



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*October 14, 2013*

## **Wild-Sabres Preview**

By Kevin Chroust

Associated Press

October 13, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres have the NHL's worst record, and they'll try to shed their winless label at home Monday night against the Minnesota Wild.

It's been all about a lack of offense for the Sabres (0-5-1), who are looking to avoid matching the worst start in franchise history. They went winless in seven straight to open the 1990-91 and 1999-2000 seasons.

This Buffalo club has a league-low six goals and has been outshot in every game, including a 40-29 margin in Saturday's 2-1 loss at Chicago. The Sabres, the only team yet to reach two points though no club has played more games, have scored more than a goal once in six contests.

"It puts a lot of emphasis in the backside and you can't make any mistakes," goaltender Ryan Miller said. "We've got to try to find a way to earn our goals and find a way to score."

The bad start has been no fault of Miller's. He has a .941 save percentage and a 2.29 goals-against average to go with his 0-4-0 start. He's faced 153 shots in four games.

The scoring chances aren't likely to come much easier against the Wild (2-1-2), who have allowed two goals in their last eight periods. They've faced fewer than 20 shots in three of their five games and are limiting opponents to a league-low 21.4 per game.

Minnesota held Dallas to 19 shots Saturday in a 5-1 road win, outshooting its eighth straight regular-season opponent dating back to last season.

"We've talked about how we want to be a puck-possession team and how defending is a lot easier when you have the puck," coach Mike Yeo said. "I like the way that we defend. I like the structure that we have. But, again, we'd much rather force them to defend than put ourselves in that position."

The Wild haven't defended all that well on the penalty kill, allowing six goals in 18 short-handed situations. But Buffalo's power play is 2 for 21 on the season, including 0 for 3 against Chicago.

The Sabres did outshoot the Stanley Cup champions 13-3 in the third period. Drew Stafford scored at the 11:49 mark to get them back in it, but they weren't able to overcome a two-goal deficit.

"I thought we had more chances from more lines, not just our top line," coach Ron Rolston said. "We haven't had that the last couple of games, so that's a positive for us."

The Wild's five goals against Dallas came from five different players, which matches the number of Sabres' goal scorers for the season.

While Zach Parise got his fourth goal in five games, Justin Fontaine, Mathew Dumba and Nino Niederreiter all scored their first.

"Tonight was a step in the right direction. That was our first, full 60-minute game," Matt Cooke told the Wild's official website after having a goal and an assist for the second straight game.

Backup goalie Josh Harding improved to 2-1-0 with 18 saves. He has allowed one goal in each of his three games. Starter Niklas Backstrom has been out since straining his knee Tuesday at Nashville, though he has returned to practice.

The Sabres have won their last two against the Wild, including a 3-1 home victory in the last meeting March 24, 2012. Miller was in net for the win and is 3-1-0 with a 2.10 GAA against the Wild.

## **Pominville, Sabres to renew acquaintances**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 14, 2013

Nearly 12 years in the Buffalo Sabres organization ended in a split second for Jason Pominville on April 3. It was trade deadline day and he was sent to the Minnesota Wild, which meant a harried cross-country flight to Los Angeles to join his new team.

It also meant virtually no good-byes for a captain who had been one of the franchise's most popular players since its run to the 2006 Eastern Conference finals that included his unforgettable, series-winning overtime goal in Ottawa.

There was only one player who got a farewell and that was teammate, long-time linemate and Clarence neighbor Thomas Vanek.

Six months later, Pominville gets to say those good-byes – and now hellos – to lots of folks in First Niagara Center today in his first trip back with the Wild for a game against the winless Sabres. The morning skate figures to be quite a reunion before things get down to business this evening.

“The only two people I got to say bye to were Vanek, because he was my neighbor and drove me to the airport, and Dave Williams, who brought me my equipment,” Pominville told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune over the weekend, referring to Buffalo's equipment manager. “So it'll be nice to go back, but it'll be weird to go in the same door but a different locker room.

“I'll see the ice from a different angle, I guess. It'll be fun. Everything happens so fast and I just would really like to see the staff and play in front of those fans again.”

