



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Myers done with broken bone in leg

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

April 12, 2013

The Sabres' last game was ugly as they come, with Buffalo getting completely embarrassed by Montreal. The team hopes it was an aberration.

Based on the blows to the talent level, it might not be.

Buffalo's depleted defense descended toward decimated status Friday with news that Tyler Myers is done for the season. The blue-liner broke a bone in his leg Thursday while blocking a shot against the Canadiens, and the healing process will take longer than the seven games that remain on Buffalo's schedule.

"Obviously, that's a huge hole for our defense corps," said defenseman Mike Weber, whose team hosts Philadelphia this afternoon in First Niagara Center. "It's obviously extremely unfortunate that he fractured his leg, but we've got to move forward."

They'll do so with a fraction of the team that opened the season against the Flyers.

Christian Ehrhoff and Andrej Sekera are the only defensemen left who played in the season opener. Myers and Alexander Sulzer were lost to injuries, while Buffalo traded Robyn Regehr and Jordan Leopold. Weber was a healthy scratch, and so was T.J. Brennan, who got dealt to Florida.

Add in traded captain Jason Pominville and Buffalo's present lineup is measurably lower in skill and experience.

"You look around this room, we don't have a lot of high-profile guys or, you know, highly skilled guys," said Adam Pardy, who started the year as a minor-league ninth defenseman but will play in the top four today. "I mean, we do have a lot of skill here, but we need work, too. We need work and support.

"We can't afford to be taking nights off like we did."

The combination of lack of effort and diminished talent led to the 5-1 beatdown against the Habs. The Sabres can't do anything about the latter, but they insist improving the former will help them overcome their shortcomings.

"Basically, the same team beat the Pittsburgh Penguins," Weber said of last week's win over the Stanley Cup contenders. "We know how to play. When we play the right way, it doesn't matter who you have in the lineup.

"We still need to prove to ourselves in here. Guys are fighting for jobs, contracts, spots, ice time. There's a huge list of things that you're fighting for. You only get a certain amount of time in this league. Everyone's fighting for different things. As a team, we're fighting for the same goal of trying to improve every night. It starts right now."

Myers won't restart his career until next season. The defenseman was injured while blocking back-to-back shots by P.K. Subban during a second-period five-on-three penalty kill.

Myers still finished with a game-high 25:37 of ice time, with 9:36 coming after the bone break. Interim coach Ron Rolston said the injury will not require surgery.

"He played the rest of the game, basically, so it's not a major, major thing," Rolston said. "He just can't continue on it."

Though Myers has underperformed since reporting to training camp out of shape, his departure still leaves a major hole in the lineup. He was second in overall ice time at 21:18 per game, which included 2:14 of short-handed time (third on the Sabres) and 2:12 of power-play work (sixth).

The 23-year-old completed his fourth NHL season with three goals, eight points and a minus-8 rating in 39 games.

"He does everything out there," Pardy said. "It's tough to lose a guy like that, but at the same time it's going to open the door for somebody else. Somebody's going to come in here and going to have to play."

Sabres notebook: Briere's time as a Flyer may be near end

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
April 12, 2013

Danny Briere will be in the Philadelphia Flyers' lineup today. He's not sure how many more times that will happen.

Briere, who missed the past 10 games with a concussion, will enter First Niagara Center accompanied by questions about his future. The former Sabres captain admitted this week he's a candidate for a compliance buyout after the season.

"It's reality," Briere told reporters in Philadelphia. "All I can control is for me to come back in the lineup and play as good as I can."

He typically plays well against Buffalo, putting up 14 goals and 23 points in 28 games. He also played very well in Buffalo from 2003 to 2007, which led the Flyers to sign him to an eight-year, \$52 million contract.

Briere has two seasons left on the deal, with an annual salary cap hit of \$6.5 million. His actual salary is \$3 million next season and \$2 million in 2014-15.

The salary cap is dropping from \$70.2 million to \$64.3 million next season, and the Flyers have already committed \$65.5 million, according to CapGeek.com. The new collective bargaining agreement includes two compliance buyouts, which is where Briere may fit in.

