



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres president Black braces fans for more rough times ahead

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

October 24, 2013

As if the worst start in franchise history isn't bad enough, Buffalo Sabres President Ted Black braced his team's win-starved fans for potentially more tough times.

That's the message Black issued Thursday during his weekly show on WGR-AM, by emphasizing the Sabres' intention to stay the course in developing their prospects this season.

"When we're in a transition year like this, it is going to be difficult. It's going to be difficult to stomach the short run," Black said. "The fans that follow this team, they signed up for this team, they signed up for a rough road."

Rough as it has been so far, Black isn't shying from the frustration and criticism directed at management.

"I'm not going to go anywhere and hide under a bed and wish I didn't have to do this or that," he said. "I'm going to do my damndest to turn this thing around."

The Sabres are essentially at Square 1 after making the decision last season to overhaul an aging, high-priced roster.

At 1-9-1, Buffalo has surpassed its worst start to a season, previously a 1-7-1 start in 1993-94. They Sabres can't score, having managed two or more goals just four times. They've yet to score first, and have been outscored by a combined 14-1 in the first period.

And Buffalo can't even manage to get a lead. The team's one win came in a 4-3 shootout over the New York Islanders on Oct. 15, in a game Buffalo never led in regulation.

Otherwise, the Sabres have held a lead once, in a 3-2 overtime loss to Tampa Bay, for a combined total of 9:35 of ice-time, which is by far the shortest span of any NHL team this season, according to STATS LLC. The Florida Panthers (3-6-1) are next, having held a lead for a combined total of 58:53.

Add it up, and these are among the reasons the Sabres have been routinely booed off the ice by a once-loyal fan-base that's grown increasingly frustrated. Chants of "Fire Darcy!" directed at general manager Darcy Regier, have become familiar during home games, where Buffalo is 0-6-1 following a 5-2 loss to Boston on Wednesday night.

“No one in here is proud of our record or proud of what we’ve accomplished this season or haven’t accomplished this season,” co-captain Steve Ott said. “We knew the transition was going to be coming on. Obviously, it’s hit us to start, and it’s hit us hard.”

This essentially amounts to the “suffering” Regier cautioned Sabres fans might be in store last spring in outlining his strategy to rebuild from the ground up.

The Sabres’ lineup features six rookies. And they are the first NHL team since 1995-96 to play at least four teenagers.

The roster could get even younger. The team hasn’t ruled out trading its two most marketable stars — goalie Ryan Miller and leading scorer Thomas Vanek. Both are in the final year of their contracts, and it’s unclear whether they fit in the team’s long-range plans or are interested in staying.

Vanek has already indicated he has no interest enduring a long-term rebuilding project. He suggested it might be better off for the Sabres to deal him to get draft picks or prospects in return as they did last season by trading three veterans, including captain Jason Pominville.

Vanek acknowledged Thursday this season has been the lowest point of his nine-year NHL career in Buffalo.

“I knew going into this year that this is what we were doing, and this is what we were going to have,” Vanek said. “It is frustrating? Is it fun to go home each and every night? No. It’s not, because you want to win. But at the same time, you’ve got to be realistic.”

The reality is that the Sabres could very well end up with the NHL’s worst record.

And that, according to Black, might not be a bad thing in the long run.

Black reflected to his days in Pittsburgh, when the Penguins struggled through several woeful seasons. In bottoming out, the Penguins stockpiled several high draft picks, lucked out in winning the Sidney Crosby draft lottery, which helped transform them into Stanley Cup contenders.

“For us to get back to where we want to be, and that’s building a championship, it’s going to come through the draft,” Black said. “We’re going to get through this. There is light at the end of the tunnel. I don’t know how long it’s going to take us to get there, but we are going to get there.”

Buffalo at Florida

Associated Press

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The Florida Panthers won't have veteran goaltender Tim Thomas through at least this weekend. A matchup with the last-place team in the Atlantic Division could make it a little easier to deal with his absence.

With Thomas recovering from a lower-body injury, the Panthers will try to send the visiting Buffalo Sabres to another defeat Friday night.

Thomas had to leave Tuesday's game against Chicago after making a save late in the third period. His replacement, Jacob Markstrom, didn't give up a goal in regulation but allowed the Blackhawks to score on two of three shootout attempts in a 3-2 defeat.

The 39-year-old Thomas, who missed four games earlier this season with an ailing groin, was placed on injured reserve the following day, putting him out through Sunday's visit from Tampa Bay. Florida (3-6-1) recalled Scott Clemmensen from the minors to take his place on the roster.

"We're confident that he's not going to be long term. (Thomas is) a quick healer," coach Kevin Dineen told the team's official website. "He played very well. He played well against Boston. He played fabulous against Minnesota, and we had a really good game going against Chicago so it's unfortunate."

The Panthers have collected three points in the last two games and will try to earn some more against the scuffling Sabres (1-9-1). Buffalo, off to the worst start in team history, allowed Boston to pull away in the third period of a 5-2 home defeat Wednesday.

The Sabres trailed by one goal entering the final period but were outshot 13-2 in those 20 minutes en route to a third straight regulation loss.

"I thought we did a good job of hanging around and doing the right things. It was just a couple mistakes. It's just not the kind of mistakes we need right now," goaltender Ryan Miller said.

Rookie defenseman Nikita Zadorov was one of the bright spots for Buffalo, scoring his first NHL goal in his second game. The 18-year-old Zadorov, the 16th overall pick in this year's draft, was the second-youngest Sabre to score a goal, 136 days older than Pierre Turgeon in 1987.

"There's no better feeling than watching an enthusiastic kid get his first goal," center Steve Ott said.

The Sabres will have a second player suspended Friday, with enforcer John Scott being banned indefinitely pending a disciplinary hearing for a blindside hit to the head that leveled Bruins forward Lou Eriksson.

Patrick Kaleta has four games remaining on his 10-game suspension for his head shot to Columbus' Jack Johnson on Oct. 10.

Florida has gone 4-0-2 in the last six matchups with Buffalo. The Panthers went 2-0-1 against the Sabres in 2012-13, and are 2-0-1 in the past three home meetings.

Florida defenseman Brian Campbell had a team-best five points against his former team last season with two goals and three assists. Shawn Matthias led the Panthers with three goals in those three matchups.

Sabres notebook: Team looks for good vibes on Florida swing

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

October 24, 2013

Amid the talk of suspensions and hits and response to media criticism, the Buffalo Sabres are still trying to figure out one thing – how to win a game.

The Sabres have just one win this season, a shootout victory against the New York Islanders. They also played strong in the final 30 minutes against Chicago. Notably, both were road games.

So as the team was preparing to fly to Florida for tonight's game with the Panthers and Saturday's game against Tampa Bay, there was a thought that maybe it was a good time to get out of town.

"Yeah, I would say so," Steve Ott said. "Anytime you're in a situation that it's like right now. It will be nice to get down to Florida and hopefully right the ship. We're more than capable of showing up and having a good performance. We need to do that. It's time."

The opportunity is there to pick up their first win in regulation against the Panthers. Florida is just 3-6-1 and sits one spot above the Sabres in the Atlantic Division standings. The Panthers have given up 35 goals in 10 games, more than the Sabres, who have surrendered 33 in 11 games.

"Our job is to continue to make progress and work on a daily basis with the guys and help our young guys progress as quickly as possible," Sabres coach Ron Rolston said. "I think we've seen a lot of really good things out of our younger players and the direction they're going in. They're going to get opportunities and they're going to make mistakes. And you're going to see on a nightly basis that they're going to make mistakes. That's part of the process. We understand that. That was kind of part of it. That's the plan."

...

Gary Bettman issued a ruling Thursday afternoon upholding the 10-game suspension of Sabres forward Patrick Kaleta.

Kaleta was appealing his suspension, originally issued by Director of Player Safety Brendan Shanahan, for an illegal check to the head of Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson on Oct. 10.

Bettman wrote in his ruling:

"The only question raised on appeal is whether such contact to the head was fairly considered 'avoidable.' I find that there is clear and convincing evidence to

support Mr. Shanahan's conclusion that the contact to Mr. Johnson's head was avoidable and, in fact, should have been avoided.

"Regrettably, Mr. Kaleta stands out for his repeated violations of – and seeming indifference to – the Playing Rules put in place to protect other Players, and, particularly, other Players' heads."

Considered a repeat offender under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, Kaleta will forfeit \$152,439.

Kaleta has the option to appeal this decision to an independent arbitrator. This is a new feature of the collective bargaining agreement and the players' association has not yet tested this clause.

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Kevin Porter was put on waivers by the Sabres. Should he clear waivers, and he is expected to, he will be assigned to Rochester.

The move comes as Ville Leino and Cody McCormick are close to returning to action. Rolston said McCormick will be ready to go for the pair of games in Florida. He missed one game with a leg injury. Rolston said Leino (rib) will make the trip but that he is still being evaluated.

Suspended Scott defends his role with Sabres

By AmyMoritz

Buffalo News

October 24, 2013

In his six years as a National Hockey League player, John Scott was never before suspended by the league.

His first time, however, has been wrapped in national attention.

Scott was suspended indefinitely by the NHL on Thursday afternoon pending a disciplinary hearing for his blindside hit to the head of Loui Eriksson in Boston's 5-2 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday night. His elbow caught Eriksson in the head, leaving him woozy and needing assistance to leave the ice.

He, along with Sabres coach Ron Rolston, were hammered in the national media. Scott was called a goon and analysts questioned why he had a job in the NHL in the first place. Rolston came under fire for putting Scott on the ice along with his apparent inability to control the aggression of his players.

Thursday morning at First Niagara Center, Scott was apologetic for the hit, rejected claims he was a "goon" and defended his head coach.

For starters, Scott said he didn't realize his check caught Eriksson in the head.

"It happened pretty fast," Scott said. "I just thought I was completing a check, but obviously I hit his head. It wasn't exactly what I was aiming for. I didn't want to do that.

"It's just a bad play. Unfortunate it happened. ... Honest to God, I didn't realize it was that bad of a hit, because I was in the box, I was asking the ref like, 'was it a head hit?' I didn't set out to do that.' "

Scott said he sent a text to Eriksson on Wednesday night that said, "Sorry for the hit." Eriksson stayed overnight in Buffalo for observation. The latest reports were that he was experiencing concussion-like symptoms but was expected to travel back to Boston on Thursday.

Scott received a match penalty for the head shot and subsequently was offered an in-person hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety. He did not know when that hearing would take place but players who have an in-person hearing are generally looking at a suspension of five or more games.