Pominville has just one point, a goal, in the Wild's first five games as Minnesota has gone 2-1-2. He had four goals and five assists in 10 games last year but was felled by a concussion from a hit by Los Angeles' Dustin Brown and was ineffective in two playoff games against Chicago.

He is currently skating on Minnesota's second line, with Mikael Granlund at center and former Ottawa standout Dany Heatley on left wing. And just as he did in Buffalo, Pominville is playing the right point on the power play while partnering with defenseman Ryan Suter.

Pominville is so bullish on a future with the Wild that he agreed to a five-year, \$28 million extension with the club on opening night.

“I remember the first game in L.A., they chalk up a board and throw a bunch of things at you, and you’re just excited to be there,” he said. “It’s a new team, you’re meeting all kinds of different people and you’re just confused.”

Pominville’s wife, Kim, and his two children made a surprise drive from Buffalo to see him the week after the trade during a game in Columbus. The Wild’s PR staff decked out the family in team gear flown in that day from St. Paul for the occasion.

“There’s a lot of things that go with being traded,” Pominville said. “You have a place where you used to play, so you have to make sure you empty that and bring as many things as you can here. You get here and you don’t have a vehicle, so what do you do? And I’m terrible with directions anyway. Everything’s new, everything’s thrown at you. So it’s nice to be able to get settled in, get out of the hotel, get my family here and get a feel for the city and team.”

The Sabres acquired Pominville for center Johan Larsson, Rochester goalie Matt Hackett, a first-round pick they turned into defenseman Nikita Zadorov and a second-rounder next year. Among the Sabres’ all-time leaders, Pominville ranks 12th in goals (185) and points (456), ninth in assists (271), and is tied with Miroslav Satan for 19th in games played (578).

Rumors continue to fly in the hockey world that he might be joined next season by Vanek, who could be one of the hottest free agents on the market and could easily fit into Minnesota’s payroll with the salary cap going up and the Wild not likely to retain Heatley’s \$7.5 million hit.

Vanek, of course, won an NCAA championship in Buffalo in 2003 while playing for the University of Minnesota and one of his teammates on that club was current Wild defenseman Keith Ballard. Vanek’s wife, Ashley, is a Minnesota native and he makes his offseason home in the suburbs of the Twin Cities.

Pominville has even joked with Minnesota reporters about how he gets asked once a day about Vanek. They rolled together during the Sabres’ glory years of 2006 and 2007, which seem a long way away from the Sabres now.

“We’d have 18,000 in the building and another 15,000 outside the arena watching on a big screen,” Pominville recalled. “The fan support was awesome. We were pretty fortunate. They love their hockey, they’re all about their team. We had some good years, we had some tougher years, but they always supported us.”

...

The Sabres (0-5-1) can tie the franchise record for longest winless streak from the start of the season if they don’t get a win tonight. Their anemic offense has an NHL-low six goals in six games – tied with the 1970 Buffalo expansionites for fewest in franchise history – and faces a tough test against a Minnesota team that

leads the NHL in fewest shots on goal against (21.4). The Sabres, conversely, are second-last in that department (37.0).

Tonight's game opens a brutal week for Buffalo, which plays the New York Islanders on Tuesday in Nassau Coliseum and then hosts Vancouver on Thursday and unbeaten Colorado on Saturday. With days off mostly mandated by the new collective bargaining agreement, the Sabres were off Sunday and are scheduled to be off again Wednesday, so they won't even have a full practice again until Friday.

## **Sabres host Wild and ex-captain Pominville**

By David Kalan

NHL.com

October 13, 2013

WILD (2-1-2) at SABRES (0-5-1)

TV: NBCSN; TSN2

**Season series:** This is the first meeting of the season between the Minnesota Wild and the Buffalo Sabres. The last time they met, the Sabres came away with a 3-1 victory at First Niagara Center on March 24, 2012.

**Big story:** After playing parts of nine seasons with the Sabres to start his career, Wild forward Jason Pominville will be returning to First Niagara Center as a visiting player for the first time to face a Buffalo team still searching for its first win of 2013-14.

