



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Miller, Vanek thinking about the future

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 5, 2013

Thomas Vanek drove Jason Pominville to the airport early Thursday morning so his longtime friend and teammate could catch a flight to join his new team. When Vanek returned home, he looked at the empty houses nearby.

“It’s hard,” said Vanek, who lived next to Pominville and fellow former Buffalo Sabre Jordan Leopold. “The neighborhood’s dwindling a little bit.”

The realtors could have another listing or two in the not-so-distant future.

The Sabres head into tonight’s home game against Ottawa with a rebuilding plan in place. General Manager Darcy Regier says the project could take years. Vanek and Ryan Miller have one year remaining on their contracts, and they want to sit down with Regier to learn if the transformation will include them.

“It’s something I haven’t had a chance to talk to him about and certainly something I can’t speculate on because I’ve never known what Darcy’s going to do,” Miller said in First Niagara Center. “We’ll just see where everything falls, talk to Darcy about what his plan is and how I’m going to fit into it or what’s going on because these aren’t conversations we’ve had time to have.

“Probably given that the trade deadline has come and gone now, I don’t know if we’ll have a chance to talk about it till after the season.”

Vanek said earlier this week he would not be interested in a long-term rebuild. That remained the case Thursday, meaning the Sabres need to move him for assets or face a daunting struggle to re-sign him next summer.

“I haven’t talked to them about anything,” Vanek said. “It’s hard to say yes or no because no one has let me know what direction this is heading. Again, we’ll finish the year out, and I’m sure at least I would expect them to let me know what the future is with myself.”

Vanek and Miller were subdued the day after Pominville was sent to Minnesota for prospects and draft picks. Pominville and Miller spent 11 years together in the Sabres’ organization, while Vanek has been with them for nine.

“Not a great day,” Miller said. “We’ve grown up together, so it’s tough to watch him go. That’s what happens when you don’t perform in a season as a team.”

Vanek realized time was up Saturday when Regier announced he was open to offers for every player.

“It hasn’t happened in the past,” said the Sabres’ leading scorer. “I’m sure there were talks but never publicly. Now with Jason gone, that obviously sends a message that change is happening.”

The change revolves around an underachieving core. After letting Chris Drury and Daniel Briere depart following back-to-back appearances in the Eastern Conference finals, Regier and the Sabres committed \$155 million to Vanek, Miller, Pominville, Jochen Hecht, Derek Roy and Paul Gaustad.

They missed the playoffs the first two seasons, lost in the opening round the next two years and are on the verge of missing for the second straight season again. Half of the players (Pominville, Roy and Gaustad) are gone, and the other three seem likely to follow.

“Obviously, we didn’t get it done,” Vanek said. “I didn’t think we were that far away. Add one or two pieces, I think we could have been stronger. He’s the general manager and he makes moves and decisions, and you’ve got to live with it.”

Miller understands what the legacy of a championship in Buffalo would have meant, and it’s disappointing to not achieve it.

“We’ve had ups and downs with this core,” the goaltender said. “Certainly, the core group of guys have pushed. Early on when we were kind of identified, we made good pushes. It just wasn’t enough. It got away from us a little bit.

“I thought all the guys who were identified have been strong players and done a pretty good job. But when the ultimate goal is to win a championship, it’s pretty easy to step back from all of it and say it didn’t work, we didn’t do enough. It wasn’t for lack of trying.”

Sabres notebook: Team hasn't given up on making the playoffs

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 5, 2013

The Sabres' organization has turned its focus to future seasons. Buffalo's players and coaches have 11 more games this year.

They're refusing to adopt the company line of treating this season as the beginning of a rebuild.

"We treat it that we're going to make the playoffs," interim coach Ron Rolston said Thursday. "That's how we treat it."

The Sabres host the Ottawa Senators tonight with a far different roster than if they'd met last Friday. Buffalo traded captain Jason Pominville and veteran defensemen Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr because management decided this year's disappointing club wasn't moving toward the ultimate goal.

"We made a determination that it was about the Stanley Cup," said General Manager Darcy Regier, whose team was in 13th place entering Thursday night's schedule. "Maybe we could have stayed in the race. Maybe we could have acquired a player. Maybe we could have made a run at it like we did last year, either got in or just out.

"But the reality is that the preference is to build for a Stanley Cup versus a playoff run."

Despite overwhelming odds against them – the Sabres have a 3 percent chance of reaching the postseason, according to SportsClubStats.com – the folks in the dressing room still dream of a postseason.

"We're not eliminated yet," defenseman Mike Weber said. "There's hope. It starts again with Ottawa."