For \$3.33 million in cash, the Flyers can buy out the 35-year-old Briere, his contract and its accompanying cap hit.

"Everybody understands that the revenues are going to go down, and a lot of teams had prepared for two, three, four seasons ahead," Briere said in Philly. "Those teams are going to pay the price because they had their salary structure set already, so it's a chance for helping the owners out with the new rules of the CBA."

"Obviously, I end up paying the price. But you know what? There's been so many good things that have turned up in my favor over the years that I'm not going to complain about that."

The recent concussion was the latest setback in a forgettable season. Briere opened the year on the sidelines after suffering a wrist injury in Germany during the lockout. He's put up just five goals and 13 points in 26 games.

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Sabres owner Terry Pegula and his wife, Kim, will join Buffalo Mayor Bryon W. Brown and Erie County Executive Mark Polancarz in front of the arena for a ceremonial groundbreaking for the HarborCenter project. The 1 p.m. event will feature several guest speakers and media availability.

The Sabres and Flyers will face off at 3 p.m.

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The Sabres did not announce whether anyone will be called up from Rochester to take the roster spot of defenseman Tyler Myers, who is out for the season after suffering a broken bone in his leg Thursday against Montreal.

Buffalo had just five defensemen at practice Friday. Forward John Scott, who was a healthy scratch last game, has NHL experience on defense but didn't do any work along the blue line during the workout.

The Amerks hosted Oklahoma City on Friday night. Potential call-ups from Rochester include Alex Biega, Drew Schiestel, Nick Crawford and Jerome Gauthier-Leduc.

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The Sabres' 5-1 loss to Montreal was televised by CBC's "Hockey Night in Canada," and their cameramen filmed a close-up of Buffalo center Steve Ott attempting to lick the face shield of former Dallas teammate Jeff Halpern during a faceoff.

Ott, who was penalized earlier this year for blowing kisses to Toronto's Dion Phaneuf, had an interesting reaction to a question about the incident.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Ott, who then broke into a huge grin and screeched while bolting away.

Backsliding team gives fans reason to jeer

By Bucky Gleason
The Buffalo News
April 12, 2013

Steve Ott was greeted with a rousing ovation when he was introduced in the starting lineup Thursday night, so apparently fans weren't overly upset with him for his critical comments about them earlier in the week. Say what you will about Buffalo, but its people generally are a friendly and forgiving lot.

Ott will learn soon enough that Sabres fans don't ask for much more than a full effort on most nights, which is precisely why he's one of their more popular players. He's an honest player who is intelligent and tough. You never get the sense from watching him play that he just stole your wallet and maxed out your credit cards.

Sadly, on this team, that's all it takes to stand out.

Ott has been here for four months. If he was around for the past four years, he would have known the boos raining down from the stands, which returned Thursday night in a 5-1 loss to the Canadiens, weren't directed toward him or the young teammates he was trying to protect.

They were booing the franchise, the general manager, the owner, the product, the repetitiveness of it all. They were booing because they've exhausted all other options. They were booing because that's what fans do when they feel like they've been ignored by the very people collecting their money.

Montreal outshot Buffalo, 42-15, in the game and 14-2 through the first 12-plus minutes of the second period. Ott effectively muted a few boo birds, but they were mostly drowned out by cheering Habs' fans Thursday. Still, plenty could be heard during various stages of the game after the Canadiens assumed command.

"Absolutely and rightfully so," Ott said in a quiet dressing room after the game. "I said that at the beginning. It was a shellacking. Boo your head off. I agree. I'd be booing, too, from the bench. That's not the issue."

Ott still didn't understand that fans have greater issues than a few games or one season or the failure to get the puck out of the zone.

Ted Black can talk all he wants about the Sabres being better off now than when Terry Pegula bought the franchise. He might be kidding himself, but he's not fooling anybody here. The Sabres are spending more, winning less, going in the wrong direction and refusing to make the necessary changes at the top. For him to pass the season off as improvement insults the intelligence of the people who have spent good money on a lousy product. The Sabres are a day closer to winning the Stanley Cup the way people are a day closer to death. Progress can be found at the construction site across the street from First Niagara Center. What you've watched all season inside the arena is actually destruction.

