



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

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## **Avalanche-Sabres Preview**

By Jordan Garretson

Associated Press

October 18, 2013

Colorado's season-opening win streak finally came to an end, but a matchup with the Buffalo Sabres' league-worst offense should help the Avalanche get back on track.

Led by stellar goaltending, Colorado will look to keep the Sabres bottled up and take a sixth straight victory in the series in Buffalo on Saturday night.

The Avalanche (6-1-0) finished one win shy of matching the franchise's best start with a 4-2 home loss to Detroit on Thursday. Colorado had yielded the same amount of goals over its previous four games combined, but Semyon Varlamov had a rough outing despite 24 saves. He entered with a 1.20 goals-against average.

The club still leads the league in GAA (1.43) and save percentage (95.8).

Meanwhile, the Avs had 38 of their own shots turned away by backup goaltender Jonas Gustavsson, who was filling in for the injured Jimmy Howard.

"We're 6-1. We still have the best or second-best record in the league," said Matt Duchene, who went without a point for just the second time this season. He has three goals in two career games versus Buffalo.

"It's unfortunate we couldn't have kept it going against these guys, but we played hard and played really well."

The Sabres (1-7-1) will find themselves in a particularly bad matchup, with a 1.1 goals-per-game average that is the league's lowest. They're scoring on just 9.4 percent of power plays (3 for 32), also ranking near the bottom of the NHL.

Buffalo was shut out for a second time while managing 25 shots in a 3-0 loss at Vancouver on Thursday. An apparent goal by Thomas Vanek in the third period was overturned after officials reviewed the play.

The Sabres, whose only win came 4-3 in a shootout at the New York Islanders on Tuesday, were booed off the ice following the second period. Fans also vocalized their discontent with "Fire Darcy" chants - a reference to general manager Darcy Regier.

Regier didn't comment, but in terms of turning things around, coach Ron Rolston put the onus on his players.

"If we don't play the right way, they're creating their own frustration," Rolston said. "So they've got to figure that out."

One of the few bright spots for Buffalo has been the solid play of Ryan Miller, who has posted a misleading 2.49 goals-against average. He's stopped 93.5 percent of the 231 shots against him - the league's highest total and 30 more than Varlamov has seen.

"He's been our best player from the start," Rolston said.

Colorado will be without enforcer Cody McLeod, who has been offered a hearing by the league's department of player safety after receiving a 5-minute penalty for boarding and a game misconduct Thursday for his hit on Niklas Kronwall.

Kronwall was carried off on a stretcher, but was moving all his extremities in the locker room following the game. He was later diagnosed with a concussion and also suffered cuts on his ear.

McLeod, one of the league leaders in penalty minutes with 27, could be suspended for more than five games.

"From the bench, I thought Kronwall turned his back at the last minute," coach Patrick Roy said. "Does that make it dirty? I guess (director of player safety Brendan) Shanahan has to make a decision."

Paul Stastny has five assists in four career games against Buffalo, which hasn't beaten Colorado since Dec. 4, 2005.

## **Sabres rookies try dancing to lighten the mood**

By Miguel Rodriguez

Buffalo News

October 19, 2013

The only thing missing was some background music as Mikhail Grigorenko, Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson and Rasmus Ristolainen were among the seven rookies who at the end of Friday's Sabres practice simply got jiggy with it at center ice.

The centipede. The Watusi (or Batusi as forward Tyler Ennis referred to Grigorenko's moves at center ice). Moonwalk. Breakdancing.

The rookies' post-practice stars-on-ice moves at First Niagara Center proved to be quite the comedic sight and served as a reminder that hockey is supposed to be fun even though "suffering" has been Sabreland's season-long theme.

"You're talking about having a little more emotion on and off the ice. ... It's a good way to loosen everyone up," Ennis said of the light-hearted rookie hazing for the amusement of the team's veterans.

"Sometimes you just have to add something that loosens everything up," Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller added. "I think everybody can recognize it's a little tense here. It was a fun chance to embarrass the rookies. ... You only get one crack at them when they're rookies."

Dance fever did lighten the mood somewhat as Buffalo continued preparations for tonight's game against the Colorado Avalanche at FNC, but frustration continues to be the more prevalent emotion at the foot of Jim Kelley Way and Perry Street and with good reason.

The Sabres (1-7-1) have matched the franchise record for worst nine-game start to a season, a situation that has fans disgruntled, coach Ron Rolston admittedly frustrated and players desperately searching for ways to turn things around. They also rank last in goals per game (1.11) despite ranking in the middle of the pack with a more than respectable 2.62 goals-against average.

Even Miller didn't stick around to discuss Thursday night's 3-0 loss to Vancouver, although he offered his reason Friday afternoon after having a chance to sleep on another loss in which a Sabres goaltender failed to be rewarded with a "W" for good play.

"Everybody's heard me talk quite enough," said Miller, who added he felt fine following his 31-save effort. "We don't always need an immediate reaction from me in my stand. You guys know where to find me eventually. If I need a moment, I'm just going to take it and we'll have a conversation about it later on. ... It wasn't anything other than let someone else talk a little bit."

What everyone else has been talking about lately – besides suffering – is the team's inability to get off to a fast start. The Sabres seem to be stricken with stage fright, with Thursday's first period just the latest example of their early-game woes.

