep getting better and improving.

"I think the position we put ourselves in, every night can be better, and that should be our goal."

Miller has urged his teammates to improve in several ways this season. Despite pedestrian numbers in several categories, he's been the team's steadiest player since the

puck dropped. He's also been fiery in the dressing room, using expletives to try to get players to realize that complacency is unacceptable.

"I felt like last year I put myself through way too much in my own head, and this year I'm just going to do my job and lead where I can," Miller said. "I did snap a few times already, but that's all a little bit of theatrics."

The outbursts may have helped the sliding team gain traction.

"It's not that they weren't trying to win before, but I think you can see they're hungry and they're ready to learn a little bit," Miller said. "I think everybody respects where we're at. We did it to ourselves. We dug a hole.

"I just don't want to see the boys wallowing anymore and feeling sorry for themselves. I know that our crowd and our fans are proud and they want to see us play good hockey. But what we have to worry about is digging back out, not making that hole deeper and feeling sorry for ourselves and getting caught up in the tough emotional part of this. You've got to suck it up and be professional."

It's the second straight season littered with disappointment for Miller and the Sabres, but the goalie says the struggles last year were worse.

"This has been tough, but it is just a moment in time," he said. "We can do something about it. Looking back at last year, it was probably the lowest point I've had in my career, just going through that month-and-a-half, two-month stretch with nothing going my way, nothing going right."

Miller and the Sabres hope this trip to Florida finally gets things rolling their way.

"The guys in that room have a lot of pride," interim coach Ron Rolston said. "There's a lot of pride in this organization. Now it's them banding together and us moving forward."

## **Sabres notebook: Realignment plan not fair, Ott says**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

February 28, 2013

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. – Steve Ott isn't sold on the NHL's latest realignment plan.

The league has been talking with the NHL Players' Association about how best to revamp the NHL's conferences. The latest proposal has Detroit and Columbus moving to the Eastern Conference while Winnipeg heads West.

While Ott agrees with that part, the Buffalo Sabres forward dislikes the league's plan to have 14 teams in the Western Conference and 16 in the East.

"That's completely unfair," Ott said Wednesday after practice in BB&T Center, where the Sabres visit the Florida Panthers tonight. "They preach parity and they preach having the same chance. Well, the goal in hockey is to make the playoffs. If they can come up with some magical formula where teams can have the same opportunity to make the playoffs, then I'm for it. I think that's the biggest issue right now.

"How can you have 14 on one side and 16 on the other side? The percentages of making it in the East become that much greater."

The NHL concedes the proposal, which still needs the approval of the board of governors and players' union, isn't perfect.

"We are trying to get to a solution that everybody can live with," Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly told NHL.com. "There are no perfect answers here, so we have to do the best we can in trying to adequately address a number of competing concerns.

"We certainly hope to be in a position to announce something in the relatively near term."

The latest plan has two conferences with two divisions in each. The Eastern Conference would be split into a couple of eight-team divisions, while the West would have a pair of seven-club divisions. The breakdowns:

Eastern Conference, Central Division: Boston, Buffalo, Detroit, Florida, Montreal, Ottawa, Tampa Bay, Toronto.

Eastern Conference, Atlantic Division: Carolina, Columbus, New Jersey, New York Islanders, New York Rangers, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington.

Western Conference, Pacific Division: Anaheim, Calgary, Edmonton, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Jose, Vancouver.

Western Conference, Midwest Division: Chicago, Colorado, Dallas, Minnesota, Nashville, St. Louis, Winnipeg.

Eight teams in each conference would make the playoffs. The top three teams in each division would qualify, and the remaining two “wild card” spots would go to the teams with the best records, regardless of division.

Every team would play each other at least twice, once at home and once on the road.

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The Sabres got their first goal out of the way Tuesday by winning in Tampa. Their next goal is to score goals.

Buffalo’s list of slumping forwards is long. Jochen Hecht has no goals in 20 games this season. Nathan Gerbe is scoreless in 16. Marcus Foligno has no goals in the last 15 games and one in 20. Drew Stafford also has one in 20. Jason Pominville has one goal in 10 games. Ott has one in nine. Tyler Ennis has one goal in seven games.

