



Buffalo Sabres

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Devils-Sabres Preview

By Jordan Garretson

Associated Press

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The Buffalo Sabres continue to try to inch their way toward what would be an unexpected playoff berth.

The New Jersey Devils, meanwhile, are caught in an ugly spiral that could cause them to miss the postseason for only the second time in 16 seasons.

Buffalo aims for its third straight victory on Sunday night as it hosts New Jersey, which is trying to end a six-game losing streak.

The Sabres (15-17-6) sit in 12th place in the East, six points back of the Islanders for the conference's eighth and final playoff spot. But they've won their last two, ending the Penguins' 15-game winning streak Tuesday and knocking off the sixth-place Senators 4-2 on Friday with a three-goal third period.

Buffalo netted four regulation goals in each, the first time the club has done so in back-to-back games. The win over the Senators was the Sabres' first game without former captain Jason Pominville, who was traded to Minnesota on Wednesday.

Thomas Vanek also missed a fifth straight game due to an upper-body injury, and he isn't expected to return Sunday.

The Sabres had also recently traded veteran defensemen Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr, sending a signal to some that the team was preferring to load up for the future rather than chase a playoff spot.

"Hah, there's no memo," said Steve Ott, who scored on Friday for the second straight game after totaling two goals in his previous 20. "There's no indication of that even being said in this room. We really want to fight. There's a lot to play for in this dressing room, and we've got 10 games left to prove that."

The Devils (15-14-9) occupy 10th place in the East and are fading fast with their second six-game skid of the season. They haven't won since Ilya Kovalchuk went down with a shoulder injury March 23 against Florida, and there's still no timetable for his return - though coach Pete DeBoer said Saturday he's getting closer.

New Jersey has 10 goals in the six games Kovalchuk has missed and has scored twice on 17 power-play opportunities. Only Columbus has scored fewer goals than the Devils' 88 this season.

"There is some frustration in not winning," DeBoer said after Saturday's 2-1 home loss to Toronto. "Whether we win 1-0 or 2-1, we have to find ways to win games. That's the

bottom line and that's where the frustration lies. The solution has to come from within the room."

New Jersey has made it to the playoffs every season but 2010-11 since missing out in 1995-96.

Patrick Elias has recorded nine points in his last eight games against Buffalo, while Martin Brodeur owns a 1.09 goals-against average and two shutouts over his last nine starts against the Sabres.

Buffalo's Ryan Miller, who is 5-2-1 with a 1.58 GAA in his last eight starts against New Jersey, passed Dominik Hasek on Friday for the franchise lead with 13,309 career saves.

The teams split two earlier meetings this year, with each winning at home in a shootout.

Sabres' players focus on winning, not rebuilding plan

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 7, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres are supposed to lose now. That's the point of trading key guys and starting a rebuild. The more they lose, the better their draft position, the better the prospect they get.

That's how it's supposed to work, anyway.

"That's what people think," defenseman Andrej Sekera said Saturday. "We think differently."

That has become obvious. The Sabres have won two straight games since they began shipping out veterans. They're eager to make it three in a row tonight when they host New Jersey.

"Our main focus is still to win," forward Nathan Gerbe said in First Niagara Center. "Obviously, we're not cashing in this season. We're within reach of playoffs. We know that as a group, and we have guys here that can get it done."

"The organization itself wants to turn around. It doesn't mean we can't win. It doesn't mean they don't want us to win. Teams aren't going to take us lightly because we're turning things around. We've still got guys in here that want to win and obviously make playoffs."

The postseason remains a long shot, but the Sabres are far from eliminated. They are in 12th place, six points behind the eighth-place New York Islanders with one fewer game played.

The Isles were on pace for 51 points. At that rate, the Sabres would need to earn 16 of a possible 20 points in their final 10 games to pass them.

"No one in here is going to quit and not keep driving to the playoffs until you're mathematically out," forward Luke Adam said. "There's no quit in this locker room."

Instead, what the Sabres have in their dressing room is a bunch of players making the most of new opportunities.

The Sabres traded captain Jason Pominville and defensemen Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr heading into Wednesday's trade deadline. Their departures opened top-line and first-pair minutes for players.

During the Sabres' last two wins, exactly half of the offense was supplied by players who weren't in Buffalo at the start of the season. Forwards Kevin Porter, Brian Flynn and

Adam joined defensemen Adam Pardy and Mark Pysyk in recording four goals and seven assists to key victories over Pittsburgh and Ottawa.

“Once we made the trades, it opened up opportunities,” interim coach Ron Rolston said. “That’s what we have to be as a team. Everyone’s going to have to chip in one way or the other. They’re also guys that are going to have to make big defensive plays. We need complete players right now, and we need players that can chip in. We saw that.”

The victory over Pittsburgh on Tuesday was perhaps the Sabres’ most complete game. They overcame a shaky second period Friday to beat Ottawa. They scored three times in the third after the Senators took a 2-1 lead.

“Everybody knows what we need to do, and we’re trying,” Sekera said. “We just have to do it with the guys we have now, and I guess so far it’s working.”

It is indeed – except for the folks who assumed the club would nose-dive toward last place and the top overall draft pick.

“I don’t see it that way,” Gerbe said. “Those people are obviously negative. I like to see the positive side of things.

“It’s a big game for this group just to keep the momentum going. In the past in the season, we would lose this game. Now we’ve got to win it.”

Pardy takes his turn after a long wait

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 7, 2013

Adam Pardy is finally getting a fair chance in Buffalo. He's making the most of it.

Pardy has been a key contributor during the Sabres' last two games, victories over Pittsburgh and Ottawa. He's totaled three assists, including a pair of helpers against the Senators for his first multipoint game since October 2009.

The defenseman knew he could help the Sabres win. He just had to wait awhile.

The lockout short-circuited the start of his debut season in Buffalo. The team had a surplus of defensemen, and with a shortened training camp he never got a chance to prove he belonged. The Sabres sent him to Rochester, where he's spent most of the year.

He'll play his third game in a row and eighth overall for Buffalo tonight when New Jersey visits First Niagara Center.

"There's no doubt I can play in this league," Pardy said Saturday. "It's just a matter of getting the opportunity. These next 10 games are the opportunity. It's time to take advantage of it."

Pardy seems to have a permanent place on the blue line for the remainder of the season. The Sabres are carrying six blue-liners, meaning no one will be scratched. Plus, the top prospect for the Amerks, Brayden McNabb, is done for the year because of injury.

"This year being up and down, not knowing where it's going to go, living out of a hotel and my car, it's been a rough couple of months," Pardy said. "But it's nice to get back here and be part of this push winning a couple games here."

"This is the group we've got. It's nice to be a part of it right now down the stretch."

Pardy, who came from Dallas as part of the Derek Roy-Steve Ott trade, will be an unrestricted free agent following the season. He's not only trying to help the Sabres win, he's trying to ensure future employment.

He's off to a solid start with the last two games.

"I always feel confident in myself, but after a couple of rough years where you're getting sent down and you're in and out of the lineup, you start to question yourself," Pardy said. "All these thoughts start to creep into your head. It's tough sometimes, but you've got to try and stay positive and just try and work through it. If you go the other way, you're probably going to be out of the league. I'm not ready to leave yet."

...

Ron Rolston can't wait for players to get moving. Marcus Foligno learned that Friday.

Rolston sat the winger for most of the third period against Ottawa. During practice Saturday, the coach took Foligno off the second power-play unit and replaced him with Brian Flynn.

"He just wasn't moving his feet as much as he should be," Rolston said. "Right now we have 12 forwards and six defensemen that are healthy, so we can't afford guys that aren't playing the way we have to play."

"He'll bounce back and he'll have a good game, but everyone has to be playing their best hockey right now."

...

Leading scorer Thomas Vanek is expected to miss his sixth straight game with an upper-body injury.

"He is getting better, yeah, but I don't think he'll be ready," Rolston said. "We're hoping the best-case scenario would be Tuesday."

The Sabres visit Winnipeg on Tuesday.

Ville Leino, meanwhile, may be done for the season.