Scott has never been suspended by the league. The 31-year-old forward led the Sabres in fighting majors last season with seven. He hasn't scored a goal in 152 games (last goal was Nov. 15, 2009) and hasn't recorded an assist in 61 games

(last on Dec. 16, 2011). He's averaging 4:57 minutes of ice time and has played in seven of the team's first 11 games.

In September, the NHL fined Rolston for "player selection and team conduct" after he put Scott on the ice late in a preseason game against the Toronto Maple Leafs. The move sparked a massive brawl.

The popular pundit stance is that there's no room in the NHL for John Scott.

Steve Ott disagrees.

"There's definitely a place for him in the game," the co-captain said. "I thought he had a strong game, one of the best nights I've seen him play. John's a big individual for us but in no instance has he had a previous record by any means.

"He's hard to play against. He keeps guys honest out there. ... He's not a dirty player. Because he fights doesn't make him a dirty player. He's doing a job out there for us and he does his job well."

"I don't think I'm a dirty player," Scott said. "I try to play within the code, within the rules. This is my first suspension. I don't try to be a dirty player. I kind of feel really upset. I was sick to my stomach last night knowing what happened, watching the video. I just kind of regret the whole situation. I don't want to be a dirty player."

Asked about Rolston and the accusation swirling about that he was sent out there to cause trouble, Scott became passionate:

"It's just nonsense. There was 14 minutes left in the game," Scott said. "If you watch my shifts, our line was doing pretty well. We had zone time. We were playing really well. So to say he sends me out there just to hurt somebody is just asinine, is just completely false and not what happens at all.

"I'm a hockey player. I go out there and I play my game. I'm physical. I hit. That's my role. Like, I'm not going to score a million goals. I get frustrated when people say I'm a goon and this and that. I have a role. I do it."

Rolston brushed off the criticism. He noted that Scott has played all season for the Sabres and that, "he is a fighter in this league but I think he's not looking for that. He wants to be a better player."

As far as handling the criticism of his own coaching, Rolston said his approach is to "just wake up the next morning and do your job. That's how I handle it. Just come to the rink and do my job."

Kevin Porter could be Amerks-bound

By Kevin Oklobzija
Democrat and Chronicle
October 24, 2013

Several reports on Twitter say the Buffalo Sabres have placed center Kevin Porter on waivers.

If he clears, and it's hard to imagine that he won't, then the Rochester Americans get back their most valuable forward from the first four months -- and coach Chadd Cassidy will have a problem.

The arrival of Porter would give the Amerks six "veterans," which is one more than they can play in any given game. That also doesn't include Colton Gillies, who fits the "exempt veteran" slot (between 260 and 320 upper-level pro games).

Who sits won't be an easy decision for Cassidy and the coaching staff may end up rotating from the group of defensemen Drew Bagnall and Alexander Sulzer and forwards Matt Ellis, Mike Zigomanis, Jamie Tardif and Porter.

Ellis is the leader, Zigomanis does a little (or a lot) of everything, Tardif provides grit and jam around the net and Porter is a top centerman in the AHL (15-29-44 in 48 games before his recall last spring). Sulzer is an AHL All-Star and Bagnall is the one true physical presence on the blue line.

So, yeah, good luck with that nightly decision.

Porter would likely join the Amerks in Hamilton Friday for their 7:30 game against the Bulldogs at Copps Coliseum. The team buses up this afternoon.

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Cassidy said he had a "candid discussion" with Matt Hackett on Wednesday and both parties are on the same page with what is expected in terms of temperament from the fourth-year goalie.

Hackett piled up 18 minutes in penalties during his past two starts and the last minor penalty -- in the second period against Utica on Saturday -- prompted Cassidy to pull him from the game.

"He has taken responsibility for what he did," Cassidy said.

* * * * *

The Amerks have been a pretty good team off transition so far. Two goals in Saturday's 6-4 victory over Utica were scored off quick-developing odd-man

rushes. That included the game-winner by Jerome Gauthier-Leduc, after Sulzer started the rush with a quick pass to Phil Varone in the Amerks zone.

"The biggest thing is we're coming out with speed," center Phil Varone said.

While Sulzer made the highlight home-run pass to spring Zigomanis on a breakaway earlier in the game, this was just a simple 12-foot pass that created the fast-break.

"There's no extra points for degree of difficulty," Cassidy said. "Sometimes we can over-complicate things. Most of the time you just need singles hitters."

Should coaches be more accountable?

By Pierre Lebrun

ESPN.com

October 24, 2013

It's a guarantee John Scott will be suspended but just for how many games will depend on how ugly the NHL feels his hit to the head on Loui Eriksson was in Wednesday night's game.

A closer look at the video and it's not clear really if the hit was actually late nor was it really an elbow, but definitely it was an illegal check to the head, the kind that the league absolutely wants to outlaw in the game.

Eriksson had to be helped off the ice and spent the night in Buffalo hospital.

There is just no place in the game for this kind of hit. Zero.

And given the history between these two teams, dating back to two years ago when Milan Lucic bowled over Ryan Miller, the acquisition of Scott the following summer a direct response to that, there's certainly context to keep in mind here. Not to mention the time of the game, about a minute and a half after Boston took a 4-2 lead in the third period, when Scott went out and nailed Eriksson.

Further to that, it should be noted that while Scott got away without any further punishment for his role in the preseason mini-brawl in Toronto, one that cost the Leafs David Clarkson a 10-game suspension for leaving the bench after Scott went after star winger Phil Kessel, keep in mind that NHL disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan did nevertheless deliver a warning to the Sabres tough guy in a phone call; the kind of call where you point out that while there was nothing really Scott could be suspended for, it was duly noted in everyone's mind that he triggered the whole thing.

It should be said, though, that Scott has never before been suspended in the NHL. That certainly counts for something.

In the bigger picture, the latest incident involving the Sabres begs another question, one which is beginning to gather more steam around the league: Where is the responsibility of the head coach or the team in all this? Sabres head coach Ron Rolston was fined for putting Scott back out during that preseason game in Toronto. Since then, he's had Patrick Kaleta suspended 10 games, followed by Scott's head hit, which will result in a suspension.

The NHL is trying hard with these suspensions to curb player behavior, but do coaches' behaviors also need reshaping?

TSN colleague Bob McKenzie pointed out during our Insider Trading segment Tuesday a quote from Canucks head coach John Tortorella regarding Alexander

Edler's three-game suspension earlier this season for a hit on San Jose's Tomas Hertl: "I would teach that play to all our defencemen. The one he was suspended on we're teaching that. The league just happens to believe it's suspendable," Tororella was quoted as saying last week in the Vancouver Province.

So what is Edler supposed to do next time he's got a player lined up the same way, what his coach says or what the NHL has warned him not to do again?

I'm not suggesting automatic fines for coaches every time a player is suspended, that's unrealistic and unfair for all kinds of reasons, including the fact there are just times when a coach has no control over what an angry player might do out on the ice. But I would suggest some kind of threshold perhaps where if a team shows repeated trends with 2-3 suspensions within a certain time period, that perhaps something should be done.

Which is similar in spirit to what Mario Lemieux had in mind when in March 2011 the Penguins co-owner wrote a letter to commissioner Gary Bettman suggesting team fines for suspensions to repeat offenders. It's an idea that the NHL talked about at the time in some form, but in the end it never materialized.

Rolston has now had three major incidents on his hands this season: the preseason events in Toronto, the Kaleta suspension and now the incoming Scott suspension.

Should he or the team not be held accountable? Just asking the question.

Panthers host Sabres in Atlantic Division matchup

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

October 24, 2013

SABRES (1-9-1) at PANTHERS (3-6-1)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, FS-F

Last 10: Buffalo 1-8-1

Season series: This is the first of four meetings between the Buffalo Sabres and Florida Panthers, new rivals in the Atlantic Division. Each team won once in its opponent's building last season, with the Panthers taking two of three overall. Shawn Matthias led Florida with three goals.

Big story: While the Sabres' biggest issue with their goaltending is whether to keep Ryan Miller or move him prior to the trade deadline, the Panthers are once again dealing with health issues surrounding veteran Tim Thomas. He went back on injured reserve with a lower-body issue after coming out of Tuesday's game against the Chicago Blackhawks late in regulation. It's probable Jacob Markstrom starts Friday with Scott Clemmensen recalled to be his backup.

Team Scope:

Sabres: First, the good news to come out of Buffalo's 5-2 loss Wednesday to the Boston Bruins, the Sabres' 10th in 11 games: Nikita Zadorov, an 18-year-old defenseman taken with the 16th pick in the 2013 NHL Draft, scored his first NHL goal in his second game. Zadorov saw 17:44 of ice time, up more than six minutes from his debut Oct. 19 against the Colorado Avalanche.

"I'm really happy right now," Zadorov said about his goal. "It's really hard to play against these guys."

Unfortunately, that got overshadowed by a John Scott match penalty in the third period for an illegal check to the head which left the Bruins' Loui Eriksson woozy and Scott facing a lengthy suspension. He was offered an in-person hearing with the League at a date and time yet to be determined.

Panthers: Thomas has played solidly for Florida this season when healthy, and that was the case against the defending Stanley Cup champs. Chicago scored a pair of goals in the second, but Thomas stopped 25 shots and gave the Panthers an opportunity to pull even in the third as Tomas Fleischmann and Dmitry Kulikov scored.

Thomas was forced from the game with 2:59 left in regulation. Markstrom faced two shots through the end of the third and the five-minute overtime before he yielded two goals on three shootout attempts in a 3-2 loss.

"You have got to prepare. When I'm on the bench, I don't just sit there and watch the stands, I try to be in the game," Markstrom said about being pressed into duty late in the game. "You try to be in the game as much you can and I have no problem with that at all."

Who's hot: Cody Hodgson has goals in consecutive games for the Sabres. ... Aleksander Barkov, the No. 2 pick in June's draft, has a goal and an assist in the past two games for the Panthers, giving him three goals and four assists in 10 games.

Injury report: Buffalo has forwards Corey Tropp (jaw), Ville Leino (rib) and Cody McCormick (foot) on injured reserve, while forward Patrick Kaleta is suspended. Scott is also suspended, pending his hearing. ... Thomas will miss at least the weekend's game for Florida, though coach Kevin Dineen termed him "a quick healer," so he might not be out much longer. Defenseman Ed Jovanovski (hip) and forwards Steven Pinizzotto (hip) and Sean Bergenheim (hip/abdomen) are on injured reserve. Bergenheim is practicing with the team and close to returning.