“I’ve just got to work harder and play a little better,” Foligno said. “You want to get on the point sheet and the scoreboard, so I’ve got to get around the net a little more and chip in offensively.”

The Sabres tweaked their lines during practice. Cody Hodgson remained in the middle of left wing Thomas Vanek and Pominville. Ennis skated between Ott and Gerbe. Kevin Porter was flanked by Hecht and Stafford. Mikhail Grigorenko centered Foligno and Patrick Kaleta, while John Scott skated as the extra forward.

“I knew coming in that I would play a different role than before, but still you want to end up on the score sheet and put some pucks away,” Hecht said. “I’ve had some chances.”

...

Interim coach Ron Rolston continues to put his spin on the Sabres’ practices, including a session-ending breakaway relay race. He also repeatedly preached the importance of bearing down on scoring chances.

“Having the idea but actually getting the guys to go out and do it is another part of the coaching aspect,” Rolston said. “If you have all these great ideas and nothing’s getting done, it really doesn’t matter.”

## **Thomas Vanek a bright spot for Sabres**

By Doug Harrison

CBC Sports

February 28, 2013

James Patrick remembers standing on the Buffalo Sabres' bench and marvelling at the play of a young Thomas Vanek.

The 2006-07 National Hockey League season was Patrick's first as an assistant coach and he watched the Austrian-born left-winger post a career-best 84 points in his sophomore campaign, topping the Sabres with 43 goals and leading the league with a plus-47 rating.

"There were a lot more [goals on the rush] back then," Patrick, the former NHL blue-liner, said Wednesday on the phone from Sunrise, Fla., where Buffalo was preparing to face the Panthers. "A lot of teams now will just take away the rush by having four or five guys back [in the neutral zone or at their blue-line]."

"[Vanek] still has that type of talent. He has proved to be a consistent scorer his whole career and I don't see him tailing off for some time."

Vanek began the season with an eight-game points streak that included a pair of five-point performances. The 29-year-old has eight multi-point efforts in Buffalo's first 20 starts and twice has ended a stretch of three games without a point with a two-point showing.

Vanek picked up two assists in Tuesday's 2-1 win at Tampa Bay and entered Wednesday's game with 27 points, trailing only Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos and Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, who have 30 apiece.

That makes the six-foot-two, 205-pound Vanek third in league scoring playing for a Sabres team that sits 29th in the 30-team NHL. No player on a last-place team has won the league scoring title since the NHL began awarding the Art Ross Trophy in the 1947-48 season.

The Great One, Wayne Gretzky, came the closest in the post-Original Six era, when he racked up 92 assists and 130 points for the Los Angeles Kings, who finished 22nd of 26 teams in 1994.

Four years earlier, Gretzky had 142 points for a Kings outfit that placed 15th in the then 21-team NHL. In 1988, Pittsburgh's Mario Lemieux recorded 168 points (70 goals, 98 assists) for a Penguins team that was 12th of 21 clubs.

1st Art Ross winner

Montreal's Elmer Lach was the first Art Ross recipient in 1948 following a league-best 61-point performance when the Canadiens ended the season fifth in the six-team league.

Chicago was fifth the next year when Roy Conacher of the Blackhawks topped all players with 68 points in 26 games.

"I don't know how [the scoring race] is going to play out," Patrick said. "We're focusing on moving up from 29th."

Vanek has teased coaches and fans alike before, sitting among the NHL's top 20 scorers at mid-season a year ago, only to fall out of the place, in part due to a shoulder injury. He also dealt with a sore chest and ankle sprain late in the season.

Over the years, Vanek has been the target of criticism, widely thought to be a lazy player to the point that there was a Twitter account dedicated to it (@LazyVanek26). Others would suggest he was not as energetic in the second half of last season and guilty of sloppy puck management, which led to a drop in ice time.

This season, Vanek is averaging 19 minutes 25 seconds a game, up from 17 minutes in 2011-12, and Patrick has seen a player that is stronger on the puck and more consistent.