"He's probably out indefinitely right now with upper body," said Rolston, who added the injury does not require surgery. "I don't know where that's going to end up, but we'll see how it goes."

Sabres' new defense corps locking down, helping keep slim playoff alive

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 7, 2013

BUFFALO – There are some perks to hotel life, Adam Pardy said. Each day, a maid makes his bed and cleans his room. That's not a bad thing, right?

For three months, the defenseman has been living out of a suitcase while shuttling between the Sabres and the Rochester Americans, an experience the 28-year-old chalks up to being “one of those years.”

“It (stinks), but it is what it is,” Pardy said about hotel living Saturday after the Sabres prepared for tonight's contest against the New Jersey Devils inside the First Niagara Center.

After waiting out the NHL lockout, the 28-year-old cleared waivers and was sent to Rochester, his first regular AHL stint in five years. Finally, though, in his third recall, Pardy should be sticking.

The Sabres' blue line has transformed dramatically recently. The team dished respected veterans Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr for draft picks prior to Wednesday's trade deadline. T.J. Brennan was also dealt for a pick last month.

Now, with deadline having passed, the defensemen you see on the ice each night – the only six on the roster, in fact – should be the regular group the final 10 games this season.

Only three defensemen currently on the team – Christian Ehrhoff, Tyler Myers and Andrej Sekera – played opening day. The other three – Pardy, rookie Mark Pysyk and Mike Weber – earned their places later.

“This is our team,” Pardy said. “We got our six guys.”

It can be argued the blue line has been the Sabres' greatest weakness this disappointing season. But in recent games, the defense has settled down nicely, showcasing the tight style many expected it would before the season.

Not coincidentally, the Sabres have won two straight, keeping their slim playoff chances alive.

“We expected some changes to be made,” Myers said about the trades. “The way this group has played the last two games is exactly the way we need to play every game coming into a season. I think if we would've started that way, we wouldn't be battling for a playoff spot right now. We'd be right in the thick of things.”

What has changed?

For starters, Weber said forwards are supporting the defensemen better.

“We’re breaking out of our zone a lot easier just because of the support and the talk we have now in the D-zone,” he said.

Weber said interim coach Ron Rolston’s defensive system is similar to Lindy Ruff’s old one.

“Maybe the message didn’t get through to some of guys the way that it’s getting through now, I guess,” he said.

Of course, some defensemen have started playing a sturdier game, most notably Myers.

Rolston has told Myers, a colossal disappointment much of his fourth NHL season, he doesn’t care if the former Calder Trophy winner gets another point the rest of the season. He just wants to Myers concentrate on playing well in his own zone.

Myers has embraced that philosophy, putting offense on the backburner.

“I think it’s been night and day from the start of the season until now,” Myers said about his play. “There’s always room for improvement for any player. I feel I’ve really simplified my game. It’s just a matter of jumping when ... you see the opportunity.”

Myers has only four assists in the last 17 games and five all season. But the 23-year-old has played at least 23:59 in the last four games.

“He’s going to score points,” Rolston said. “He’s getting more confidence offensively. He’s rushing the puck. He’s doing a lot of good things.”

Then there’s Weber, a healthy scratch the first six games this season. Weber has started the last three years as an extra before earning regular duty. The gritty 25-year-old has played the last 23 games.

“Even when he was out of the lineup, he was a team-first player, which we want those players here,” Rolston said. “And then you add his battle, his competitive nature. He’s willing to do anything for the team.

“And then his game, he’s found what he has to do to be successful in the league. ... He keeps things really easy.”

Weber believes he has matured with age.

“I’m getting a little wiser, maybe not running around a little bit,” he said. “I’m not trying to make those big hits anymore. I’m just trying play solid and physical down low.”

Pardy never got too low during his 75-mile trips on the New York State Thruway. He monitored the Sabres' transactions while playing 21 AHL games.

"You always pay attention to what's going on," Pardy said. "You have to."

These final weeks could be an audition for the Newfoundland native. He had two assists in Friday's 4-2 win over Ottawa, his seventh appearance this season and second straight.

"He's really steady back there," said Rolston, who also coached Pardy with the Amerks. "He can move the puck. He's got a really good attitude, great attitude, good teammate. I think that he just is looking for the opportunity in any organization now."

Larsson hard to part with for Wild

By Michael Russo

Star Tribune

April 7, 2013

Parting with Johan Larsson wasn't an easy move for a Wild brain trust that had watched him blossom into star material.

When you're a scout who spends weeks on the road in the heart of winter scouring the world for talent, there is nothing more satisfying than draft day.

The most rewarding part is the selection of the first-round pick. In a vast production, the general manager, coach, team's top talent evaluators and a scout or two get to go on stage, announce the pick on national TV and pose for pictures with a teenager whose dream just came true.

Scouting is an inexact science when trying to project the futures of 18-year-olds. But the other cool part of the draft is trying to hit home runs in the later rounds.

That's why as excited as the Wild was to acquire Buffalo Sabres captain Jason Pominville on Wednesday, you know deep down it hurt a lot of behind-the-scenes folks in the hockey operations department.

Unless General Manager Chuck Fletcher is able to acquire another first-round pick, the Wild hierarchy won't get to go on stage this June in New Jersey. But perhaps the harder blow was giving up Johan Larsson in the package. Larsson was considered one of those home runs inside the Wild.

It's that part of the Pominville trade that caused the most internal debate inside the Wild. Trading Larsson was crushing for assistant GM Brent Flahr, who proudly called him "the Grumpy Swede."

"Scouts, when you trade a first-round pick, it's always a little uneasy feeling probably, but when you get a good player [like Pominville], it's fine," Flahr said. "Probably more uneasiness comes from trading a guy like Larsson, who you draft and get to know a bit and appreciate. I'm a big fan of Johan Larsson. I think everybody knows that, but that's the business.

"We've worked hard as a staff. We have a lot of good, young kids in this organization now. You can't always keep them all in order to take a next step to be a better team."

From Buffalo's perspective, besieged GM Darcy Regier swung a heck of a deal, parlaying a 30-year-old on a franchise in rebuild mode for Larsson, a potential goalie of the future in Matt Hackett and first- and second-round picks.

The Wild missed on Ryane Clowe. It then really, really wanted Pominville and had so many assets, it was able to afford to give up what most externally would consider a truckload.

There are only so many positions on a hockey rink. The Wild has core pieces already cemented to the ice. They have lots of kids in the pipeline. So Fletcher felt there had to come a point where he began using some of these picks and prospects as currency since they can't all play here.

Fletcher also wanted to send a message to the team that, as Flahr said, "We want to win now."

Of course, the thing that's scary is that despite that "huge, huge vote of confidence," as coach Mike Yeo called it, the tired club has responded by losing two games since the trade.

"Making this trade doesn't guarantee anything, but if you sit around and take the safe route all the time, what good does that do?" Fletcher said.

Not only has Fletcher tried to get the attention of the Wild with the trade, the hope is there's a ripple effect around the NHL. The Wild wants to gain a reputation as a destination — a team players want to play for, like New York, Pittsburgh and others.

Pominville said that rep began last summer when the Wild signed Zach Parise and Ryan Suter for \$196 million over 13 years.

Now the Wild is showing it isn't afraid to trade picks and prospects to at least try to get better.

One player who may take notice is former Gophers sniper Thomas Vanek, Pominville's buddy and linemate in Buffalo who isn't thrilled with the Sabres' rebuild. His contract is up after next season. If the salary cap begins to rise again after next year's dip, the Wild may be able to afford him.

Regardless, the Wild keeps showing it's willing to make bold moves. Let's see if they translate into victories on the ice.

Devils hope to find offense against Sabres

By Brian Compton

NHL.com

April 7, 2013

DEVILS (15-14-9) at SABRES (15-17-6)

TV: NBCSN

Last 10: New Jersey 2-5-3, Buffalo 5-3-2

Season series: This is the third and final meeting. The first two required shootouts, with each club earning a victory.

Big Story: After a fantastic start to the season, the New Jersey Devils are now fighting for their playoff lives. They are 0-3-3 since Ilya Kovalchuk suffered a shoulder injury and have fallen into 10th place in the Eastern Conference.