I'll spare you another lengthy rant about Darcy Regier. You're welcome. By now, you know my opinion of his work. Forget the first 13-plus seasons. It's a matter of time before the Sabres

miss the playoffs in both full seasons under new ownership. Fans are booing because they're not getting anywhere near their money's worth.

That's the issue.

You can see where the Sabres are going. They have lowered their standards, which makes it easier to sell progress next season and beyond. Regier will likely stick around. Ron Rolston has a reputation for being a good teacher, which will likely be enough to stay and oversee the development of a young team. They'll buy more time.

Pegula could improve his team and re-energize a frustrated fan base in a flash if he made the right decision with his general manager. Imagine the buzz in town during the offseason if a creative and aggressive GM, or pretty much anyone else, showed up and started the necessary moves to get this team going in the right direction.

Fans are booing because they feel they have no voice and no choice. Black is terrific at answering emails and answering questions from the media, but he has shown little regard for paying customers and critics. It hasn't dawned on upper management that critical fans and the evil media actually could have been right all along.

The Sabres teased their fans yet again with a three-game winning streak, but this isn't Atlanta. Most people knew the winning streak was a mirage. They weren't overly impressed with the performance against New Jersey even though Buffalo never trailed and ended up winning. It's another reason they booed.

And they had more reasons to share their disgust Thursday night after seeing the Sabres get dominated from start to finish by yet another team playing its backup goalie. Montreal scored twice in the first period, added two more in the second and treated Buffalo like a speed bump on its way to Toronto.

"Embarrassing," Ott said. "Our effort was terrible. Fourteen shots to how many for them, 40 or 50? Who knows. It felt like a ton. It was definitely, man-to-man, completely not good enough."

Ott was one of few players on the Sabres who effectively aroused the fan base Thursday night. He hammered Brendan Gallagher with a heavy hit along the wall with just more than seven minutes left in the second period. He wasted no time dropping his gloves when Francis Bouillon came to his rookie teammate's defense.

The Sabres broke up the shutout in the third period, with the game all but decided, when Kevin Porter made a pretty feed to Brian Flynn for an easy goal. It was a nice play in a season lacking them and enough to temporarily get people out of their seats. Fans even cheered a minor penalty assessed to the Sabres in the final minute for abuse of officials.

See, it really doesn't take much. For a few brief moments, the Sabres gave their fans a reason to cheer. So they did. That's how it works.

Peca assures Junior Sabres he is staying on

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
April 12, 2013

It was midway through the Buffalo Junior Sabres' breakout season when Larry Playfair braced the board of directors for impending bad news.

"We're going to have to look for a new coach," the team president said.

Michael Peca, the coach and general manager of the Junior Sabres, had guided the organization into the national rankings. Playfair knew with Peca's early success and name recognition, it was only a matter of time before a team from a higher level of hockey knocked on Peca's door and whisked him away.

Not wanting to disrupt the Junior Sabres' season, Playfair tiptoed around the subject with Peca. Finally, with tryouts for next year around the corner, Playfair needed to know if the former Sabres captain planned to stick around or take the next step.

"I don't think you achieve that type of success and then walk away," said Peca, who will return to try to build off his inaugural season. "My whole life I've been goal-oriented, trying to achieve a level of success. I did that throughout my playing career, but I think now that I'm retired from playing, my true passion is to make the City of Buffalo and its surrounding area of Western New York a hockey hotbed, whether it's youth hockey or junior hockey.

"I think now with the Sabres' support, we're going to be able to achieve that."

Peca's family and heart are in Buffalo despite growing up in Toronto and playing in six NHL cities. The 39-year-old has a son who plays in Buffalo's youth hockey system, and Peca pictures the boy and his peers having a clear path to college or professional hockey through their hometown.

"I grew up in Toronto where a kid can get a lot of opportunities afforded him for youth hockey and junior hockey," Peca said. "There's no reason why Buffalo can't have that same type of opportunity. I know we don't have the population, but there's just as many boys and girls that want to grow up and play hockey at a high level.