Commissioner Bettman upholds Kaleta's 10-game suspension

NHL.com

October 24, 2013

NEW YORK -- Commissioner Gary Bettman today upheld the 10-game suspension that was assessed to Buffalo Sabres forward Patrick Kaleta by the Department of Player Safety for an illegal check to the head of Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson in NHL Game No. 49 in Buffalo on October 10.

Commissioner Bettman heard Kaleta's appeal of the original decision, assessed Oct. 15, at a hearing in New York on Monday.

Kaleta is considered a repeat offender under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and, based on his average annual salary, will forfeit \$152,439.00. The money goes to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

The incident occurred at 3:08 of the first period.

Sabres' Scott offered in-person hearing

NHL.com

October 24, 2013

Buffalo Sabres left wing John Scott will have a hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety for a hit on Boston Bruins forward Loui Eriksson during the teams' game Wednesday at First Niagara Center.

Scott was offered the opportunity for an in-person hearing as required by provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement for any suspension that can exceed five games.

At 5:49 of the third period, Scott came across the ice and hit Eriksson in the neutral zone after Eriksson had moved the puck. Scott received a five-minute major for charging, as well a five-minute fighting major for an altercation with Boston's Adam McQuaid that followed the play.

Eriksson received assistance leaving the ice and did not return. The Bruins announced after the game that he would be staying in Buffalo overnight for observation, but was expected to return to Boston on Thursday.

The following grounds are being considered for supplemental discipline: Illegal check to the head. However, the Department of Player Safety retains the right to make adjustments to the infraction upon review.

Boston won the game 5-2.

USHL Alumni Voices: Zemgus Girgensons

USHL.com

October 24, 2013

Zemgus Girgensons has made a rapid rise from the USHL to playing in the NHL. He spent two seasons with the Dubuque Fighting Saints and collected 104 points (45g, 59a) in 100 regular season games, plus 12 points (5g, 7a) over 13 playoff contests.

The native of Latvia helped Dubuque capture the Clark Cup during his rookie season and then became captain of the team the next year. After an All-USHL First Team performance, he was selected by the Buffalo Sabres 14th overall in the 2012 NHL Draft, one of a record six USHL players taken in the first round. He is the highest drafted player ever from Latvia.

Only days later, he signed a NHL contract and began his professional hockey career with the American Hockey League affiliate of the Sabres, the Rochester Americans. He made his NHL debut this season and scored his first goal the same night, only 18 months after playing in the USHL.

After John Scott's latest, Sabres need a fresh start from top down

By Brian Stubits

CBS Sports

October 24, 2013

Something stinks in the Buffalo sports scene and for once it's not the Bills.

The Sabres are an absolute mess right now. Maybe mess doesn't even do it justice, maybe they're a dumpster fire or any number of unflattering comparisons. Whichever description fits best, just know it's bad. Everybody knew it was going to be a tough season with rebuilding and all but a 1-9-1 start? Brutal.

Perhaps that would be palatable -- rebuilds pretty much require losing -- if the Sabres weren't mucking up every game they play in (it just feels that way at this point). There's an old cliché that people use in sports about "playing the game the right way" and I always laughed at it because it sounded so stupid. How do you play hockey the wrong way; put your skates on your hands? But now, looking at this Sabres team, I can see what it looks like to play the wrong way.

If coach Ron Rolston were a baseball player, he'd have two strikes on him already and that's without even digging into the win-loss column. Everybody remembers in the preseason when the Sabres and Leafs held an impromptu 80s night with a line brawl in front of the benches, all started when John Scott went after Phil Kessel of all people.

As a result of that Rolston was fined by the league for his choice in "player selection," something that seemed incredibly laughable at the time. Wouldn't you know it the selection of Scott reared its ugly head again on Wednesday night.

Fool me once, shame on ... shame on you. If you fool me, I can't get fooled again. Or something like that.

Rolston's choice to deploy Scott at that time is pretty much indefensible. It's tough to argue that he was just rolling all four lines given that it was Scott's first (and only) shift of the third period. It's not as though the game was out of hand at that point with the Sabres down two with about 14 minutes to play. For the team they have this season that does equate more to a mountain instead of a molehill but it's not insurmountable, even against the big, bad Bruins. I can tell you this, though; Scott isn't going to help a team come back. The man has one goal and four assists in his 187-game career. His lone goal? It came in 2009.

The guy spends most of his time glued to the bench, averaging just 4:57 of ice time per game this season as it is. So why would he be on the ice in what could be deemed a critical juncture for Buffalo? Why, to send a message of course.

I'll give Rolston some benefit of the doubt here; I'm not going to draw the conclusion that he whispered in Scott's ear with the directive to go make his

presence felt. It's already implied. Scott knows his role and so does Rolston. I'll even give Scott some benefit of the doubt; I'm not sold he actually intended to light up Loui Eriksson the way he did. Regardless, if you put a 6'8 guy on the ice who punches 10 times better than he skates and whose job is to be physical and little else, that can easily happen, intentional or not. It's something they will have to pay the consequences for.

Yes, they. Scott is already facing an in-person hearing to nobody's surprise and will likely have the book thrown at him. Rolston should be facing something as well. At some point down the line, the NHL is going to start looking harder at the coaches and GMs for these big hits, it must; but that day isn't here yet. That said, would anybody be surprised if Rolston incurs the wrath of the NHL again for this? The league already set some precedent, though admittedly the circumstances were a bit different with this incident being in the midst of a game instead of at the faceoff circle.

Perhaps Rolston won't have to pay anything now to the league for Scott's actions but soon enough he'll pay.

It's not working and it's already time they do something about it. The Sabres had a nice little run under Rolston last season but it has grown abundantly clear (at least to these eyes) that he's not the man to get the job done. Indeed, he has a bad hockey club but is he the answer? This one incident shouldn't be the reason that Rolston is relieved like Mike Milbury postulated for after Wednesday's game but put together with everything else -- the Toronto brawl, Patrick Kaleta's suspension, the atrocious play -- and it might be one too many straws on the camel's back. Remember, this team is 1-9-1 and are at or near the bottom in just about every statistical category you can find (that's useful, at least).

Frankly, until GM Darcy Regier gets his job done, no coach will be the answer. The fans in Buffalo have run out of patience for his long reign in Buffalo and at this point, can you blame them? It doesn't look like there is a light at the end of the tunnel. He's made questionable move after questionable move, especially since goalie Ryan Miller was run by Milan Lucic a couple of years ago.

Has any one moment had such a profound impact on a franchise as that in recent years? Without that play, the Sabres likely don't have Scott on the roster at all and perhaps Rolston isn't already being given the label of a goon coach.

Is that a fair charge at this point? Honestly, it's probably not. Take a look at how Rolston has used Scott vs. other coaches. But the perception is building and as we all know, perception can become reality.

At this point the Sabres (see: owner Terry Pegula) need to sit down and take a long, hard look at where they're heading right now and decide if they have the men to lead them where they want to go. Almost as important, they need to figure

out if this is the way they want to play. In both questions, I have my doubts that Rolston and Regier can really be the answers.

The Sabres are in need of a fresh start from the top down. Should it happen right this moment? No, even if that's what the fans in Buffalo would probably like to see. But with this rebuild beginning in earnest and going into next season, perhaps this pair shouldn't be the ones to lead it.

Gary Bettman's decision says much about player history—and Patrick Kaleta

By Sean Gentile

Sporting News

October 24, 2013

If there were ever a lack of clarity over the role of a player's history in the NHL's disciplinary system, commissioner Gary Bettman attempted to take care of it on Thursday.

In his appeal decision on Buffalo Sabres forward Patrick Kaleta's suspension, which he upheld, Bettman made it plain—past actions, as defined by the collective bargaining agreement, remain relevant even after 18 months. The 18-month time frame, to be exact, only determines how to levy a fine against a player.

Specifically, Bettman said, NHL director of player safety Brendan Shanahan can consider (or not consider) whatever past fines and suspensions he wishes. Kaleta, not coincidentally, has six in the past four seasons.

"While the NHLPA contends that such evidence may not be considered under Section 18.2 of the CBA, the Union's argument is belied by a plain reading of the section," Bettman wrote. "Nothing in Article 18 limits the League's right to consider suspensions that occurred more than 18 months earlier."

"My conclusion not only gives meaning to all the provisions of Article 18, it is entirely consistent with the principle of progressive discipline, which generally accords the greatest weight to the most recent offenses and less weight (but not necessarily no weight) to offenses that are more remote in time."

The NHLPA, as is its duty, appealed Shanahan's decision on other grounds, as well—that Kaleta didn't deliberately elbow Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson in the head, that Johnson's own positioning contributed to the hit and that Kaleta was essentially doing his job, as a back-checking "energy player."

That made for classic Bettman shade-throwing. Let's break it down together.

1) I do not credit Mr. Kaleta's testimony that he 'tried ducking out of the check.' To the contrary, the video evidence demonstrates that Mr. Kaleta followed through on the check and made no attempt to avoid it. Nor do I credit (Sabres GM Darcy) Regier's testimony that Mr. Kaleta had insufficient time to about the hit. As Mr. Shanahan noted, 'Players of NHL caliber have that ability.'

Translation: If he couldn't avoid the check, he's not any good. Take your pick.

2) Neither the fact that Mr. Kaleta was playing Buffalo's system (i.e, back chacking the opposing team's Player handling the puck), nor the fact that he's

relied upon for his 'energy' and 'grittiness' and ability to make 'hits' excuses Mr. Kaleta from his conduct.

Translation: The quotation marks signify Kaleta's words, though it's funnier to imagine Bettman condescendingly throwing up air quotes while writing. Having a reputation as a physical player doesn't give you the right to break rules and injure others in the process.

3) Regrettably, Mr. Kaleta stands out for his repeated violations of—and seeming indifference to—the Playing Rules put in place to protect other Players and, particularly, other Players' heads.

Translation: He plays like a jerk.

4) This is a remarkable record over the span of just three and one-half seasons for a Player who is only in his eighth NHL season, and, as noted above, has demonstrated a total disregard for the safety of other players and, in particular, their heads.

Translation: Yep, like a jerk.

5) While these comparables might have been appropriate for Mr. Kaleta had this offense been his first offense (or even his second offense), they are clearly inapposite here given Mr. Kaleta's disparate and distinguishing disciplinary history.