"We're repeating ourselves here for the past few games," Devils forward Patrik Elias said after Saturday's 2-1 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs at Prudential Center. "You try to stay up, and again the work ethic was there. We created a lot of good chances. It's tough to win with one or not scoring any goals."

Buffalo, meanwhile, has won back-to-back games as it aims to remain in the playoff hunt. However, the Sabres enter Sunday's action six points behind the eighth-place New York Islanders.

Team Scope:

Devils: New Jersey's offensive struggles continued Saturday, as David Clarkson spoiled James Reimer's shutout bid at 11:37 of the third period. It marked the third straight game the Devils – who went 0-for-5 on the power play against the Maple Leafs -- have scored one or fewer goals; they were shut out by the Boston Bruins at TD Garden on Thursday.

"Tonight, for me, it's the power play," Devils coach Peter DeBoer said. "We've got to cash in on the power play tonight. That's probably our first 5-on-3 in two months; you've got to make hay this time of year when you get the table set like that for you."

Sabres: Buffalo made it two in a row Friday, when it earned a 4-2 victory against the Ottawa Senators at First Niagara Center. It was another solid effort by Ron Rolston's club after it ended the Pittsburgh Penguins' winning streak at 15 games with an impressive 4-1 victory at Consol Energy Center on Wednesday.

Indeed, the Sabres will continue to press on without Jason Pominville, as the former captain was dealt to the Minnesota Wild just hours before Buffalo's win at Pittsburgh.

"There's no indication of that even being said in this room," forward Steve Ott said of a potential rebuild. "We really want to fight. There's a lot to play for in this dressing room and we've got 10 games left to prove that."

Who's hot: Ott has scored in back-to-back games for Buffalo, while goaltender Ryan Miller has stopped 54 of 57 shots he's faced in the past two contests.

Injury report: Besides Kovalchuk, the Devils are also expected to be without forward Tom Kostopoulos, who was knocked out during a fight with Islanders forward Matt Martin last Monday. ... Buffalo's leading scorer, Thomas Vanek, has missed the past five games with an upper-body injury. Ville Leino (upper body) and Alexander Sulzer (knee) are also out.

Sabres rally for 4-2 win over Senators

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

April 5, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Steve Ott and the Buffalo Sabres haven't received the message their team is supposed to be rebuilding for next season.

However, the Ottawa Senators are picking the wrong time to stumble.

Ott had a goal in his first game since being promoted to assistant captain, and Brian Flynn and Jochen Hecht capped a three-goal, third-period rally by scoring 12 seconds apart in leading the veteran-depleted Sabres to a 4-2 win on Friday night.

"Hah, there's no memo," Ott said, when asked about the Sabres trading away three veteran players over the past week for prospects and draft picks. "There's no indication of that even being said in this room. We really want to fight. There's a lot to play for in this dressing room, and we've got 10 games left to prove that."

Buffalo (15-17-6), which ended the Penguins' 15-game winning streak with a 4-1 win at Pittsburgh on Tuesday, has won two straight to jump into sole possession of 12th place in the Eastern Conference. With 36 points, the Sabres moved to within four of the eighth-place New York Islanders.

The Senators are suddenly slipping as they continue to struggle on the road.

Marc Methot and Eric Gryba scored for Ottawa, which has lost three in a row in regulation for the first time this season. The fifth-place Senators (19-12-6) dropped to 6-9-3 away from home in the midst of a seven-game trip.

"We can't do anything about the last three, all we can do is something about the next one we play," coach Paul MacLean said, looking ahead to a game Sunday at Florida. "It's a must-win to make sure that we stop the bleeding type of thing."

The Senators took brief control by building a 2-1 lead 1:41 into the third period, when Gryba's shot from above the right circle sneaked in through a crowd.

Buffalo tied it 1:34 later when Ott, parked in front, deflected in Mark Pysyk's shot from the left boards.

Flynn scored the go-ahead goal with 5:23 remaining when Hecht set him up with a no-look pass through the crease.

Hecht sealed it by scoring off the next faceoff. Driving up the left wing, he outmuscled Kyle Turris, stopped, spun around in the circle, and backhanded a shot that beat goalie Robin Lehner through the legs.

It was an impressive display for a Sabres team that has scored four goals in regulation in consecutive games for the first time this season.

Buffalo was playing its first game since trading captain Jason Pominville to Minnesota on Wednesday. The Sabres were also without leading scorer Thomas Vanek, who missed a fifth game because of an upper body injury.

"It hasn't been easy, maybe a little bit tougher on some of the guys that have been here a little bit longer," said goalie Ryan Miller, referring to the team's depleted roster. "Just put everything aside, everything else can wait. Just trying to be right here right now and play some hockey and see how it goes. I was proud of the guys."

Miller made 35 saves. Luke Adam also scored for Buffalo in his second game since being called up from AHL Rochester. Defensemen Adam Parady and Mike Weber added two assists while getting additional playing time after Buffalo traded Robyn Regehr to Los Angeles on Monday, and Jordan Leopold to St. Louis on March 30.

The Senators have also made a few changes, but with an eye on continuing their late-season playoff push. Rookie center Cory Conacher made his debut after being acquired in a trade that sent goalie Ben Bishop to Tampa Bay on Wednesday.

Though he didn't register a point, he was part of an all-rookie line rounded out by Mika Zibanejad and Jakob Silfverberg that had a hand in both goals.

"I felt really comfortable with the team. It's an easy fit to play with those guys," Conacher said. "It would've been better to win the game and contribute a little more. But it happens, and we'll turn the page and go on to the next game."

NOTES: It was a homecoming for Conacher, who is from Dunnville, Ontario, about 40 miles west of Buffalo, and played at Buffalo's Canisius College. ... Sabres 2012 third-round pick F Justin Key was signed by AHL Rochester, to an amateur tryout. Key had just completed his junior season with Saginaw of the Ontario Hockey League. ... In stopping his 12th shot of the game 22 seconds into the second period, Miller passed Dominik Hasek to take over the franchise lead with 13,309 career saves.

Flynn, Hecht end droughts to fuel Sabres' rally

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 6, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres have been keeping one eye on the ice and the other on trade rumors this week. Somehow, despite the juggling act, they've found a way to win.

The Sabres earned their second straight victory Friday night, 4-2 over Ottawa. The victories came after the organization sent captain Jason Pominville and defensemen Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr packing, presumably a sign this season was over.

The players appear to have other ideas.

"The trading deadline is always a time when everybody's anxious, waits and sees what's going to happen, especially this year with a lot of rumors, a lot of talk about it," forward Jochen Hecht said. "Once we come to the rink here, we've got to play. We did a hell of a job of concentrating and just focusing on our game."

Hecht was at the center of the latest win.

Between them, Hecht and Brian Flynn had combined for 18 scoreless games. In a matter of 12 seconds, they got rid of the goose eggs and the Senators.

Flynn snapped a 2-2 tie with 5:23 remaining, and Hecht found the net with 5:11 to play to propel the Sabres past their division rival. Flynn put Buffalo ahead after burying a cross-crease pass from Hecht. The goal ended a seven-game scoring drought.

"That was a big shift for us," Flynn said. "It's tough when you lose your captain and some other veteran guys who were a big part of the team, but I think we just stressed it gives other guys opportunity, maybe gives a guy like me more opportunity to hopefully contribute more offensively."

The cheers for Flynn's goal from the First Niagara Center crowd were still reverberating when Hecht snapped his 11-game skid.

The center streaked down the left side, stopped in the faceoff circle and dumped a no-look backhand past goaltender Robin Lehner to give the Sabres breathing room.

"I just closed my eyes and threw it," said Hecht, who has three goals in 37 games. "You want to contribute any way you can. So far, it's been mostly playing on the fourth line and shutting guys down. I was able to set up one up and put one in."

"It was good to come out and get those two quick goals and finish it off."

Another overdue player got the announced crowd of 18,811 out of its seats early. Luke Adam hadn't scored in the NHL since Dec. 17, 2011. After his rocket found the top corner with 6:21 off the clock, he savored the long wait.