Buffalo yielded 11 shots on goal in the opening three minutes. The Sabres were outshot, 19-7, in the frame, but only trailed, 1-0, because of Miller's efforts.

Buffalo has been outscored, 11-1, in the first period and has been outshot, 127-74, during the opening 20 minutes. The Sabres have yielded the game's first goal eight times.

Still, everyone thought the Sabres would start better against the Canucks considering they had rallied for their first win of the season at Long Island two nights earlier.

"It's not what we want," co-captain Steve Ott said. "After a day off, fresh legs and coming off our first win, you'd definitely want a different response and our response was we were complete outmatched from the get-go.

"It's execution first of all. Executing throughout our lineup. It's one guy or everybody, it's everybody continuing to push the game plan. Right from the get-go, we haven't created the momentum we need to create and by the third period it's too late."

"You can't get behind in this league," Rolston said.

Do the Sabres need to start their fourth line just to provide instant energy?

"I think it's just up to everybody to play hard," Ennis said. "Whoever's out there first, it's important to get good energy for the boys."

Rolston believes the solution is hard work coupled with execution, but the formula may be a little more complex than that.

The proof is in Buffalo's record. There's no dancing around that.

"You just have to find small things to build on, encourage each other and build each other up and not help tear each other down, which plenty of outside factors are trying to do at this time," Miller said. "We know where we stand. ... At some point you have to start digging your way out.

"I don't think we've been so far off that we haven't been able to get some points out of games. We come down to the wire where we just kind of let things slide. We just have to put together some smaller pieces, stay in games longer. We're not going to win every one we stay in but we're going to get points out of them. Start finding a way to play with the lead more, we'll start getting our fair share of points."

## **Sabres notebook: Sacco looks forward to facing Avs**

By Miguel Rodriguez

Buffalo News

October 19, 2013

It's still early, but the addition of Joe Sacco looks like it could be a winner in a season filled with so few W's for the Buffalo Sabres.

Under the direction of the former head coach of the Colorado Avalanche, Buffalo's penalty-killing unit has left its foes feeling blue 25 times during 29 man-advantage chances. The Sabres rank fifth in the league at 86.2 percent heading into tonight's clash against Sacco's former team.

The Sabres' secret thus far after finishing last season ranked 26th on the penalty kill: They're receiving great goaltending from both Ryan Miller and Jhonas Enroth. The Sabres also are being more aggressive without players taking themselves out of the play – protecting better against backdoor plays and defending better down low.

“The guys have bought in to what we're trying to accomplish from a structural standpoint and then all the little details that go into penalty killing,” said Sacco, who guided Colorado to the playoffs once in his four seasons as head coach. “It's stopping and starting. It's working in straight lines. It's having a good stick, the willingness to sacrifice your body and put it in the shot lanes at the right times.”

The Sabres will be tested on the PK tonight as the Avalanche bring in the league's ninth-ranked power-play unit (23.1 percent success rate) to First Niagara Center.

The Avs also rank ninth in goals-for (3.33), while one of the big keys to their start has been a defense that's allowing a league low 1.43 goals per game.

Sacco admits it might feel weird seeing Avalanche players he used to coach – including young talents Gabriel Landeskog, Ryan O'Reilly and Matt Duchene – on the opposite bench tonight.

Sacco played a role in their development as players, and that past experience with youths was among the reasons he opted to join Ron Rolston's coaching staff and become part of the Sabres' rebuild after the Avs dismissed him April 28.

While Colorado systematically does things differently under new head coach Patrick Roy, players do have their tendencies nonetheless. With that in mind, Sacco could provide a winning scouting report that results in the struggling Sabres surprising an Avalanche (6-1-0) team that flirted with the franchise record for best start to a season until losing Thursday night at home to old Western Conference nemesis Detroit.

“They still play a fast game,” Sacco said. “They still try to play an up-tempo game. ... They still have some speed. They like to push the pace of the game. Hopefully the scouting report will be good from my end and it’ll help us grab two points.

“It’ll be a fun night. They’re playing very well right now. They’re getting good goaltending, much like we are. Obviously the records are flip-flopped, but it’s an opportunity for us to play another young team that’s sort of up and coming, heading in the right direction.”

Sacco compiled a 130-134-30 mark with Colorado, guiding the club to the playoffs in his first season and finishing as a finalist for the Jack Adams Award as the league’s top coach.

“ I enjoyed my tenure when I was there,” Sacco said. “I was with the organization for eight years, coaching in the minors and then with the Avalanche. That’s a long time with one organization. I have a lot of friends who are still there. ... But tonight that all goes by the side.”

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Suspended winger Patrick Kaleta spoke after practice Friday, but couldn’t offer too much of an update regarding the status of his appeal of the 10-game ban he received Tuesday for his illegal check to the head of Columbus defenseman Jack Johnson on Oct. 10.

“That’s between us” and the Players Association, “and all that kind of stuff,” said Kaleta, who has sat out four games. “There’s not much more info I can give right now.”

Johnson wasn’t hurt on the play nor was Kaleta penalized for the hit, but the Angola native’s past offender status played a role in the league dealing out the lengthy suspension.