Vanek is facing the opposition's best shut-down defencemen on a nightly basis and has learned to better handle those situations, according to Patrick.

"I just think there's more maturity to his game, and with maturity comes consistency," said the Sabres assistant coach. "There's times when he keeps things simpler. If there isn't [a play at the offensive blue-line] he'll get pucks deep. He doesn't turn over as many pucks at the [opposition's] blue-line.

"He's a skilled player. He can score on the rush, he can score inside. I've been here seven years with him and he's one of those guys that can find a puck and pucks find him."

One day, it might lead to Vanek making NHL history.

## **Rolston mentor on Sabres' new coach: 'I can assure you that he's top shelf'**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 28, 2013

BUFFALO – Back in 1996, Mark Morris wanted to add Ron Rolston to his Clarkson staff badly. The Sabres' interim coach had just won two national championships as an assistant with Lake Superior State. Morris thought Rolston's expertise could help his program could get over the hump.

So he hired a 29-year-old Rolston and another Lake Superior assistant, Jim Roque.

"I think the attraction for me was they were working with Jeff Jackson at the time, and they were winning national titles," Morris told the Times Herald by phone this afternoon.

Morris received a "jack-of-all-trades" in Rolston, who handled every facet of the game – offense, defense and recruiting – in addition to doing video work and being a certified strength coach, an additional skill that impressed Morris.

"He really was very detailed and extremely knowledgeable about the game," said Morris, now the coach of the Manchester Monarchs, the Los Angeles Kings' AHL affiliate.

The Golden Knights never won a title in Rolston's three years in Potsdam, although they made the NCAA Tournament each season.

But even about a decade before Rolston would run his own bench, Morris told his assistant he could be a head coach someday. In addition to his many skills, Rolston was young and in touch with the modern athlete. His brother, Brian, was playing for the New Jersey Devils.

"I had always told him I saw him being an excellent guy to teach pros because he was more current with the guys," Morris said. "He knew their music. He knew the mindset of a professional athlete. He trained his brother Brian as well in the offseason. So he was familiar with the current player and the types of things that were all the hot buttons for young pros to get the most out of them."

As Sabres fans have probably already noticed, Rolston's not very emotional. He rarely changes his tone or looks angry. Don't let that fool you, though.

"I can assure that he's ... a fierce competitor," Morris said. "I've played shinny hockey with him. I know. He competes very hard. I've always marveled at the fact he always put the time in to make sure that our guys were ready for every game. If it wasn't breaking out video, it was showing them the finer points of the game or in the weight room counting out every rep and telling him why they were doing it."

Morris calls Rolston's current situation "precarious." The Sabres' terrible play cost Lindy Ruff his job and didn't improve until Tuesday, when they beat the Lightning 2-1 in Tampa Bay, Rolston's first NHL win in his third game. Fixing the broken club will be a challenge.

"He's in to try to fix everything overnight," Morris said. "I know it's a huge undertaking to try to settle things down and get things moving in the right direction."

Morris knows Rolston will be fine if he's given time.

"Unfortunately, anybody that's a skeptic is probably going to think, 'Who is this guy?'" Morris said. "But I can assure you that he's top shelf. I have met a lot of people in the business, but I hold him right up there with some of the most well-rounded people that I've ever had the pleasure of working with."

## **No Man's Land**

WGR 550

February 27, 2013

Four points out of a playoff spot versus 15th place - Should I be looking for the Sabres to go on a run to 8th place? Should I be more accepting of a total collapse that will reap a huge payoff come the NHL Draft. It's tough to know when you're here - in No Man's Land.

I have a feeling that Darcy Regier is not long for his current position. The Sabres could quickly turn this season around with a brief win streak, or shuffle the deck with a roster move. Things could get better. Things could get worse. Trying to predict which way they're going to go is tough to do, and figuring out which would be better is tougher still.

There's talent on the roster.  
The coach has an impressive resume.

But what's the plan from here? While the team's reason for existence is to win the Stanley Cup, would a team that does that have an INTERIM coach?