Translation: He did this to himself.

6) (There) is no longer any possibility (assuming there ever was one) to excuse a Player on the basis of his failure to appreciate the importance of Playing Rule 48 (or the broader League-wide emphasis on protecting Players' heads), or based on an asserted inability to adjust his 'gritty' or 'energetic' style of play to the new requirements imposed by the League's current Playing Rules.

Translation: Matt Cooke seems to have changed. That means anyone can. Get to work.

Sabres' John Scott rejects 'dirty player' label

By Fluto Shinzawa

Boston Globe

October 24, 2013

Sabres winger John Scott, who laid out Bruins forward Loui Eriksson in Wednesday night's 5-2 Boston win, addressed Buffalo reporters after practice Thursday.

Scott, who was assessed a match penalty for his blind-side hit to Eriksson's head and suspended indefinitely by the NHL pending an in-person hearing with league officials, said, "I don't think I'm a dirty player," according to the Buffalo News. "I try to play within the code, within the rules. This is my first suspension. I don't try to be a dirty player.

"I kind of feel really upset. I was sick to my stomach last night knowing what happened watching the video. I just kind of regret the whole situation. I don't want to be a dirty player."

Scott said he texted Eriksson after the game. Eriksson was scheduled to travel to Boston Thursday after remaining in Buffalo overnight at the team hotel.

The Bruins, who play the Sharks at TD Garden Thursday night, didn't skate this morning. After San Jose's skate, Sharks coach Todd McLellan was asked about the hit.

"Sometimes you get here and you answer these questions, you come across as a group of saints. We're not saints by any means," said McLellan. "We have guys that have problems with finished checks and suspensions, too. It's happening around the league.

"When you talk about it as a whole, there's no need for it, in my opinion. There's no need for it. There's players that can avoid certain situations that haven't. I don't know how we're going to stop it. I just hope that it does stop."

San Jose's Dan Boyle, who was flattened from behind by the Blues' Maxim Lapierre earlier this month, skated with his teammates Thursday for the first time since the incident.

Notebook: John Scott awaits ruling for Loui Eriksson concussion -
Boston Herald
October 25, 2013

Loui Eriksson needed assistance getting off the ice Wednesday night, so it was no surprise when Bruins general manager Peter Chiarelli announced yesterday that the forward was diagnosed with a concussion and will be out indefinitely.

Eriksson, who was put out of commission by a brutal hit to the head from tough-guy Sabres winger John Scott, stayed overnight in Buffalo for observation. He returned home to Boston yesterday, accompanied by a member of the team's medical staff. Scott, meanwhile, was suspended indefinitely pending a meeting with NHL disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan, which could bring a suspension. In the game, Scott received a match penalty plus a five-minute fighting major when Adam McQuaid went after him right after the hit.

Coach Claude Julien said players need to support the league's efforts to clean things up. And though he didn't mention Sabres coach Ron Rolston by name, Julien suggested coaches can have an impact as well. While acknowledging "nobody's clean in this game," Julien said he's got a few players who could go over the edge if left to their own devices, too.

"I'll never tell Shawn Thornton to go after Sidney Crosby or anyone else that's a top player in this league. I'll never do that. If he does it, it's on his own. And if he does it on his own, I don't think I'd personally accept it," said Julien.

Eriksson's teammates did not lobby for any particular length of suspension for Scott. Their opinions about the hit, however, were united. "I hated the hit. My teammate's down and I'm not on the ice and can't really do anything," said Thornton.

"(McQuaid) did an awesome job getting in there quickly and addressing it. Quaid's a big tough guy, too, and I'm happy he was out there.

"Those are hits that we're trying to get rid of for years. Everyone talks about it, but at some point as players we're going to have to look ourselves in the mirror and take the responsibility upon ourselves to do something about it."

Zdeno Chara also said it is up to the players. "Obviously, we see the league is trying to eliminate these kinds of hits, but it seems like the more they try to clean that part of the game it's coming up more often. I really don't know what's next," said Chara.

"I think it really comes down to players being more aware of the situation and have to play with more awareness of a player's position and the weaknesses."

Mike Milbury Goes Off After Loui Eriksson Hit, Says John Scott, Ron Rolston Should Be ‘Out of This League’

By Zack Cox

NESN

October 24, 2013

NBC hockey analyst Mike Milbury spoke Wednesday night about how the NHL has no place for goons like Buffalo’s John Scott — during the pregame show.

Having already ripped Scott before puck drop as a thug who brings nothing to the table but fists and dirty play, Milbury was practically livid postgame after Loui Eriksson became the latest victim of a cheap shot from the Sabres enforcer.

“This guy is a predator,” Milbury said after the game. “He was put out there to seek and destroy, and in this case, with his team down two goals [Boston led 4-2 at the time], he destroyed a pretty good player well after he’d released the puck. He was looking for trouble; he’s been looking for trouble every shift he’s been on the ice because he can’t do much of anything else.

“He should be fired. It should be the guy who owns the team, who keeps the general manager accountable, who says, ‘Get this guy off the roster. He doesn’t belong in the National Hockey League.’ ... It’s an embarrassment to me that this franchise has sunk so low.”

Milbury’s criticism wasn’t limited to Scott, however. He also called out Sabres head coach Ron Rolston, whom he says should have known better than to put a player like Scott on the ice in that type of situation.

“The talk in Buffalo is that [Rolston] is in over his head. I’ll tell you right now, he’s way over his head. In fact, he’s drowning,” Milbury said. “That’s a bush league play by a coach that doesn’t know any better and doesn’t have enough experience in the league and shouldn’t be afforded another game — not one. That’s an embarrassment to the league and to the Buffalo Sabres, and I’m saddened by it.”

Ryan Miller's wife chirps injured Milan Lucic

Toronto Sun

October 24, 2013

The on-ice war between the Boston Bruins and Buffalo Sabres reached new heights Wednesday night.

Not only did Sabres giant John Scott blindside Bruins winger Loui Eriksson with a hit to the head, one player's wife got a shot in, too.

Noureen DeWulf, married to Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller, had one word for Bruins forward Milan Lucic after he took a puck to the face and left the ice.

"Karma," she tweeted.

If you'll recall, Lucic is the man who sparked the grudge between both clubs after taking a run at Miller in November 2011. The puck-stopper suffered a concussion on the play and missed eight games.

Lucic was not suspended for the hit, which may explain DeWulf taking delight in his injury.

Unfortunately for her and the Sabres, Lucic returned to the ice Wednesday after getting stitched up and promptly scored his second goal of the game on Miller and added an assist in a 5-2 win.

The big Bruins winger also fired a shot after the game.

"Obviously when you get hit in the face like that it's never a good feeling, so it was good to come out and have a good first shift in the second period," Lucic told reporters. "Actually, I almost hurt myself even more when I crashed in the boards after that, but it was nice to get one also when the crowd is cheering when you get in the face. It was nice to stick it to them that way."

Preview: Sabres vs. Panthers, Friday 7:30 p.m.

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

October 25, 2013

Panthers vs. Sabres

When/Where: 7:30 p.m., BB&T Center, Sunrise.

TV: FSF Radio: 560-AM

Scouting report: The Panthers are coming off a 3-2 shootout loss to the defending Stanley Cup champion Blackhawks and are 1-1-1 on this six-game homestand. F Tomas Fleischmann has nine points in 10 games. The rebuilding 1-9-1 Sabres no longer have coach Lindy Ruff and Panthers killer Jason Pominville, but the Atlantic Division rivals have high-scoring winger Tomas Vanek (7 points) and G Ryan Miller. They've lost three in a row. Buffalo F's Corey Tropp and Ville Leino are on IR, while F's Patrick Kaleta and John Scott are serving suspensions. Panthers D Ed Jovanovski (hip) and G Tim Thomas (leg) are on IR.

Sabres' Patrick Kaleta has suspension appeal denied; Kevin Porter waived

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 25, 2013

BUFFALO – In a strongly worded 19-page document released Thursday, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman rejected Sabres winger Patrick Kaleta's appeal of his 10-game suspension.

Kaleta, who's been suspended four times in the last four seasons, including twice in his last 21 games, hit Columbus' Jack Johnson in the head Oct. 10.

Clearly, Bettman wants to send Kaleta a message.

Kaleta, Bettman wrote, "has demonstrated a total disregard for the safety of other players, and, in particular, their heads."

The frequency of the head hits "leads inexorably to the conclusion that Mr. Kaleta has not responded adequately to the progressive discipline that has been meted out to him thus far," he wrote.

Bettman also wrote: "Regrettably, Mr. Kaleta stands out for his repeated violations of – and seeming indifference to – the Playing Rules put in place to protect other Players, and, particularly, other Players' heads."

The NHL Players' Association argued, among other things, a "material change" to position on Johnson's body "significantly contributed to the head contact."

Sabres general manager Darcy Regier and others said Johnson's head wasn't avoidable as Kaleta zoomed into the Columbus zone early in the Blue Jackets' 4-1 win.

Kaleta, who will serve his seventh game tonight when the Sabres play the Florida Panthers, is deciding whether to appeal again through a neutral arbitrator, according to TSN.

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With forward Cody McCormick set to return from a two-game absence after blocking a shot, the hapless Sabres waived Kevin Porter to create room on the 23-man roster Thursday.

Porter was pointless in nine games this season. The 27-year-old center will report to Rochester if he clears. He had 15 goals and 44 points in 48 AHL games with the Americans last season.

Meanwhile, winger Ville Leino, out since cracking a rib opening night, accompanied the Sabres on their two-game Florida trip and could return soon.

Rookie winger Joel Armia, out since breaking his hand during the preseason, is just starting to use a stick again, Sabres coach Ron Rolston said. The Finn's still a week or two away from playing.

Rolston said backup goalie Jhonas Enroth will play either tonight or Saturday in Tampa Bay.

xxx

Rolston on the rebuilding 1-9-1 team's plan: "We've had the same plan the whole time in terms of what we've talked about in terms of playing younger players. We've committed to that, and that's what we're doing right now. We've continued to put the young guys in there and go along with the plan that we have."

Six rookies are currently on the roster, including four teenagers, the most the Sabres have since 1995-96, when five played.

Sabres tough guy John Scott apologizes for head hit, defends his reputation and role: 'I don't think I'm dirty'

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 25, 2013

BUFFALO – Sabres tough guy John Scott acknowledges that, yes, almost six minutes into the third period Wednesday, his powerful blindside headshot that concussed winger Loui Eriksson, while not intentional, was illegal.