**Team Scope:**

**Wild:** For the first 578 games of his NHL career, Pominville wore a Sabres sweater; he scored 185 goals and 271 assists. That all changed late last season, when Pominville was sent to Minnesota to accelerate Buffalo's rebuild, and after signing a five-year \$28-million contract extension this summer, he'll be calling Minnesota home for a while. This will be his first game back in Buffalo as a visiting player, and while many expect him to get a warm reception from the crowd, it could still be a strange experience for Pominville.

"It was kind of 'Bang-bang, you're out of here,'" Pominville told the media when asked about being traded. "I didn't even go down to the arena to get my gear; our trainer, we met somewhere and he brought it to me. I was always treated real well [in Buffalo], so it'll be nice to see everyone again."

Beyond Pominville's return, the game is a pivotal one for the Wild. Minnesota is starting a four-game road trip, and after dropping three straight to start the season the Wild have rebounded to win two in a row. With a visit to Toronto on Tuesday looming, however, Minnesota will be hard-pressed to keep winning before facing the Atlantic-leading Maple Leafs on the second end of a back-to-back.

**Sabres:** The trade of Pominville was a strong indication that the Sabres were in rebuilding mode for the 2013-14 season, but even with lowered expectations in the standings, Buffalo is off to a slow start. The Sabres are winless in six games and have only one point (an overtime loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning on Oct. 8). They are alone in the Eastern Conference basement.

"We've had a handful of games so far where it's been all different situations or ways to put ourselves in a bad situation," goalie Ryan Miller said following the team's 2-1 road loss to the Chicago Blackhawks on Saturday night. "Tonight it was the penalties. It just left the first period as us having to defend, run around and waste energy."

Things won't get easier for Buffalo any time soon. After hosting Minnesota, the Sabres visit the New York Islanders on Tuesday before returning to First Niagara Center to host the Vancouver Canucks, Colorado Avalanche and Boston Bruins.

Who's hot: Minnesota's Zach Parise is looking like he could be among the League's top goal scorers this season with four goals in five games. ... Despite Buffalo's struggles, Cody Hodgson and Thomas Vanek have each had solid starts to the season with five points and four points, respectively, in six games.

Injury report: Starting goaltender Niklas Backstrom (lower body) has missed two games for Minnesota and is questionable for Monday. Forward Charlie Coyle (knee sprain) is out for 2-3 more weeks. ... Nikita Zadorov (hand) is questionable for Buffalo, while the Sabres will be without Ville Leino (rib) and Henrik Tallinder (upper body).

## **Wild's Pominville returns to Buffalo**

By Dan Myers

NHL.com

October 12, 2013

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- For the second time in less than a week, a high-profile Minnesota Wild player will return to his former home to play in front of fans who used to cheer for him.

Defenseman Ryan Suter was booed by Nashville Predators fans each time he touched the puck at Bridgestone Arena on Oct. 8. Forward Jason Pominville expects a warmer reception Monday night when the Wild play the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center.

Suter willingly left the Predators to sign a 13-year, \$98 million contract with the Wild on July 4, 2012 -- likely dooming him to villain status in Nashville for the rest of his career.

Pominville's circumstances are quite different.

As one of the highest-paid players on a team looking to rebuild, the Sabres traded Pominville, a two-year team captain, to the Wild at last season's NHL Trade Deadline. For Pominville, it was an opportunity to jump from a team out of contention to one in the thick of the Stanley Cup Playoff race.

"It'll be fun to go back, see the guys, play against guys you played with for a while," Pominville said. "Hopefully I don't get the same treatment Ryan did."

On the surface, it's a trade that appears to have worked out well for both teams. Buffalo got a pair of high-end prospects and a pair of high draft picks from the Wild. Minnesota got a player who is well-respected in the locker room and in the organization -- so respected, in fact, that last week he signed a \$28 million contract extension that will keep him in St. Paul for six more seasons.

"It's a huge, huge thing for our group," Wild coach Mike Yeo said after the signing. "This guy is such a valuable player for us, a valuable teammate. He has respect from his teammates. It's a great job by our organization to get him signed and it's great of him to show that commitment to our organization."

