



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Leopold traded before Sabres lose in shootout

By John Vogl
Buffalo News
March 30, 2013

Ryan Miller wondered aloud this month whether veterans such as himself, Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek were still the Buffalo Sabres' core. Given the team's struggles, the goaltender didn't know whether management viewed a rebuild as its ideal course of action.

General Manager Darcy Regier indicated Saturday night he is contemplating a franchise overhaul.

"Where our hockey club is right now we have to be open to listening to just about anything and everything, and I am listening," Regier said between trading Jordan Leopold to St. Louis and watching the Sabres lose, 4-3, in a shootout to Washington. "We have to be open to everything, and I think the players recognize that as well.

"You're looking to get a group of top players that are going to play together, not on a one-year basis but going forward on a multiyear basis. That's our focus, and it could involve any players, and I think the players are aware of that."

The aforementioned players and notables such as Robyn Regehr and Jochen Hecht have contracts that expire either this year or next. Based on Regier's statement of going forward on a multiyear basis, the GM sounds like he's planning to build around youngsters such as Cody Hodgson, Tyler Ennis and Tyler Myers.

Miller, upon hearing and reading Regier's remarks, did not view the comments as evidence of an immediate rebuild.

"It's another one of the mysteries of Darcy," Miller told The Buffalo News. "I think that's his way of saying we obviously know we have to do something. From his end, he's going to do whatever he feels he needs to do, but it doesn't tell you much. It doesn't tell me much.

"Starting this summer he can extend us, so his plan doesn't have to kick in right now. Media and everybody hypes up the trade deadline. A lot of things go undone. You still have the draft, you still have free agency and you still have training camp to build a team. Even then you can make adjustments early into next year.

"We're all curious to see what Darcy's going to do, but we have to be patient and just kind of do our job."

Miller has a modified no-trade clause in which he can submit a list of eight teams to which he will not accept a trade. He told The News that a report about him giving the Sabres a list prior to the season is false.

Regier's task is improving a team that coughed up a pair of two-goal leads to extend its winless skid to three games while falling to 13-16-6.

“I’ll continue to try and figure out ways that we can be better, not just for the rest of this year but more importantly for the future,” said Regier, who acknowledged it would be difficult to re-sign all the veterans. “There’s only so many of those players you can have on your roster with the cap the way it is. You need top-quality young players to fill out because they’re both good and they’re inexpensive.”

Regier moved out his first veteran Saturday afternoon when he shipped Leopold to St. Louis for a second-round pick and conditional fifth-round selection in this year’s draft. The conditional pick becomes a fourth-rounder if the Blues win a playoff series.

“Where we are as an organization, it’s an opportunity to get something that’s more focused on the future,” Regier said.

Leopold was in the final season of a three-year, \$9 million contract. The defenseman totaled 23 goals and 59 points in his first two seasons and had two goals and eight points in 24 games this year. The 32-year-old was second on the team with 21:08 of ice time per game.

“He’s touched every aspect of Buffalo’s game,” Blues GM Doug Armstrong said on a conference call. “He’s a guy that’s going to come in here and just give us a good, steady influence on our back end.”

Regier has no plans to make the Leopold deal his final one before Wednesday’s trade deadline.

“We’re going to try and do some things,” Regier said. “The trade deadline, you can feel at times that you’re going to get a lot done and you don’t get anything done, and vice versa. You can feel like you’re not making much headway and you end up doing more things. It’s still too early, really, but we’ll find out.”

Despite letting another victory slip away, the Sabres gained a point and sit three behind the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The tiebreaker is regulation and overtime wins, and the Sabres have the second fewest in the NHL (nine) with 13 games remaining. They host Boston tonight.

“It’s obviously upsetting if you’re hearing those words rebuilding,” defenseman Mike Weber said. “We play this game to win, and we play to make the playoffs and obviously get to our goal of winning the Stanley Cup. Rebuilding is a tough word to hear, but again it’s part of the business. We haven’t performed up to par.”

“We can’t worry about it. We have to play two more hockey games here before the trade deadline’s done. We just need to focus on that.”

Sabres notebook: Leino bounces back with two goals

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 30, 2013

Ville Leino got benched for the final 40 minutes of Thursday's game at Florida for taking an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty that resulted in a power-play goal. Afterward, the Sabres winger didn't crab about the decision by interim coach Ron Rolston and instead said it was a stupid penalty.

Rolston put Leino right back in the lineup Saturday night against Washington and got exactly the reaction he wanted to see.

Leino scored a pair of second-period goals – his first of the season and first at home in more than 15 months – to stake the Sabres to a 3-1 lead but it was hard to celebrate them as they went to waste in a 4-3 shootout loss.

“Obviously I wanted to bounce back. It's not fun [to be benched],” Leino said. “You want to be at your best when the games are on the line, the playoffs are on the line and games are big. That's when you should go out there and enjoy it, not be nervous.”

“He played well for us tonight,” Rolston said. “Got to the net. Both the goals he got to the net on.”

Leino had one previous multi-goal game for the Sabres, coming March 5, 2012 in Vancouver. He had eight goals last season, the last five all coming on the road.

Leino pumped home a Tyler Ennis rebound at 1:21 and then had a tap-in at 10:16 as Tyler Myers' shot from the left point leaked through Caps goalie Braden Holtby into the open goal crease. He went to the net in both cases and got rewarded.

“We have to stay aggressive,” Leino said. “We start games really aggressive. Some games we do really well. We just got to keep it going 60 minutes. It's not enough to do 40 or 20.”

...

Despite the loss, Jhonas Enroth kept up his hot play since Rolston took over from Lindy Ruff. In four starts under Rolston, Enroth is 2-0-2 with a 1.95 goals-against average and .940 save percentage.

“He played well tonight for us again, which is a great sign,” Rolston said. “That's four starts he's played really well for us. Very positive.”