“It happened pretty fast,” an apologetic Scott said Thursday inside the First Niagara Center after the reeling 1-9-1 Sabres prepared for tonight’s tilt in Florida against the Panthers. “I just thought I was completing a check. But, obviously, I hit his head. It wasn’t exactly what I was aiming for. I didn’t want to do that. It’s just a bad play, unfortunate it happened.”

But the 6-foot-8 Scott, who had never been suspended in his 187-game NHL career, bristles at the cries he’s a dirty player and doesn’t belong in the league.

“I don’t think I’m a dirty player,” Scott said. “I try to play within the code, within the rules. This is my first suspension. I don’t think I’m dirty. I don’t try to be a dirty player. I kind of feel really upset. I was sick to my stomach last night knowing what happened watching the video. I just kind of regret the whole situation. I don’t want to be a dirty player.”

Scott, who skated 5:15 in the Sabres’ 5-2 loss to the Boston Bruins, said “it’s just nonsense” some observers are saying coach Ron Rolston had his enforcer on the ice to hurt someone.

NBC Sports Network analyst Mike Milbury lambasted both following the game, calling for the Sabres to fire Rolston, who’s “way over his head,” and ditch Scott, a “meathead” who “doesn’t belong in the National Hockey League.”

“This was bound to happen,” Milbury said. “This guy is a predator. He was put out there to seek and destroy.”

Scott said his line deserved the ice time.

“We had zone time, we were playing really well,” he said. “So to say he sends me out there just to hurt somebody is just asinine, is just completely false and not what happens at all.”

Then Scott started becoming a bit emotional and talking passionately.

“I’m a hockey player,” he said. “I go out there and I play my game. I’m physical, I hit. That’s my role. Like, I’m not going to score a million goals. I get frustrated when people say I’m a goon and this and that.

“I have a role, I do it. I go out and I’m physical. It’s unfortunate what happened last night. But to say that Ron sent me out there to do anything with any malcontent or anything is just completely false.”

Rolston, who’s skated Scott an average of 4:57 over seven appearances, added: “He’s been getting minutes the whole year.”

Scott said he didn’t know he had hit Eriksson’s head right away.

“I honest to God didn’t realize it was that bad of a hit, because I was in the (penalty) box, I was asking the ref, like, ‘Was it a head hit?’” Scott said. “I didn’t set out to do that. I knew something was going to happen, but I didn’t realize what happened.”

Scott’s suspended pending an in-person hearing. He got Eriksson’s number from Sabres co-captain Steve Ott, the Swede’s teammate in Dallas.

A woozy Eriksson left the game and stayed overnight in Buffalo for observation. The Bruins announced Thursday he’s out indefinitely with a concussion.

“I texted him and told him, ‘Sorry for the hit,’” Scott said. “I didn’t realize it was a hit to the head. So it was unfortunate.”

The hit on the 6-foot-2 Eriksson, which occurred after he had dished the puck in the neutral zone, “could’ve gone either way,” Scott said. Adam McQuaid immediately fought Scott, who was ejected.

“I was finishing my check,” Scott said. “He was leaning forward, so I definitely made contact with him. ... Ten years ago, that would’ve been good. But now that’s the hit they’re getting out of the game. So I totally understand that.”

For those who want the 31-year-old Scott out of the game, Ott has a message.

“There’s definitely a place for him in the league,” Ott said. “I thought he had a strong game, one of his best nights I’ve seen him play. John’s a big individual for us, but in no instances does he have a previous record by any means, and he’s hard to play against. He keeps guys honest out there.”

Ott added: “He’s not a dirty player. Because he fights doesn’t make him a dirty player by any means. He’s doing a job out there for us, and he’s doing his job well.”

Scott also drew loads of criticism for chasing down Toronto star Phil Kessel during the preseason, igniting a brawl after teammate Corey Tropp was injured fighting.

Scott said he doesn’t know his hearing date.

MacGregor: John Scott's thuggery generates outrage throughout NHL

By Roy MacGregor

Toronto Globe and Mail

October 25, 2013

Such glorious opportunity.

Let us hope the NHL does not pass this one up – as the league has unfortunately done so often in the past.

At the 5 minute 49 second mark of the third period in a Wednesday game between the visiting Bruins and the Buffalo Sabres, with Boston winning 4-2, Sabres enforcer John Scott is sent onto the ice.

Scott, a 6-foot-8, 270-pound giant with no discernible hockey skills, comes “out of the clouds” – as they might say in a real war – to take direct aim at the head of an unsuspecting Loui Eriksson, who has already moved the puck up the ice.

Eriksson, no surprise, has to be helped off the ice following the ugly hit. He is kept overnight in Buffalo as a precautionary measure.

Scott is punished with a match penalty and a fighting major. The fight is not against Eriksson, who was busy fighting unconsciousness, but against Boston defenceman Adam McQuaid. McQuaid is given a fighting major, a game misconduct and a two-minute penalty for being the instigator.

In other words, Boston not only loses the injured Eriksson but ends up being more penalized for the incident than the Sabres.

Fascinating math. Bizarre justice.

The incident, so familiar in recent years, caused more than the usual outrage.

NBC hockey commentator Mike Milbury – once a player who waded, in full equipment, into a crowd to pound a fan with his own shoe – called not only for the expulsion of Scott from the NHL but for Sabres head coach Ron Rolston to be fired.

“I don’t know what he’s doing in this league,” Milbury said of Scott. “I believe players who play in this league have to be able to skate and pass, and not simply ignite a fight.”

Scott, Milbury declared, is simply a “predator” sent out to “seek and destroy” by Rolston.

“He’s way over his head,” Milbury said of the Buffalo coach. “In fact, he’s drowning. It’s a bush-league play by a coach that doesn’t know any better.”

Another NBC commentator, Pierre McGuire, who was stationed between the benches during the game, was equally put off. Speaking on Ottawa's Team 1200 all-sports radio channel the next morning, McGuire called Scott "a mayhem-maker" and added that, given Scott has all of one career goal in nearly 200 NHL games, "he shouldn't even be in the league."

Scott was suspended indefinitely Thursday, and NHL commissioner Gary Bettman also upheld the 10-day suspension recently handed down by league disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan to Sabres forward Patrick Kaleta for another head shot.

Buffalo's race to embrace thuggery, coincidentally, is directly tied to a two-year-old assault on goaltender Ryan Miller by Boston forward Milan Lucic, who received but a minor penalty for deliberately running over Miller and was given no subsequent suspension.

It is unlikely Scott can hope for the same leniency, despite having no history of supplementary punishment by league. The hockey world seems to be at least partly coming to its senses over such senseless attacks.

Anaheim Ducks winger Teemu Selanne, the NHL's elder statesman at 43 and perhaps the most widely respected player in today's game, said in Montreal the suspensions handed out to the likes of Kaleta are inadequate.

"I don't think they're enough," Selanne told reporters. "The next night, the same thing happens."

Surprisingly, Selanne added players have been talking about themselves about the need for suspensions to move to "a big one so guys can't afford to do that," as well as the possibility of the teams, coaches and even owners being fined for such transgressions.

"The bottom line is, there's no option – we've got to do it."

Rather ironically, it is a half-dozen years since then-Sabres owner Thomas Golisano demanded the league "immediately" bring a firm end to hits to the head. Since then, Buffalo has acquired a new owner, hired new goons, taken on a new coach and is, tellingly, boasting a shameful 1-9-1 record.

As well, early evidence suggests concussions are on the rise this season. Such skilled players as Rick Nash (New York Rangers), Daniel Brière (Montreal Canadiens), Dan Boyle (San Jose Sharks) and Dustin Penner (Ducks) are on the list of those downed by a concussion.

It is a dozen years since American star Mike Modano posed his question on the cover of The Hockey News – “Do we have to wait for someone to be killed or paralyzed?” – and the rising hope is that, no, we do not have to wait.

This is the NHL’s perfect opportunity.

“I get frustrated when people say I’m a goon and this and that,” Scott said in Buffalo, “I have a role. I do.”

Indeed, he may have an important role.

To stand as a symbol of when the NHL finally decides to crack the whip as hard as is obviously required.

Sabres' John Scott deserves due process after hit

By Chris Stevenson

Ottawa Sun

October 24, 2013

I wish I had the concession for pitchforks and flaming torches as the mob storms the NHL offices demanding the head of Buffalo Sabres forward John Scott.

They want Scott's head because of his hit to the head of Boston Bruins forward Loui Eriksson Wednesday night.

Was it a bad hit?

Of course it was.

Should Scott be suspended?

Of course he will be.

It is exactly the kind of hit the NHL is trying to get out of the game: a player targeting an opponent and delivering a blow where the main point of contact is the head.

But because Scott is a little-talent brawler who has fewer career goals than goaltender Martin Brodeur doesn't mean he doesn't deserve the same due process as any other player. There have been calls for him to be cut by the Sabres and that he should be getting a double-digit suspension.

It's expanded into an indictment of the Sabres and how brutal they are (true), but as far as the hit and the length of suspension go, this is about Scott.

He has been a tough guy, but he doesn't have a track record of being a dirty player.

While there are a lot of people who want the library, never mind just the book, thrown at Scott, this doesn't look any worse than other hits that resulted in a five-game suspension by players with similar disciplinary records.

"I don't think I'm a dirty player," Scott told reporters after the Sabres practised Thursday. "I try to play within the code, within the rules. This is my first suspension. I don't try to be a dirty player. I kind of feel really upset. I was sick to my stomach last night knowing what happened, watching the video. I just kind of regret the whole situation. I don't want to be a dirty player."

For what it's worth, Scott said he sent Eriksson a text to apologize for the hit.

"It happened pretty fast. I just thought I was completing a check. But, obviously, I hit his head," said Scott. "It wasn't exactly what I was aiming for. I didn't want to do that. It's just a bad play, unfortunate it happened."

Bruins general manager Peter Chiarelli said Eriksson had sustained a concussion and would be out indefinitely. After spending Wednesday night in hospital, Eriksson flew back to Boston with a member of the Bruins medical staff.

Certainly injury plays a role in determining the length of suspension and it's not a coincidence the Bruins were quick to make public the diagnosis of Eriksson's injury in advance of Scott's in-person hearing.

In the two somewhat similar open-ice hits that resulted in suspensions this season, Michael Grabner of the New York Islanders was suspended for two games for his elbow to the head of Columbus' Nathan Gerbe and Ryan Garbutt of the Dallas Stars got five games for charging Anaheim's Dustin Penner.