"My passion and my desire now is to try and give those kids that want to pursue the game at a high level every opportunity to achieve that."

Peca sees staying with the Junior Sabres as the best way to do it.

The team recently lost in the second round of the Ontario Junior Hockey League playoffs, bringing an end to a season filled with awards and recognition. The Junior Sabres went 38-12-5 and ranked in the top 10 in the Canadian Junior Hockey League, an organization that oversees 10 leagues and 128 teams from coast to coast.

Peca earned two honors, with the league naming him Coach of the Year and Executive of the Year. What's more important to him is seven players committed to college, including four to Division I schools, and at least a half-dozen more are in position to do so next season.

“If it helps at all with some of our recruiting, to get some good players play for us, great,” he said of the individual awards. “Having the success we did this year I think will put us on the schedule of a lot of colleges now. They’re going to see the Buffalo Junior Sabres and say, ‘They have a really good team, and they usually have a good team, and we want to get out and see the players that they’ve got.’ That’s only going to help and benefit the players in our program.

“The reason we want success isn’t to pat ourselves on the back. It’s to get the coaches and college scouts out to our games as often as possible.”

The recruiters will see a team led by a calm, confidence-building coach.

“He brings a quiet confidence in his ability, but he also has a way of reassuring the kids,” Playfair said. “They end up confident in their abilities. He doesn’t barbecue them necessarily when they make a mistake. He asks them what were they thinking when they did that play and did they see Player X was open, and if the answer is no, well, next time think about that.

“It seems like the kids just gravitated toward that.”

Peca enjoyed coaching more than he figured. He’s been a hockey dad and coached youth teams, but leading 16- to 20-year-olds got the adrenaline going. Being the GM helped since he feels that could be a suitable calling sometime.

“My true assets are in evaluating and putting teams together,” he said, “but I fell in love with the coaching part.”

To the surprise of Playfair and others, Peca will continue to coach in Buffalo.

“For a lot of reasons, having Michael stay around is good,” Playfair said. “The peace that Michael gets is to give back to the community. Some of us played at that level, and because of a break or coaching or pure luck we were able to move on. It’s nice when you’ve finished your playing career and you come back to the town you’re going to live in and reach out and do that kind of stuff.

“I think Michael gets that part of it. He can help make a difference for these kids.”

Tyler Myers to Miss Remainder of Season

WGR 550

April 12, 2013

The Sabres have announced that defenseman Tyler Myers will miss the remainder of the season due to a broken bone in his leg. Myers suffered the injury during Thursday night's 5-1 loss to Montreal.

Myers played in 39 games in this shortened season, registering 3 goals and 5 assists. He's a minus-8. His absence on the blue line will be a big blow to the team's playoff chances. Buffalo's loss to Montreal on Thursday night kept the team 6 points back of 8th place in the Eastern Conference. There are only 7 games left to play.

MYERS TO MISS REMAINDER OF SEASON

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

April 12, 2013

Buffalo Sabres General Manager Darcy Regier today announced that defenseman Tyler Myers suffered a broken bone in his leg during Thursday's game against the Montreal Canadiens and will miss the remainder of the 2012-13 season.

Myers logged 25:37 of ice time in 27 shifts during Thursday's 5-1 loss to Montreal, his third-highest total of the season. Over his last seven games Myers had averaged more than 25 minutes per game.

In 39 games this season, the 23-year-old Myers recorded three goals and five assists, along with 32 penalty minutes.

Sabres down to five defensemen after Myers' season-ending leg injury

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 13, 2013

BUFFALO – With 2:17 left in the second period of Thursday's dismal 5-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens, Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers absorbed P.K. Subban's wicked one-timer from the point with his leg.

After blocking the lethal shot, Myers hobbled off seconds later when the Canadiens converted their five-on-three power play.

The 23-year-old finished the game, though, skating 25:37, his third-highest total this season, while blocking a game-high four shots.