The forward stood on the right faceoff dot with his arms held high, his teammates skating over to congratulate him on the blast that gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead. Adam, who scored 10 times last season before being sent to Rochester, connected on a cross-ice pass from Adam Pardy.

"It was a great shot," Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston said. "It was real good to see. I'm happy for Luke."

The lead lasted six minutes as Ottawa defenseman Marc Methot connected on a pinpoint shot of his own.

Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller finished the period with 11 saves, and the first stop in a scoreless second put him past Dominik Hasek on the Sabres' career list with 13,309. Miller passed Hasek in franchise appearances Tuesday.

The Senators took their only lead with 1:41 gone in the third period on a goal by defenseman Eric Gryba.

The lead was short-lived. Steve Ott scored 94 seconds later, pulling the Sabres into a 2-2 tie and setting the stage for Hecht and Flynn to finish off the Sens.

The Sabres return to action Sunday when they host New Jersey.

The game, originally slated to start at 7 p.m., has been rescheduled for 7:30 p.m. to accommodate coverage by the NBC Sports Network.

"Getting down, 2-1, early in the third and having to battle through it, just kind of settling down and realizing, 'Hey, we've just got to work here and get pucks to the net,' " said Pardy, who had two assists for the second time in his career. "We do that and we got a couple big goals there.

"It's opportunities for young guys to play and get more ice time. We responded well."

Conacher's adventure continues

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

April 6, 2013

It's one thing to play hockey at Canisius College, even as it's a program on the rise. It's one thing to become a most valuable player in the American Hockey League. And it's another thing entirely to make an impact in the NHL and become a desired target at the trade deadline.

Cory Conacher has rolled all that into two years time. The former Griffs star was the AHL MVP last year at Norfolk as the Admirals won the Calder Cup and, after a strong stint this year at Syracuse during the lockout, graduated to Tampa Bay and became one of the NHL's top rookies.

So what was he doing in First Niagara Center on Friday night? It's all part of the ride.

"It's always tough to leave the place you started and Tampa did a lot of good things for me," Conacher said after taking a pregame skate for the first time with his new team, the Ottawa Senators. "I have to give them a lot of credit for the success I've had so far this year. At the same time Ottawa is a team on the rise and they've been finding ways to win with all the injuries they've had this year. They have a lot of young guys and it will be a fun experience for me to play on a Canadian team, to be close to home.

"It's been a dream season so far. To be able to play with a guy like [Tampa veteran] Marty St. Louis, a guy I idolized forever, who I called out in road hockey or minisick games to be him as a player, he's done it all."

Conacher was a surprise trade piece at the deadline, as the Lightning sent him north for goaltender Ben Bishop. With nine goals and 24 points, only 5-foot-8 and 179 pounds, Conacher is second in NHL scoring among rookies and instantly became Ottawa's scoring leader.

Sens coach Paul MacLean has Conacher on an all-rookie line with Mika Zibanejad and Jakob Silfverberg and said he's liked what he saw in practice from Conacher, who played 13:57 Friday and was plus-2 as his line set up both Ottawa goals.

"Our expectation is he's going to come in and make us a better team. We'll make sure we get him on the ice lots," MacLean said. "He's got a good skill set, quick mind, quick hands. He's good around the net, good with the puck. He seems to be diligent enough without it so we're looking forward to seeing him play."

So were plenty of Conacher's family and friends, especially the ones with ties to Canisius. The problem? They all had their tickets in hand for Tampa's lone visit here this year on April 14. Conacher's parents had a suite for the game and the Sabres were planning to honor the Canisius team for its first-ever trip to the NCAA Tournament.

The trade left lots of people in scramble mode trying to exchange tickets or rearrange schedules. Many of Conacher's friends are on spring break and weren't in the house Friday. Neither was Canisius coach Dave Smith, who was in San Jose with his daughter at a youth tournament. But Conacher said he often has texted Smith since the trade.

"He gave me his immediate impact on the trade," Conacher said. "He took me back to the day he got traded [in the International Hockey League] and just how to handle things. Find the positives out of it. He's excited for me and wishes he could be here. He's a guy I can talk to about anything. I texted him a lot this season."

Conacher said he was at a Lightning team dinner at St. Louis' house during the Canisius-Quinnipiac NCAA game last Saturday in Providence, R.I. The Griffis had a 3-1 third-period lead but lost, 4-3.

"I was following it on Twitter. It's unfortunate that Quinnipiac made the comeback," Conacher said. "But you have to give a lot of credit to Canisius for what they did."

Conacher is thrilled to be playing in a city closer to his home in Burlington, Ont., although his home debut in Ottawa won't come until April 16 as the Sens played game two of a seven-game trip Friday that will include a matchup with his old team Tuesday in Tampa.

Conacher knows Sabres fans, including many of his old Canisius buddies, have no soft spots for the Sens in the wake of the 2007 Eastern Conference finals. But he's hoping they'll let bygones be bygones at least a little.

"They're Buffalo fans but at the odd time they can cheer for the Ottawa team too," Conacher said. "It's nice to have that little bit of support. They can say, 'I wouldn't mind if Buffalo wins but you get three goals.'"

Ott is sad about deals

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

April 6, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres' 4-1 win Tuesday in Pittsburgh ended the Penguins' 15-game winning streak and was easily their most complete game of the year. After the game, Steve Ott told Brian Engblom of the NBC Sports Network that he wanted General Manager Darcy Regier to be a buyer at the trade deadline rather than a seller.

Obviously, Ott didn't get his wish. The locker to his right in the Sabres' dressing room was empty Friday because captain Jason Pominville is in Minnesota, sent packing Wednesday.

"It was tough. Let's be honest," Ott said prior to the game against Ottawa in First Niagara Center. "What Jason has done for the Buffalo Sabres over the last 10 years or so is unbelievable. He's a heckuva player. It's not easy to replace a guy like that. It takes years to build a prospect into a Jason Pominville. It's disheartening in the fact that our team obviously wasn't playing up to where it needs to be."

Ott said he was hoping Regier would have added to the team because he hasn't given up on the playoff race.

"You always want to have hope and we still have hope in this dressing room," Ott insisted. "We have eight home games left [prior to Friday] and three on the road. A little bit of our destiny is in our hands but we have to win games. That's a fact of where we are right now."

Ott's contract runs through next year and like teammates Thomas Vanek and Ryan Miller, he said he'd like to talk to Regier about the franchise's rebuilding plans.

"I think we all are [interested], absolutely," Ott said. "I'm 30 years old. I don't know like everybody else where everybody stands. In these type of moments, you look at where you are. Obviously I came in here with aspirations of staying hopefully for a long time and that's up to Darcy and management to do so. I go out there and I'm just a hockey player. We'll let the management do their job."

The Sabres made Ott an alternate captain in the wake of Pominville's departure and he said he was "humbled and honored" by that distinction, even if he doesn't need an actual letter on his sweater to lead.

Plenty of observers think Ott could be the permanent captain next season. Of course, he would likely need to sign an extension to get that title.

"That's definitely not even on my radar," Ott said of the captaincy. "No particular feelings about myself. I truly just want to be a hockey player on this team and be

successful here. And that's the main focus, having a successful team, being a playoff team and being committed to the city rather than any leadership role.

"I don't look at a letter or title as anything," Ott said. "Leadership is a mindset. Everybody out here leads in their own way."

...

Drew Stafford was relieved to still be in Buffalo after weeks of rumors that he was going elsewhere at the deadline.

"Near the end there, my phone was blowing up around 4 o'clock that something was going on," Stafford said. "I didn't know what the story was or where that started. It was definitely stressful. Just thankful that now it's behind me."

Stafford reiterated that he wanted to stay with the Sabres.

"I'm definitely happy with the way it worked out," he said.

"It is a business and Darcy has to make decisions. If I was one of the guys that had to be moved out of here, I'd have to accept that and move forward. At the same time, it didn't happen so now my focus is staying here and continuing to try to get better.

...