The Sabres will skate into First Niagara Center after playing possibly their finest game of the year. They beat Pittsburgh, 4-1, Tuesday to snap the Penguins' 15-game winning streak.

"We finally put a 60-minute effort together," Weber said. "They can give you all the excuses they want – they had [Sidney] Crosby out, they had some D-men that were out – but we took it to them on a consistent basis. We stuck to our game plan, getting pucks deep, working their defensemen, cycling pucks, getting shots through, so we need to build on that to go forward here.

"Obviously, with the moves we've made, that's a huge momentum swing for our younger guys and for the guys that need to step into bigger roles as we go forward."

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The Sabres will play the rest of the schedule without a captain. Rolston and his staff have decided not to name a replacement for Pominville.

Instead, Buffalo has promoted Steve Ott to alternate captain. The forward joins Thomas Vanek and Drew Stafford. Vanek may return tonight after missing four games with an upper-body injury.

“He looked pretty good, see how he’s feeling in the morning and pregame skate and go from there,” Rolston said.

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Pominville was set to debut for the Minnesota Wild on Thursday night after leaving Buffalo early in the morning and flying to the game in Los Angeles. Though he realized a trade was possible, especially after Regier asked him to supply an eight-team, no-trade list, the veteran was caught off-guard.

“Even though I kind of had a little bit of feeling that it might happen, it’s still a shock,” he told reporters in L.A. “Obviously, I’m really excited to come to this team, this organization, this city. They’re doing whatever it takes to win, and they’re heading in the right direction.

“Hopefully, I can just fit in and add to the puzzle.”

Vanek, who went to the University of Minnesota, gave his former teammate a brief synopsis of the area.

“I told him just the good things, put him a little upbeat because he was down a little bit,” Vanek said. “Once he gets there, he’ll be fine.”

Vanek's future in Buffalo clouded by Sabres trades

By Mark Ludwiczak

Associated Press

April 4, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Thomas Vanek is unsure about his long-term future with the Buffalo Sabres now that the struggling team is battling through a rebuilding process.

Vanek, Buffalo's leading scorer, has one year remaining on a seven-year, \$50 million contract he signed in 2007. And he spoke with caution in the locker room Thursday, one day after the Sabres traded former captain Jason Pominville to the Minnesota Wild. In the days leading up to the trade deadline, the Sabres also dealt veteran defensemen Robyn Regehr and Jordan Leopold.

General manager Darcy Regier said after the Pominville trade that it's difficult to put a timetable on the rebuilding process. And that's puzzling to Vanek.

"I mean, obviously we gave up three good players in the last week and got a lot of picks in return," Vanek said. "Again, we'll see."

Vanek leads the Sabres in scoring with 33 points (16 goals) in 29 games. He's a four-time 30-goal scorer and has topped 40 twice in his career.

He's one of few players left from a core group of Sabres that has anchored the team for several seasons, and he might be on his way out soon, too. He expects to have a clearer picture after the season ends.

"I haven't talked to them about anything so it's hard to say yes or no because no one has let me know what direction this is heading," Vanek said. "So we'll finish the year out and I'm sure, at least I would expect them to let me know what the future is."

Sabres goalie Ryan Miller is also hoping to know more about his future when the season wraps up. Miller, like Vanek, has one year remaining on his contract.

"I don't know, I have to talk to Darcy about it," Miller said. "We'll just see where everything falls and talk to Darcy about what his plan is or what's going on because these are conversations we haven't had time to have."

"I don't know if we'll have a chance to talk about it 'til after the season."

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NOTES: Vanek hopes to be back when the Sabres play Friday against Ottawa. He's missed the last four games with an upper-body injury. ... With Pominville gone, the Sabres have decided not to name a new captain for the remainder of the season. Interim coach Ron Rolston said Steve Ott will be a third assistant captain in Pominville's place. ... Regier said on Wednesday that forward Ville Leino (upper body) is not expected to return in the near future.

Ex-Griffs star Conacher goes from Bolts to Senators

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 4, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Thomas Vanek is not happy that he's watched three veterans leave the Sabres room. He felt it was a situation where this team was close and just need a few pieces. The Sabres leading scorer said, "You can look at it however. Obviously we didn't get it done. I didn't think we were that far away. I think add one or two pieces, we could have been stronger, but again, he's the general manager and he makes the decisions. You've got to live with it." Ryan Miller joins Vanek and Drew Stafford as the last of the core group Darcy Regier built and now has dismantled. Miller said, "It's pro sports and if you don't perform, it's easy to look at the standings or the stats and we've had some good runs here where we had the right kind of feeling and we had the right kind of team, maybe we were close, maybe we were a piece or two away, but we've had ups and downs with this core. Certainly the core group of guys have pushed and early on when we were kind of identified, made good pushes and it just wasn't enough. It got away from us a little bit. I thought all the guys that were identified have been strong players and done a pretty good job, but when the ultimate goal is to win a championship, it's pretty easy to step back from all of it and say it didn't work and we didn't do enough. It wasn't from a lack of trying."

