



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

April 12, 2014

Sabres-Bruins Preview

Associated Press

April 11, 2014

It's hard to believe the Boston Bruins and Buffalo Sabres have split four meetings given they are separated by 64 points at opposite ends of the NHL's overall standings.

The Bruins can capture the season series and more importantly secure the Presidents' Trophy on Saturday if they can defeat the visiting Sabres.

Boston (53-18-9) claimed its lone Presidents' Trophy in 1989-90. The Bruins figure to be in good position to finally win it again since league-worst Buffalo (21-50-9) has lost five straight and is 2-15-1 with one regulation victory in its last 18 games.

But while the gap in the standings between these Atlantic Division rivals is substantial, it hasn't translated to the ice. The Sabres have been narrowly outscored 15-12 by Boston, winning 4-2 on Dec. 19 and 5-4 in overtime Feb. 26.

The Bruins are also seeking to avoid their first three-game skid after dropping shootouts on a two-game trip to Minnesota and Winnipeg, losing 2-1 to the Jets on Thursday. They know their play has been sporadic as the postseason looms.

"It just feels like we're not prepared, and we should be," said winger Brad Marchand, whose club is 1-1-3 this month. "We're still fighting for the top of the league and we want to make sure we finish there. So we've got to be a lot more prepared for the next game and make sure that we come out at our best."

Marchand also said that the last contest "felt more like an exhibition game," and part of the problem may be that Boston has been resting key players down the stretch.

Captain Zdeno Chara was a healthy scratch in Winnipeg, Patrice Bergeron sat out with an undisclosed injury and Chris Kelly was out with a minor back injury.

"Those guys are obviously leaders of the team and good players for us night in and night out and we value their presence, especially when they're not in the lineup," center Gregory Campbell said. "But that shouldn't be an excuse for our team. We're a good team and we're built to compete every night."

Coach Claude Julien had Chad Johnson start Thursday and figures to give each of his goalies one in this back-to-back set with a visit to New Jersey on tap Sunday.

Johnson has started all three road games against the Sabres with Tuukka Rask getting the lone one at home, snapping a personal five-game skid to Buffalo with

a 4-1 win Dec. 21. Rask is 5-0-1 with a 0.82 goals-against average in his last six home starts.

Buffalo's latest defeat was Thursday's 2-1 road loss to the New York Rangers. The Sabres were outshot 18-1 in a dismal second period but played better in the third with an 11-3 edge, though they allowed Rick Nash's game-winner with 1:42 left.

"It's embarrassing so we've got to man up, everyone in here, and pour it on," said winger Drew Stafford, who scored the Sabres' goal. "We've got a couple more chances here to finish strong but unfortunately we let this one slip away."

Goalie Matt Hackett has started the last two games for Buffalo since Nathan Lieuwen suffered a concussion in Sunday's 5-2 loss at Philadelphia. Hackett has never faced Boston.

Flynn's versatility earns him ice time with Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 11, 2014

BOSTON — Guys competing for jobs in the NHL should be willing to do anything. Brian Flynn has a future because he does, in fact, do almost anything.

Injuries have been an opportunity for the Buffalo Sabres forward. He's played center and both wings, skated on all four lines, killed penalties and appeared on the power play. The Massachusetts native will do a bunch of those again today when the Sabres play their final road game in Boston.

"I got a lot of experience this year, and being versatile maybe helps you stay in the league a little longer," Flynn said. "Obviously, I will play whatever position I have to play to be in the lineup."

Flynn centered the third line for wingers Cory Conacher and Torrey Mitchell on Thursday in New York. The Sabres took Friday off, so it's unclear where he'll be for the 12:30 p.m. start in TD Garden. Wherever it is, coach Ted Nolan will be comfortable.

"The one thing about Flynn is he's very versatile," Nolan said. "He never complains. You put him on a first line, his demeanor doesn't change. You put him on a fourth line, it doesn't change. He just wants to play. If you have people like that who just want to play, it makes the job a lot easier. He's one of those guys that you like to have around for sure."

Flynn, who turns 26 in July, has one season left on his two-year deal. It becomes a one-way NHL contract that pays \$650,000. The threat of the minors will be diminished, not that a demotion was cause for concern anyway. Though his offensive stats have been disappointing — he has six goals and 13 points in 78 games after putting up six goals and 11 points in 26 games last year — fellow Sabres have seen improvement.

"You see growth," said veteran forward Matt Ellis. "He's really added some layers to his game. He's doing what they want him to do, and he's becoming a consistent performer no matter if he's in a top-end role or his minutes are reduced and he's playing more of a checking role."

