



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Ott, Enroth lead Sabres over Panthers, 3-1

By Paul Gereffi
Associated Press
October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) -- Steve Ott scored the go-ahead goal, Jhonas Enroth made 44 saves and the Buffalo Sabres beat the Florida Panthers 3-1 Friday night to win for just the second time in 12 games and break a three-game losing streak.

Rasmus Ristolainen and Cody Hodgson also scored for Buffalo.

The Sabres went ahead 2-1 at 12:42 in the third on Ott's goal. Christian Ehrhoff took a shot from the point and Ott was able to tip it past Jacob Markstrom.

Hodgson scored an empty-net goal with 47 seconds left.

Jesse Winchester scored for Florida and Markstrom stopped 18 shots. Florida lost for the fifth time in six games despite taking a season-high 45 shots.

The Sabres tied it 1-all on Ristolainen's goal at 13:32 of the second period. The 18-year-old rookie took a slap shot from the right circle that got past Markstrom for his first NHL goal.

The Panthers took a 1-0 lead on Winchester's goal in the first period. Sean Bergenheim passed from the left circle across to Winchester, who was able to tip in the puck high into the net at 13:58 for his second goal of the season. It was Bergenheim's first NHL point since April 26, 2012, in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals against New Jersey.

Bergenheim played two games in Finland during the lockout last year, but has spent 18 months recovering from multiple surgeries on his abdomen, groin and hip.

The Panthers outshot the Sabres 18-4 in the first period, and led in shots 34-14 at the end of the second.

NOTES: Florida's 45 shots is a season high and the most since 39 in the season opener at Dallas on Oct. 3. . Florida G Tim Thomas is on injured reserve after a sustaining a lower body injury on Oct. 22 against Chicago. He will be eligible to be activated on Nov. 1. . Buffalo C Cody McCormick, sidelined with a leg injury since Oct. 19, returned to the ice on Friday.

Enroth steals victory over Panthers for Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, Fla. – Rasmus Ristolainen walked out of the arena with a souvenir. Jhonas Enroth should have left with all his teammates' paychecks.

He's the only reason the Sabres departed with a victory.

Enroth made 44 saves to prevent Florida from running away with the game Friday, and Buffalo eventually took advantage of the stellar goaltending. Ristolainen scored his first NHL goal in the second period to make it 1-1, Steve Ott scored the game-winner with 7:18 left and Cody Hodgson sealed the Sabres' 3-1 victory with an empty-net tally in the final minute.

Buffalo moved to 2-9-1 with its first regulation win of the season. If Enroth hadn't kept it close, the Sabres wouldn't have had a chance.

"Jhonas was phenomenal," Ott said. "If it wasn't for what he did out there, we had no business being in the game. It could have went the other way in a hurry. He gave us a chance."

They have a chance for a Sunshine State sweep tonight in Tampa Bay against the Lightning.

"It's a win, and we're desperate for those right now," Ott said. "But we've got a lot to work on. We pulled it out, which was nice, but we can't give up 45 shots."

They can only if they get perfect goaltending, which is what Enroth felt he provided. The only goal came in the first period when Jesse Winchester drove to the net during a three-on-two rush and tapped home an airborne pass from Sean Bergenheim.

"I was very focused all night," Enroth said. "It was a perfect game. That goal they scored was 1 in 100, I think, so it was a really good game for myself."

Enroth improved to 1-2-1 with a 2.24 goals-against average and .932 save percentage.

"This is a little bit special feeling winning the game instead of losing again when you play good," he said. "This is why we play, to win games."

The Sabres' plan to go with youth was historically evident against the Panthers in BB&T Center. They used four teenagers – 19-year-olds Mikhail Grigorenko and Zemgus Girgensons, and 18-year-olds Nikita Zadorov and Ristolainen – and it

was the first time a team dressed that many for a game since Winnipeg did it March 10, 1996.

For the second game in a row, one of the rookies achieved a milestone.

Ristolainen scored with 6:28 left in the second, pulling the Sabres into an undeserved 1-1 tie. The defenseman's wrist shot from the right point slipped through the net-front traffic caused by teammate Cody McCormick and Florida defenseman Erik Gudbranson and got by goalie Jacob Markstrom.

Zadorov scored his first NHL goal Wednesday against Boston.

"It feels great," Ristolainen said. "It was a significant goal for us. We tied the game. The guys were good in front of the net, so the goalie didn't see anything."

Ott got a piece of the puck to give the Sabres their second lead of the season. Christian Ehrhoff took a shot from the point, and Markstrom had no chance as Ott jumped to make contact before tumbling to the ice with 7:18 left in the third.