Commissioner Gary Bettman will hear the first appeal. According to Hockey Night in Canada’s Elliotte Friedman, the hearing date was still being finalized Friday.

If Bettman upholds the suspension, the new CBA allows for a second appeal to a neutral arbitrator. If the suspension is upheld, Kaleta will lose \$152,439 in salary.

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Rookie Zemgus Girgensons practiced fully with a full face shield on Friday and should be ready to play tonight, according to Rolston. Girgensons got hit near his left eye with a shot during Tuesday’s win against the Islanders. ... Center Cody McCormick is day-to-day with a lower-body injury. He blocked a shot off his

leg/foot during while killing a penalty during Thursday's game. ... Rookie defenseman Nikita Zadorov is close to returning from a finger injury, and Rolston said he would suit up for at least one game. When will that happen? "Anytime is possible," he said.

## **Avalanche aim to get back in win column vs. Sabres**

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

October 18, 2013

AVALANCHE (6-1-0) at SABRES (1-7-1)

TV: ALT, MSG-B

Season series: This will be the teams' first meeting since March 14, 2012, when the Colorado Avalanche beat the Buffalo Sabres 5-4 in a shootout in Buffalo. The Avs have won the last five games between the teams; the Sabres' last win against the Avalanche was Dec. 4, 2005.

Big story: The Avalanche will try to rebound from their first loss of the season while the Sabres are looking to get back to where they were two games ago, when they beat the New York Islanders in a shootout for their first -- and only -- victory of the season.

Team Scope:

Avalanche: Obviously the Avalanche weren't going to go 82-0-0, and while coach Patrick Roy was disappointed to lose for the first time in his NHL coaching career, he came out of his team's 4-2 loss to the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday feeling pretty good.

"We didn't have the result, but I'm telling you, if we play a lot of games like this, we're not going to lose that many," Roy told the Denver Post. "We'll win our share of games like this."

Matt Duchene, who had five shots on goal but saw his four-game point-scoring streak snapped, echoed his coach's sentiments.

"Other than the first period I think we played a good game," he told the Denver Post. "I really liked our second period and we really battled."

Sabres: At 1-7-1 and sitting 15th in the Eastern Conference entering the weekend, it's pretty easy for the Sabres to be a pretty down bunch right now.

So why not have a dance contest?

At the urging of coach Ron Rolston, a few of the team's younger players did their best "Dancing With the Stars" imitation after practice Friday.

"Twerking on skates," forward Tyler Ennis said. "That'll be the first time."

"You need things to pick your spirits up," co-captain Steve Ott said. "We have so many young guys that we continue to try to keep the mood light. Had some fun out there on the ice."

Ennis pegged 2012 first-round pick Zemgus Girgensons as the winner.

"I thought Girgensons won it," Ennis said. "I think he was moving pretty good out there. Looked a little bit like Miley Cyrus."

Who's hot: Duchene has seven points in his first seven games and leads the Avalanche with five goals. ... No player has seen more pucks than Sabres goalie Ryan Miller, but his .935 save percentage through six games is the best of his career.

Injury report: Avalanche forward Cody McLeod is facing an in-person hearing with the NHL after a hit against the Red Wings that left Niklas Kronwall with a concussion. He can't play until then. ... Sabres forward Ville Leino (rib) is out. Defenseman Nikita Zadorov (finger) could make his NHL debut. Girgensons (face) is questionable. Forward Patrick Kaleta is sitting out a 10-game suspension.

## **The Buffalo Sabres held a dance-off at the end of practice**

By Chris Chase

USA Today

October 18, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres are in last place in the NHL's Atlantic Division. What better way to break out of the early-season doldrums than by having a dance-off at the end of practice? This is exactly what the Broad Street Bullies would have done.

The four dances seen in this short clip are:

1. The West Side Story into break dance.
2. The '80s film homage, a combination of Michael J. Fox playing guitar at the Enchantment Under The Sea dance and Tom Cruise sliding across the floor in Risky Business.
3. The Jack Rabbit Goon, a mixture of a hockey fight and John Travolta in Pulp Fiction.
4. Twerking, because you knew it was coming.

The stick taps at the end are glorious. Everyone for replacing shootouts with dance-offs at the end of overtime, say "aye."

## **Shoalts: If Sabres GM Regier stays, he may roll the dice**

By Dave Shoalts

Toronto Globe and Mail

October 18, 2013

When Terry Pegula rode into this downtrodden town with his billions of dollars from the coal and oil business and promised to spend his way to success with the Buffalo Sabres, the fans hailed him as a King Arthur come to create an unlikely Camelot.

Two and a half years later, the Sabres owner and the hockey lieutenants who continue to have his ear are remote figures amid the NHL team's ruin. Pegula and general manager Darcy Regier are in a cold war with much of the local media, especially the city's only daily newspaper (the Buffalo News), and fans are angry about another season that appears lost before the 10-game mark.

By the third period of last Thursday's 3-0 loss to the Vancouver Canucks, a score which actually flattered the Sabres, the few thousand fans who had not angrily left their seats at First Niagara Center were once again chanting "Fire Darcy, fire Darcy."