Enroth draw a standing ovation from much of the crowd for diving to his left to spear a rebound attempt by Mike Ribeiro midway through overtime, perhaps the best of his 35 saves on the night.

“I'm moving my feet better now. That was a good save,” Enroth said.”

...

Rookie defenseman Mark Pysyk was scheduled to be a healthy scratch for Saturday's game but got back in the lineup when Jordan Leopold was traded prior to the game. Pysyk, the team's No. 1 draft pick in 2010, doesn't figure to come out of the lineup again.

"Mark is going to be a very good NHL player and this is a test period for him," said General Manager Darcy Regier.

Pysyk, a scratch Thursday at Florida, played 13:52 Saturday and was not on the ice for any goals. In Leopold's absence, Tyler Myers played a season-high 28:13 and Christian Ehrhoff played 26:19 in his 600th career NHL game, just over his average of 25:09.

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With Leopold gone and Robyn Regehr a good bet to be dealt by Wednesday's trade deadline, the Sabres will not be calling up Brayden McNabb from Rochester. He's out for the season with a knee injury suffered last Saturday night against Houston.

McNabb had a goal and seven assists in 25 games for Buffalo last season. He did not make the NHL this year and played 62 games in Rochester, collecting five goals and 31 assists while playing mostly with Pysyk.

"He and Mark played together and were playing very well together," Regier said. "It's unfortunate for his development and for us certainly as well."

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Caps star Alex Ovechkin had 10 shots on goal, had four others blocked and was wide on three. His goal gave him a seven-game point streak (seven goals, four assists). ... If Ryan Miller plays tonight's game here against Boston, he will tie Dominik Hasek's franchise record for games by a goaltender with 491. Miller already owns the franchise victory record with 263. ... John Scott was the only healthy scratch. Winger Thomas Vanek took the morning skate but Rolston said he wasn't ready to go yet. Rolston did not rule Vanek out of tonight's game.

Regier Open To More Trades

By Dave Buchanan

WGR 550

March 30, 2013

The Sabres made the first of what could be several trades leading up to Wednesday's NHL trade deadline when they dealt Jordan Leopold to the St. Louis Blues for a pair of draft picks on Saturday.

Sabres General Manager Darcy Regier spoke to reporters after the announcement of the Leopold trade and indicated that he is open to trading any player on his roster.

"Where our hockey club is right now we have to be open to listening to just about anything and everything and I am listening," said Regier, "I have talked to all 30 GMs over the last week and I'll continue to try and figure out ways we can be better not just for the rest of this year but more importantly for the future."

Regier was unsure how busy the trade market will be over the next four days but he does have an objective to make moves with the future of the team in mind.

"You're looking to get a group of top players that are going to play together not on a one year basis, but on a multi year basis," Regier said, "that's our focus and it could involve any players and the players know that."

Those players could include Ryan Miller, Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek who all have one more year left on their contract after this season. With the salary cap going down after this season it could force Regier to move one of those three players to make cap room for the other two.

"It will all come down to the numbers," said Regier, "you look at Anaheim they obviously signed their two big guys but there's only so many of those players you can have on your roster with the cap the way it is and you need top quality young players to fill out because they're both good and inexpensive."

Sabres trying to wake up after trade

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 30, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres got good goaltending and some pretty inspired play for 20 minutes. The question is, can it last for 60? Very often teams play good games after a trade.

It only took 3:01 to get on the board and it was pretty simple, a good pinch by Christian Ehrhoff and a hard snap shot to the far side. Ehrhoff is finally thinking offense and its shown lately scoring two goals and three assists in five games.

Buffalo has a habit of giving up a goal right after scoring and it did give up a good chance in the right circle, but Jhonas Enroth made a great save.

Strong goaltending is a big reason Buffalo had the lead early. He made a great save on Alex Ovechkin alone in the slot on a power play.

Mike Weber took a careless four minute high sticking penalty, but Buffalo did a great job on the penalty kill for a change against the NHL's second best power play. As often happens, Enroth was their best penalty killer.

Marcus Foligno turned the puck over to Ovechkin and again Enroth was there.

The Sabres were stopped by Braden Holtby after they scored.

Brian Flynn, back in the lineup after being benched for a game stole the puck and got it to Nathan Gerbe down the slot. Holtby made a save on the big shot.

After 40 minutes the shots were 27-15 in favor of Washington, but I feel that stat is deceiving. Buffalo led by two goals and it hasn't been by luck. Players have been going to the net and the Sabres have out hit the Caps, 29-13.

The biggest point is net presence. Off the rush Ville Leino sends in Tyler Ennis down the right wing side. Both Leino and Drew Stafford keep skating right to the crease. Holtby stops Ennis, but Leino is right there for his first of the season.

On the power play, the Sabres have two guys in front, but Ehrhoff missed the net. A few seconds later, Tyler Myers put it right on target and there was Leino to tap it into the empty net.

Despite the trade today, the team seems more together. Steve Oleksy boarded Kevin Porter and Nathan Gerbe was right there to drop the gloves and defend his teammate.

The one thing I can tell you is Buffalo can't win if it keeps going to the penalty box. The double minor on Weber was killed off, but Ennis then took a lazy tripping penalty and Ovechkin didn't miss.

Enroth was again strong stopping Mike Ribeiro twice in a row and then again after Mark Pysyk turned it over.

Cody Hodgson did not play in the final six minutes of the second period. He was on the bench.

Hodgson got back into the third period and was robbed by Holtby on a wide open power play chance. Before that, Ehrhoff failed to keep a puck in allowing Troy Brouwer to walk in alone and easily beat Enroth for a shorthanded goal.

Myers followed that up taking a dumb interference penalty behind the net. The lead was almost gone when Mike Green hit the post clean from the point. Buffalo did wind up killing the penalty.

Once they killed that penalty they seemed to get their legs back.

We got to see some third period desperation when two guys sold out to try to block a Green shot.