They were both first-time offenders.

Penner was hurt; Gerbe was not.

Sabres' miscreant Patrick Kaleta, a repeat offender, got 10 games for his hit on Blue Jackets defenceman Jack Johnson, a suspension that was upheld by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman Thursday upon appeal by the NHLPA on behalf of Kaleta.

The Kaleta camp and the NHLPA have a week if they want to take the case to an independent arbitrator, whose decision would be final. The arbitrator can uphold the suspension, cut it or add games.

The appeal process can be triggered with a suspension of six games or more.

NHL vice-president of player safety Brendan Shanahan has said he has not been thinking about the six-game threshold to avoid players being able to appeal.

There have been lots of calls to make an example of Scott, but with the checks and balances of the new appeal process in this CBA, it wouldn't seem to be as simple as that.

If Shanahan were to give Scott 20 games, as some have advocated, it would be interesting to see if a "message-sending" suspension would ultimately pass the arbitrator's smell test.

John Scott of Buffalo Sabres faces suspension after vicious hit on Boston's Loui Eriksson: Cox

By Damien Cox

Toronto Star

October 25, 2013

There are goons, and there are rats.

Rarely do you get both in one hockey player. But the Buffalo Sabres, a franchise fallen on very hard times, have such a player.

A goon rat in Sabres clothing, as it were.

A player, quite simply, who needs to have his membership as a player in the NHL revoked for a considerable period of time, an exceptional case even these days when there seems to be a suspension-per-day and NHLPA members seem more determined than ever to cause each other serious brain injuries.

People complain that we in the media only want to talk about this stuff.

How can we not? There's a new sensational violation every day.

The notion that 6-foot-9 John Scott "polices" anything took a body blow in September when he decided to try and pick a fight with Phil Kessel, the star forward of the Maple Leafs. Kessel got suspended, David Clarkson got suspended, and Scott skipped away free and clear.

On Wednesday, Scott blew the "code" to smithereens with another brutal decision, this time racing across the ice to deliver a vicious, late, blind side head shot to another skill player, Loui Eriksson of the Boston Bruins.

Presumably, Scott's next target will be a player standing on crutches in the hallway. Or perhaps a grandmother in the first row.

For some time, while the "code" has become increasingly cloudy, there was still a line between goon and rat.

A goon was there just to fight and only to fight. Not to score or forecheck or backcheck. Just fight.

Scott, 31, fits the profile. Over the past six seasons, he has 35 fights and one goal. He used to play defence, and thus play a little more, but now most nights he's in the five- or six-minute range.

Generally speaking, the idea is that goons fight goons, or at least similarly sized players. Occasionally a middleweight like Brandon Prust or Clarkson might get

involved, but mostly goons drop 'em with goons and people know how the system works.

Rats, meanwhile, are there to take cheap shots at good players, to distract them, irritate them and ideally get them to retaliate and take penalties.

They might score once in a blue moon, but usually the puck, or possession of it, is of little interest to them. They abide by no code, by no rules of conduct generally accepted by others.

They just want to take free shots at skill players — slashing, board and charging are the usual tactics — and thus are generally loathed by all except their teammates in contrast to goons, who are generally liked.

Scott, by going head-hunting Wednesday night, seems to fit both categories now, which doesn't mean his pay should be doubled.

In fact, he's going to take a big hit in the pocketbook from Brendan Shanahan, at least five games and maybe more.

With Buffalo's Patrick Kaleta already up for a 10-game ban — the appeal decision is expected today — the last place Sabres are carving a new reputation for themselves these days.

Indeed, the coaching of Ron Rolston will again be up for scrutiny, not simply because he doesn't appear capable of guiding the 1-9-1 Sabres to any level of competence.

Rolston was fined in the pre-season for sending Scott out after Kessel — a Sabre player had challenged a Leaf and been beaten up, which to Rolston meant an unusual escalation in hostilities was necessary — and in theory could be on the hotseat again, although it seems unlikely.

But if you believe hockey coaches should be held more accountable for the actions of their players, as I have for many years, than this would be a case for taking some action against a coach who clearly can't control his Rottweiler.

After the Bruins scored to make it 3-1 on Wednesday, Rolston sent out Scott, ostensibly to challenge Shawn Thornton, who ignored him.

In the the third with the Sabres theoretically trying to come back from a 4-2 deficit, there was Scott on the ice again, and it wasn't to cut the lead in half.

Maybe to try and cut Eriksson in half, and the Bruin forward stayed behind overnight in Buffalo after, presumably, being concussed by the ridiculous open ice hit.

Shanahan seems to be ramping up the suspensions these days, while the players' union seems, as usual, intent only on defending the goons and rats rather than protecting the health interests of the Erikssons and Kessels of the world.

Shouldn't the union be out to get justice for Eriksson, not just Scott?

When Chris Simon took his thuggery to a new level in 2007 by stomping Jarkko Ruutu, the league gave him 30 games.

Scott doesn't have Simon's rap sheet, so that length of suspension seems almost unthinkable.

Then again, why wait?

MEILER: Eriksson's blood on NHL's hands

By Mike Meiler

Niagara Gazette

October 25, 2013

Niagara Gazette — The Buffalo Sabres' Season from Hell plunged further into the abyss Wednesday night with another embarrassing loss, this time at home to the hated Boston Bruins in a nationally-televised game promoted as part of NBC Sports Network's Wednesday Night Rivalry series.

An uncharacteristically watchable first period from the 1-9-1 Sabres gave way to a predictably sloppy second, but Buffalo somehow found itself trailing by just one heading into the third. More uninspired play allowed the Bruins to score and essentially clinch the win early in the period, but the game's defining play came well after the outcome was already decided.

With 14:11 left in regulation, Buffalo enforcer John Scott went out of his way to run over Boston's Loui Eriksson, a four-time 25-goal scorer acquired in the offseason. Scott's hit was far from historic in terms of NHL brutality, but it was late and high, and that it came from a "goon" seems to for some reason make it worse in the eyes of observers.

A close comparison would be Chris Neil's late hit on Chris Drury that incited the infamous line brawl/goalie fight between the Sabres and the Ottawa Senators on February 22, 2007. After Drury released a pass, Neil went out of his way to line up the Sabres' captain, hit him high and left a bloody mass lying on the ice.

If Neil's hit was a '10' on the Cheap Shot Scale, Scott's probably falls somewhere around an eight. It wasn't as late, and while it was high, most of that is due to Scott standing 6-foot-8 and Eriksson 6-foot-2.

Eriksson had to be helped off the ice and stayed in Buffalo overnight for "precautionary reasons," according to Boston coach Claude Julien. While his condition is unsure, Scott will have an in-person hearing with NHL player safety czar Brendan Shanahan, a necessary step under the new Collective Bargaining Agreement taken when the league wants to suspend a player for more than five games.

The irony of the story is that Scott was signed by Buffalo following the 2011 season specifically to combat the big, bad Bruins following Milan Lucic's trampling of Ryan Miller. While it doesn't excuse Scott's actions by any means, the two are directly related. If Lucic doesn't run Miller, Scott likely isn't in Buffalo, and Wednesday's hit doesn't happen.

NBCSN used the Lucic hit as a key storyline to promote the game. The network ran a "NHL Rivals" special Tuesday night highlighting the history between Buffalo and Boston, using clips of big hits and fights to establish the bad blood

between the two teams. It even played a clip of Scott knocking out Bruins tough guy Shawn Thornton in what equated to a "Buffalo strikes back" segment. But when Scott hit Eriksson, the network's analysts turned heel, led by Mike Milbury — a former player who once beat a fan with a shoe during his time with (You guessed it!) the Bruins.

Milbury tore into Scott and Sabres coach Ron Rolston during the post game, going as far as to say both should be out of the league. That's been the NHL's modus operandi for the past few seasons — flaunt the physical side of the game to attract viewers, allow fighting and encourage the tough-guy persona, then act appalled when a player crosses a very abstract line, so long as that player is someone casual fans won't miss.

Lucic didn't get suspended for hitting Miller, despite it being one of the most blatant goaltender cheap shots in recent memory. Toronto's Phil Kessel only got three preseason games after violently slashing Scott this preseason. Alexander Ovechkin was only suspended for three games following a high, late hit in 2012 that was similar to Scott's, only Ovechkin left his feet to deliver the blow.

But those players are stars. They're valuable to the league because of their marketability and they aren't "three-minute guys," which is how Julien described Scott. Somehow, their value to their teams and to the league makes their actions less severe.

The NHL is punishing context rather than the actual plays. If it were Scott swinging his stick wildly at Kessel, you can bet he'd have gotten a monumental suspension. If it were Ovechkin laying the hit on Eriksson, he might get suspended because of his prior record, but it still would equate to a slap on the wrist compared to what Scott is likely to get.

Scott has no prior record, but his status as an enforcer means he'll likely face a higher penalty. Colorado's Cody McLeod and St. Louis' Max Lapierre sent opponents off on stretchers this week, and both received five-game suspensions.

You can bet Scott clears that pretty easily as the league uses this as an opportunity to save face by coming down hard on a player who ultimately doesn't matter much to ratings. But when you see clips of Scott's hit as part of the inevitable "revenge" narrative used to promote the next Buffalo-Boston meeting, don't forget who's responsible.

Sabres Scott says he's not a goon

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 24, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- John Scott was at practice on Thursday, but he won't be playing for a while. Scott has a face to face hearing with the NHL after a head shot to the Bruins Loui Eriksson. Eriksson remained hospitalized in Buffalo overnight.

Many accused Ron Rolston of putting Scott on the ice to hurt somebody, including Bruins coach Claude Julien. Scott said, "It's just nonsense. There was 14 minutes left in the game and if you watch my shifts, our line was doing pretty well that game. We had zone time and we were playing really well, so to say that he sends me out there to hurt somebody is just asinine. I'm a hockey player and I go out there and play my game. I'm physical, I hit, that's my role. I'm not going to score a million goals and I get frustrated when people say I'm a goon. I have a role, I do it and I go out and be physical and it's unfortunate what happened last night."

Scott has never been suspended by the NHL. Part of the reason Pat Kaleta got 10 games was he had been suspended multiple times by the league. Scott takes offense when he's called a head hunter or dirty, "Yes, I'm not a dirty player. I try to play within the code and within the rules and this is my first suspension. I feel really upset, I was sick to my stomach last night knowing what happened and I regret the whole situation. I don't want to be a dirty player."