But thus far, Pegula is resisting the pleas, despite the Sabres' 1-7-1 record and no sign of hope it will improve any time soon. In the wake of speculation Pegula would give in to pressure from the fans and fire Regier in the next few weeks, Sabres president Ted Black told WGR radio, which broadcasts team games, they will "stay the course."

The problem is, if Pegula fires Regier 10 games into a season finding a replacement will not be easy. Almost all of the best candidates are already under contract to other teams. Many of them, such as Dave Poulin and Claude Loiselle (executives with the Toronto Maple Leafs), or Montreal Canadiens assistant GM Rick Dudley, who played and coached in Buffalo, may only have a window in their contracts that lets them leave at the end of a hockey season.

So it will be left to Regier to deal with the Sabres' most pressing issue, getting some assets in return for their two best players, goaltender Ryan Miller and winger Thomas Vanek.

Miller, whose great work kept the score against the Canucks from being far worse, is showing his frustration. For the first time, he refused to speak to reporters after a game.

It will be easier for Regier to get a bigger immediate return on Miller than Vanek.

The latter is a good scorer but even though this is the last season of his contract, it carries a \$7.1-million (U.S.) salary-cap hit, which won't make him attractive until

close to the NHL trade deadline (March 5). Miller, 33, also has just this season left on his deal but it is a more cap-friendly \$6.2-million.

The goaltender has the right under his contract to name eight teams which he will not agree to be traded to. That list is believed to include the Edmonton Oilers, who just happen to be shopping hard for a goaltender.

The Oilers also have a problem with talented young centre Nail Yakupov, 20, who alienated new head coach Dallas Eakins in record time with his attitude but has the offensive talent the Sabres desperately need.

The Oilers' major financial commitment is to three other young forwards – Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Taylor Hall and Jordan Eberle. When Nugent-Hopkins's contact extension kicks in next season, all three will be making \$6-million per year. That does not leave a lot for Yakupov, whose entry-level deal, and its \$925,000 salary, is up at the end of 2014-15.

Oilers GM Craig MacTavish is unlikely to admit it out loud, but this, plus his goaltending problem, means a deal involving Miller (more parts to it are likely) is possible.

It is also possible Miller might change his mind about going to Edmonton. He wants to be closer to Southern California because his wife is an actress who works mainly in Los Angeles. But none of the three California teams are in the market for a goaltender.

And those who know Miller say he is a hockey guy above all and might be intrigued by the possibilities of winning with a young team such as the Oilers. Since Edmonton is a lot closer to L.A. than Buffalo, it might be enough to entice him.

But Regier is painfully cautious when it comes to trades (as any frustrated Sabres fan, not to mention NHL GMs, will tell you), so it could take a while before anything happens.

## **Sabres hope mentor Tallinder helps Myers regain old form**

By Dave Ricci

New York Hockey Journal

October 17, 2013

BUFFALO — Tyler Myers didn't hesitate when he heard the news that the Buffalo Sabres had re-acquired fellow blueliner Henrik Tallinder in a trade with the New Jersey Devils on July 7.

"I'm obviously very excited to have him back," Myers said, sitting in his locker inside the First Niagara Center. "When I got word that he was coming back, I got a hold of him right away and told him that I was excited to have him back in the Buffalo dressing room.

"It's not only going to be nice to have him back as a player but also for the type of person that he is in the room. It's good for our team to have a guy like him in here."

Little wonder why fans and media were happy to see Tallinder back in the blue and gold. Myers experienced his brilliant Calder Trophy-winning season of 2009-10 under the wing of Tallinder when they were paired together on the back end.

Myers flourished under Tallinder's watchful eye, but most experienced onlookers agreed that Tallinder benefited from the pairing as well. In 2009-10 he had arguably his best season as a pro, as his 16 assists and 20 points both ranked second on his career stat sheet.

But the union didn't last long as Tallinder signed a four-year free-agent deal with the New Jersey Devils in the offseason. He spent three seasons with the Devils, tallying 26 points in 146 games, with his best season being 2010-11, when he scored five goals and 16 points.

But the 2011-12 season was a scary time for Tallinder, as a blood clot in his lower left leg robbed him of five months and 37 games of action. There also were reports of a personality conflict between him and Devils coach Peter DeBoer.

With all that behind him, Tallinder is looking for a fresh start in a familiar place.

"Basically, this is where I grew up as a man," said the 34-year-old Tallinder. "The play here, I'm used to that. It's a little bit different than in New Jersey. So in that sense it's kind of good to be back, too.

"But it's good to get away, too. To see something new and learn something new, have new experiences, it made me appreciate what was good here."

So what was it about Tallinder and Myers that clicked, helping them bring out the best in each other? With Tallinder at 6-foot-4 and 216 pounds and Myers

standing 6-foot-8 and tipping the scales at 227 pounds, maybe it was just a size thing that helped them find a rhythm.

“I don’t know,” Tallinder said with a smile. “I’m a big guy. He’s a big guy. So you’ve got two octopuses back there.”

Both said it was tough to put a finger on why they worked so well together. But both felt the core of their success together was based on the communication that was born out of friendship and mutual respect.

“It’s tough to explain,” Myers said. “I think a lot of it is communication on and off the ice. It’s amazing how much talking can help one another out, for any ‘D’ pairing. And I thought that season we communicated a lot with each other on and off the ice. It’s just one of those things where the chemistry was there right away.”