Really what's the plan? I started thinking about it...so here's the straight stream of consciousness. Indulge me if you will....

Disclaimer - I apologize for a ton of questions, and few answers...this is a bit of a stream of consciousness, and hopefully makes you think. Please share any thoughts below.

Lindy Ruff is gone and Darcy Regier remains the GM of the Buffalo Sabres. It feels like there are now more questions than answers. I think it's totally understandable for a fan or follower of this Sabres team to feel a bit lost.

Regier believed in Ruff through and through. Regardless of how you and I felt about Ruff, you at least knew that Darcy was in Lindy's corner. If this team was going to pull through...it'd be with Lindy. Because of Lindy. It's all about Lindy.

Ron Rolston stands behind the Sabres bench now, faced with what seems like an impossible task. Rolston has to make his own hay in the league, while turning around the worst team in the Eastern Conference.

Is this a long term plan?

In years past, all 15 of them, Darcy and Lindy would have worked in concert to turn this thing around. What is Ron Rolston's role in that?

Lindy had some power over player personnel decisions. He had input. Rolston seems like a fairly accomplished coach but is there any way that Regier trusts him on personnel decisions the way that he trusted Ruff?

This is most certainly a new time for the players on the roster, but one has to wonder just how different it is for Regier as well. He's gone from the "firing the coach isn't an option" guy to the "it was time" guy.

If Rolston is just an interim coach, here to teach the young players and develop this team, then it seems the Sabres would be sellers at the deadline. Then again, if Rolston gets them back in the race, isn't Regier going to want to find out just how good his coach is? Does he care?

Does Darcy have the backing from ownership to have a fire sale? Does that mean he submarines his own coach? If they have a fire sale and finish in dead last...what will he say about Rolston?

So here we sit...waiting for the GM to evaluate a roster that has the team in 15th, with a first time coach who has the job on an interim basis and you have to ask yourself: Just what is Regier evaluating?

Really...What's the plan?

## **Sabres plummet down the goal scoring ladder.**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 27, 2013

Sunrise, FL (WGR 550) -- The Sabres got away with winning a game with only two goals, but if they want to put together a streak, scoring must improve.

Buffalo has just four goals in four games with both Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek hitting the skids. Vanek has one goal in eight games while the captain has one in 10. On the other side their line mate Cody Hodgson has three goals in six games.

Others in bad slumps include Jochen Hecht, Nathan Gerbe and Pat Kaleta who are 0 for the season, Marcus Foligno, Drew Stafford and Mikhail Grigorenko have one goal each. Ron Rolston said, "That's a lot of what we talked about today. Everybody scoring is having fun and we're getting to the point where our defensive game is getting a little better where we can get pucks back quicker and have a little more structure and then from there, they're committed to the defense and you've got to be able to attack people and right now we're not doing enough good things and stringing them together to create the offense whether it's off the rush or offensive zone play or on the power play, we've got to do things better in areas in order to generate more scoring chances and to make the guys confident and then points come."

Other slumps on the team include Steve Ott who has one goal in nine games and Tyler Ennis who has one goal in seven.

Buffalo has fallen to 22nd in league scoring averaging 2.45 goals per game.

## **SABRES: Different coaches stress different things**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 27, 2013

Sunrise, FL (WGR 550) -- Many have been questioning why Ron Rolston sees so much more wrong with the Sabres than Lindy Ruff did. Rolston said that's not it at all and coaches stress what's important to them, "There's a lot of different ways to coach, there's a lot of different systems that can be used and it just boils down to what you want and then being able to get that across. That's the part of having the idea, but getting the guys to actually go out and do it is another part of the coaching aspect. If you have all these great ideas and nothing's getting done it really doesn't matter. It's not right or wrong, it's just different."

One thing Rolston stresses each and every practice is attention to detail. A drill must be done right or it's done again. As far as how far they've come in attention to detail in practice the head coach said, "Yes we're getting there. That's a process too. You come into a situation where you're new to the team and you want to make some adjustments so we're trying to find balance on how do we go about that. Like teaching, whether it's video, what we can do on the ice or individual video with the players. It's getting the proper mix, but making sure that when we get out there to practice, we're getting down the things that need to be done."