Scott got Eriksson's number from Steve Ott who was teammates with him in Dallas. Scott said, "I reached out to him so I texted him last night and told him that I was sorry for the hit. I didn't realize it was a hit to the head."

Things happen quickly on the ice and Scott didn't take aim on the head, "It happened pretty fast I just thought I was completing a check, but obviously I hit his head. It wasn't exactly what I was aiming for. I didn't want to do that, it was just a bad play and unfortunate.

Scott said he doesn't know when his hearing will be.

SCOTT: "I DON'T TRY TO BE A DIRTY PLAYER"

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 24, 2013

John Scott doesn't want to be known as a dirty player and says he did not intend to injure Boston Bruins forward Loui Eriksson on Wednesday.

At the 5:49 mark of the third period at First Niagara Center in the Sabres' game against Boston, Scott hit Eriksson in the head near center ice. Eriksson had to be helped off the ice and did not return to the game. Scott subsequently fought Bruins defenseman Adam McQuaid and received a five-minute major for fighting and a 10-minute match penalty.

"I don't think I'm a dirty player. I try to play within the code and within the rules," he said after the team's practice at First Niagara Center on Thursday. "This is my first suspension and I don't think I'm a dirty player. I don't try to be a dirty player. I feel really upset. I was sick to my stomach last night knowing what happened and watching the video, I just kind of regret the situation. I don't want to be a dirty player."

He now faces an in-person hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety in New York City for the hit, meaning he will be suspended for at least five games. As of Thursday morning, he did not know when that hearing would be held.

Scott said he sent a text message to Eriksson after the game, apologizing for the hit. He also said that he did not realize the hit was to Eriksson's head until he saw a replay from the penalty box.

"It happened pretty fast. I just thought I was completing a check but obviously I kind of, you know, hit his head and it wasn't exactly what I was aiming for," Scott said. "I didn't want to do that. It was just a bad play and it's unfortunate what happened."

Eriksson stayed overnight in Buffalo as a precautionary measure.

Prior to the game against Boston, Scott averaged 4:54 of ice time in six games. At the time of the hit on Eriksson, Scott had already skated 5:15, his second-highest total of the season.

"John's been playing the whole season for us," Sabres coach Ron Rolston said. "It's not like we played him in one game. He's been playing the whole year for us and he's been getting minutes the whole year."

After the game, Bruins coach Claude Julien made his frustration with both Scott and the incident known.

“It's unfortunate but the guy who did it did his job tonight,” Julien said. “He's out there for two reasons and that's either to fight or to hurt. He did his job tonight.”

When asked about Julien's comments, Rolston disagreed with that assessment and stood by his player.

“I don't buy that. I don't think Johnny's that type of person,” Rolston said. “He is a fighter in this league, but he's not looking for that. He wants to become a better player and I don't think that was in Johnny's mind at all.”

Scott drew attention in the preseason during a line brawl against the Toronto Maple Leafs. Rolston kept Scott on the ice after a fight between Corey Tropp and Jamie Devane. When the puck dropped, Scott went after Phil Kessel and Rolston was fined by the League for “player selection and team conduct.”

On Thursday, Scott defended his role on the team and denied any accusation that Rolston sent him on the ice against the Bruins with the intent of hurting another player.

“It's just nonsense. There were 14 minutes left in the game and if you watch my shifts, our line was doing pretty well that game. We had zone time, we were really playing well,” he said. “So to say he sends me out there like to hurt somebody is just asinine. It's completely false and it's not what happens at all.

“I'm a hockey player. I go out there and I play my game. I'm physical, I hit. That's my role. I'm not going to score a million goals. I get frustrated when people say I'm a goon and this and that. I have a role. I do it. I go out there, I'm physical and it's unfortunate what happened last night, but to say that Ron sent me out there to do anything with any [malicious intentions] or anything is just completely false.”

McCORMICK READY, ENROTH IN THIS WEEKEND

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 24, 2013

Ville Leino and Cody McCormick will make the trip to Florida with the Buffalo Sabres for the team's pair of games in the Sunshine State this weekend.

Both forwards are currently on injured reserve and roster moves will have to be made in order to activate one or both of them.

Sabres coach Ron Rolston said that McCormick is ready to play while they're still evaluating Leino. Rolston also said that a roster move would be made today but was not ready to announce what it would be.

The Buffalo Sabres can only have 23 players on their active roster and two of their three scratches at the moment are taken up by forwards who cannot play. Patrick Kaleta is serving a 10-game suspension that he is appealing and John Scott has a hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety for a check he made Wednesday on Bruins forward Loui Eriksson.

"It's two roster spots that are basically with guys who can't play for you, so sure, it affects things," Rolston said.

The Sabres play the Florida Panthers on Friday at 7:30 p.m. and the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday at 7 p.m. Jhonas Enroth will start one of those games, according to Rolston.

Also on the injury front, forward Corey Tropp continues to skate with the team, albeit in a red non-contact jersey and a full face shield as he works his way back from a broken jaw. Rolston said he is "on a good path" and they're waiting for him to be cleared for contact by team doctors.

Rookie Joel Armia, who broke his hand in the preseason on Sept. 25, is not skating with the team, but is making progress as well.

"He's just in the stages now where he can basically have a stick in his hand and actually stickhandle a puck, that sort of thing," Rolston said. "He's close, but he's still probably a week or two away in terms of doing everything that he needs to do and being confident in it and his hand."

Even with the team's 1-9-1 start, Rolston said that he, general manager Darcy Regier and owner Terry Pegula are all still on the same page.

“We’ve had the same plan the whole time in terms of what we talked about and playing young players,” Rolston said. “Again, we’ve committed to that and that’s what we’re doing right now. We have continued to put the young guys in there and going along with the plan that we have.”

26 Thomas Vanek – 19 Cody Hodgson – 65 Brian Flynn
9 Steve Ott – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 82 Marcus Foligno
28 Zemgus Girgensons – 22 Johan Larsson – 63 Tyler Ennis
21 Drew Stafford – 8 Cody McCormick – 23 Ville Leino
32 John Scott – 12 Kevin Porter – 36 Patrick Kaleta
78 Corey Tropp (red non-contact jersey)

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 3 Mark Pysyk
61 Nikita Zadorov – 57 Tyler Myers
20 Henrik Tallinder – 4 Jamie McBain
6 Mike Weber – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth

SABRES COMMUNITY ASSIST WEEK

By Clare Lewis, Joe Ray, Marc Davies, Alex Pagliano & Rob Poling

Sabres.com

October 24, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres are proud to announce a new community program this season that will feature Sabres players, coaches, organization, alumni and fans supporting a variety of different non-profit agencies and individuals who make our community so special. Sabres Community Assist will be a six-day endeavor from October 18-23 that will include player visits to area non-profit organizations, a fundraising walk to benefit the I AM effort and will shine a light on individuals whose lives have inspired and impacted others.

“We are very excited to introduce the Sabres Community Assist program that will be a celebration of so many who make this area such a wonderful place to live,” said Sabres Chief Development Officer Cliff Benson. “This organization-wide effort is one way for us to give back to a community that has given us so much over the years.”

The schedule of events is as follows:

Oct. 18: Heritage Centers

Oct. 19: Vive, Inc.

Oct. 20: I AM Tribute Walk

Oct. 21: Kids Escaping Drugs

Oct. 22: Buffalo City Mission

Oct. 23: Rowan Langille Tribute Night

Friday, October 18: Heritage Centers

The Buffalo Sabres kicked off Sabres Community Assist Week with a special visit to the Fall Festival at the Heritage Centers Maryvale School in Maryvale, N.Y. on Friday.

The group consisting of eight Sabres players, Sabres alumni Rob Ray and Andrew Peters, coach Ron Rolston, former broadcaster Harry Neale and Chief Development Officer Cliff Benson interacted with students from the Heritage Centers Educational Center and individuals in the Heritage Centers' adult work program for an ice cream social.

The Fall Festival left a lasting impact on the Heritage Centers families, according to Executive Director Michael Gross.

“Our people have a long road to face. To have celebrities and the Sabres organization as a whole embrace them is incredibly uplifting,” Gross said. “We have truly found that the Sabres organization gets it. They want to be part of the fabric of the community. That is going to carry a long way.”

Peters was put to work making snow cones for the ice cream social while Neale manned an arts and crafts table. Current Sabres Nikita Zadorov, Rasmus Ristolainen, Henrik Tallinder, Marcus Foligno, Zemgus Girgensons, Mikhail Grigorenko, Johan Larsson and Mark Pysyk all kept busy by playing basketball and various carnival games with the kids. They also enjoyed the bounce house, inflatable slide and pony rides.

The evening was full of jokes and fun as everyone was able to take a few minutes to relax and enjoy the event. A long game of basketball and some time spent in the bounce house with the children served as a mini-workout for some of the players.

“I’m sweating!” Larsson joked. He also added that it was nice to see all the kids and spend some time with them.

For 60 years, Heritage Centers has delivered comprehensive services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Through their efforts, Heritage Centers has helped many developmentally disabled people strive to reach their full potential. The Heritage Centers Maryvale School serves approximately 160 developmentally disabled children.

Beth Simons, Chief Operating Officer of the Heritage Centers Foundation, commented on the impact this event would have on the children.

“It’s so special that the children can come out and spend time with the Sabres and just be kids,” she said.

The event also had special meaning to the players.

“You really appreciate that you are fortunate with what you have,” Sabres defenseman Henrik Tallinder said. “These kids are so happy and it is really humbling.”

-Clare Lewis, Sabres.com Digital Content Intern

Saturday, October 19: Vive, Inc.

The Buffalo Sabres had some very special guests at First Niagara Center for their morning skate on Saturday. As a part of Sabres Community Assist Week, the team welcomed a group from Vive, Inc. to the arena.

Vive is the largest refugee shelter in the United States and, according to executive director Angela Jordan-Mosely, it welcomes almost 3,000 people each year from approximately 110 countries. Vive is a non-profit, humanitarian organization that assists refugees seeking protection in the U.S. and Canada. With 118 beds for

men, women and children, Vive, which is located in Buffalo on the border of Fort Erie, Ont., offers food, clothing and shelter for refugees from around the world.

Sabres Director of Community Relations Rich Jureller was very pleased that the team was able to help Vive as a part of their week-long community service endeavor.