Vanek expressed last Saturday that he's not up for a long rebuild and these trades have changed his mind on his future with this team, "Probably, we gave up three good players in the last week and got a lot of picks in return so we'll see. I'm just trying to get healthy now and finish out the year strong and see what happens from there."

Whatever Vanek's future is here in Buffalo, it's not something that will be handled now, "No, I think that kind of stuff you do after the season. Even though we're five points out, we still need to concentrate on doing what we do and winning games and hopefully sneak in." Vanek added, "First of all it's not even up to me. I haven't talked to them about anything so again, it's hard to say yes or no because no one has let me know what direction this is heading. So again, we'll finish the year out and I'm sure, at least I would expect them to let me know what the future is with myself."

When Miller spoke on his future he said, "You just regroup and look at the plan moving forward. If you're part of it or not, that's something you have to talk to Darcy about, it's something I haven't had a chance to talk to him about and it's certainly something I can't speculate on. I never know what Darcy's going to do so I'm in the same boat as you guys."

Vanek went to Pominville's house Wednesday after he was traded and drove him to the airport Thursday morning. Vanek said the direction this team is taking is not a shock to him, "I think when you knew it was coming was when he (Darcy Regier) came out and said we're all available. That's what happened, that hasn't happened in the past. I'm sure there were talks, but never publicly and now with Jason gone that obviously sends a message that change is happening. Again, I'm disappointed because I lost a good friend but I understand the business side of it."

This past week has been tough on Vanek because all three players that were traded, he was close to, "I saw Robyn leave a few days ago, a good friend. Jordan Leopold was my next door neighbor just like Jason so the neighborhood's dwindling a little bit."

Vanek practiced Thursday, but didn't take line rushes. As far as playing Friday he said, "Getting better. Each day I'm making some strides and we'll see how it feels tomorrow." Vanek added, "Today was better than yesterday and hopefully I keep progressing."

Sabres will not name a captain this season

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 4, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres will not replace Jason Pominville's captaincy this season. Ron Rolston said, "No, we'll have an assistant, but no captain. Steve Ott will wear the A with Staff and Van."

Thomas Vanek is questionable to Friday. Nathan Gerbe took Pominville's spot on the Hodgson line. Tyler Myers took his spot on the power play.

With three veterans traded Rolston has a simple philosophy moving forward, "We treat it that we're going to make the playoffs, that's how we treat it. We just focus on tomorrow night's game. We played Boston a couple of games ago and we gave up 11 scoring chances, we played Pit and gave up 10, I think we're playing better as a team and the guys understand that no matter who's on the ice, if they play the right way and play for each other, we can get the results we need."

THURSDAY NOTEBOOK: THOUGHTS ON THE POMINVILLE DEAL

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

April 4, 2013

Thomas Vanek lost another neighbor on Wednesday, both at home and in the locker room. The trade of Jason Pominville to Minnesota on Wednesday means there's an empty locker stall next to Vanek now. But it also means that Vanek's street has one less resident.

"It's hard. I saw Robyn (Regehr) leave earlier, a good friend. Jordan Leopold was my next door neighbor, just like Jason," Vanek said today. "The neighborhood is dwindling a little bit."

Even with all the rampant speculation leading into the deadline, Vanek, who drove Pominville to the airport this morning, said he was "shocked" when he heard about the deal.

"Obviously I knew we all had a chance of leaving. When it does happen, it sets in. He's been a good friend of mine for the past eight or nine years. We played together and had a good time. It's hard to see him go, but it's part of the business. He's moving on to a great team."

Ryan Miller echoed Vanek's sentiments about the departure of a teammate who had become such a good friend of his since their days together in Rochester.

"It's not a great day. Jason has done a lot for the organization. I've been a close friend; we've grown up together. It's going to be tough to watch him go," said Miller. "But that's what happens when you don't perform in a season as a team. The good players have value, and Jason has a lot of value. Hopefully he can do something special with his new team."

The trade of Pominville leaves Buffalo without a captain, and interim head coach Ron Rolston said it will be that way for the remainder of the season. Rolston says Steve Ott will be added as a third assistant captain, joining Vanek and Drew Stafford. A decision on a full-time captain won't be made until after the season.