Later, Jason Pominville not only dove in front of a point shot, but twirled around on his stomach to clear it.

This game is probably as close to a 60 minute effort as we've seen this year until they gave away a two goal lead as they always do and handed Washington points.

Sabres deal Leopold to St. Louis

WGR 550

March 30, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres have announced that Jordan Leopold has been traded to the St. Louis Blues for a 2nd round pick in the 2013 NHL Draft, and a conditional 5th Round pick in 2013.

Leopold is in the final year of his contract and will become an unrestricted free agent at the end of this season.

"He's obviously a good player, his contract is up at the end of the year and where we are as an organization it's an opportunity to get something that's more focused on the future," said Sabres General Manager Darcy Regier, "they were looking for defenseman and they identified Jordan and hopefully things work out there."

Leopold skated in 174 games for the Sabres over the past three seasons. The Golden Valley, MN native added two goals and six assists in 24 games this season and was a -6. Leopold was originally signed by Buffalo as an unrestricted free agent prior to the 2010-11 season.

The Blues, currently in eighth place in the Western Conference, acquired Leopold to help bolster their chances of making the playoffs.

"He provides us with stability and experience back there, he's touched every aspect of Buffalo's game," said Blues General Manager Doug Armstrong, "He's second on the team in ice time for defense. he's third in PK for defense, second on power play for defense. He's a guy who's going to come in here and give us a good steady influence on our back end."

If Leopold plays well in the Blues' push for the postseason then he may have a home next year in St. Louis. "The beauty of it is we'll get a good look at him and he'll get a good look at us," said Armstrong, "We're hoping that he comes in and plays really well. He's a 1980s birthday so he certainly has some miles left on the tires. If it's a good fit, that's something we'll certainly look at."

With four days until the NHL trade deadling it was not a big surprise to the Sabres locker room that one of their own was sent packing.

"We are in a spot where we were not expected to be in and where we don't want to be and yes, there's going to be changes made and that's just part of the business," said Sabres defenseman Christian Ehrhoff, "It's always a hard day when somebody that's been in your group for a long time has to leave and it's usually that the whole team feels responsible for it and yes, we lost a good friend to another team today."

Leopold was a vocal leader in the room and on the bench. When Tyler Myers refused to do the NHLPA responsibilities after Paul Gaustad was traded, it was Leopold that took the reins. "He's a veteran player, he's been around and has a lot of experience and he's been a great guy to be around and to be with and as a group, we're going to miss him," said Ehrhoff.

For the very latest Sabres and NHL trade deadline news, stay tuned to WGR - Sports Radio 550 and wgr550.com.

Sabres try to solve the Caps

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 30, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Buffalo has lost twice to Washington this season and gets its last chance tonight at home.

Thomas Vanek will miss his 6th game this season due to injury. He did skate for a bit in the morning skate and his return could be close. Ron Rolston said, "He was out there today and moving, but he's not where he needs to be." Rolston added, "I would say it's possible tomorrow."

Jhonas Enroth gets the call in goal. This will be his fourth game in 11. Rolston said, "His confidence is a lot better than it was. He's been battling, he's been very quick, he's been tracking pucks very well and he's prepared himself with his confidence where he feels good about going in the net now."

Since Rolston's arrived Enroth is 2-0-1 with a 1.66 goals against and .948 save percentage. Rolston said, "He had went a long time there without winning a game and mentally more than anything it was something that to go in there and just have a solid performance, whether it was a win or a loss, but just to start feeling good about there his game was at and he's been able to do that."

Brian Flynn is returning after being a healthy scratch for one game. John Scott and Mark Pysyk are the healthy scratches.

Flynn scored three goals in his first eight games in Buffalo, but hasn't scored in four. He has three goals and two assists in 12 games. Flynn seemed to be making more mistakes. Rolston said, "I just think his energy more than anything lately was a little down so, just building that back up and being ready to go here for the last push."

If you still have the standings in mind, both teams along with Tampa have 31 points which ties them for 11th. Carolina is in 10th one point ahead, the Islanders hold down 9th, four points in front while the Rangers are 8th, also four points ahead.

Buffalo had won three games in a row before losing to Tampa Bay and Florida. Washington had won three in a row too, but lost last time out at home to the Islanders.

Both teams have power play goals in five out of six games.

Alex Ovechkin is finally rolling with points in six straight games. He has six goals and four assists for 10 points in those six games. His 32 points ranks him 18th in league scoring.

The Caps got Mike Ribeiro from Dallas and he has 35 points which puts him 9th in the NHL. His 24 assists rank him 6th overall.

Under Ron Rolston the Sabres have given up 18 power play goals. They kill at a 73.1% rate since Rolston arrived. Overall Buffalo's 27th on the PK at 77%. They'll face the league's second best power play in the Caps. Washington runs at 24.1% efficiency. The last place Sabres power play is 12.9%.

Join Brian Koziol for the pregame at 6:00 when he'll be joined Ron Rolston, Brian Flynn and Jochen Hecht.

Sabres blow another third-period lead, fall to Capitals in shootout

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 31, 2013

BUFFALO – An agitated Ron Rolston mostly offered short, vague answers to questions about the Sabres' woes following a 4-3 shootout loss to the Washington Capitals on Saturday before a capacity crowd of 19,070 fans inside the First Niagara Center.

The reeling Sabres had just blown a 3-1 third-period lead, and the interim coach was in no mood to give any insight into their third straight loss.

A sampling:

Almost 20 games into his tenure, does he have major questions about the Sabres' mental toughness?

"No, not really," Rolston said.

Why not?

"Because I don't," he replied.

How do the 12th-place Sabres, who also blew a third-period lead Thursday and lost a 5-4 shootout in Florida, fix things?

"Just keep working day-by-day," Rolston said. "Make it better."

The Sabres would make it better if they could close out games regularly.

Up two goals and on the power play Saturday, the Capitals' Troy Brouwer scored short-handed 2:21 into the third period.