"There's been that growth there, and I think that's the important thing for our younger players to continue to grow, continue to develop good habits and turn into good professionals."

Flynn's biggest jump lately has been on the penalty kill. He's become one of Buffalo's top forwards on a unit that's killed 16 of 18 in the last five games. The

Sabres went 4 for 4 against the Rangers, and Flynn was on the ice for a team-high 4:34.

“That’s going to be big for me moving forward in the future, skate well and do a good job on the penalty kill because such a big part of the game is special teams,” Flynn said. “It wins or loses you every game pretty much because you’re playing so many one-goal games. It’s the difference most nights.”

Flynn’s best penalty-kill moment Thursday came late in the second period. Rangers forward Dominic Moore was manning the point in the middle of the blue line, and Flynn blocked back-to-back shots. Flynn finished with three blocks, second to Mike Weber’s six, as the Sabres got in the way of 21 attempts by the Rangers.

“Obviously, jumping in front of shots, I don’t know anyone who likes doing that,” Flynn said. “When you’re doing a lot of penalty kills and you’re in a good rhythm with some guys and you’re killing with the same guy all the time and you’re getting a good feel for each other, it’s pretty fun.”

Said Weber: “We’ve done a good job of getting in lanes. Flynny came up huge with two or three in a row on the penalty kill in the second period. Everyone gets involved, and that’s what you like to see.”

Flynn’s biggest adjustment has been a move to center. The longtime right winger has lost 53 percent of his 383 faceoffs, but the movement after the puck drops has been a tougher challenge.

“I think my game is just forechecking and trying to cause turnovers for my linemates,” he said. “At center it’s been tougher for me to get in on the forecheck. I’m behind the play a little more, and you’ve obviously got to be a little more aware defensively.”

Flynn figures to be a factor during the Sabres’ penultimate game. He has two goals, four points and a plus-5 rating during the four outings against his home-state Bruins this season.

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The Sabres’ goalie wheel has finally landed on Connor Knapp. Not only will he dress for an NHL game for the first time, he’ll also put Buffalo in the record book.

Knapp, selected in the sixth round of the 2009 draft, was called up Friday to back up Matt Hackett this afternoon. When Knapp appears on the lineup sheet, he’ll become the ninth netminder to dress for Buffalo this season. That will be an NHL record, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Ryan Miller, Jhonas Enroth, Ryan Vinz, Jaroslav Halak, Michal Neuvirth, Nathan Lieuwen, Hackett and Andrey Makarov have also taken a spot in the Sabres' crease or on the bench. Makarov backed up Hackett during the previous two games, but the organization wanted him to play in Rochester this weekend as the Amerks attempt to earn a playoff spot.

Knapp, 23, has played for four teams this season: Greenville, Florida and Alaska of the ECHL, plus the Amerks. He made two starts for Rochester, losing both while putting up a 4.03 goals-against average and .873 save percentage. Knapp played for the Boston Junior Bruins in 2007-08.

Bruins look to wrap up Presidents' Trophy vs. Sabres

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

April 11, 2014

SABRES (21-50-9) at BRUINS (53-18-9)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, NESNPLUS

Last 10: Buffalo 1-8-1; Boston 5-4-1

Season series: This is the fifth and final game between the Buffalo Sabres and Boston Bruins. In spite of the 64-point gap in the standings between the Atlantic Division rivals, they've split the first four. Matt D'Agostini's overtime goal gave the Sabres a 5-4 win in Buffalo in the most recent matchup on Feb. 26.

Big story: The Bruins can wrap up the Presidents' Trophy and home-ice advantage throughout the Stanley Cup Playoffs with a win Saturday. They've already locked up the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference.

Team Scope:

Sabres: The aforementioned win against Boston was part of a three-game winning streak for Buffalo out of the Olympic break. Since then, the Sabres are 3-16-1 and enter Saturday on a five-game losing streak. All five losses were to teams heading to the playoffs. The Sabres finish out the season Sunday at home against the New York Islanders.

With injuries having decimated their young goaltending corps, Matt Hackett has started three of the past four games. He's posted a .918 save percentage over that span but has nothing to show for it, the latest loss 2-1 at the hands of the New York Rangers on Thursday.

"It's really frustrating," Hackett said in the Buffalo News. "I want to get one for the boys, and I can't find a way right now."