With his AHL and international coaching experience, Rolston has some familiarity with forward Johan Larsson and goaltender Matt Hackett, the two prospects coming to Buffalo from Minnesota in the Pominville deal. He spoke in glowing terms about both of them.

"Hackett played last year for Houston, so (Rochester) played them. I think he's got a big upside. Last year he was arguably one of the best, if not the best, in the league for a long time. And he had a good push the year before. For as young as he is, with the experience that he's had, that's a positive on our side of things because he's already in his third full

season as a goalie at the pro level. He's somebody that we feel in the future can be an NHL goaltender if he continues to develop."

Rolston described Larsson as a "solid two-way player with a lot of leadership skills," specifically pointing out his captaincy of Sweden's 2012 gold-medal winning World Junior team.

"Anytime you can be a captain on international teams – U18's, U20's – especially for short term, it's a very hard task as a leader. Especially when you're pooling together your best players, and you have to pick somebody out of that group of best players from your country to be a leader. He's been one of those for Sweden, and we know how good a hockey country they are. And we want to bring those players to our organization – leaders that bring a two-way game, work hard."

Vanek skated at today's practice, but didn't take part in any of the line work. He's hopeful that the upper body muscle strain that's kept him out of the past four games will continue to improve enough for him to play against Ottawa on Friday.

"It's getting better. Each day we're making some strides and we'll see how it feels (Friday). Today it was better than yesterday, and hopefully I keep progressing."

Ville Leino (upper body) was the only roster player absent today, and it's likely to be that way for a while. When asked about Leino's injury status on Wednesday, Sabres GM Darcy Regier said "I don't think you can expect him around anytime soon."

The lines at today's practice were as follows:

Ott-Hodgson-Gerbe

Foligno-Ennis-Stafford

Adam-Porter-Flynn

Scott-Hecht-Kaleta

Defense pairs: Pardy-Pysyk, Ehrhoff-Myers, Weber-Sekera

Sabres know Pominville's departure could only be first major move

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 5, 2013

BUFFALO – Darcy Regier's strong words stuck with Thomas Vanek. Prior to Saturday, the general manager had never publicly made any of his Sabres available to other teams during his long tenure. At that point, four days before trade deadline, the slick winger knew major changes could hit the Sabres.

Sure enough, Regier dealt captain Jason Pominville to the Minnesota Wild on Wednesday for two prospects and two draft picks.

It could just be the first of several major moves.

"Now with Jason gone, it obviously sends a message change is happening," Vanek said Thursday inside the First Niagara Center after preparing for tonight's tilt against the Ottawa Senators. "I'm disappointed because I lost a good friend. But I understand the business side of it."

In trading a franchise cornerstone, Regier said the Sabres' focus had shifted to the future. He acknowledged the foundation he built – which includes core players Pominville, Vanek and goalie Ryan Miller – wasn't good enough.

"We didn't get it done," Vanek said. "I didn't think we were that far away. I think add one or two pieces, I think we could've been stronger."

Miller believes the Sabres "were close," just "a piece or two away."

"I thought all the guys that were identified were strong players, have done a pretty good job," Miller said. "When the ultimate goal is to win a championship, it's pretty easy to step back from all of it and say it didn't work, we didn't do enough. It wasn't for lack of trying. We just regroup and figure out what the plan is moving forward, if you're a part of it or not."

Fixing the Sabres – remember, Regier wouldn't use the word "rebuild" – could take years.

Vanek said Sunday he would like to stay but "would probably look in the other direction" if the Sabres had a two- or three-year plan.

So, did Pominville's departure, coupled with the earlier trades of defensemen Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr, change Vanek's mind?

"Probably, I mean, obviously we gave up three good players in the last week, got a lot of picks in return," said Vanek, a free agent after next season. "Again, we'll see."

Vanek stressed he hasn't spoken to management yet and likely won't until after the season ends.

“It’s hard to say yes or no because no one has let me know what direction this is heading,” Vanek said.

Miller, also rumored to be on the trading block, stayed in bed all day Wednesday anxiously waiting for the deadline to pass.

He also plans to talk with Regier about the Sabres’ future.

“It’s obviously something that hasn’t been planned out,” Miller said. “I think Darcy is just trying to take into consideration all the options he had. ... I guess it’s hard to pass up the return you get when you get draft picks and prospects. I took Jason’s value pretty high organizationally.”

Clearly, saying goodbye to Pominville was tough for Vanek and Miller, who had spent their entire professional careers with the popular winger.

“I think he was shocked, too,” said Vanek, who drove Pominville to the airport Thursday morning. “But he knew there was a chance it would happen. But I think at the same time, he’s excited to move on to a really good team out in the west.”