"After that," said Sabres winger Ville Leino, who scored twice, "they were fired up and wanted to win the game."

Then, with 40 ticks left in regulation and goalie Braden Holtby on the bench, Mike Green tied it.

Shootout goals from Matt Hendricks and Alex Ovechkin sealed the Capitals' fourth win in five games and spoiled backup goalie Jhonas Enroth's strong 35-save effort.

"It shouldn't happen," Leino said. "Good teams usually win those games."

How did the Sabres, habitual lead-blowers, do it again?

"I think it's part of being experienced and being cool in the situations where the game's on the line and there's a lot of pressure on players," explained Leino, who was benched

45 minutes Thursday for taking an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. "So we just got to be extra smart and extra cool and win your battles. It's been happening too many times."

The Sabres also lost some of their aggressiveness.

"I think we got to stay aggressive," Leino said. "Some games we do really well. We got to keep going 60 minutes. It's not enough to do 40."

Enroth played all 65 minutes, stopping all 10 shots in the first period, 16 in the second and seven in the third.

"He was the best player for us by far," Sabres defenseman Robyn Regehr said. "I thought he played a great game and gave us a chance to win. We should've won that game."

In overtime, Enroth's diving glove stop kept Mike Ribeiro's shot from hitting a yawning cage.

"That's just a good skill set by me," Enroth said. "I think I'm moving my feet better now."

The Swede, who went almost 16 months without a win, began the night 2-0-1 with a 1.66 goals-against average and a .947 save percentage under Rolston.

Christian Ehrhoff scored the Sabres' other goal. Leino's first score gave the Sabres their first two-goal lead before Ovechkin's power-play score in the second period.

Regier says Sabres could trade top assets before deadline

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 31, 2013

BUFFALO – Given their 12th-place standing with Wednesday's trade deadline approaching, the Sabres must listen to "anything and everything" available to them, general manager Darcy Regier said Saturday after trading veteran defenseman Jordan Leopold.

Yes, that means Regier could envision himself dealing franchise cornerstones like goalie Ryan Miller and captain Jason Pominville.

"I am listening. I have talked to all 30 GMs over the last, if I say week, it certainly takes in all of them," Regier said Saturday prior to the Sabres' 4-3 shootout loss to the Washington Capitals inside the First Niagara Center. "I'll continue to try to figure out ways we can be better, not just for the rest of this year but, more importantly, for the future."

Dealing current core players could create a new group of stars for the future.

"We have to be open to everything, and we have to be open to that as well," Regier said. "You're looking to get a group of top players that are going to play together, not on a one-year basis, but, going forward, (a) multi-year basis. And so that's our focus, and it could involve any players, and I think the players are aware of that."

Regier was speaking after dishing Leopold to the St. Louis Blues for a second-round pick and a conditional fifth-round pick that could turn into a fourth-rounder in June's NHL Entry Draft.

The 32-year-old Leopold, who had two goals and eight points in 24 games, will be an unrestricted free agent following the season. He signed a three-year, \$9 million contract with the Sabres in July 2010.

"He's obviously a good player," Regier said. "His contract's up at the end of the year. Where we are as an organization and as a team, it's an opportunity to get something that's more focused on the future."

More on Leopold later.

Could Saturday's trade be the first of several?

"I don't know," Regier said. "We're going to try to do some things whether it works out. The trade deadline, you can feel at times that you're going to get a lot done and not get anything and vice versa. You can feel like you're not making much headway and you end up doing more things. I think it's still too early."

Regier has been asked about Miller, who has a limited no-trade clause. Rumors are flying – some from credible sources – the former Vezina Trophy winner could be dealt.

“I get asked about every player, including Ryan, sure,” said Regier, who refused to say if Miller had submitted a list of teams he would accept a trade to.

With the salary cap coming down next season, it could be difficult for the Sabres to keep Miller, Pominville and leading scorer Thomas Vanek, whose contracts all expire after 2013-14.

“It’ll all come down to the numbers,” Regier said. “I think if you look at Anaheim, they obviously signed their big guys (Ryan Getzlaf and Corey Perry). ... There’s only so many of those players you can have on the roster. That’s the way it is, and you need top-quality young players to fill out.”

Regier would consider trading some of the Sabres’ top prospects, too.

“Quite honestly, if there’s a deal that makes sense and it involves one of those younger players, it could possibly happen,” Regier said. “... I wouldn’t single out anyone. But I think if the focus is in the right position for us organizationally, an area where we still have a need, we’re open.”

The Sabres filled Leopold’s opening by playing impressive rookie Mark Pysyk after one scratch. The 21-year-old should have a spot the rest of the season.

“Mark is going to be a very good NHL player, and this is a test period for him,” Regier said. “He’s handled it very well to this point, and so we’ll kind of ride it out right now.”

It was believed the Sabres would deal Leopold instead of letting him walk for nothing.

The versatile Leopold struggled much of the winter, even sitting as a healthy scratch before an injury sidelined him eight games.

When he was healed, interim Sabres coach Ron Rolston sat him an extra game. Leopold rebounded, though, and Rolston played him more than 20 minutes most contests.

Leopold’s a deadline veteran, having been dished twice – from Colorado to Calgary in 2009 and from Florida to Pittsburgh a year later – late in the season.

“I’m not scared, no,” Leopold told the Times Herald on Friday about possibly being dealt. “I have a job to do day in, day out. Things that I can’t control, I’m not going to stress over.”

Switching teams can take its toll on a family, though.

“I look at it from a different perspective,” Leopold said. “I have three kids and a pregnant wife. I’m pretty settled here in Buffalo. I look at it as a family aspect. Playing the game of hockey is the same wherever you go. You just have to go out there and do your job. As far as my family, I have to look at them first. The noise, they tend to pay more attention to it than I do.

“I think it’s true with all sports. Sometimes it’s harder watching that it is playing. My family definitely gets affected by that.”