“One of the things we wanted to accomplish was to get involved with an organization that we didn’t know much about and the rest of the community didn’t know enough about,” Jureller said. “A lot of people I talked to kept saying, ‘You have to go talk to Vive, they’re really special.’ We went to meet with them and found out that they’re really special.”

After taking in the morning skate from a few rows behind the Sabres’ bench, the group from Vive had the chance to meet Sabres color commentator Rob Ray as well as current Sabres players John Scott, Ville Leino and Patrick Kaleta. Kids and adults alike were enamored with the experiences as they received autographs and photos from each player.

Goaltending coach Jim Corsi also took the time to meet with Vive and quickly developed a rapport with everyone in the room. A native of Montreal, Quebec, Corsi switched from English to French to speak to a couple of French-speaking visitors from Vive. Corsi also emphasized the importance of education to the many young children in attendance.

After this morning’s events, the men and women from Vive watched Buffalo’s game against the Colorado Avalanche in a team suite. From the most casual hockey fan to the biggest Sabres admirer, every person from Vive found that their visit to First Niagara Center created many unforgettable memories.

-Joe Ray, Sabres.com Digital Content Intern

Sunday, October 20: I AM Tribute Walk

On Sunday, October 20, the Buffalo Sabres organization hosted a 5k walk to raise money for the Iraq/Afghanistan memorial, which will be built in the Buffalo and Erie County Military Naval Park. The walk was part of the team’s inaugural Community Assist Week.

Along with raising money for the memorial, the tribute walk honored the 64 Western New Yorkers who have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan since September 11, 2001.

The project was spearheaded by Ret. Staff Sergeant Dan Frontera, when two years ago he approached the 26th Chapter of American Gold Star Moms about the memorial.

Frontera, an Iraq War Veteran, carries his rucksack from his time in Iraq to every benefit walk and run he attends. His rucksack weights 64 pounds, serving as a tribute to the 64 soldiers from Western New York who lost their lives while serving their country.

“We’re so grateful that Dan came to us two years ago and had this vision,” said Cathy Macfarlane, a Gold Star Mom. “As Gold Star families, we are so thrilled that it’s become this large and we have a beautiful day for it. I’m just overwhelmed seeing everything that’s going on here.”

Along with many military and other community members, many Sabres players walked the 5K to support the cause. Among them was Steve Ott, who reflected on his time growing up in a military family.

“Living the military life is something that’s in my heart,” said Ott. “I’m a military kid and it’s the reason I’m here today and able to live my dream. Both of my parents served for 26 years so this means a lot to me.”

The walk was an important part of the continuing fundraising effort, raising about \$25,000 of the estimated \$100,000 it will take to construct the monument. With the addition of the money raised on Sunday, about 70 percent of the total funds have been raised. The monument is scheduled to be completed by next spring.

-Marc Davies, Sabres.com Digital Content Intern

Monday, October 21: Kids Escaping Drugs

As part of the Sabres Community Assist Week, the Renaissance House in West Seneca welcomed some special guests on Monday night.

Current Sabres Ryan Miller, Tyler Myers, Brian Flynn, Jhonas Enroth, Cody McCormick, Tyler Ennis and Corey Tropp interacted with the adolescents, along with Sabres alumni Rene Robert, Craig Muni, Jay McKee and Daryl Shannon, and broadcaster Dan Dunleavy.

Prior to eating together, the group of players split up into several different activities. Miller played cards with some of the males, while Ennis and Enroth played ping pong with a few others. In the gymnasium, Flynn, McCormick, Myers and Tropp competed in both basketball and volleyball with a mixed group of the kids. After the activities, each adolescent had the opportunity to interact and snag some autographs from their favorite Sabres players. The opportunity presented numerous memories, including Melissa, a client housed at the organization.

"It's a dream come true. I'm in love with Miller," she said. "[For them to come out and show that they care], it's the best thing ever. I even got his autograph and met his dog, Puck!"

Miller reflected on the importance of giving back to the community as a team.

"Giving back to [the community] makes you feel like a part of the greater whole," he said. "I think that makes you really have a connection to the city, and I have been fortunate to have that in my career here where I feel that I have a connection here."

However, as for the card games, Miller was out of luck.

"I got hustled," he laughed. "A lot of bragging rights went out the window tonight [for me]."

Since 1991, the Renaissance House has helped over 1,000 adolescents suffering from alcohol and drug dependency/addiction related issues. The organization also offers academic instruction and community in-service training to prepare clients for a return to society. Jodie Altman, Director of Adolescent and Clinical Services, commented on the importance of the event.

"The community outside of here cares about [the kids]," said Altman. "The team coming here demonstrates that the community does care. ... You cannot give this memory back [to these kids]."

Sabres alum Rene Robert, who has made over 100 visits to the facility, concurred.

"These kids are young enough, that with help and counseling, can turn their lives around. To get a player like [Ryan] to come out, it can only help [the kids]. It's a big bonus for [the kids]."

-Alex Pagliano, Sabres.com Digital Content Intern

Tuesday, October 22: Buffalo City Mission

The Buffalo Sabres organization continued their Community Assist Week on Tuesday, traveling to the Buffalo City Mission to remodel a dormitory for veterans and serve community lunch.

Current Sabres Cody Hodgson, Mark Pysyk and Zemgus Girgensons served community lunch to over 75 clients. After serving warm quiche and fresh strawberries to the clients, the teammates interacted with the organization's volunteers and visitors.

Hodgson acknowledged the importance of the appearance, but also recognized the organization's volunteers.

"Well, it's a good feeling. It feels good to be able to lend my services [to such an organization]," he said. "But, the volunteers here, they should get all of the credit. They do this every day."

Later, the teammates joined Sabres personnel to lend a hand in coating some of the walls of the remodeled space set aside for veterans. The space accords them a sense of privacy as they work through their existing issues at the center.

"Often times, our veterans come home with post-traumatic stress disorder. As they work through their issues, they need their space," said Raine Schreiner, Director of Treatment Services at the Buffalo City Mission. "[Without the support of the Buffalo Sabres], the project would have taken a lot longer. We're absolutely grateful of their support."

Sabres alum Danny Gare, who also served lunch, hopes to come back with friends.

"It'd be nice to get some of the [Sabres Alumni] involved. Anytime you can help a person in need, I think we should take advantage of those opportunities," he said. "There's no better way to do this than remodeling a dormitory or serving lunch."

-Alex Pagliano, Sabres.com Digital Content Intern

Wednesday, October 23: Rowan Langille Tribute Night

The Buffalo Sabres concluded their Community Assist Week program on Wednesday night at the First Niagara Center with a special tribute to a remarkable young boy named Rowan Langille.

Rowan, a four-year old boy from St. Catharines, Ont., who sadly lost his battle with brain cancer this past summer, had his family, friends and classmates in attendance for the Sabres home game against the Boston Bruins.

A tribute video for Rowan was shown on the big screen during a stoppage of play in the first period.

"Cheerful, happy, always smiling, first one to jump in to do things and outgoing with a big heart," Rowan's mother Ann Langille said fondly about her son during intermission.

"Huge hockey fan, with a really good slap shot in the driveway," his father Shawn Langille added with a smile.

Rowan loved hockey. His older sister plays hockey and he loved going to her games. At home, he could sit and watch hockey on TV with his dad and uncles.

Ann and Shawn say ever since Rowan could walk, he was holding a hockey stick in his hand.

Last season, Rowan's parents took him to his first ever NHL game at the First Niagara Center for a Sabres home game against the Pittsburgh Penguins. He even got to meet Sidney Crosby and received an autographed puck from Ryan Miller.

"It was in February. That was his first ever NHL game and he loved it. He was so excited to meet Sidney Crosby, he had a huge smile on his face," they remembered.

Having a night at the First Niagara Center dedicated to Rowan was appreciated greatly by the Langille family.

"It means a lot; it really does because we didn't realize how many people he touched for only being four years old, for so many people knowing who he is and what he has been through. It means a lot and we really appreciate the Sabres for bringing us here and recognizing him," said Ann Langille.

If Rowan could have talked to the Sabres players during that intermission his parents said he would have told the team to "keep going and never ever give up."

"Because he never gave up on anything...he never quit," they said.

- Rob Poling, Sabres.com – Digital Content Intern

"TICKETS FOR TROOPS" SOLDIERS ON

By Clare Lewis

Sabres.com

October 23, 2013

It's become one of the most memorable moments each night at arenas throughout the NHL, and it's gaining momentum in Buffalo. A member of the Armed Forces is recognized in the stands and the fans stand to give their applause and gratitude.

At each Buffalo Sabres home game, one player donates tickets in the 100 Level to sponsor the "Tickets For Troops" initiative, in which a member of the military from Western New York is honored for their service and dedication.

Over the summer, the opportunity for a new player to donate to "Tickets for Troops" presented itself. Multiple Sabres were interested, and after a drawing, defenseman Mike Weber was chosen as the new face of the program.

When an active service member or veteran is selected to take part, they receive two tickets to a home game along with a Weber jersey and a hat. The jersey is a new addition to the program this year.

"Obviously these men and women do a lot for us, and the jersey was just something extra I wanted to do for them," Weber said. "It's a little thing that I'm doing and I hope it helps give them some of the recognition they deserve."

Weber's generosity ensures that it's a night the service member will not forget, while also creating a special memory for himself as he meets the individuals recognized by the program. Weber meets with the men and women after the game, and the mutual admiration is very apparent throughout.

"It's really exciting to meet them and they've been excited to meet me," said Weber. "A lot of the other players also come in and introduce themselves. What they sacrifice for us and what they do for our country is amazing. I am very humbled and honored to be able to do this."

The influence reaches far beyond the individual service member, Weber, and the rest of the organization. After a recent game, Tyler Ennis took a moment to meet a serviceman's son who was wearing an Ennis jersey. The two chatted for a few moments before Ennis signed the jersey for him.

"We are always very grateful and proud when our players take the initiative to get involved in supporting the community," explained Rich Jureller, the Sabres' Director of Community Relations. "Mike's generosity and commitment to the Tickets for Troops program is a great example of how our players give back to the many deserving individuals in Western New York."

As an American with family serving in the Armed Forces, “Tickets for Troops” holds a special meaning for Weber.

“My brother is in the Air Force Reserves right now. He is an electrical engineer working on the refueling planes based out of Pittsburgh, and he’s done three or four tours of duty overseas,” Weber said. “It is something close to my heart. My grandfather fought in the Korean War, and he was in the Marines, so it is something that has been always been in my life. It’s an honor that I can sponsor ‘Tickets for Troops.’”