Miller called Wednesday “not a great day.”

“It’s tough to watch him go,” Miller said. “That’s what happens when you don’t perform in a season as a team. You get players that have value. Jason has a lot of value. Hopefully, he can do something special with his new team.”

He spent 11 years “right next to” Pominville – they both began their professional careers with Rochester in 2002-03 – maturing from green rookies into NHL stars.

Miller sounded nostalgic talking about his early memories of Pominville.

“It was fun to come the first year,” Miller recalled. “His wife Kim would visit. I’d try to talk to her. She’d just nod because she didn’t speak any English. Pommer would come up and say, ‘Millsie, she doesn’t speak any English.’ Obviously, they have two beautiful children and she speaks great English.”

Later on, Miller passionately talked about Pominville’s selfless, team-first attitude, illustrating his point by saying he would’ve accumulated more points playing up front on the power play instead of manning a point for years, yet never complained.

“I would argue I want him close to the net,” Miller said. “So he sucks it up, does what he has to do and doesn’t complain, say anything, does his job. That’s the unfortunate part is those are the kind of guys you want, and we haven’t been able to keep them lately.”

Miller then cut off a question, ending the interview.

Earlier, Miller said the Sabres, who trailed eighth-place New Jersey by five points as he spoke, still have an opportunity.

“If you’re going to wallow and mope, cash in your cards, that’s not the situation you want,” he said. “It’s up for us to react in the right way.”

He added: “The hockey’s been a little bit better. We’re hanging around not where we need to be, but a place where we can still accomplish our goals. It’s up for us to write our own story.”

Interim coach Ron Rolston said the Sabres will treat the final 11 games like “we’re going to make the playoffs.”

Pominville calls trade from Sabres 'a shock,' makes Wild debut

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 5, 2013

BUFFALO – Jason Pominville felt his 11-year run with the Sabres organization could be ending. Before Wednesday's trade deadline, the struggling team asked its captain to submit a list of eight clubs he could refuse a trade to. The Sabres, a colossal disappointment this season, seemed ripe for a major shakeup.

Still, when Sabres general manager Darcy Regier called Wednesday and said he had been traded to Minnesota, the star winger was shocked.

"It's still a shock," Pominville told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune on Thursday in Los Angeles prior to making his Wild debut. "Obviously, really excited to come to this team, this organization, this city where they're doing whatever it takes to win, and they're heading in the right direction. They've had a lot of success so far, and hopefully I can just fit in and add to the puzzle."

Wearing his familiar No. 29, Pominville skated on a line with Mikko Koivu and Zach Parise on Thursday. Ironically, former Sabres defenseman Robyn Regehr was making his Kings debut after getting traded Monday.

Why did Pominville leave the Wild, which began Thursday third in the Western Conference, off his no-trade list?

"It's obviously a great city to play hockey in, all the guys I talked to from here, they have nothing but good things to say about the city and organization," Pominville said. "With steps they took this summer to add some big players to the roster, I think they're willing to do whatever it takes to win, and I think that excites you as a player. It's a place you want to come to."

"Anytime you have a chance to win, those teams are going to be on top on most guys' lists."

Having never been dealt before, Pominville experienced a whirlwind day before getting to Los Angeles.

"There's a lot of things that come with it," Pominville said. "You don't realize until it happens. Obviously, (there's) the wife and kids and your house and all your stuff. Your clothes, what do you bring? What do you do with your house? What do you do with everything in the house?"

"The bottom line is I'm here to play hockey. ... Let my wife take care of the rest," he joked.

With Pominville gone, interim Sabres coach Ron Rolston said he won't name a new captain and will give winger Steve Ott an assistant captaincy with Drew Stafford and Thomas Vanek.

Nathan Gerbe replaced Pominville on the right wing beside Ott and Cody Hodgson during Thursday's practice.

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Vanek, out the last four games, said he felt better after practicing Thursday and could play tonight when the Sabres host the Ottawa Senators. The winger will see how he feels this morning.

"Getting better," Vanek said. "Each day we're making some strides."

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Rolston on the prospects the Sabres acquired from the Wild:

Matt Hackett, a 23-year-old goalie:

"I think he's got a big upside. Last year, arguably one of the best if not the best in the league for a long time and had a good push for the year before. ...

"He's already in his third full season as a goalie at the pro level and lot of upside, good size to him (6-foot-2), good ability, somebody we feel in the future can be an NHL goaltender if he continues to develop."