He added: “Those are the things people don’t see when you get traded, the family aspect of travel, the moving, long nights, early mornings – that kind of stuff, getting acquainted with your teammates. ... I would like to have a future here.”

Rolston praised Leopold on Saturday morning, saying, “He’s really had a pretty solid, complete game right now.”

Notes: Vanek (muscle strain) missed his second straight game. Rookie winger Brian Flynn replaced tough guy John Scott after a one-game absence. “His energy, I think more than anything lately, was a little down,” Rolston said about Flynn. “So just building that back up and being ready to go here for the last push.” ... Sabres prospect Brayden McNabb (lower body) is out for the season. The defenseman was recently hurt playing with Rochester. “It’s unfortunate for development,” Regier said.

CAPITAL COMEBACK: Washington rallies for 4-3 shootout win

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

March 30, 2013

Washington 4 – Buffalo 3 (SO)

Saturday, March 30, 2013

First Niagara Center

GAME RECAP

As quickly as things start to go well for the Buffalo Sabres, they can also go south just as fast. The Sabres coughed up a 3-1 third-period lead on Saturday, eventually losing a 4-3 shootout decision to the Washington Capitals at First Niagara Center. Matt Hendricks and Alex Ovechkin both scored for Washington in the shootout that lasted only two rounds.

The Sabres entered the third period with a two-goal advantage, thanks in large part to Ville Leino's first two goals of the season. Christian Ehrhoff had staked Buffalo to an early 1-0 lead just 3:01 into the game. But with John Carlson in the box for a delay of game penalty for shooting the puck over the glass, Washington netminder Braden Holtby fired the puck around the boards after scooping up the Tyler Ennis dump in. Troy Brouwer grabbed the puck outside the Capitals' blueline, headed to the Buffalo net untouched, and beat Jhonas Enroth short side for the shorthanded goal. It was Buffalo's league-leading sixth shorthanded goal allowed this season.

Washington would eventually tie the score with just 40 seconds left in the game, as Mike Green's point shot rang off the post behind Enroth, but the rebound would hit his back and bounce into the net.

The Sabres fall to 13-16-6 (32 pts.) with the shootout loss, with a mere 13 games remaining on the schedule. Seven of Buffalo's last 15 games have been decided in a shootout, and they evened their season record at 4-4 with the loss tonight.

Jhonas Enroth was the hard-luck loser in goal for Buffalo, stopping 34 shots in the loss. His diving stop on Mike Ribeiro in overtime was his best save of the net. Enroth is now 2-2-1 on the year, and is 2-0-1 in his past three starts.

Buffalo is right back at it on Sunday when they host the Boston Bruins. Game time is 7:30 p.m.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Ville Leino scored his first goal since April 5, 2012; and recorded his first two-goal game since Mar. 3, 2012 at Vancouver... Marcus Foligno extended his point streak to three games (1+2) with an assist on Leino's second goal... Christian Ehrhoff played in his 600th NHL game tonight... Buffalo has now collected points in five straight home games (3-0-2). This is their longest streak since going 7-0-1 in eight home games from Feb. 19-Mar. 24, 2012... The Sabres have now had 14 of their last 16 games decided by one goal. Buffalo is 6-3-5 in those 14 games, and they are 9-8-6 in their 23 one-goal games this

season... 143rd game all-time between Buffalo and Washington; Buffalo leads the series with an 83-43-17 record

BACK-TO-BACK

Tonight's game opened up Buffalo's seventh of nine sets of back-to-back games this season. With tonight's shootout loss, the Sabres are now 3-2-2 in the first game, and head into Sunday's game with a record of 1-4-1 in the second. Buffalo's point breakdown in previous back-to-back sets is as follows: four points (1), three points (1), two points (1), one point (1) and zero points (2).

LEOPOLD DEALT TO ST. LOUIS

Prior to the game, Buffalo traded defenseman Jordan Leopold to St. Louis in exchange for a pair of 2013 draft picks – the Blues' second-round draft pick and a conditional fifth-round selection. If the Blues win at least one playoff round this year, the fifth-round pick will become a fourth rounder. Leopold recorded 67 points (25+42) in 174 games with the Sabres after signing as an unrestricted free agent on July 1, 2010. In 610 career NHL games with Calgary, Colorado, Florida, Pittsburgh and Buffalo, the 32-year-old Leopold has amassed 65 goals and 137 assists.

ROSTER NOTES

Thomas Vanek missed his second straight game with an upper body injury... John Scott was Buffalo's lone healthy scratch.

BUFFALO'S REAL-TIME STATS LEADERS

Time on Ice: Tyler Myers, 28:13
Shots: Drew Stafford, 3
Blocked Shots: Sekera/Weber, 3
Hits: Steve Ott, 6
Faceoff Wins: Steve Ott, 9
Total Faceoffs: Steve Ott, 19 (9-10)

BUFFALO'S RECORD WHEN...

Scoring First: 9-4-4
Leading after the first period: 4-2-2
Leading after the second period: 5-0-4
Outshot by an opponent: 10-11-2

SPECIAL TEAMS:

Power Play
Tonight: 1/2
Overall: 17/126, 13.5%
Home: 9/59, 15.3%

Penalty Killing

Tonight: 3/4
Overall: 107/139, 77.0%
Home: 37/50, 74.0%

Sabres trade D Leopold to Blues for 2 draft picks

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

March 30, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- The underachieving Buffalo Sabres began retooling for the future by trading defenseman Jordan Leopold to the contending St. Louis Blues on Saturday.

The move was announced hours before Buffalo hosted the Washington Capitals. And it could be the first of many for the Sabres before the NHL trade deadline on Wednesday.

In exchange for Leopold, Buffalo received a second-round pick and a conditional fifth-round selection in the June draft.

Leopold is a 10-year NHL veteran who has spent the past three seasons in Buffalo. He has two goals and six assists in 24 games this season in the final year of his contract.