Many fans have asked me why is it's going to take so long for Rolston to get things changed with the players. The head coach said, "You need some time with things. There's a lot of individual things in terms of the individual within the system and it's angles to the puck, it's battles on the puck, it's those things that a lot of times when you have less time to practice, they're hard to get in because you don't want to grind the players too much because now you're playing the next night and you've got two on the weekend so it's trying to manage all that and continue to move forward on your course." Rolston added, "We've been pretty much theme oriented and just trying to do one thing at a time and just keep moving forward in different areas of the game."

Two signals to me that the team worked harder in Tampa than they had in a while were the penalty killing against the team that has the most power play goals in the NHL and the final minute of the game. I saw desperation. Pat Kaleta was diving in front of pucks blocking three shots. As a team Buffalo blocked 14 shots. They had 20 hits led by Steve Ott with four and Marcus Foligno with three and even the faceoffs improved with Cody Hodgson winning 10-of-18 and Tyler Ennis taking 4-of-5. Usually when the Sabres are protecting a lead in the final minutes and the other team pulls its goalie, Buffalo is under siege and very often give up a goal. In Tampa, the Lightning never could set up and the Sabres never got in trouble. Rolston said, "You look at the penalty kill three on five, guys throwing their bodies in front of one timers and that's the attitude right now in the room. As far as the last minute, we're still a ways away, but just figuring out how to manage games because when your confidence is low, you don't understand situations a

lot of times and how to take care of them because you're pressing all the time and that's a situation at the end of the game where we did a better job of managing the game, where the puck went, how we got it out, how we supported it in order to get it to the areas that weren't dangerous that would keep us hemmed in our zone. It's baby steps, but we're seeing some really good signs of the guys doing what we're trying to get across in practice."

## **The Pegula Era at Two Years**

By Andrew Kulyk and Peter Farrell

Artvoice

February 27, 2013

Are the Sabres better today?

Former President Ronald Reagan once posed this question when he was a candidate for the office: “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?”

It’s a powerful question, and a variation of that is perhaps worthy of a bit of reflection for the Buffalo Sabres. This past weekend the team had an anniversary of its own. Two years ago Terry Pegula took ownership of our hockey team. The unveiling of the “Pegula Era” took place on February 23, 2011, as the Atlanta Thrashers were in town.

Remember the event? Pegula and his two boys took to the carpet at center ice, with no announcement or noisy PA announcer intro, and the ovation lasted for two minutes. It only got better as the French Connection trio skated onto the ice to greet the new owner.

The Sabres won that night, and they would do a lot of winning for the new boss. In fact, Buffalo went 16-4-4 to finish that year, climbing out of a big hole to take the seventh seed in the conference. The Philadelphia Flyers were the first-round playoff opponents, and fans here were dreaming of a deep run and asking, “Why not here? Why not now?” On the hopes of blue-liners such as Chris Butler and Shaone Morrisonn, and the leadership of Rob Niedermayer, the Pegula magic and energy had us believing that we could immediately be a Cup contender.

It didn’t happen. A topsy-turvy playoff series against the Flyers ended miserably in seven games. After Tyler Ennis provided the heroics in game five at Philadelphia, the team could not hold a one-goal lead in the third period in game six at home, succumbing to a tying goal and then an overtime netter to send Buffalo fans home disappointed.

That was the last playoff action we have seen on Buffalo ice.

2011-12 saw a great start in Europe, followed by a head of steam for the rest of October, quickly devolving into a losing funk that stretched through early December and into most of January. At one point the Sabres were mired in a 1-8 streak that included a host of lopsided losses. In back-to-back games in March, the team surrendered goals with less than five seconds left in regulation.

And now, in this lockout-shortened season, Buffalo finds itself once again stuck in the bottom of the standings, despite the boxcar salaries being meted out by a free-spending owner and the (on paper) deep talent on this team.

Report card?