Johan Larsson, a 20-year-old forward Rolston hasn't see play much:

"He's a solid two-way player, a lot of leadership skills, works really hard. Anytime you can be a captain on international teams it's a big thing, (under 18 and 20 teams), especially for short-term, it's a very hard task as a leader."

Rochester Amerks' David Leggio OK with team adding goalie

By Kevin Oklobzija

Democrat and Chronicle

April 4, 2013

Between recalls, trades by the parent Buffalo Sabres and a season-ending injury to Brayden McNabb, the Rochester Americans defense took quite a hit over the past two weeks.

So what do they get out of the NHL trade-deadline deal by the Sabres: a talented young forward, who should fit nicely in their lineup, and a goalie.

A goalie?

Surely David Leggio was saying the same thing under his breath at some point on Wednesday afternoon, when goalie Matt Hackett and center/winger Johan Larsson were obtained from the Minnesota Wild for Jason Pominville.

After all, Leggio's coach is lobbying for him to be considered for the American Hockey League's Les Cunningham Award as most valuable player, and in comes another goalie with an upscale resume.

Some fans saw it as a slap in the face to Leggio. Yet on Thursday after practice, the fifth-year goalie said all is just fine.

"Nothing's changed for me," said Leggio, who will start in Friday night's 7:05 home game against the Lake Erie Monsters. "I'm still a Rochester American, there's still nine games left in this season and I have to do what I can to help this team during the playoff push."

His ability to take it in stride could by now simply be a reflex action. This has pretty much been his career: proving himself only to find few believing in what he can do.

"The harder it gets, the better he does," Cassidy said. "Now another goalie comes in who's gotten lots of publicity — when he's (ticked) off, he plays better."

And he goes about proving he deserves to play. Leggio helped Clarkson to an NCAA regional but, as an undrafted goalie, could only get work in the ECHL when he turned pro in 2008-09.

The following year, without contract offers from NHL teams, he went to Finland and helped TPS Turku win the championship.

But in Portland with the AHL's Pirates in 2010-11, he was Jhonas Enroth's backup, and was slotted in the same backup role last season with the Amerks until Drew MacIntyre failed to win over the trust of coach Ron Rolston.

Ever since late January of 2012, he has been the Amerks go-to goalie, and this year he has been arguably the most valuable goalie — and maybe player — in the league.

He has played in 57 of 67 games and leads the AHL in wins (35-21-1), saves (1,765) and minutes (3,433), ranks fifth in save percentage (.924) and is 230 saves from the league's all-time record. Over his past 14 games he has allowed more than two goals just twice and has two shutouts.

Without him, the Amerks would be floundering, not sitting fifth in the Western Conference, which is why Cassidy says he must be in MVP discussion.

"He's certainly on the top of that category," Cassidy said.

Leggio, however, isn't worrying about individual honors or how the new individuals on the team alter the depth chart.

"Moves happen, it's just part of the business," he said. "You can't control it so you have to block it out."

Hackett enters with the pedigree that says he has a future with the Sabres. He was a third-round pick of the Minnesota Wild in 2009 and, as a rookie, backstopped the Houston Aeros to the Calder Cup finals in 2010-11 by playing all 24 games.

He has appeared in 13 NHL games (3-7, 2.68 GAA, .914 save percentage), which is 13 more than Leggio has experienced.

"I think we probably have two of the best goalies in the American League down there now," Rolston, now the Sabres interim coach, told reporters in Buffalo on Thursday.

Leggio will play the bulk of the games, though.

"Obviously David has earned the No. 1 spot," Cassidy said, "but with Hackett coming in it gives us another strong goaltender. It's huge with the three-in-threes we have (three games in three nights each of the next three weekends). Especially with the work David has done, it's unrealistic to expect him to play eight of nine."

And that's just fine with Leggio. When Cassidy says play, he'll play.

"The biggest thing is taking care of what's going to happen the next three weeks," he said. "I need to focus on that little black thing."

Sabres look to future with Pominville trade

Business First

April 4, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres continue to reset their lineup with an eye on the future.

The hockey club Wednesday traded winger Jason Pominville, the team's captain, to the Minnesota Wild for a pair of players two draft picks. The Sabres also sent a fourth-round draft pick in 2014 to the Wild.

Buffalo acquired forward Johan Larsson, goaltender Matt Hackett, a first-round selection in the 2013 National Hockey League Entry Draft and a second-round selection in the 2014 NHL Entry Draft

In his first professional season, Larsson has recorded 37 points (15 goals) in 62 games for the Houston Aeros of the American Hockey League. He made his NHL debut as a member of the Wild on Feb. 17 against Detroit.