Following the contest, Myers found out he had broken a bone in his leg. His season is finished with seven games remaining. Myers doesn't need surgery.

"Obviously, it's a huge hole for our defense corps," defenseman Mike Weber said after practicing Friday inside the First Niagara Center. "He logs a lot of minutes. He's a core guy for our power play. It's kind of a repetitive statement right now, but someone's got to step up again and kind of fill his role for power play and his minutes."

Injuries and trades have whittled the Sabres' defense depth down dramatically recently. Incredibly, only five healthy defensemen in the organization possess NHL experience.

Interim coach Ron Rolston wouldn't say which defenseman the Sabres plan to recall from Rochester for this afternoon's tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers.

Alex Biega, a 25-year-old with 193 games of AHL experience, seems like the probable candidate.

The Harvard graduate, a fifth-round pick in 2006, has four goals and 22 points in 67 games with the Americans this season.

"He's a good D-man," Sabres defenseman Adam Pardy said about the 5-foot-11 Biega, his defense partner about 10 games in Rochester. "He's got good skills. He skates really well. He's got his head up."

Pardy began the season in Rochester as the organization's No. 9 defender. Now, less than three months later, he's a fixture on the NHL blue line.

The Sabres traded T.J. Brennan, Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr for draft picks before the trade deadline. Myers and Alexander Sulzer (torn ACL) are out for the season.

"It's pretty crazy how it works," Pardy said. "You got to be prepared for anything. You look back to January when I first got put on waivers, it seemed like a longshot to even get back in the lineup here. ... It definitely was tough not knowing what was going to happen."

At times this season, the Sabres couldn't figure out what was happening to the 6-foot-8 Myers, their alleged franchise defenseman.

In the first season of a seven-year, \$38.5 million contract, Myers, who received a \$10 million bonus on July 1, struggled mightily, especially early on.

Myers reportedly came to training camp in less-than-stellar shape. Former coach Lindy Ruff scratched him twice during a February slump.

Not long ago, Rolston and his staff told Myers, a slick puck-rusher and point-producer in the past, to concentrate on defense; they didn't care if he only got one more point the rest of the season.

Myers had rebounded a bit recently. Rolston kept playing him big minutes while complimenting his game.

"I thought he was doing good," Rolston said Friday.

Myers compiled three goals, eight points, a minus-8 rating and 32 penalty minutes while averaging 21:18 during his 39 appearances this season.

He also broke his ankle late last season blocking a shot against Pittsburgh.

Teammates like the gutsy effort Myers showcased Thursday.

"Once you get that will in your mind to continue to push forward, that's pretty awesome, scary in the same part because it probably could've been a lot worse of an injury," Sabres winger Steve Ott said.

Weber added: "What he did in a losing effort was huge for us. I mean, we need more guys to step up and make big blocks like that."

Very few Sabres stepped up in Thursday's embarrassing defeat. The shellacking may rank as the worst loss in recent memory.

Weber expects a better effort this afternoon from the Sabres, whose playoff chances have all but disappeared following consecutive losses this week.

"Guys are playing for jobs, contracts, spots, ice time," he said. "I mean, there's a huge amount of things you're fighting for. You only get a certain amount of time in this league. So everyone's fighting for different things."

Pardy believes the "main problem is just in between our ears."

"It's not work ethic," he said. "We're losing way too many battles, being a step behind – two, three steps behind (Thursday)."

During Thursday's game, CBC cameras captured Ott trying to lick – yes, lick – Jeff Halpern's helmet or visor.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Ott said when asked about it Friday.

Ott then smiled and cackled before leaving the dressing room.

Don't forget, Ott also blew a kiss to Toronto's Dion Phaneuf earlier this season.

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Rolston on the poor production from the Sabres' top forwards: "Your best players on every team have to be the best players in this league. That's why you hear the word 'top six.' Those guys got to get it done. So it's huge for every team."

Tyler Ennis has zero points in the last six games. Cody Hodgson has one goal and two points in nine contests. Drew Stafford has zero points in seven games.

Thomas Vanek, once the NHL's top scorer, has two goals and three points his last seven appearances. Rolston said the winger, who just sat six games and has missed 10 this season, is healthy.