From the front office standpoint, the team has done all the right things. Pegula went out and found a top hockey executive in Ted Black. Coming from the Penguins, Black has the leadership, personality, and marketing savvy of former Sabres executive Ron Bertovich from the old Adelpia days. He has reached out into the community to assess strengths, goals, and weaknesses, refined a good management team, and represents Pegula well as the face of the franchise.

They got off on the right foot, first putting out the call and inviting all player alumni back to Buffalo for a reunion. Many showed up, and it was a grand affair; most importantly, it sent waves of attention within the hockey community that there was a new kid in town in Buffalo. The team followed up by creating the new Alumni Plaza in front of the First Niagara Center, unveiling the first statue, that of the French Connection, as its centerpiece.

There was more. Pegula spent \$7 million for a complete makeover of the team's locker room, lounges, and training areas for the players. The new look was dramatic, the opulence and comfort for the players taken to an entirely new level.

With the adjoining Canalside, the Sabres are also displaying huge leadership. Tired of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation's inaction towards cleaning up the development parcels on the Central Wharf, Pegula donated \$120,000 to remove the jersey barriers and collapsing fencing and to lay sod. Then in August, the Sabres were named the developer for the adjoining Webster Block. Construction is expected to start soon on the \$170 million project, which will be a game changer in the Inner Harbor.

On the ice? Not so good.

Ville Leino's free agent signing might turn out to be a bust, the Sabres traded away huge grit with Zack Kassian, and incredibly the defensive corps appears to have regressed, even minus the aforementioned Butler and Morrison. Coach Lindy Ruff has never been able to cultivate a true backup netminder for Ryan Miller (or, for that matter, for Dominik Hasek), the trade deadline acquisitions have been miserable (Zubrus, Moore, Torres, Boyes), and since that dark day in 2007 when Drury and Briere departed, the team seems to lack a true leader. Ruff's resignation was a necessary first step to begin turning things around.

Multiple Stanley Cups? Given the current formula, the team is locked into multiple 10th-place finishes, with an occasional steal of a low seed playoff berth if the puck bounces their way.

Everyone knows what needs to be done. Not sod. Not sculptures. Not contract extensions for hockey guys mired in mediocrity. By the time we do this column for the third anniversary, hopefully Terry Pegula can figure it out.

## **Moneyball approach for Sabres scouting analyst**

By Mike Davies

Peterborough Examiner

February 28, 2013

Graham Beamish gets paid to watch hockey all day.

And when his work day is done, you'll find him watching more hockey.

The 25-year-old Peterborough native is a pro scout and video analyst for the Buffalo Sabres. His NHL dream didn't come with a stick and skates, it came with a laptop computer.

"I always knew I wanted to be in hockey and my stone hands could only carry me so far," Beamish said. "I had to find another way in."

Beamish grew up playing AAA and AA hockey in Peterborough to the major midget level. He also played high school hockey for the Holy Cross Hurricanes where he credits former coach Joe McGillis as a major influence.

After four years of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, Beamish took a masters sports administration course at Buffalo's Canisius College. While there he was video coach for the varsity men's hockey team and got acquainted with Sabres director of pro scouting Jon Christiano, a Canisius alumnus.

It led to a one-year unpaid internship with the Sabres scouting department where he broke down video of Sabres prospects, and drafted players from other NHL organizations, for management to review. It led to a job offer and Beamish is currently in his third season as a paid employee working out of the Sabres Buffalo office.

His role — his title is hockey analytics assistant — expanded into video and statistical analysis of opposing teams, referees and mapping league trends.

"It's almost like a Moneyball approach but not as over the top as baseball," said Beamish, son of local physician Dr. John Beamish and Karen Beamish, principal at Lakefield's St. Paul's School.

It's a career he dreamed of from a young age and one, he says, which makes many friends jealous.

"I was always that guy who was a little bit of a hockey geek," he said.

"If you asked my parents I think they'd probably tell you they knew I was going to end up in the NHL eventually, probably not playing. I just knew I had to find a way."