Pominville's coach for all but a few games in Buffalo was current Dallas Stars bench boss Lindy Ruff, who was a strong endorser of the Wild's move when asked about it when the Stars played in Minnesota last week.

"I really felt he was our all-around best player," Ruff said. "The type of player that could play through anything, any situation -- could use him penalty killing, power play, great shot ... and on top of that, he's an even better person."

"Those kind of players are really hard to come by."

It's been a whirlwind few months for Pominville since the trade that brought him to Minnesota. From the day the trade took place April 3, Pominville has been almost constantly moving. Having spent most of eight full seasons in Buffalo, he said it was difficult to leave so quickly, without having a chance to say goodbye to many people with the Sabres who became a part of his life.

"It was kind of 'bang-bang, you're out of here,'" Pominville said. "I didn't even go down to the arena to get my gear; our trainer, we met somewhere and he brought it to me. I was always treated real well [in Buffalo], so it'll be nice to see everyone again."

As difficult as the process of uprooting his family and career was, Pominville says it was the best thing that could have happened.

"A lot of things have changed in my life," Pominville said. "But I think when you step back and look at the big picture, I think it's a good thing for me."

## **Minnesota at Buffalo**

CBS Sports

October 13, 2013

Time: 07:30 P.M. EST

Venue: First Niagara Center

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## **Wild-Buffalo game preview**

Minnesota Star-Tribune

October 14, 2013

6:30 P.M. at Buffalo • FIRST NIAGARA CENTER • NBCSN, 100.3-FM

Preview: The Wild has won two in a row and begins a four-game road trip to Buffalo, Toronto, Tampa Bay and Florida. The Wild is the final Western Conference team to play the East, and the West is 27-6-3 against the East. The Sabres are last in the East at 0-5-1, have scored six goals and given up 16. A Buffalo loss would match its worst start ever.

Players to watch: Playing in his fifth game, Wild RW Justin Fontaine's first NHL goal Saturday against Dallas was the quickest goal in Wild history (12 seconds in). It matched the quickest goal ever from the start of a game by a player scoring his first goal (North Stars' Rick Boh did it in his seventh game on Feb. 27, 1988, at Boston Garden). LW Matt Cooke leads the team with five points, and LW Zach Parise leads with four goals. G Josh Harding has won two in a row, and his 1.07 goals-against average ranks third among NHL goalies who have played more than one game. Sabres Fs Thomas Vanek and Cody Hodgson have combined for nine of Buffalo's 16 points. D Tyler Myers and D Mike Weber are minus-7 and minus-8.

Numbers: The Wild has given up a league-low 21.4 shots per game and ranks sixth in goals against (2.20). ... The Wild's power play ranks fifth (30.4 percent), but its penalty kill is tied for 27th (66.7 percent). ... The Wild was 5-9-4 against the East two years ago.

Injuries: Wild C Charlie Coyle (knee) and LW Mike Rupp (knee) are out; G Niklas Backstrom (knee) is questionable. Sabres RW Ville Leino (rib) and RW Patrick Kaleta (suspended) are out; D Henrik Tallinder (upper body) is day-to-day.

## **Pominville still connected to Vanek, and everybody knows it**

By Michael Russo

Minnesota Star -Tribune

October 14, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Almost daily, Jason Pominville will get recognized around the Twin Cities. He’s always flattered, although inevitably the Wild winger knows where the conversation will usually end up.

It takes mere minutes for hockey-mad Wild and Gophers fans to ask Pominville if his former Buffalo Sabres teammate, Thomas Vanek, will soon be reuniting with him in Minnesota.

“It’s funny,” said Pominville, the former Sabres captain who faces his former team and buddy for the first time Monday night. “It feels like I answer that question at least once or twice a day. It’ll be interesting to see how it all plays out. He’s a very smart guy and talented player. I’m sure he’ll take his time and make the best decision when the time comes.”