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Rolston said backup goalie Jhonas Enroth will start this afternoon or Sunday when the Sabres host the Tampa Bay Lightning.

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Former Sabres star Daniel Briere is expected to return from a 10-game absence (concussion) today.

Sabres D Myers out for season with leg injury

The Associated Press

April 12, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Buffalo Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers will miss the rest of the season after breaking a bone in his leg during the team's 5-1 loss to Montreal Thursday.

Friday's announcement by general manager Darcy Regier marks a disappointing end to what's been a forgettable season for the high-priced defenseman. Myers has struggled with consistency at both ends of the ice while in the first season of a seven-year, \$38.5 million contract he signed before the start of the 2011-12 season.

The injury also is the latest setback for a Sabres team that's in jeopardy of missing the playoffs for a second straight season, and is already rebuilding for the future.

Regier did not say how Myers suffered the injury.

Tyler Myers breaks leg, out for season

By Allan Muir

Sports Illustrated

April 12, 2013

It was hard to imagine things getting much worse for the Buffalo Sabres after that truly shameful effort against the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday night, but this is a team that demands you keep an open mind about the levels to which it might sink.

So, really, this morning's news that defenseman Tyler Myers had broken his leg in the 5-1 loss shouldn't come as a shock, given the way this disastrous campaign has played out for Buffalo.

For Myers, this almost qualifies as a merciful end to a brutal season. The 2010 Calder winner — and the league's highest-paid player — has lost his mojo and needs his career reset as much as he does his leg. It might have been the weight of trying to play up to that \$12 million salary, or the responsibility of carrying an undermanned blueline, but Myers' game fell apart this year with a flurry of unforced puck errors, weak positioning and poor decisions. Getting away from this gong show might be exactly what he needs right now.

Another positive: the Sabres can get a look at one of their promising young defenders. The team hasn't announced a call-up yet, but Alex Biega, a fifth-rounder from 2006, could be the guy. At just 5'-10", he's nearly a foot shorter than Myers, but he has shown some playmaking ability from the back end.

And if nothing else, the Sabres are one game closer to the draft lottery, right? Of course, the way things are going, the NHL will forget to put Buffalo's balls in the hopper...

Sabres, Flyers need points to cling to playoff hopes

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

April 12, 2013

FLYERS (17-20-3) at SABRES (16-19-6)

TV: NBCSN, CSN-PH, MSG-B

Last 10: Philadelphia 4-4-2; Buffalo 4-4-2

Season series: This is the third and final meeting between the teams this season. They split the first two, with the Sabres winning 5-2 in Buffalo on Jan. 20, and the Flyers winning 3-2 in Philadelphia on March 10.

Big story: With both teams staring at gaping deficits to qualify for the Stanley Cup Playoffs, this one could be more about playing for pride.

Team Scope:

Flyers: In his first season with the Flyers, Danny Briere and the team were slumping badly when they arrived in Buffalo for a game on Feb. 25, 2008. Briere scored in a shootout against his former team, helping the Flyers snap a 10-game losing streak and sparking a run that would carry the Flyers to the Eastern Conference Finals.

Briere and the Flyers are slumping again as the team arrives in Buffalo for a game Saturday. Briere, stuck in the worst season of his career -- he has five goals in 26 games, and none in the past 13 -- will return to the lineup after missing nearly a month of games due to a concussion.

"I feel I'm ready to go. I have no worries," Briere told reporters. "I'm not going to hold back. I haven't played in a couple weeks, and hopefully it won't be too much of a challenge getting my game back. But as far as the head goes, there's no worries there."

Sabres: The Sabres started the season with a surplus of blueliners, but after the announcement Friday that ice-time leader Tyler Myers would miss the remainder of the season with broken bone in his right leg, the Sabres suddenly are starting at a defense deficit.

With Myers' injury, plus the trade-deadline departures of Robyn Regehr and Jordan Leopold, the Sabres had just five blueliners on the roster. John Scott, who played defense part-time in previous stops with the New York Rangers and Chicago Blackhawks, could move back to the blue line to replace Myers, but he has not played defense this season. Or the Sabres could call up a player from the American Hockey League team.