It took a long time for the Pominville trade to be finalized and registered by the league Wednesday and, as it turns out, the reason was money. The Wild was very tight to the salary cap and the Sabres have retained some of Pominville's salary on their cap the next two years.

According to capgeek.com, the figure is \$795,000 for next year. Although common in other sports, salary retention had not previously been an option for NHL teams before but was added in the new collective bargaining agreement.

...

Johan Larsson and Matt Hackett, the two prospects acquired from Minnesota for Pominville, dressed for the Amerks Friday night against Lake Erie. Hackett was the backup goalie to David Leggio.

Larsson scored a goal for Rochester in a 3-1 loss to Lake Erie.

Buffalo Sabres too much for homesick Ottawa Senators

By Don Brennan

Ottawa Sun

April 6, 2013

BUFFALO — The Senators' longest road trip of the season is off to a bumpy start.

Most recently, because they had far too many passengers.

Ottawa lost its second of the six-in-12 days journey by a 4-2 score Friday at First Niagara Center to a Buffalo Sabres team that was a seller at the trade deadline and has very little hope of making the playoffs.

The Senators have now failed to take a point out of three straight games, officially making it their longest slump of the season.

In the latest, the Senators played down to their opponent's level, despite outshooting the Sabres 37-30.

With the game tied at 2-2, the Senators surrendered goals by Brian Flynn and Jochen Hecht 12 seconds apart late in the third period.

"They played harder longer than we did, and they got rewarded for it at the end, which is what normally happens in the NHL," coach Paul MacLean said.

MacLean admitted there's cause for concern over three straight losses.

"I think there certainly is. But we can't do anything about the last three. All we can do is something about the next one (Sunday in Florida) we play.

"That's a must-win. We have to make sure we stop the bleeding ... and we have to make sure we come prepared. We have to do more.

"Right now, we're not doing enough to win a game. Everyone has to play a little harder."

Hecht's goal, a backhand that went through the legs of both Kyle Turris and Robin Lehner, came with 5:11 remaining in the third.

The Senators pulled Lehner for an extra attacker with 2:57 left but never did come close to mounting a comeback.

"We just broke down. It's unacceptable," Marc Methot said. "We're going to have to regroup coming up in Florida."

"I think we can be a lot harder in our own end to play against."

Defensive defencemen Methot and Eric Gryba scored for the Senators. It was the second of the season for both.

Playing his first game for the Senators with family and college friends in attendance, Cory 'Little Train' Conacher made a positive impact.

He was on the ice for both Ottawa goals and drew an interference call on Drew Stafford in the third period.

The Senators couldn't take advantage of that one or three other power-play opportunities.

When it was mentioned the power play could have been a big help, Lehner said, "Yeah, but I could have been a huge help too, and I wasn't."

Ottawa's penalty killers were 2-for-2, including the survival of a Methot cross-checking penalty with under eight minutes remaining in the third.

The Flynn winner came 15 seconds after the Methot penalty expired.

Luke Adam and Steve Ott had the other Sabres goals.

Gryba's goal, a wrist shot from the high slot with Conacher parked in front, broke a 1-1 tie at 1:41 of the third period.

But the lead lasted a little more than a minute and a half until Ott deflected a shot over Lehner.

MacLean said that Mike Hoffman, who re-injured his collarbone in Boston, was heading back to Ottawa and would be unavailable to the team for the rest of the trip.

Twitter: @sundonib

FIRST PERIOD

Chris Phillips puts the first legit chance on Ryan Miller just wide of the net ... Chris Neil takes a penalty for interference ... Buffalo's Luke Adam slaps one home to open the scoring ... Marc Methot's wrist shot ties it ... Sens outshoot Sabres 12-9.

SECOND PERIOD

Scramble in front of Lehner is saved by Jakob Silfverberg, who clears the puck away ... Patrick Kaleta heads to the penalty box for charging on Marc Methot ... Tyler Ennis takes an elbowing penalty ... Both teams get good chances in final seconds ... Shots are 29-20 for Ottawa.

THIRD PERIOD

Early in the period, Eric Gryba shows patience and scores for Ottawa ... Grinding play by the Sabres sets up a tip in by Steve Ott to tie the game ... Interference call on Buffalo's Drew Stafford ... Methot goes to the box for cross checking Cody Hodgson ... Brian Flynn and Jochen Hecht score 12 seconds apart give Buffalo the lead ... Ottawa pulls goalie Lehner with three minutes left.

THREE STARS

Jochen Hecht, Buf: Assisted on the winner and scored the insurance marker

Steve Ott, Buf: Had a goal and was running into Senators all night.

Ryan Miller, Buf: Needed 12 saves to become the franchise leader. Did that and plenty more.

Turning Point:

Senators called for icing when Erik Condra failed to connect with Marc Methot on a pass as he stepped out of the box. Sabres scored off the faceoff, with tired Senators unable to change.

Thumbs up

Jakob Silfverberg had a team high seven shots on goal as all-rookie line showed promise.

Thumbs down

Nobody dealt with Ott, who had six hits and was in the face of top centre Kyle Turris right from the opening faceoff.

Sabres say playoffs still within sight after rallying to down Senators

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 6, 2013

BUFFALO – On Friday morning, hours before their 4-2 victory over the Ottawa Senators, new assistant captain Steve Ott promised the Sabres would keep fighting for that unlikely playoff berth until the bitter end.

Two days after management jettisoned captain Jason Pominville at the trade deadline with the message the Sabres' plans have shifted to the future, players emphatically say they're still focused on the present.

They want to win *now*.

Ten games remain for the 12th-place Sabres, who trail the eighth-place New York Islanders by four points; seven contests are at home inside the First Niagara Center.

Never say never, right?

“There’s a true factor of actually catching a playoff spot if we hold some destiny in our own hands,” Ott said after scoring the tying goal 3:15 into the third period. “Obviously, we’re going to need some help from the top-end teams to knock off the teams we’re racing with. But you know what? We’re playing a lot of those guys we’re racing with for a playoff spot.

“We have to continue to be, I guess, that old Bad News Bears hockey club.”

Fresh off a nice 4-1 win Tuesday in Pittsburgh, the Sabres scored 12 seconds apart to seal their triumph before 18,811 fans.

Rookie Brian Flynn knocked in Jochen Hecht’s rebound 14:37 into the third period. Hecht then cemented the game, quickly backhanding a hard shot in from the left circle with a defender draped on him.

“I closed my eyes and threw it,” said Hecht, who’s notorious for using his backhand from all angles.

Sportsclubstats.com pegs the team’s playoff chances at just 5.4 percent, a number that *jumped* three percent with Friday’s win.

In players’ minds, any chance is enough, though.

“Our whole goal from the beginning of the season was to make the playoffs,” said Sabres defenseman Mike Weber, who had two assists. “It still is. It’s still mathematically possible. We’re still right in it.”

Ott believes “all of us have a big reason to play.”

“If it’s young guys trying to make the team next year; if it’s guys looking for contracts; if it’s veteran guys looking for extensions. I mean, there’s so many aspects to play this game, and there’s still a lot of life in here to maybe catch a playoff spot.”

Goalie Ryan Miller, who broke Dominik Hasek’s all-time franchise saves mark Friday, said this week has been tough on some of the veterans. Still, that shouldn’t detract from their focus.

“It’s just trying to figure out what the temperature is and what’s going on,” Miller said. “It doesn’t stop the fact we have ... points on the table – try to be professional, prepare, put everything aside. Everything else can wait, just try to be right here, right now, play some hockey, see how it goes.”

Luke Adam, playing his second game this season, scored 6:21 into the game, his first goal in 22 games, a stretch dating back to Dec. 17, 2011.

After Adam one-timed Adam Pardy’s pass in the right circle, the 22-year-old raised his arms and looked to the rafters as teammates congratulated him.

“It was a good feeling,” Adam said. “It was nice to get that one, for sure. It’s been a long time coming.”

Weber added: “That’s huge for him and his confidence. He’s a great player. What happened happened, whatever it was. He’s still kind of growing into his body. We get him going, we’re going to be a special team here.”

Marc Methot tied it at 12:29. Eric Gryba put the Senators up 2-1 1:41 into the third period.