Vanek, the former Gophers star who helped lead the University of Minnesota to a national championship in 2003, can become a free agent July 1. The winless Sabres are in rebuild mode, so many assume Vanek is a goner and have pegged the goal-scorer as Wild-bound.

Vanek, the Sabres co-captain who lives in Stillwater during the offseason, owns a piece of the city’s Lumberyard Hockey and Sports Center and trains at Mariucci Arena, is aware #PariseWatch and #SuterWatch on Twitter two summers ago has already turned into #VanekWatch in Minnesota.

But free agency, Vanek says, is not on his mind.

“I know right now we’re rebuilding and have a young team and a lot of good young players,” Vanek said during a phone interview Friday. “That’s the reason why I just wanted to hold off and wait to see what happens here. With that said, I’ve never said I wouldn’t sign an extension here. I have enjoyed my eight years going on nine in Buffalo. It’s a great hockey town. The people really live for the Buffalo Sabres, I live in a great neighborhood and my kids love it, my wife loves it. And that goes a long way.

“So whatever happens on the business side of it — if I leave or stay — I’m not going to be one of those guys that says anything bad about Buffalo because I’ve enjoyed my time here and still do.”

The Austrian-born Vanek, 29, scored 57 goals and 113 points in 83 games over two years for the Gophers. He led the team in scoring both years, was a WCHA Rookie of the Year and his 31 goals as a freshman rank second in school history. In 2003, he was the Frozen Four MVP, beating Michigan in overtime and scoring the winning goal in the national championship game against New Hampshire.

He's a pure goal scorer. His next goal — his 253rd of his NHL career — will move him into fifth all-time in Sabres history. His 105 power-play goals rank fourth.

Vanek can score many different ways, from Brian Rolston-like slapshots in shootouts to snap shots off the wing to how-did-he-do-it deflections to dazzling between-the-legs goals like he scored last week against Columbus.

“With that goal, I knew before the puck got there what I wanted to do,” Vanek said. “Just figured I'd change the angle of attack.”

Pominville laughs.

“His ability to find a way to get his stick in the danger area in front of the net, I think he's hands down by far the best net-front guy you can have,” Pominville said. “A lot of times you just have to throw pucks in his area knowing he can get his stick on them. His speed and ability to pass the puck are underestimated, too.”

The Wild will have the cap space to pursue Vanek if he reaches free agency, although it's not guaranteed it will. If the Wild's young forwards Charlie Coyle, Nino Niederreiter and Mikael Granlund blossom, the team could decide to spend that money elsewhere, such as on a goaltender or bruising defenseman.

But some believe one reason Vanek is destined for the Wild is his friendship with Pominville. They talk all the time, and when Pominville was traded to the Wild, Vanek, who lived two doors down, helped him pack, then drove him to the airport early the next morning.

“We're similar ages and played nine years together — eight in Buffalo and one in Rochester, and even there we lived in the same complex,” Vanek said. “He's a great friend. I have friends on the [Wild], but I have friends on other teams as well.”

Regardless, Vanek said the only thing on his mind now is helping Buffalo escape the NHL's cellar.

“We knew going into this season that it was going to be tough to win games,” Vanek said. “This league is good. In the cap era, there's a lot of good teams each and every night. Everyone can beat everyone. But when you go young, especially as young as we did, it makes it even harder.

“And not that they're not good players. Every single one of these guys are good hockey players, or they wouldn't be here. But the major difference is experience. You can't teach experience. I was the same way when I was young. And until you go through 82-game season grinds multiple times, that's when you start to learn about yourself.”

## **Minnesota Wild: Jason Pominville back in Buffalo as a visitor**

By Chad Graff

St. Paul Pioneer Press

October 13, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Jason Pominville has been to the First Niagara Center, the Buffalo Sabres' home arena, a few hundred times.

But on Sunday, as he recounted the path he took to the locker room countless times during his eight seasons in Buffalo, he stopped himself.

"I don't think I've ever been in the visitor's locker room," he said.

The former Buffalo captain was shipped to the Wild at the trade deadline last season and recently signed a five-year extension in Minnesota. On Sunday, though, a day before the Wild face the winless Sabres and seek their third straight victory, Pominville will take on his former team for the first time.