“We just clicked for some reason,” said Tallinder. “We’re both tall guys; maybe that helps. He’s mobile. I think I’m still pretty mobile. I can move the puck, so can he. In that sense I think we’re pretty similar.”

Myers said that Tallinder has a supportive, approachable way about him that lets you know you can always come to him for anything.

“He’s one of those guys who is just very easy to talk to and he’ll support you through thick and thin,” Myers said. “It’s great to have him in the room again, but in saying that, there’s a lot of guys in this room you can talk to. It’s a matter of us holding each other accountable, but at the same time supporting each other. Hank is definitely one of those guys who’ll do that.”

Winger Thomas Vanek said Tallinder brings a calming presence to the room and the ice that benefits everybody.

“It’s good for us. You can never have enough of those guys,” Vanek said. “I think Hank was great when he was here and I think everyone enjoyed his presence here. ... We’re happy to have him back.”

Tallinder, at the start of training camp, made it clear he thought media and fans were putting too much pressure on the 23-year-old Myers. That Myers was an amazing talent. But that he was still young and subject to growing pains, as any young player is.

“I think Tyler is an exceptional young man and player,” Tallinder said. “When he came in his first year, I’d never seen a guy that talented and that good at such a young age, or very few of them that I’d played with. I think he’s still young. I think that you guys (in the media) have been pretty hard on him, too. He’s going to be an exceptionally good player. Just give him some time.”

Myers, no doubt, was feeling the pressure as his offensive output dipped in each of the seasons after Tallinder left — from 48 points in 2009-10 to 37 to 23 to just eight in last year's lockout-shortened campaign. The more Myers struggled, the more he heard outside voices question if could he succeed without Tallinder riding shotgun with him on the blue line.

Tallinder's message to Myers is the same in 2013 as it was in 2009 — just trust in yourself and the talents that got you to the NHL. That, perhaps more than anything, will be Tallinder's most important contribution to the Sabres this season.

"I think one of the biggest things was he just told me to play," Myers said. "Whenever I made a mistake he said don't worry about it. Just go out there and play your game and don't worry about the other stuff. Whether you make a mistake or give up a goal, there's a next shift. It's not (about) worrying about the surroundings; it's about playing."

Tabbing former teammates like James Patrick, Jay McKee, Stu Barnes, Bill Guerin and Rhett Warrener as the kind of leaders he admired, Tallinder knows his role now is to be that supportive veteran — not just to Myers, but to everyone in blue and gold.

"It's not so much what they said but how they (were) in the locker room," Tallinder said. "It keeps you calm for some reason. As a young guy, that's my approach too. I'm just gonna be myself and play my style of game out there, and hopefully guys learn something from me out there."

"He's a real steady force, has a calming affect," said center Cody Hodgson. "He's got good hands, good skills. He's a real smart player. I think he can bring a lot to our team."

Tallinder smiled as he looked around the Sabres dressing room, which was renovated during his time in Jersey. Though things looked a little bit different, he knew he was back home.

"It's amazing," he said. "I can feel that (energy) in the atmosphere, too. Like something big is going on here and something (special) is happening."

## **Struggling Sabres make rookies dance; Nikita Zadorov to make NHL debut soon**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 19, 2013

BUFFALO – One by one they danced, each Sabres rookie taking a turn at center ice as teammates laughed and cheered following Friday’s practice inside the First Niagara Center.

Johan Larsson showcased, well, all sorts of crazy moves, including some breakdancing. Zemgus Girgensons twerked like Miley Cyrus at the MTV Video Music Awards.

“Twerking on skates, that’ll be the first time,” Sabres winger Tyler Ennis said.

When you’re 1-7-1 and hours removed from a shutout home loss, positive energy must be created.

“Get a little energy going and have some fun, a rookie dance-off,” Sabres coach Ron Rolston said.

So Mikhail Grigorenko moved a la Vincent Vega, John Travolta’s character from “Pulp Fiction.” Brian Flynn slid into the circle and played his hockey stick like a guitar. Nikita Zadorov did some sort of Ukrainian squat-kick.

“That was nice,” Ennis said. “A lot of guys showed a lot of flair.”

Sabres goalie Ryan Miller said “sometimes you add something that loosens things up.”

“Everybody can recognize it’s a little tense here,” he said. “It was a fun chance to embarrass the rookies. At any turn we’re going to take advantage of that. You only get one crack at them when they’re rookies.”

At the end, Girgensons and Larsson danced together.

“A lot of it is what we can bring,” Rolston said about the coaching staff. “But a lot of it’s what they bring to the room, too. We want them to have fun with it, and right now, guys needs a little bit of that.”

So which rookie cuts the best rug?

“I thought Girgensons won it,” Ennis said. “I think he was moving pretty good out there, looked a little bit like Miley Cyrus.”

The Sabres, who host coach Patrick Roy and the upstart Colorado Avalanche tonight, looked a little bit like a good team Tuesday, beating the Islanders 4-3 in a road shootout. But they quickly reverted back to their old ways Thursday, getting outshot 19-7 in the first period and falling 3-0 to Vancouver.

Barely two weeks into the season, the Sabres are a mess, arguably the NHL's worst team.