“I don’t think we had everyone going today,” interim Sabres coach Ron Rolston said. “We just found a way to win there in the third.”

Miller added: “After getting down we could’ve hung our heads after this week. But we answered back, and then we made a nice push.”

After making 35 saves Friday, Miller has 13,332 in his 493-game career.

“There’s not too many words left to describe Ryan Miller,” Weber said. “He’s a special individual and a special player.”

Former Canisius star Conacher thrilled to play in Buffalo again

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 6, 2013

BUFFALO – Cory Conacher’s family and friends all had their tickets for April 14, the Tampa Bay Lightning’s first visit here this season. The homecoming promised to be a special night for the former Canisius College star, the first Golden Griffins product to crack the NHL.

The 23-year-old’s parents reserved a suite inside the First Niagara Center. The Sabres plan to honor Canisius’ recent NCAA Tournament team that night, Conacher said.

Then, in one of the more intriguing and surprising trades prior to Wednesday’s deadline, the Lightning dealt the slick rookie to the Ottawa Senators for goalie Ben Bishop.

“It’s tough, for sure,” Conacher said Friday prior to making his Senators debut in the Sabres’ 4-2 win. “I got messages saying, ‘Why did this have to happen? I mean, I bought tickets already.’”

Even though it was unexpectedly moved up nine days, Conacher called his return to Buffalo “very special.”

“I have a lot of fans and family in the crowd,” he said. “It’s going to be fun for all of us.”

Conacher began Friday with nine goals and 24 points in 35 games, just a point behind Florida’s Jonathan Huberdeau for the rookie scoring lead.

The 5-foot-8 center has earned what he called a “dream season” the hard way.

Forget about going undrafted, the Toronto native received scant attention from major junior teams or big NCAA programs because of his size.

He wound up at Canisius, compiling 62 goals and 148 points in four seasons.

Despite playing in Buffalo, the Sabres never invited Conacher to one of their summer development camps, which usually has a couple of local youngsters. His roommate even participated one year.

Conacher eventually signed with Tampa Bay, quickly becoming an AHL star.

He enjoyed one of the most prolific AHL campaigns in recent memory last season, earning MVP and rookie of the year honors while scoring 39 goals and 80 points for the Norfolk Admirals, who won the Calder Cup.

The Lighting summoned Conacher from the Syracuse Crunch when the NHL lockout

ended.

Playing with 5-foot-8 Lightning star Martin St. Louis, Conacher's idol, was special. Both endured similar paths to the big leagues.

"He's a guy I would call out in road hockey or mini-stick games to be him as a player because he's done it all," Conacher said. "He had to work so hard when size mattered in the league. He's just as tall as me. So he had to battle through. He had to do a lot things to impress the coaching staffs and the GMs of the league, and he did that. He overcame a lot of adversity during his career."

So has Conacher.

Notes: According to capgeek.com, the Sabres retained \$795,000 of Pominville's \$5.5 million salary next season in Wednesday's trade with the Wild. ... Rochester has signed forward Justin Kea, the Sabres' third-round pick in 2012, to an amateur tryout.

Sabres defeat Senators 4-2

WGR 550

April 5, 2013

A defensive struggle for two periods turned into a scoring fest in the third as the Buffalo Sabres got their first victory against the Ottawa Senators this year, 4-2. Luke Adam opened up the scoring in the first period, netting his first of the year to make it 1-0. That goal was answered about ten minutes later by Marc Methot of the Sens, who took a beautiful drop pass top shelf to beat Ryan Miller. After a second period that saw a few penalties and not much else, the focus shifted to the third period as the Sabres dialed up the offense. It didn't start well for Buffalo, however, as a broken play in the Buffalo zone led to Ottawa taking the lead less than two minutes into the period. That goal was quickly answered by Steve Ott, who deflected a Mark Pysyk shot into the cage. Following a period of time with not many scoring chances, the Sabres took advantage of their opportunities with Bryan Flynn tallying his fourth of the season, hitting essentially a wide open net to give Buffalo the one goal lead. That lead would balloon to two goals just 12 seconds later as forward Jochen Hecht pulls a spin-o-rama backhand through goalie Robin Lehner. It was a lock-down defensive effort after that, the Sens pulled their goalie but Buffalo held strong to get the 4-2 victory.

Goals:

1st Period

BUF-Luke Adam 6:21 Pardy, Weber

OTT-Marc Methot 12:29 Silfverberg, Zibanejad

2nd Period

None

3rd Period

OTT--Eric Gryba 1:41 Zibanejad, Neil

BUF-Steve Ott 3:15 Pysyk, Party

BUF-Brian Flynn 14:37 Hecht, Weber

BUF- Jochen Hecht 14:49 Myers, Porter

Penalties

1st Period

OTT-Neil (Interference) 3:51

BUF-Foligno (tripping) 13:20

2nd Period

BUF-Kaleta (charging) 8:48

BUF-Ennis (elbowing) 12:09

3rd Period

BUF-Stafford (interference) 5:06

OTT-Methot (x-checking) 12:22

3 Stars:

1. Mike Weber

2. Ryan Miller

3. Steve Ott

Sabres start without their captain

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 6, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres DID NOT pick up where they left off in Pittsburgh as the Sens had the better of the play to start. Or course they miss Jason Pominville, but much of this was going on when he was here.

Buffalo wasn't awful, but the turnovers at the Ottawa blue line were plentiful and bad coverage cost them a goal and the lead.

Luke Adam was responsible for both goals. He got himself in position in the RW circle and Adam Pardy sent a perfect pass across to him. Adam hit a perfect one-timer for his first NHL goal since December 17th, 2011. This play doesn't happen without the hustle and brains of Brian Flynn. He got the puck in full tilt through the neutral zone. Instead of trying to stickhandle around a defenseman that stepped up, he got the puck in and continued after it. He won the race and got the play started back to Mike Weber.

That lasted for just over five minutes when Adam over skated his back check. By the time he realized it, Marc Methot had fired a screen shot from the right point to tie the game.

Many of the other Sabres didn't have the smarts of Flynn. Marcus Foligno tried to stickhandle through the defense and turned it over. He immediately took a tripping penalty. Get it in deep and there's no penalty. Tyler Ennis had chances to get the puck in, but he's back forcing plays too.

Ottawa had a late chance to take the lead on that power play, but Weber blocked a shot heading into an open net.

Things in the second period got worse. The passing is as bad as its ever been. Players that appear to be open are missed by three to five feet.

Drew Stafford leads a 2-on-1, gets in too tight and throws a pass right into the defenseman's pads.

There was one decent chance and Tyler Myers cut in front and had an open shot, but the puck stood up on him and he got a weak shot off.

The good news is Ryan Miller is on his game and has 25 saves in 40 minutes. He's playing just like he did in the game after last year's trading deadline when he was livid they traded Paul Gaustad.

In the third Ottawa got on the board quickly. A puck went back to Eric Gryba at the right point. Ennis sold out to block the shot, but he went down too fast and slid right by him. Andrej Sekera camped right in front of Miller and never moved. Gryba let a wrist shot go that Miller never saw.

It had been a while since Buffalo had even tested Robin Lehner, but just 1:34 later, Mark Pysyk made a great play along the left wing wall. He got a pass from Adam Pardy and in one motion, turned and got the puck to the net. Steve Ott was causing havoc and tipped in his 7th.

As the third wore on, the Sabres got better. Then they got real good and struck for two goals. Jochen Hecht was in on both. He sent a backhand pass through the crease and Flynn fought off his check to score an open backhand. For Flynn it was his 4th.

Hecht didn't quit working. Just 12 seconds later, he did a spin o rama to the backhand and put a screened goal by Lehner. Hecht hasn't been much help this season, but he certainly came alive there.

The goal helps, but tonight Flynn was their best player.

It wasn't pretty, but they found a way.

Rebuilding Sabres win second in a row

By Mark Ludwiczak

Sports Xchange

April 5, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Buffalo Sabres may be building for the future, but they're not giving up on this season yet.