"He provides us with stability and experience back there," Blues general manager Doug Armstrong said during a conference call. "He's a guy that's going to come in here and give us a good steady influence on our back end."

Armstrong noted Leopold can play in every situation, including the power play, and ranked second among the Sabres with an average of more than 21 minutes in ice time per game.

Leopold has 65 goals and 202 points in 610 career games for Calgary, Colorado, Florida, Pittsburgh and Buffalo. Leopold enjoyed his best season with Buffalo in 2010-11, when he reached career highs with 13 goals and 35 points.

The Blues (17-14-2) were in need of help after losing three in a row and four of five. They began the day in the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference, a point ahead of Dallas and Columbus.

"We feel a lot stronger. We feel our depth is much more improved as of 3 o'clock today than it was 3 o'clock yesterday," Armstrong said. "Our goal, first and foremost, we have to get into the playoffs. We've put ourselves in a position where we're going to have to work hard to maintain our position and improve it."

The Sabres (13-16-5) have been inconsistent in a season in which they've already fired coach Lindy Ruff. Buffalo is 3-1-1 in its past five, but began the day sitting 12th in the East.

"His contract's up at the end of the year, and where we are as an organization, it's an opportunity to get something that's more focused on the future," Sabres general manager Darcy Regier said.

Regier suggested everyone on the roster is available for the right price - including goalie Ryan Miller.

"Listen, where our hockey club is right now, we have to be open to listening to just about anything and everything," he said when asked about Miller. "I have talked to all 29 GMs over the last week, and I'll continue to try to figure out ways that we can get better not just for the rest of this year but, more importantly, for the future."

Miller, captain Jason Pominville and leading scorer Thomas Vanek each have one more season left on their contracts.

The Sabres have traded away two defensemen this month, after T.J. Brennan was dealt to Florida on March 15 in exchange for a fifth-round pick.

Earlier in the day, the Blues assigned goalie Jake Allen to Peoria, their American Hockey League affiliate.

Green rallies Caps to 4-3 SO win over Sabres

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

March 30, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- It was second time lucky for Mike Green, and the Washington Capitals are suddenly showing signs of making a legitimate late-season charge up the Eastern Conference standings.

After watching his shot deflect off the post and wide of the net 7 minutes into the third period, Green got a much better bounce on another shot from the same spot with 40 seconds remaining.

Green's goal - which struck the left post and banked in off the back of Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth's arm - capped the Capitals' two-goal, third-period rally. Matt Hendricks and Alex Ovechkin then scored on Washington's two shootout attempts to seal a 4-3 win on Saturday night.

"No, I didn't call 'bank.' It was more of a wish than anything," Green said, describing his goal. "I came back to the bench and said, 'I wish it would have hit him in the back and went in.' And the second one did, so somebody was listening."

Green added an assist, while Ovechkin and Troy Brouwer also scored in regulation in helping the Capitals (16-17-1) improve to 4-1 in their last five. With the win, Washington took over sole possession of 11th place, a point ahead of Buffalo, in the Eastern Conference standings.

Braden Holtby stopped 20 shots through overtime, and didn't allow a goal in the shootout.

"These are the type of games that we are going to need to steal to make a playoff push," Green said. "A big win for us."

It was an all too familiar finish for the inconsistent Sabres (13-16-6).

Buffalo is 0-1-2 in its past three. The Sabres have squandered two-goal leads six times this season, and they were coming off a game in which they blew a third-period lead in a 5-4 shootout loss at Florida on Thursday.

"It's happened too many times," forward Ville Leino said. "It shouldn't happen. Good teams usually win those games."

Leino scored twice, while Christian Ehrhoff also scored for Buffalo on a day the team already began looking to the future.

Hours before the game, Buffalo traded veteran defenseman Jordan Leopold to St. Louis in exchange for two draft picks - including a second-rounder. Leopold was in the final year of his contract and Sabres general manager Darcy Regier said he's focusing on improving the team beyond this season.

The Sabres jumped to a 3-1 lead despite being outshot 27-15 after 40 minutes.

The Capitals got a lift while killing off a delay-of-game penalty to John Carlson early in the third period.

From behind his net, Holtby swept the puck up the left boards. The puck dribbled past Sabres defenseman Andrej Sekera at the point, which set up Brouwer to score for a 2-on-1 break.

Buffalo has allowed a league-worst six short-handed goals.

Green's goal fueled the Capitals' momentum entering overtime.

Mike Ribeiro nearly sealed it for Washington 2:46 into overtime, but was robbed by Enroth's diving save.

Enroth, who stopped 35 shots, then gave up goals on both shootout attempts.

Hendricks scored by faking to his right and then going to his left, where he flipped a shot over goalie's pad.

After Holtby got his right pad out to stop Buffalo's Tyler Ennis, Ovechkin sealed the victory by snapping a shot through Enroth's legs.

"It's a credit to our guys for sticking with it," Holtby said. "Greenie came up with a huge goal, and that's what the leaders on your team do."

NOTES: Ovechkin extended his point streak to seven games, in which he has seven goals and 11 points. He has 32 points (20 goals, 12 assists) in 30 career games against Buffalo.
... Sabres leading scorer Thomas Vanek (upper body) missed his second straight game.
... Ehrhoff played his 600th career game.

Green's deja vu rallies Capitals past Sabres

By Mark Ludwiczak

The Sports Xchange

March 30, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The second time was the charm for Washington Capitals defenseman Mike Green Saturday night.

With the Capitals down 3-2 to the Buffalo Sabres in the third period, Green blasted a shot off the goal post with just over 13 minutes remaining in regulation. When the Capitals pulled goalie Braden Holtby for the extra attacker in the game's final moments, Green had another opportunity at almost the exact same spot -- in the middle of the ice in front of the Sabres blue line -- and this time his shot rang off the left post, hitting Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth and into the Buffalo net to tie the game with 39.2 seconds remaining.