"That's why a lot of teams did what they did at the trade deadline with guys like Robyn and [Leopold], stock up on defensemen," Rolston said Friday. "This time of year, going into the playoffs, you can't have too many."

Regardless of who is in the lineup, Rolston said he expects more from his players than he got Thursday in a 5-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens.

"You have to play hard and play together, two things we didn't do [Thursday]," he said. "You have to be much more detailed and [show] a lot more effort than we had."

Who's hot: Flyers forward Simon Gagne has five points in his past five games, and after totaling just five points in 11 games with the Kings at the start of the season, he has four goals and eight points in 19 games since being traded to Philadelphia.

Injury report: The Flyers are missing forwards Zac Rinaldo (ankle), Jody Shelley (hip) and Maxime Talbot (leg), and defensemen Nicklas Grossmann (concussion), Braydon Coburn (shoulder) and Andrej Meszaros (shoulder). ... The Sabres are missing defensemen Myers (leg) and Alexander Sulzer (knee), as well as forward Ville Leino (upper body).

Philadelphia (17-20-3) at Buffalo (16-19-6)

By Dan Pieringer
The Associated Press
April 12, 2013

Philadelphia Flyers forward Scott Hartnell said Thursday that the team would need an “epic ending” to make the playoffs. Days later, the Flyers have an even steeper hill to climb.

After dropping their third straight, the Flyers hope to solve their punchless offense and start making a move to get into postseason position Saturday when they visit a Buffalo Sabres team looking to make a playoff push of its own.

Philadelphia (17-20-3) has been outscored 11-3 during its skid after totaling 18 goals during a season-high four-game winning streak. The slide leaves the Flyers with eight games to try to climb back into position for their sixth straight postseason appearance.

They're in 12th place in the Eastern Conference, seven points back of the final postseason berth. Buffalo (16-19-6) is in 11th and six points behind.

Hartnell indicated a sense of urgency when he spoke before Thursday's game against Ottawa, but Philadelphia was outshot 24-14 in the first two periods and needed a strong performance from goalie Ilya Bryzgalov to keep things close before the Senators pulled away in the third and won 3-1.

The Flyers haven't converted any of their 13 power-play opportunities in their last five games.

“To make the playoffs, you've got to win games, and right now we're not winning games,” said Claude Giroux who scored Thursday but has been held to 12 goals in 40 games after scoring 28 in 77 last season. “We've got to find a way to win those games.”

Philadelphia's struggles on the ice have impacted the club off it. Bryzgalov has been criticized for shutting his eyes and yawning on the bench during a loss to Winnipeg last weekend. He was later anonymously accused by some teammates of sleeping—or at least pretending to doze off—during a team meeting.

Bryzgalov scolded the media for the report and called it “embarrassing.”

“That was never happening,” he said.

Flyers coach Peter Laviolette could be in danger of losing his job three years after leading the team to the Stanley Cup finals.

“We are in the business of winning hockey games,” Laviolette said. “Not getting that done is frustrating.”

The Sabres can relate, having suffered through similar offensive troubles while losing consecutive games in regulation for the first time since late February. Buffalo is 0 for its last 19 power-play opportunities, including 0 for 2 in a 5-1 loss against Montreal on Thursday.

The Sabres were outshot 42-15 in the rout, leading interim coach Ron Rolston to pull Ryan Miller after facing 32 shots through two periods.

“He played well. There was nothing he could do,” Rolston said. “We didn’t have enough effort. We didn’t have enough going. We had too many passengers.”

These teams have split two meetings this season, with the Sabres winning 5-2 at home Jan. 20 behind two goals and three assists from Thomas Vanek The Flyers had taken at least one point in each of their previous nine trips to Buffalo, going 7-0-2.

Bryzgalov is 5-1-0 with a 2.49 goals-against average in his last six games versus Buffalo, while Miller is 1-2-1 with a 3.52 GAA in his last five appearances