The Sabres scored twice in a span of 12 seconds in the third period to come away with a 4-2 win over the Ottawa Senators on Friday night at the First Niagara Center.

The win was Buffalo's second in a row after defeating the Eastern Conference leading Pittsburgh Penguins 4-1 on Tuesday night. And it came two days after general manager Darcy Regier alluded to a rebuilding process in Buffalo. Buffalo traded former captain Jason Pominville to the Minnesota Wild on Wednesday for two prospects and two draft picks.

"There's so many aspects to play this game and there's still a lot of life in here to maybe even catch a playoff spot," Buffalo forward Steve Ott said. "Obviously, we're going to need some help from some of the top-end teams to knock off the guys we're racing with, but you know what? We're playing a lot of those guys we're racing with. We have to continue to be, I guess, that old 'Bad News Bears' hockey club."

Brian Flynn put the Sabres up 3-2 with 5:23 remaining, and Jochen Hecht gave the Sabres some insurance with 5:11 remaining on his third goal of the season.

Hecht was the spark behind both of Buffalo's late goals. Flynn's goal came after Hecht put the puck in the crease and it deflected to Flynn. Flynn then fired a backhand shot into the open net.

Hecht single-handedly scored Buffalo's fourth goal on a tremendous rush up ice before spinning and putting a backhand attempt past goalie Robin Lehner.

Ott and Luke Adam also scored for the Sabres, who improved to 15-17-6 and are now four points out of the final playoff spot in the East. Ryan Miller had 35 saves.

The suddenly slumping Senators lost their third game in a row and fell to 19-12-6. Marc Methot and Eric Gryba scored for Ottawa, and Lehner had 26 saves.

Ottawa is in the midst of a season-high seven-game road trip and is facing what coach Paul MacLean called a "must-win" game Sunday at Florida.

"I think it certainly is (a cause for concern)," MacLean said. "But we can't do anything about the last three, all we can do is something about the next one we play and it's a must-win here to make sure that we stop the bleeding, and we have to make sure we come prepared, we have to do more. Right now we're not doing enough to win a game and everyone has to play a little harder."

"It comes down to small bounces sometimes, but I feel like we have more in us than we showed today," Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson said.

If the Senators are going to bounce back, they'll need to do better with their puck possession. Two of Buffalo's goals came shortly after faceoff losses by Ottawa.

"The first thing for us is we need to have the puck more," MacLean said. "We're no good in the faceoff circle. We get scored on on two faceoff plays tonight, our power play (0-for-4) didn't generate any offense for us when we needed it to generate offense for us. Lost faceoffs led to ragged coverage in the defensive zone ... the faceoff circle's going to be a priority."

Adam got the Sabres on the board first at 6:21 on a blast from inside the right circle. Defenseman Adam Pardy found Adam wide open, and the forward ripped a slap shot past Lehner. It was Adam's first goal for the Sabres since Dec. 17, 2011.

Methot tied the game at 1-1 at 12:29 on a wrist shot through traffic from the right point. It was Methot's second goal of the season.

The teams traded goals early in the third period. Ottawa grabbed a 2-1 lead on Gryba's wrist shot 1:41 into the third. But the Sabres answered with Ott's seventh goal of the season at 3:15, tipping in Nathan Gerbe's shot to even the score at 2-2.

Buffalo then took charge with just over five minutes remaining, leaving some room for optimism in what has been a difficult campaign for the Sabres.

"We're trying to figure out what the temperature is and what's going on (as a franchise) but that doesn't stop the fact that we have 11 games left, now 10, there's points on the table and (we're) trying to be professional," Miller said. "It's just kind of what I was trying to do -- put everything aside, everything else can wait, just try and be right here right now and play some hockey and see how it goes."

NOTES: Sabres leading scorer Thomas Vanek missed his fifth game in a row with an upper-body injury. On Thursday, Vanek expressed some uncertainty over his future in Buffalo with the Sabres beginning the rebuilding process. Vanek has 33 points (16 goals, 17 assists) in 29 games. ... Ville Leino (upper body) was also scratched for Buffalo. ... Jim O'Brien, Andre Benoit and Mike Hoffman were scratched for Ottawa. ... Ottawa's next game is at Florida on Sunday. ... This was the fourth and final meeting between the Sabres and Senators this season. ... This was the 116th game all-time between Buffalo and Ottawa; heading into Friday's game, Buffalo led the series with a 56-42-17 record

NHL Game Summary - Ottawa at Buffalo

Sports Network

April 5, 2013

(Friday, April 5th)

Final Score: Buffalo 4, Ottawa 2

Buffalo, NY (Sports Network) - Brian Flynn and Jochen Hecht scored 12 seconds apart late in the third period, lifting the Buffalo Sabres over the Ottawa Senators, 4-2.

Luke Adam and Steve Ott also lit the lamp for the Sabres, who sit four points out of the eighth spot in the Eastern Conference.

Ryan Miller made 35 saves for Buffalo, which has won two in a row since a four-game skid.

"Obviously there are a lot of great leaders in this dressing room and we lost a great one in Jason Pominville," Ott said. "I thought he showed up every single night and he was a tremendous hockey player. To throw the 'A' on the jersey and have that representation means a lot to myself, but like I said, a lot of guys in here lead in their own way and hopefully a few guys jump on my coattails and we can ride off and continue to collect points."

Marc Methot and Eric Gryba scored for the Senators, who remained tied for fifth place the East with idle Toronto. Robin Lehner stopped 26-of-30 shots in defeat.

With the score tied at two, Flynn tallied with 5:23 left in regulation. Mike Weber's shot from the point hit off the backboards and ended up on Hecht's stick. Hecht backhanded a pass across the crease to Flynn, whose backhander beat Lehner.

Just 12 seconds later, Hecht spun around with Senators forward Kyle Turris defending him and scored on a backhander from the left circle.

"I personally believe that it's even more important now to stay upbeat, stay confident in what we're doing. I don't think we're that far off at all because it's so close as it is in the League," Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson said. "We're not the only team that's gone through this and we're not going to be the last one either. We'll find a way to weather through this."

Adam's one-timer from the right circle at the 6:21 mark of the first period gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead.

Methot's shot from the top of the right circle at the 12:29 mark made it 1-1.

After a scoreless second period, Gryba tallied from the top of the right circle 1:41 into the third, making it 2-1 Ottawa.

The Sabres tied the game at the 3:15 mark. Mark Pysyk's shot from along the left boards was deflected in by Ott.

Game Notes

Ottawa took three of four from Buffalo this season ... Forward Cory Conacher made his Senators debut ... The Senators went 0-for-4 on the power play, while the Sabres went 0-for-2 on the man advantage.

04/06 00:20:21 ET

Two quick goals give Sabres win against Senators

By Chris Ryndak

NHL.com

April 5, 2013

BUFFALO -- In a whirlwind of 12 seconds, the Buffalo Sabres managed to pull away and take two points from the Ottawa Senators on Friday.

Rookie Brian Flynn scored with 5:23 remaining in regulation, and Jochen Hecht added a goal a dozen seconds later as Buffalo defeated Ottawa 4-2 at First Niagara Center.

The Sabres have won back-to-back games after gaining two points in their previous four. Buffalo, considered sellers when they traded defensemen Jordan Leopold and Robyn Regehr and captain Jason Pominville before the NHL deadline Wednesday, have not given up hope of making the Stanley Cup Playoffs despite being four points out of eighth place with 10 games to go.

The players certainly aren't thinking about rebuilding.

"There's no indication of that even being said in this room," said forward Steve Ott, who scored Buffalo's second goal. "We really want to fight. There's a lot to play for in this dressing room and we've got 10 games left to prove that."

Luke Adam also scored for Buffalo. Defensemen Marc Methot and Eric Gryba had the goals for Ottawa. Mika Zibanejad of the Senators and Adam Pardy of the Sabres each recorded two assists.

With Flynn, Adam and defenseman Mark Pysyk, the Sabres' youth movement is on. Flynn, with four goals this season, is trying to make the most of this chance.