The fact he never played pro hockey has never been held against him by management or coaches, he says. His input is sought on a variety of subjects by all levels of the organization.

He says an NHL GM once said to him: “You don’t ask your doctor how long he was sick for before he became a doctor. Meaning, you don’t necessarily have to be a player to understand how to play the game of hockey. You can study something and have a passion for something and have a sufficient knowledge of it.”

Beamish also does some live scouting travelling to junior games to evaluate players already drafted in other organizations. He also interviews prospects and provides feedback for the scouting department. Every day offers something new.

He hopes to move up the corporate ladder, in time.

“I want to stay in hockey. I have always loved it and I’m lucky I have never worked a day in my life,” Beamish said.

“I’ve been given a great opportunity with the Sabres and I’m a firm believer in loyalty. I like where I’m at there but everyone wants to grow and I’d love to see my career grow. I’d love to have my hand on the steering wheel somewhere.”

There are tougher ways to make a living, he says.

“I watch hockey all day and at the end of the day when I go home I still want to watch hockey. Some people call me crazy but I love it.”

## **Sabres face Panthers seeking second win for coach**

By Pete Jensen

NHL.com

February 27, 2013

SABRES (7-12-1) at PANTHERS (6-9-4)

TV: MSG-B, FS-F

Last 10: Buffalo 4-6-0; Florida 3-4-3

Season series: Thursday marks the second of three meetings. Brian Campbell scored the tie-breaking goal against his former team in the third period when Florida rallied from a 3-1 deficit to capture a 4-3 victory in Buffalo on Feb. 3. The teams close the season series March 28 in Sunrise, Fla.

Big story: Two days after the Sabres earned their first win under interim coach Ron Rolston, 2-1 against the Tampa Bay Lightning, they go for the Sunshine State sweep at BB&T Center. Florida looks to make it two straight after an impressive 6-4 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday. This is the end of Florida's three-game homestand.

Team scope:

Sabres: Buffalo's four-game losing streak is history, and two players who were in dire need of strong performances helped make it happen.

Goalie Ryan Miller stopped 30 of 31 shots, and defenseman Tyler Myers scored in the opening minute of the third period to finally get the Sabres' new coach on the winning track. For Miller, it was his second outing of the season when he allowed fewer than two goals. For Myers, his third goal of the season snapped a four-game pointless streak.

The Sabres will take the positive reinforcement any way they can get it. After all, a winning streak has to start somewhere.

"The only way you can build your confidence is to put a game together, then hopefully come back and play well in the fourth period and the fifth period," Rolston told the Buffalo News. "That's kind of our concentration right now after the last game. The message is that [Thursday's] first period is the next step in trying to build that confidence."

Panthers: After dropping a 4-1 decision on Sunday to the Boston Bruins, Florida got its swagger back thanks to a career night from forward Tomas Kopecky. The team needed every bit of it to hold off a second-period surge from the Penguins.

After the Panthers scored four power-play goals over the first 29 minutes of Tuesday's game, Pittsburgh got three goals to close out the second period and draw even. In a game that could have gone either way, Tomas Fleischmann answered the call with a goal

early in the third period and Kopecky added an empty-netter with one minute to go to complete his hat trick.

"When things start happening for you, it makes our job a lot easier and the guys go out there, they feel good about themselves and make quality plays," Panthers coach Kevin Dineen told NHL.com.

Who's hot: Sabres forward Thomas Vanek snapped a three-game pointless streak in Tuesday's win, setting up both goals. ... Kopecky has six goals and an assist over his past six games.

Injury report: Buffalo's Ville Leino (hip) and Alexander Sulzer (lower body) are on injured reserve. The Sabres also likely will be without Jordan Leopold (upper body). ... Florida's Scottie Upshall (ankle) and Kris Versteeg (upper body) practiced Wednesday and are listed as questionable, according to the Miami Herald. The Panthers are expected to be without Filip Kuba (upper body), Ed Jovanovski (knee), Sean Bergenheim (lower body) and Michael Caruso (wrist). Stephen Weiss will return to the lineup after missing Tuesday's game for personal reasons.