Alex Ovechkin and Matt Hendricks then scored in the shootout to lead the Capitals to a 4-3 comeback victory over the Sabres at the First Niagara Center.

"Almost the exact same spot on the ice and shot," Green said. "The first one, I'd seen the whole way, it hit the post and went out and I just came back to the bench and said, 'I wish it would have hit him in the back and went in.' And the second one did, so somebody was listening to me."

With his late equalizer, Green helped make up for a costly mistake earlier in the week in a loss to the New York Islanders. Green was stripped of the puck late against New York Tuesday night, leading to the Islanders' winning goal in a 3-2 defeat.

"We talked a little about it this morning," Capitals coach Adam Oates said. "Obviously, a lot of tough luck for him the other night and a very accountable guy. We talked about it, he apologized to me, I know how he feels. Great for him to bounce back."

Green's teammates made no mistake when the game went into the shootout. Hendricks, shooting first for the Capitals, beat Buffalo goalie Jhonas Enroth on a wrist shot after a strong deke to his forehand. Ovechkin, shooting second, sealed the victory after Buffalo's first two shooters missed.

Defenseman Troy Brouwer jump-started Washington's comeback with a shorthanded goal 2:43 into the third period.

"A big goal by Brouwer and everybody stepped up after that," Ovechkin said. "We kept pushing and pushing."

Ovechkin also scored in regulation for the Capitals, picking up his 17th goal of the season. Holtby had 35 saves for Washington (16-17-1).

Ville Leino scored twice for the Sabres (13-16-6), who blew a two-goal lead. Christian Ehrhoff also scored for Buffalo. Enroth finished with 35 saves.

"It shouldn't happen," Leino said of the loss. "Good teams usually win those games and teams that have success usually end up winning those games."

Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston was left searching for answers following the disappointing loss and had short responses in his session with the media.

"Just keep working day by day, make it better," Rolston said.

The game started out well for Buffalo. Ehrhoff got the Sabres on the board first at 3:01 of the first period with a wrist shot from the left circle. Ehrhoff dug the puck out from a scrum along the boards and skated into the circle for his fourth goal of the season.

Buffalo jumped out to a 2-0 lead early in the second period, but Washington quickly answered. Leino put home a rebound in front of the net for his first goal of the year at 1:19 of the second, but Ovechkin got one back for Washington on the power play at 2:21. Ovechkin ripped a wrist shot past Enroth from inside the left circle.

Leino gave the Sabres their two-goal lead back at 10:26 of the second period on the power play. After Tyler Myers' shot from the point struck traffic in front of the net, Leino tucked the loose puck into the net for his second of the game.

But the Capitals kept on coming, mounting the late comeback behind goals from Brouwer and Green. Washington outshot the Sabres 38-23 overall.

With 33 points, the Capitals are two points out of the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference and are hoping to make a late-season push toward the postseason. The Capitals are on the road against Philadelphia on Sunday.

"This is a huge trip for us," Green said. "We've been playing well on the road lately and we need to continue that."

NOTES: Hours before the game, the Sabres traded defenseman Jordan Leopold to the St. Louis Blues for a second-round pick and a conditional fifth-round pick. Leopold, 32, is a 10-year veteran who was in the third and final year of his contract with the Sabres. More trades may be on the horizon for the struggling Sabres, general manager Darcy Regier said before the game. "We have to be open to listening to just about anything and everything," Regier said. ... Buffalo leading scorer Thomas Vanek missed the game with an upper-body injury. John Scott was also scratched for the Sabres. ... Aaron Volpatti, Tomas Kundratek and Dmitry Orlov were scratched for the Capitals. ... This was the 143rd game between Buffalo and Washington. Heading into Saturday's game, the Sabres led the series with an 83-43-16 record

Blues pick up Leopold from Sabres

The Sports Network

March 30, 2013

St. Louis, MO (Sports Network) - The Buffalo Sabres sent defenseman Jordan Leopold to the St. Louis Blues in exchange for conditional second-round and fifth-round selections in the upcoming draft on Saturday.

The 30-year-old blueliner registered two goals and six assists in 24 games for the Sabres this season, following a two-year stretch with the franchise that saw him strike for 23 goals and 59 points in 150 appearances.

A second-round selection of Anaheim in 1999, Leopold made his NHL debut in 2002 for Colorado.

In 610 games over 10 seasons, Leopold has totaled 65 goals, 202 points and 268 penalty minutes.

Earlier on Saturday, the Blues assigned goaltender Jake Allen to Peoria of the American Hockey League.

The 22-year-old native of New Brunswick appeared in 12 games with St. Louis, going 8-3-0 with a 2.45 goals-against average.

NHL Game Summary - Washington at Buffalo

The Sports Network

March 30, 2013

Buffalo, NY (Sports Network) - Matt Hendricks scored the game-winner in the shootout, as the Washington Capitals rallied late for a 4-3 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday at First Niagara Center.

Hendricks started the shootout with a successful wrister in close and after both Buffalo shooters came up empty, Alex Ovechkin rifled a quick shot through the five-hole of Jhonas Enroth to send the Capitals to their fourth victory in their last five games.

Ovechkin also lit the lamp in regulation, while Troy Brouwer and Mike Green added a goal and an assist apiece for Washington, which sits just two points back of the eighth seed in the Eastern Conference playoff picture.

"There's no room for error," said Green. "We have to win these games, that's the bottom line."

Braden Holtby posted 20 saves and also added his second assist of the season.

Ville Leino recorded his first two goals of the season, while Christian Ehrhoff tallied once for the Sabres, who have registered a point in two straight games despite dropping three in a row.

Enroth stopped 35-of-38 shots in the setback.

"They're pros and they understand the time of the year that is and Wednesday is the deadline and what'll happen will happen," Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston said. "They don't have control over that, so they've been pretty focused."