"The morale's up a little bit. It's obviously tough when you lose your captain and some other veteran guys who were a big part of the team, but I think we just stressed that it gives other guys opportunities and maybe gives a guy like me a little more opportunity to hopefully contribute a little more offensively," Flynn said.

The Senators have dropped three straight and continue on to the third of a seven-game road trip Sunday against the Florida Panthers.

"I personally believe that it's even more important now to stay upbeat, stay confident in what we're doing. I don't think we're that far off at all because it's so close as it is in the League," Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson said. "We're not the only team that's gone through this and we're not going to be the last one either. We'll find a way to weather through this."

Buffalo gained the lead when a shot from the point by Buffalo defenseman Mike Weber went wide of the net but ricocheted off the end boards onto the stick of Hecht, who

threw the puck across the crease. Flynn got to it and backhanded it past Ottawa goaltender Robin Lehner.

Hecht said he didn't see Flynn there, but knew center Kevin Porter was around the net for a possible tip-in.

On the next shift, Hecht scored on a backhand from 32 feet out as he spun around to avoid the reach of Senators forward Kyle Turris.

"[Turris] had a decent stick on my stick, so I decided to turn up and throw it to the net. I knew [Porter] and [Flynn] were going to the net there again and found a way," Hecht said.

Buffalo goaltender Ryan Miller made 35 saves. With his first of the second period, Miller set the record for saves as a member of the Sabres with 13,309. Dominik Hasek previously held that distinction.

Lehner, coming off a career-high 47-save performance against the Boston Bruins on Tuesday, stopped 26 shots.

An early third-period goal by Gryba gave the Senators a 2-1 lead. He scored at 1:41 on a wrist shot from the point through traffic.

Buffalo responded quickly when Ott, standing in front of the net, deflected in a shot from Pysyk along the wall near the top of the left faceoff circle. Ott's seventh of the season came 1:34 after Gryba scored.

In the wake of Buffalo trading Pominville to the Minnesota Wild on Wednesday, Ott was promoted to alternate captain.

"Obviously there are a lot of great leaders in this dressing room and we lost a great one in Jason Pominville. I thought he showed up every single night and he was a tremendous hockey player," Ott said. "To throw the 'A' on the jersey and have that representation means a lot to myself, but like I said, a lot of guys in here lead in their own way and hopefully a few guys jump on my coattails and we can ride off and continue to collect points."

Adam put Buffalo ahead 1-0 6:21 into the game. On the forecheck, Flynn passed the puck back to Weber at the right point. He moved it over to his partner Parady, who then swung it back cross-ice to Adam in the faceoff circle, where a one-timer beat Lehner over the right shoulder.

It's been a relatively long journey back to the NHL for 22-year-old Adam. He started the 2011-12 season centering the Sabres' top line but was sent down to Rochester of the American Hockey League in February 2012 after failing to register a point in his 25 of his last 26 games. Numerous Rochester players had been brought up before Adam got the call again Monday.

Adam played in his first game of the season Tuesday against the Pittsburgh Penguins. He skated with Porter and Flynn, who started the season in Rochester as well. Adam's goal Friday was his first since Dec. 17, 2011 and his first at home since he scored a pair on Nov. 26, 2011 against the Washington Capitals. He has 14 goals and 11 assists in 73 NHL games.

"It was a great shot too," Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston said of Adam's goal. "[Adam] did a great job of popping off on that weak side and [Pardy] made a great play to him, so it was good to see. It was real good to see him happy for Luke."

Ottawa tied the game 1-1 with 7:31 to play in the first period. As forward Jakob Silfverberg skated over the Buffalo line with new teammate Cory Conacher and Zibanejad, he dropped the puck to Methot. He wristed a shot through some traffic to beat Miller for his second goal of the season.

Conacher, in his first game with Ottawa after being traded from the Tampa Bay Lightning for goaltender Ben Bishop on Wednesday, was on the ice and in front of the net for both Senators goals.

"It's tough to lose that way. I think we deserved a little better fate, but those games happen," Conacher said. "Just like that, you have to claw your way back, and we tried, but it's just too little, too late, and they had a goalie in net tonight, so it was tough to get them by."

SEN-SATIONAL VICTORY: Flynn scores game-winner in 4-2 victory over Ottawa

By Derek Wangler

Sabres.com

April 5, 2013

Buffalo 4 – Ottawa 2

Friday, April 5, 2013

First Niagara Center

GAME RECAP

With an assist and a goal just 12 seconds apart from each other, Jochen Hecht helped the Sabres snap their two-game home winless streak.

Luke Adam got the scoring started for the Sabres with his first goal since December 17, 2011. Adam Pardy got the assist on Adam's goal and added another assist later in the game for his second career two-point night. After the Senators grabbed the lead just 1:41 into the third period, the Sabres stormed back with three unanswered goals. Brian Flynn had the game winner as he scored his fourth goal of the season and first at First Niagara Center.

The month of April has been kind to the Sabres since 2005-06 as the team is now 25-11-3 in that span, including 2-0-0 this year. The Sabres are now on a two-game winning streak and have improved their record against Northeast Division opponents to 8-6-2.

1st Period

The Sabres struck first as Luke Adam scored his first goal of the year 6:21 into the period. Adam Pardy found Adam wide open next to the left faceoff dot and he ripped it top shelf by the Ottawa goaltender. The Senators tied it up on a screen shot by Marc Methot that made its way through a crowd and over Ryan Miller's shoulder. The Senators led in the shots on goal category by a margin of 12-9.

2nd Period

No goals were scored in the period. Ryan Miller's first save of the period was the 13,909th of his career, breaking Dominik Hasek's franchise record for career saves. Buffalo's best scoring chance came on the penalty kill. Brian Flynn slid a pass over to Christian Ehrhoff who blasted a shot off Lehner's pads and the rebound squirted just out of the reach of Kevin Porter. Shots in the period were 14-11 in favor of Ottawa.

3rd Period

Eric Gryba put the Senators ahead 2-1 just 1:41 into the period. However, just under two minutes later, Buffalo's new alternate captain Steve Ott evened things up at two. Ott was camped in front of the Ottawa net and redirected a Mark Pysyk shot for his seventh tally of the year. With just 5:23 left in the period Jochen Hecht found Brian Flynn who tapped in his fourth goal of the year to put the Sabres up 3-2. Just 12 seconds later, Hecht scored on a backhand to put the game out of reach. Shots were 11-10 in favor of Ottawa in the period and the Senators outshot the Sabres 37-30 in the game.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Ryan Miller's 35 saves broke Dominik Hasek's record for most career saves in franchise history... Jochen Hecht had his first multi-point game since December 28, 2010 at Edmonton... Luke Adam scored his first goal of the season in the first period. The goal was his first since December 17, 2011... Adam Pardy has recorded an assist in consecutive games... this was the 116th game all-time between Buffalo and Ottawa; Buffalo leads the series with a 57-42-17 record. Buffalo is 31-19-7 at home against the Senators all-time.

ROSTER NOTES

Thomas Vanek sat out for the fifth straight game with an upper body injury...Ville Leino was scratched from the lineup for the third straight game, also due to an upper body injury.

BUFFALO'S REAL-TIME STATS LEADERS:

Time on Ice: Tyler Myers, 25:54
Shots: Ehrhoff/Stafford/Myers, 4
Blocked Shots: Mike Weber, 4
Hits: Steve Ott, 6
Faceoff Wins: Steve Ott, 9
Total Faceoffs: Steve Ott, 16

BUFFALO'S RECORD WHEN...

- * Scoring First: 11-4-4
- * Tied after the first period: 9-7-3
- * Tied after the second period: 7-5-0
- * Outshot by opponent: 11-12-2

SPECIAL TEAMS

Power Play
Tonight: 0/2
Overall: 17/137, 12.4%
Home: 9/65, 13.8%

Penalty Killing
Tonight: 4/4
Overall: 114/147, 77.6%
Home: 41/54, 75.9%

UP NEXT

- * Sunday vs. New Jersey, 7:30 p.m.
- * Tuesday @ Winnipeg, 8:00 p.m.
- * Thursday vs. Montreal, 7:30 p.m.