"Coming off our first win, you want a different response, and our response was we were completely outmatched at the get-go," Sabres co-captain Steve Ott said.

That's been a disturbing trend from the rebuilding club all season. So far, opponents have outshot the Sabres 127-74 during the first period and outscored them 11-1.

"The way we approach a game, we haven't been good enough," Miller said. "I don't think we've been so far off that we haven't been able to get points out of some games. We've come down to the wire. We've just let things kind of slide. We just have put together some smaller pieces and stay in games longer.

"We're not going to win every one we stay in, but we're going to get points out of them and start trying to play with the lead a little bit more, we're going to start getting our fair share of points."

The Sabres, of course, have their fair share of rookies.

Zadorov, the 16th overall pick in June, will make his NHL debut soon, Rolston said, becoming the sixth one to dress this season.

The 18-year-old defenseman, out since hurting his finger during the preseason finale, has been practicing with the Sabres.

"He's getting there," Rolston said about Zadorov's recovery.

When will Zadorov, who skated beside spare defender Jamie McBain on Friday, play?

"Any time is possible," Rolston said.

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Girgensons practiced fully Friday sporting a full plastic shield and will return tonight, Rolston said. The winger missed one game after taking a puck off the face Tuesday.

Cody McCormick didn't practice Friday after blocking a shot in Thursday. The forward was limping around and is day-to-day, Rolston said.

## **Sabres' Patrick Kaleta 'cool' with Matt Cooke's offer to help reform style**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 18, 2013

BUFFALO – Sabres agitator Patrick Kaleta never expected Minnesota's Matt Cooke, whose history of dirty hits once threatened to end his career, would reach out following his 10-game suspension for hitting Columbus' Jack Johnson in the head last week.

But the reformed Cooke has offered to help Kaleta refine his game after his second ban in 21 games and fourth in four seasons.

"It's cool, because as you know, I don't really expect to have a lot of friends on other teams, stuff like that," an upbeat Kaleta, who's four games into the suspension, said after practicing today inside the First Niagara Center. "It's interesting because I don't know his background or anything. I'm assuming he's worked pretty hard to get to where he is. (It's) sort of the same boat there.

"So we kind of understand where I'm coming from and what I have to do to stay in the league and help out the team."

Cooke hasn't been suspended since a 10-game and playoff ban for elbowing the Rangers' Ryan McDonagh in the head at the end of 2010-11. The veteran spent that suspension studying video of aggressive players with his old Pittsburgh coaches, something that helped transform him.

Kaleta believes he began changing long ago.

"I've been changing my game over the past little while," the winger said. "Everyone who's watched the Sabres and paid close attention have seen it."

Kaleta wouldn't say why he's appealing his suspension. Johnson, Kaleta could argue, wasn't hurt.

"That's between us and PA and all that kind of stuff," Kaleta said. "There's not much info I can give right now. It gives me time to try to better my game, try to better myself and along the way maybe help out some of the younger guys."

Kaleta, who fought Jared Boll after the hit, has been practicing wearing a full face shield.

The 27-year-old can return Nov. 2 against Anaheim. He will forfeit \$153,439 during the suspension.

## **Sabres Rolston got his team to dance and laugh a little**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 18, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- After such a horrible performance against the Canucks, there seemed to be a lot of uptight hockey players in practice. After Ron Rolston put them through a little over 45 minute workout, he then brought the team together. The rookies were made to dance at center ice with some ridiculously funny moves. Larsson, Grigorenko, Pysyk, Girgensons, Flynn, Ristolainen and Zadorov all had to perform for their teammates. Larsson and Girgensons then danced together in the finals with Girgensons doing half a striptease. I think that's why the boys declared Larsson the winner.

Rolston decided that the team needed to have some fun, "A lot of it is what we can bring, but a lot of it is what they bring within the room. We want them to have fun with it and right now, guys need a little bit of that."

The Sabres were without Cody McCormick at practice. He blocked a shot while killing a penalty against Vancouver and has a deep bruise. It's questionable if he'll play Saturday.

Girgensons seems to be fine and will likely play Saturday. Rolston said Nikita Zadorov is not ready yet, but he would like to use him in a game.

Ryan Miller rarely declines interviews unless it's game day morning skate. He declined to talk after the Vancouver game and he said he needed a break, "Everybody's heard me talk quite enough, I've spoken after every game and I don't think I need to be the person talking after every single game so I just took a moment to take a step back. We can talk about the game today. We don't always need an immediate reaction from me. You guys know where to find me eventually and if I need a moment, I'll take it and we'll have a conversation about it later on, so it wasn't anything more than let somebody else talk a little bit."

## **Sabres Kaleta talks suspension**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 18, 2013

Buffalo, N Y (WGR 550) -- Pat Kaleta is still practicing with the team while serving his 10 game NHL suspension.

Kaleta was suspended on Tuesday and hasn't had anything to say until now. He is appealing his suspension.

I think because of the appeals process, he didn't want to go too far into detail, "I've just got to go through the process here and that's about it right now. Other than that, I'm coming in every day to try to make myself better as a hockey player, keep up my physical shape and watch lots of video and go from there."