Buffalo seemed well on its way to collecting two crucial points as it led 3-1 after two frames, but the Capitals battled back with a pair of goals in the third to force an extra session.

The first came early in the period with the Capitals on the penalty kill, as Holtby's clearing attempt from behind the Washington net sprang Brouwer up the left wing. Brouwer then skated into the left circle before beating Enroth to the short-side to make it 3-2 at the 2:43 mark of the third.

Enroth was able to keep the Capitals off the board from there until Holtby made his way to the Washington bench late in regulation. With the extra attacker, Green fired a heavy slapper from the high slot that found iron, but the rebound bounced off the back of Enroth and crossed the goal line to knot the game with 39.2 seconds left.

Neither team managed much in overtime, as the teams combined for just four shots over the extra five minutes to force the shootout.

Buffalo struck first just over three minutes into the game when Ehrhoff won a scrum on the short left boards and skated into the left circle before rifling a wrister high into the far corner of the net for a 1-0 lead at the 3:01 mark.

The Sabres doubled their advantage just 1:19 into the second when Leino lit the lamp with a wrister, but Ovechkin's power-play marker just over a minute later cut the margin to 2-1.

Game Notes

Washington took all three meetings from the Sabres to sweep the season series ... The Capitals improved to 8-9-1 as the guest this season ... Ovechkin extended his point streak to seven games ... Sabres leading scorer Thomas Vanek missed his second straight game with an upper-body injury ... Buffalo fell to 6-6-3 at home this season.

Merrimack's Schaller inks pact with Buffalo

By Jim Fennell

New Hampshire Union Leader

March 30, 2013

Most college students graduate and then they go look for a job. Tim Schaller of Merrimack is doing it a little differently.

By the time he gets his degree in social science from Providence College in May, Schaller will already be working in his chosen field of work. Apparently the Buffalo Sabres didn't need to see his sheepskin.

Schaller, 22, signed an entry level contract with the Buffalo Sabres and plans to join the team in the summer. He said he won't be reporting to the team's AHL affiliate, but will finish school and report to Buffalo's summer development camp in July.

"That was important to me," Schaller said of earning his degree.

Schaller said he will train on his own and work with skating coaches before reporting to Buffalo with the intent of earning a roster spot with the Sabres in the fall.

Schaller's rights were not owned by any team, so he was able to negotiate with all teams. He attended development camps with the Calgary Flames and Chicago Blackhawks in past summers and said there were 10 teams that talked with him during the season. He said his final decision came down to Winnipeg and Buffalo.

"Buffalo seemed like the right fit," Schaller said. "I've been talking to them through the year and when the season ended, things got more serious. It all came together pretty quick."

Schaller, who went to Merrimack High School before spending a year with the New England Huskies of the Eastern Junior Hockey League, is a 6-foot-2, 210-pound center who said he always admired the style of Patrice Bergeron of the Boston Bruins.

"He's dynamite at his position as a lock down centerman who can score," Schaller said.

Boston at Buffalo

Associated Press

March 30, 2013

Road woes have played a large part in the Boston Bruins' slip in the Eastern Conference standings but they will face a potentially short-handed rival in their next game away from home.

The Buffalo Sabres, though, will be seeking to add to a five-game point streak at the First Niagara Center when they face the Bruins on Sunday night.

Boston was challenging for the Eastern Conference lead earlier this month but has fallen well behind Pittsburgh by going 2-4-1 in its last seven. The Bruins (21-8-4) suffered their fifth loss in six road games Saturday, 3-1 to Philadelphia.

Boston got its lone goal from Nathan Horton in the third period despite outshooting the Flyers 34-22. In their previous game Wednesday, the Bruins matched their best scoring performance of the season but fell 6-5 in a shootout to Montreal.

"We know we have to get better," goaltender Tuukka Rask said. "We haven't played that bad, but it's uncharacteristic mistakes. And it's something we need to get rid of."

"It happens but then again ... we know we need to get better in all areas. It's weird because we're not playing awful and we're losing games, but we know it's not good enough."

The Bruins would appear to need a better performance Sunday as Buffalo is 3-0-2 in its last five home games, but the Sabres (13-16-6) are also 0-1-2 in their last three overall after blowing a two-goal lead Saturday against visiting Washington.

They gave up the tying goal with 40 seconds left in regulation en route to a 4-3 shootout defeat. It was the sixth time Buffalo has failed to capitalize on a two-goal advantage.

The Sabres also blew a one-goal lead in the third period against Florida in a 5-4 shootout loss Thursday.

"It's happened too many times," said forward Ville Leino, who scored a pair of goals Saturday. "It shouldn't happen. Good teams usually win those games."

Leading scorer Thomas Vanek missed both of those losses with an upper-body injury, but interim coach Ron Rolston told the league's website there's a chance he could return Sunday. Vanek participated in the team's optional skate Saturday, but Rolston said, "he was out there today and moving, but he's not where he needs to be."

The Sabres won't have defenseman Jordan Leopold after he was traded to St. Louis on Saturday for a pair of draft picks. General manager Darcy Regier said that might not be the end to Buffalo's moves before the trade deadline, even hinting that Vanek, goaltender Ryan Miller and captain Jason Pominville are available if an enticing deal comes along.

"Where our hockey club is right now, we have to be open to listening to just about anything and everything," Regier said. "I have talked to all 29 GMs over the last week, and I'll continue to try to figure out ways that we can get better not just for the rest of this year but, more importantly, for the future."

In the meantime, the Sabres will try to earn their third win in four meetings with Boston this season. They used their own three-goal outburst in the third period for a 4-2 victory in the most recent meeting Feb. 15 in Buffalo.

The Sabres are also 5-1-1 in the last seven visits from the Bruins but suffered one of those losses on Feb. 10. Boston scored twice in the third period for that 3-1 win.

Miller will likely be back in net after Jhonas Enroth started Saturday. Miller is 16-2-4 with a 2.04 goals-against average at home against Boston in the regular season.