Larsson was selected by the Wild in the second round (56th overall) of the 2010 draft. A native of Lau, Sweden, the forward captained Sweden's goal medal-winning team at the 2012 IIHF World Junior Championship, where he recorded six assists in six games. He was selected as the Swedish Elite League Rookie of the Year in 2012 after recording 36 points (12+24) in 49 games with Brynas (SEL).

Hackett has appeared in 43 games for the Aeros in his third AHL season, recording a 19-20-30 record with a 2.66 goals against average and a .907 save percentage. In 132 regular-season AHL games, the London, Ontario native has compiled a 62-53-13 record with a .913 save percentage and three shutouts. He has also backstopped the Aeros to a 14-12 record in 26 postseason games, reaching the Calder Cup finals in 2011.

Hackett was selected by the Wild in the third round (77th overall) of the 2009 NHL Entry Draft. He has appeared in 13 total NHL games as a member of the Wild in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 seasons, compiling a 3-7-0 record, a .914 save percentage and a 2.64 goals against average.

The Sabres, who sit near the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings, have traded away several veterans in recent weeks, including defenseman Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr, before Wednesday's trade deadline, acquiring draft picks in return for those players.

"It's going to involve rolling back a little bit organizationally," General Manager Darcy Regier said after confirming the deal. "Acquire the assets, the players, the draft picks and do it in a way that's going to allow us to group enough young players together, or players together, in order to win a championship."

In a recap of yesterday's deadline deals, a poll conducted the Toronto Globe and Mail gives the edge to Buffalo.

Sabres react to Pominville trade and question future

By Andy Young

YNN

April 4, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jason Pominville was mainstay of the Buffalo Sabres for the past 8 years, so you can imagine news of his departure was tough on his teammates.

"I was shocked. Obviously, I knew we all had a chance of leaving but when it does happen it sets in," said Thomas Vanek. "He's been a good a friend of mine for the past 8-9 years we played together and had a good time. So it's hard to see him go but it's part of the business.

"(Pominville) loved Buffalo, he loved playing in front of the fans," added Patrick Kaleta. "Really respect what he did for myself and helped me along the way. It's a hard thing to do but you have move on."

Trading Pominville signals a shift in the direction of the organization. General manager Darcy Regier said Wednesday there needs to be a stronger foundation, which certainly calls into question the futures of key veterans that are still with the team, such as Vanek and Ryan Miller. Regier indicated the process could take some time.

Vanek said the recent trades of Pominville, Robyn Regher and Jordan Leopold would "probably" change is his opinion about staying with the Sabres long term, but stressed he has to talk to Regier about it.

"It's hard to say yes or no because no one has let me know what direction this is heading," said Vanek. "We'll finish the year out, and at least I would expect them to let me know what the future is with myself."

"I don't know," said Miller. "We'll have to see where everything falls and talk to Darcy about what is plan is and how I'm going to fit into or what's going on.

Both Vanek and Miller are believed to have one year remaining on their contracts, so we could be talking about their roles with the club throughout the summer and again at the trade deadline this time next year.

Darcy, it's time to say the 'r' word

By Michael Mroziak

Democrat and Chronicle

April 3, 2013

Niagara Gazette — Buffalo Sabres general manager Darcy Regier didn't want to "use the 'r' word" when explaining Wednesday's trade involving former captain Jason Pominville.

Perhaps the Sabres are still trying to figure out what that 'r' word stands for: rebuild, reload or retreat.

They're certainly not reloading. By acquiring draft picks and young prospects in exchange for established veterans, Regier is backing up his words that he's looking ahead to next year and beyond.

Retreat? To do that, you'd need to willingly back off from the direction in which you were proceeding. The problem is, the Sabres have been adrift for most of this season.

That leaves us with the option Regier was trying not to say but is the right 'r' word to use: rebuild. It's time the Sabres admit it's their only reasonable course of action. They took significant steps over the past few days by shipping Pominville, Robyn Regehr and Jordan Leopold to Minnesota, Los Angeles and St. Louis, respectively, in exchange for young prospects and draft picks.

They're good moves that could serve Buffalo well at the next three drafts. They could also prove useful in the event other teams express interest in the Sabres' remaining veteran stars.

Regier should entertain those offers and make a few of his own. Looking at what's ahead, now's the time to seriously consider deals involving their other stars.

As popular and talented as he is, this might be the right time for Regier to seriously consider dealing Ryan Miller. The goalie turns 33 next season and will become an unrestricted free agent at the end of the 2013-14 season. His two backups, Jhonas Enroth and the newly acquired Matt Hackett, both become restricted free agents at the end of this season. Down in Rochester, former St. Joe's standout David Leggio is putting up impressive numbers and could be ready to challenge for a roster spot on the parent club next season.