As far as why he decided to appeal Kaleta said, "That's between us and the P.A. There's not much info I can give right now, but it gives me time to better myself and maybe along the way try to help out some of the other guys with some of the things that I'm watching and seeing."

Kaleta got suspended again just 21 games after he got suspended for boarding Brad Richards. Kaleta said he's tried to do things different even before this, "I've been changing my game over the past little while. Everyone who's watched the Sabres and paid close attention has seen it."

The only player in the NHL that may be more hated than Kaleta is Matt Cooke. He left Pittsburgh for Minnesota and in his last season with the Pens, toned down his game. When the Wild were in town Cooke introduced himself to Kaleta and offered any help he could give him. The Sabres winger appreciated the gesture, "It was cool because I don't really expect to have friends on other teams, but it's interesting because I don't know his background, but I'm assuming he's worked pretty hard to get to where he is so we're in the same boat there and he understands where I'm coming from and what I have to do to stay in the league and what I have to do to help out the team." Kaleta added, "I respect everything he said and hopefully I can use what he said and help myself and my game out."

Cooke said he'd talk to Kaleta anytime and the winger thinks he may phone him, "For sure. There are certain things here or there. When you're on the ice together you're competitors and you're going to battle, but if he can help me out and make me a better player for Buffalo, I'd be stupid not to use it."

Kaleta has served four games so far.

## **ROOKIES TRY TO LIGHTEN MOOD AFTER PRACTICE**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 18, 2013

After an hour-long practice at First Niagara Center, the Sabres huddled up at center ice. It looked like practice was about to wrap up, but then rookie defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen stood up, skated to the middle of the circle and started dancing.

When he went to back to take a knee, rookie center Johan Larsson skated in and took a turn, receiving stick taps from his teammates.

Rookies Zemgus Girgensons, Mark Pysyk, Nikita Zadorov, Brian Flynn and Mikhail Grigorenko also joined the dance party, showing off their moves in a pseudo rite of passage.

“Sometimes you just have to add something that loosens things up,” goaltender Ryan Miller said after practice. “Everybody can recognize it’s a little tense here, so it’s a fun chance to embarrass the rookies. At any turn, we’re going to take advantage of that. You only get one crack at them when they’re rookies, so you’ve gotta do it.”

The Sabres are 1-7-1 this season and coming off a 3-0 shutout loss to the Vancouver Canucks on Thursday. Co-captain Steve Ott said that having moments like that after practice are important, especially for the younger players.

“The ups and downs are what you try to get out of your game. Obviously around here anytime you’re losing or not having success, it’s hard times,” he said. “You need things to kind of pick your spirits up and we have so many young guys in this dressing room that we try to continue to keep the mood light.”

So which rookie had the best dance routine? Tyler Ennis’ vote went to Girgensons.

“He was a doing a little Miley Cyrus it looked like on skates,” Ennis said. “So that might be the first time that’s ever been done.”

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During practice, the Sabres focused on breakouts and moving the puck up the ice quickly. Keeping the puck out of their defensive zone will be a challenge against the next opponent, the Colorado Avalanche. Buffalo hosts Colorado on Saturday at 7 p.m. The Avanelanche are tied for sixth in the League with 23 goals for.

“It’s early in the season, but the changes have to be made and we made a little tweak on the neutral zone [entries] today,” Ennis said. “That’s hopefully going to get us a little bit more speed through the neutral zone.”

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Cody McCormick did not skate and Rolston said he was day-to-day. McCormick blocked a Jason Garrison slap shot during the game against the Canucks and was still feeling the effects of it.

Girgensons was a full-participant in practice after missing the game on Thursday. A puck deflected up and hit him near his left eye on Tuesday and stitches were required to repair the wound.

Swelling on the eye had come noticeably down by the time of practice on Friday. Sabres coach Ron Rolston said Girgensons should be ready to go against the Avalanche on Saturday.

Zadorov practiced with the team as he recovers from a lacerated finger he sustained in the preseason. Rolston said they would like to use the 18-year-old Russian defenseman in a game before making the decision to send him back to the London Knights of the Ontario Hockey League or not.

As for when that first NHL game might come for Zadorov, Rolston said “anytime is possible for him.”

On injured forwards Joel Armia (broken hand), Corey Tropp (broken jaw) and Ville Leino (cracked rib), Rolston said they’re all at least two weeks away from being close to game action.

## **KALETA ADDRESSES SUSPENSION**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 18, 2013

Patrick Kaleta may not be able to play, but he's trying to make the most of his situation.

Kaleta, considered a repeat offender under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, is in the middle of serving a 10-game suspension handed down by the NHL for an illegal check to the head of Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson on Oct. 10. Kaleta has appealed the suspension, but is still unable to play.

He's missed four games already and is eligible to return for the Buffalo Sabres' home game against the Anaheim Ducks on Nov. 2. Right now, he's just going through the process.

"There's not much info I can give right now, but it gives me time to try to better my game, try to better myself and along the way, maybe help out some of the younger guys with some of the things I'm watching and seeing and seeing if I can help out in that aspect as well," he said after practice at First Niagara Center on Friday.

Critics have said that Kaleta must change the way he plays in order avoid future fines and suspensions. He's been fined and/or suspended four times in the past six seasons. Most recently, he was suspended five games for a hit he put on New York Rangers forward Brad Richards in March.