"It'll be interesting," he said. "I'm just happy we get to get it out of the way early."

Monday night's game kicks off a four-game road trip for the Wild, who also face Toronto, Tampa Bay and the Florida Panthers.

On long road trips, Wild coach Mike Yeo places an additional emphasis on the first game to set a tone.

"I look at that Buffalo game as an important one for us," he said. "We've got to get our first (road) win. I always look at that first game of the road trip as an important game. And this one is the first game of three in four (days). We have a large stretch coming up."

After failing to record a win in their first three games, Yeo shuffled every line and defensive pairing with the exception of Ryan Suter and Jonas Brodin on the blue line. Good results followed.

The Wild come into Buffalo riding a two-game winning streak after beating up on Winnipeg and Dallas in St. Paul. But under Yeo, the Wild haven't been good against the Eastern Conference.

"We're going there to win the game and focus on what we have to do," Pominville said. "I'll enjoy the moment, but we have business to take care of."

Pominville was moved from the top line to the second line last week in an attempt to create secondary scoring. Dany Heatley and Mikael Granlund didn't score in two games together, but Granlund played well alongside Pominville.

The Wild have made it clear that they need Heatley to get involved in the scoring, which has become part of Pominville's role on that line.

"I want to try to help those guys out and provide them with what I bring to the table," Pominville said. "We might not have gotten rewarded with any goals, but we've had good looks and haven't put ourselves in trouble defensively."

The Sabres are a far cry from the 2005-06 and 2006-07 teams that advanced to the conference finals as Pominville was breaking onto the scene.

They are one of two winless teams in the NHL (the other is New Jersey) and have scored just six goals in six games. After trading Pominville and firing longtime head coach Lindy Ruff, they're in rebuilding mode, which likely means former University of Minnesota forward Thomas Vanek, an unrestricted free agent after this season, won't return to Buffalo next season. The Wild are a possible destination for Vanek, where he would be reunited with good friend Pominville.

Even so, Ruff said, the Wild should be happy with the player they already have.

"I really felt (Pominville was) our best all-around player," said Ruff, who now coaches the Dallas Stars. "He's a guy that did all the right things. ... Those players are hard to come by. You never have to challenge him to work. He's an ultimate pro, and he's going to be consistent from year to year, which is really all you can ask."

Pominville said it will be a weird day for him, playing against the team he captained for most of last season -- and that's only after he finds the visitor's locker room.

"That's going to be the weird part about it, having to compete with all those guys I know really well," Pominville said. "It's part of the game, and that day was to come eventually."

## **Former Sabres captain Jason Pominville set to make Buffalo return with Wild**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 14, 2013

BUFFALO – They became the rebuilding Sabres around 4 p.m. on April 3.

In trading versatile captain Jason Pominville to the Minnesota Wild for draft picks and prospects that day, the Sabres signaled they had given up on the present and started looking to the future.

Six months later, with the former franchise cornerstone returning tonight to the First Niagara Center, the winless Sabres (0-5-1) are a mess, probably the NHL's worst team.

Another loss and the feeble Sabres, who've scored only six goals, will tie their all-time mark for longest winless streak to start the season.

You think the Sabres miss the steady Pominville, a former NHL All-Star and arguably their top all-around player for years?

For Pominville, his first visit as an opponent will be special. The 30-year-old left suddenly after 11 years with the organization.

Now, the winger can finally say his goodbyes.

"The only two people I got to say bye were (Thomas) Vanek, because he was my neighbor and drove me to the airport, and our (equipment manager), Dave Williams, who brought me my equipment," Pominville, who recently signed a five-year, \$28 million extension, told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. "So it'll be nice to go back, but it'll be weird to go in the same door but a different locker room.

"I'll see the ice from a different angle, I guess. It'll be fun. Everything happens so fast and I just would really like to see the staff and play in front of those fans again."

These days, those fans are frustrated. The Sabres haven't started this poorly since beginning 1990-91 0-4-3 and 1999-00 0-5-2.

Pominville has one goal in five games this season.