Miller, meanwhile, is set to make \$6.25 million next season according to capgeek.com, the website that tracks NHL salaries and contracts. If Regier is serious about rebuilding — I'm using that 'r' word again — it might be the right time to lock up the younger talents, none of whom are worth Ryan Miller's level of money just yet, and let them grow as part of the rebuilding project.

Sure, it's a risk and Sabres fans have seen it backfire before. Buffalo once traded star goalie Tom Barrasso to Pittsburgh and later watched him lift the Stanley Cup twice with

his Penguins teammates. Maybe Miller is the final piece to some other team's puzzle. Perhaps Miller's key to winning the Cup is playing in some other team's uniform.

As painful as that might look to Buffalo fans, what do the Sabres have to show for keeping him and other star players for this long? It's certainly not yet another 'r' word: results.

Jason Pominville will leave Sabres fans with one everlasting memory, his shorthanded overtime goal in 2006 that eliminated the Ottawa Senators from the Stanley Cup Playoffs. I even remember where I was when I watched him score it: in my wife's hospital room, with our one-day-old baby sleeping nearby, at Women and Children's Hospital in Buffalo. That goal also produced one of Rick Jeanneret's finest sound bites, "Now do you believe? These guys are good. Scary good!"

As much as it will pain Buffalo Sabres fans to think about rebuilding, it's perhaps the only way the Sabres really can become "scary good" once more.

Senators-Sabres Preview

By Chris Altruda

Associated Press

April 4, 2013

The Ottawa Senators were buyers at the trade deadline, dealing from strength to bolster a rotation of forwards still thin due to injuries.

The Buffalo Sabres were sellers, continuing the early stages of what appears to be a rebuilding phase.

The Northeast Division rivals meet Friday night in Buffalo, where the Senators will get their first look at newly acquired rookie Cory Conacher against a Sabres squad moving on from dealing Jason Pominville.

Despite No. 1 goaltender Craig Anderson suffering a sprained ankle Feb. 21, the Senators (19-11-6) were able to hold their ground in the playoff race behind Ben Bishop and AHL call-up Robin Lehner. Anderson is now healthy enough to play, though coach Paul MacLean did not name a starter for this game after practice Thursday even though Bishop is gone from the roster.

The Senators, still missing top forwards Jason Spezza and Milan Michalek due to injuries, dealt Bishop to Tampa Bay on Wednesday for Conacher and a fourth-round pick in 2013.

"I'm a guy who likes to be first on the puck and in the corners and dig for loose pucks and create turnovers and finish checks and skate hard and back check hard and be responsible on the ice," Conacher told the team's official website. "I think Ottawa is a team that's working on a lot of those things and they have a lot of players who do those things which will be a good fit for me."

Conacher's 24 points trail only Florida's Jonathan Huberdeau among all rookies and are two more than anyone on Ottawa. MacLean put Conacher on a line with fellow rookies Jakob Silfverberg and Mika Zibanejad in Thursday's practice, teaming together three of the league's top 13 first-year scorers.

"We're trying to find the best place for him to have success early," MacLean said. "He's been good on the power play and that's something we need as well."

The Senators opened a seven-game road trip Tuesday with a 3-2 loss at Boston in a rare free-wheeling game that was also normal in it being decided by one goal. Lehner made a career-high 47 saves as Ottawa fell to 9-7-6 in one-goal games.

The game was "way too wide open for us" in the first period, forward Erik Condra said after his team matched a season high with 47 shots. "After that it was a good game both ways. We struggled in the first and just never got it back."

Buffalo (14-17-6) is last in the Northeast, 10 points behind Ottawa, and general manager Darcy Regier has been retooling his roster. Wednesday's move may have been the biggest, shipping captain Jason Pominville and a 2014 draft pick to Minnesota for prospects Johan Larsson and Matt Hackett plus two draft picks.

"It's going to involve rolling back a little bit organizationally," said Regier, who had previously dealt defensemen Robyn Regehr and Jordan Leopold for picks. "Acquire the assets, the players, the draft picks and do it in a way that's going to allow us to group enough young players together, or players together, in order to win a championship."

The Sabres snapped a four-game losing streak - and Pittsburgh's 15-game win streak - with a 4-1 road victory Tuesday behind two goals from Kevin Porter.

Ottawa has won all three games between the teams this season, and Kyle Turris' power-play goal with 1:06 left in overtime provided a 4-3 victory at Buffalo in the most recent meeting March 16. Anderson had a season-high 42 saves in a 2-0 victory Feb. 12, his fifth straight win over the Sabres.