Kaleta says he's already been working on adjusting his style and continues to do so.

"I've been changing my game over the past little while. Everyone who's watched the Sabres and has paid close attention has seen it," he said. "Like I said, I just need to keep continuing to get better and do what's best for the team and try to be a positive influence on what's going on here."

Minnesota Wild forward Matt Cooke, who has a lengthy suspension history, reached out to Kaleta to offer advice on how to approach the game in a different way.

At first, Kaleta was surprised to hear from Cooke.

"It was kind of cool because as you guys know, I don't really expect to have a lot of friends on other teams and stuff like that," Kaleta said. "But it's interesting because I don't know his background or anything, but I'm assuming he's worked pretty hard to get to where he is."

“We’re sort of in the same boat there so he kind of understands where I’m coming from and what I have to do to stay in the League and what I have to do to help out the team. It was cool in that aspect and I respect everything he said and hopefully I can use what he said and help myself and my game out.”

He would also look to talk to Cooke again if he needed to.

“When you’re on the ice together, you’re competitors and you’re going to battle, but if he can help me out in the same aspect and make me a better player for Buffalo then I’d be stupid not to use it,” he said.

Kaletka practiced again this week in a full-face shield. He injured his face in the game against Columbus.

“It’s good. I had a little surgery going on there, but if I could play, I’d be playing with it anyway,” he said. “I’m not too worried about the way my face looks or any of that stuff, so I’m good to go.”

## **Off-ice coverage:**

### **PECA EXCELS IN DUAL ROLE WITH JR. SABRES**

By Joe Ray

Sabres.com

October 18, 2013

For Michael Peca, the turnaround from being a leader on the ice to one behind the bench was pretty fast. After retiring from a decorated NHL career in 2009, Peca took over as general manager of the Buffalo Jr. Sabres in 2011 and added head coaching duties to his resume a year later.

In 2012-13, his first full season as head coach, Peca led the Jr. Sabres to a 38-12-5 regular record. He was then named the Ontario Junior Hockey League's Coach of the Year and Executive of the Year.

He seems to be on track for continued coaching success as the team is off to a stellar start this season with many new faces on the team. The Jr. Sabres currently boast a record of 8-1-1-2, putting them on top of the OJHL West Division with 19 points in 12 games.

Peca, 39, pointed to many lessons he learned from learned from the legendary Ottawa 67's coach and Hockey Hall of Fame inductee Brian Kilrea when it comes to how he guides the players.

"I've adopted my style at this level from [Kilrea] when I played with the Ottawa 67's in junior hockey. My style is stay out of the kids' way as much as possible, let them continue to explore the game and learn the game," Peca said.

A big part of that style is keeping things simple for the 16-to-20 year-old players on the team.

"We don't overcomplicate it with systems and things like that. These kids at this age don't need to be over-thinking the game," he said. "They need to kind of learn the game as they go. For the most part, we allow our kids to use their creativity and it's worked because now they can gain a comfort level and a trust with one another."

As a player, Peca worked his way up through the American Hockey League following four seasons of junior hockey in the Ontario Hockey League. He eventually broke into the NHL with the Vancouver Canucks, making his debut on Dec. 6, 1993 in Montreal.

Having been through many different levels of competition, Peca noticed an overarching theme that hardworking players are the ones that get rewarded. That carries into his coaching strategy for the Jr. Sabres.

“I’m always a believer that you become a better hockey player by how you work,” he said. “The older you get, skill has very little to do with it. A lot of guys have skill. It’s about how hard you’re willing to work in all areas of the ice. We always stress work ahead of skill here, and the ones that don’t learn about it very quickly and the ones that do are rewarded for it.”

In addition to coaching, Peca plays a major role in the recruitment of players by serving as general manager. Having both roles enables Peca to mold the team with players he believes he can develop effectively.

“It works better, especially at this level, to be able to do both,” he said. “As a coach, you want full control of what you’re doing with your program. If you can bring the players in, knowing what you’re bringing in and what guys you’re going to develop makes it a little easier.”

By combining the two roles, Peca has the ability to put his stamp on the Jr. Sabres program at multiple levels. The ability to bring in players willing to put in the work to improve as hockey players and young adults makes Peca’s job a lot easier.

The next step then is for Peca, as head coach, to hone those skills and prepare his players for the next levels of their hockey careers.

“We’re looking to be a program that continues to send kids to college hockey. It’s about trying to develop a maturity level and a hockey game to get them to a point that they’re ready to play either college hockey or a higher level of junior hockey,” Peca said.

It is easy to see the foundation Peca is building for the Jr. Sabres moving forward.

As a former captain of the Buffalo Sabres and New York Islanders and a two-time Selke Trophy winner as the League’s best defensive forward, Peca found success at the NHL level by putting in the work to become a better player in all aspects of the game.

In this new endeavor, Peca has found early success with his earnest approach to the game of hockey. He is building a program that aims to be successful for years to come and help player realize their dreams of playing hockey at a higher level at the same time.

“That’s what we’re going to strive for. Having now built relationships with a lot of the colleges in the country, I know from them that I have mature young men that are going to represent their program well,” he said. “If they can develop that respect for where they are, then they’ll be able to carry that over to where they play at the next level.”