Bruins: Although coach Claude Julien has taken the luxury of resting some of Boston's key players down the stretch -- center Patrice Bergeron missed his first game of the season Thursday -- he still expects maximum effort from those in the lineup. And he wasn't pleased with what he saw in a 2-1 shootout loss to the Winnipeg Jets.

"Every once in a while your players will disappoint you, and this is one of them," Julien said in the Boston Globe. "... Hopefully, it's just a bit of a phase here that we are going through and we can pick up our game. Because, as I keep telling those guys, bad habits creep in quickly and they're hard to break."

The Bruins finish the regular season Sunday afternoon at the New Jersey Devils before heading home to start the playoffs against the second wild-card team in the East. Based off how Julien has used his goaltenders down the stretch it seems likely Tuukka Rask and Chad Johnson will each get a start this weekend.

Who's hot: Sabres forward Drew Stafford has one goal and two assists in his past two games. ... Bruins forward David Krejci has one goal and three assists during a three-game point streak.

Injury report: Buffalo is without goaltenders Jhonas Enroth (lower body), Michal Neuvirth (lower body) and Nathan Lieuwen (concussion), defensemen Alexander Sulzer (upper body), Chad Ruhwedel (concussion) and Tyler Myers (upper body) and forward Zenon Konopka (back spasms). ... Boston forward Chris Kelly (undisclosed) missed the game Thursday. Defenseman Adam McQuaid (strained quad) is on injured reserve.

Sabres recall goalie Connor Knapp from Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 11, 2014

BUFFALO – With goalie Andrey Makarov sent back to Rochester to help the Americans secure a playoff spot, the Sabres recalled Connor Knapp today.

If Knapp backs up Matt Hackett on Saturday in Boston, the Sabres would set an NHL record by dressing their ninth goalie this season, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

They've recently lost goalies Jhonas Enroth, Nathan Lieuwen and Michal Neuvirth to injuries and also traded Ryan Miller and Jaroslav Halak. Ryan Vinz, a team employee, also dressed for a game.

The Sabres drafted the 6-foot-5, 206-pound Knapp 164th overall in 2009. Knapp has mostly spent his professional career in the ECHL after four NCAA seasons at Miami of Ohio.

Knapp is 11-12-3-2 with a 2.53 goals-against average, .920 save percentage and one shutout in 29 ECHL games this season with Florida, Greenville and Alaska.

The Amerks recalled him March 17. The York native played two games, going 0-2 with a 4.03 goals-against average and .873 save percentage.

Sabres send Makarov to Rochester. Knapp called up.

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 11, 2014

Boston, MA (WGR 550) -- As promised the Sabres sent Andrey Makarov back to Rochester so he could help the Amerks play three games in three nights. Buffalo gets Connor Knapp to back up Matt Hackett this weekend.

Knapp was a 6th round pick in 2009 and just last year was ahead of Nathan Lieuwen and Makarov on the depth chart. He went 1-6 in Rochester and was sent down to the East Coast League and this could very well be the only time he'll ever be in a NHL uniform.

He got the first chance in Rochester when Hackett and Lieuwen came to Buffalo and went 0-2-0 with a 4.03 goals against and .873 save percentage.

This season Knapp has played for Greenville, Alaska and Florida in the ECHL. In 29 games he was 11-12-3-2 with a 2.53 goals against and .920 save percentage.

Ted Nolan gave the team off Friday in Boston.

Saturday's game is a 12:35 start so Brian Koziol will be with you in the morning at 11:00.

Sabres Nolan likely to let his staff go at seasons end

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 11, 2014

Boston, MA (WGR 550) -- Multiple people inside the Sabres organization have told me that Ted Nolan will let go his entire staff when the season is over.

The only coach I'm unclear on is Joe Sacco although many are telling me he's gone too. As a matter of fact, some on the staff are already telling people they know they're gone.

Nolan has complete say over his coaching staff and he'd like to bring in people he's worked with and knows. He has mentioned his admiration for Team Latvia goalie coach Arthurs Irbe who coached the Capitals goaltenders through 2011.

Sacco and Jerry Forton were hired by Ron Rolston at the start of this season.

Teppo Numminen was handpicked by Darcy Regier and spent three years as a Sabres assistant. He played another four years here under Lindy Ruff.

Jim Corsi spent 16 seasons coaching the Sabres goalies.

Doug McKenney has been the Sabres strength and conditioning coach for 20 years. Nolan has been very vocal in the past month about how he thinks the Sabres are not well conditioned which he feels has led to numerous injuries. Nolan also wants to see drastic changes to the offseason training program.

The Sabres wrap up the season with a home game Sunday against the Islanders.