Until then, the Sabres had led just 9:35 of the opening 11-plus games.

"Usually, we give up a goal with a couple minutes left," Enroth said. "That's huge for us, and hopefully we can start building on that."

The finish took the focus away from the start. The Panthers dominated the shots with an 18-4 lead after one period (the Sabres have been outshot, 166-87, during first periods this season), and Florida became the 11th team in 12 games to put Buffalo in a 1-0 hole.

Sabres coach Ron Rolston spent most of the night juggling his lines in an attempt to find something that worked. He made an interesting switch at the beginning of the game, starting Grigorenko at right wing alongside Ott and center Marcus Foligno. Grigorenko ended up back at his center spot while playing 16:23, the second-highest total of his career. He had one shot.

"We just want to get him some minutes," Rolston said. "He did some good things out there. It's something to build on."

With Sabres dressing seven on D, the key is a lot of talk

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 26, 2013

SUNRISE, Fla. — The Sabres have talked for years about their need to talk more. Buffalo's on-ice communication has been lacking at times, and conversations are vital during games, especially among defensemen. That's true now more than ever.

Because of suspensions and injuries up front, Buffalo has been using seven defensemen, including during Friday's road game against Florida. The odd number means rapid swapping of partners, so the D-men need to chat to make sure each guy knows his role when he gets a new pairing.

"Whenever you're playing with someone new, communication helps a lot," defenseman Tyler Myers said in BB&T Center. "It's definitely a different feeling, but I think all the D within our group know what's expected of us and how we're expected to play within the system."

The Sabres used Myers, Christian Ehrhoff, Mark Pysyk, Mike Weber, Jamie McBain and rookies Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov in the 3-1 win over the Panthers. Henrik Tallinder was a healthy scratch but will return to the lineup tonight against Tampa Bay.

He will likely do so in place of Weber, who suffered an upper-body during the second period against Florida and did not return. The Sabres will likely stay with seven defensemen.

"We'll see how this goes," coach Ron Rolston said. "We're just playing it day-to-day there, and we'll make decisions as we move forward."

Rolston says he's stressed good chatter along the back end, especially for the rookies, while the team is short at forward.

"Communication is vital, and those players as they play in this league understand the importance of it," the coach said. "It's part of their development being able to do that."

The job of rotating the blue-liners falls to assistant coach Teppo Numminen, giving him an early test during his first year on the bench.

"He's been awesome," Pysyk said. "He knows the game and he knows what he's doing."

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John Scott's date with Brendan Shanahan is set for Thursday.

The Sabres' enforcer will have an in-person hearing with the NHL's disciplinarian in New York to determine how many games Scott will be suspended for his head shot to Boston's Loui Eriksson. The meeting coincides with the Sabres' game in New York against the Rangers.

Scott will miss three games before the hearing. He is expected to get at least six games for the illegal hit, which left Eriksson with a concussion.

Patrick Kaleta, meanwhile, said he and his advisers have not yet decided whether to appeal his 10-game suspension to a neutral arbitrator. Commissioner Gary Bettman upheld the ban set by Shanahan, and a new rule in the collective bargaining agreement allows for an impartial hearing for suspensions of six games or more.

Kaleta has already sat for seven games. Because the 10 games might be up before a hearing is completed, a reduction in the suspension would likely result only in some of the in lost salary being returned.

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Rolston scratched Tallinder for the first time this season. The veteran blue-liner made a bad mistake during the previous game, allowing the Bruins to get an odd-man rush and score.

"He's played well for us," Rolston said. "He's a presence in our room. He offers leadership. We've liked his game. He'll be back in there."

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Center Kevin Porter cleared waivers and was sent to the Rochester Americans, a move that was hard for Rolston because he has been Porter's biggest backer.

"It's always the toughest thing you have to do is cut somebody, waive somebody," the coach said. "I have a lot of respect for him."

Sabres, Enroth top Panthers for second win

By Alain Poupart

NHL.com

October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, Fla. -- The Buffalo Sabres got a rare victory Friday night, and they can thank goalie Jhonas Enroth for it.

Enroth stopped 44 shots and Steve Ott broke a 1-1 tie with 7:18 left in the third period to help the Sabres beat the Florida Panthers 3-1 at BB&T Center for only their second victory in 12 games.

"Jhonas was phenomenal," Ott said. "If it wasn't for what he did out there, we had no business being in the game. It could have gone the other way in a hurry. He gave us a chance."

Enroth, making his fourth start of the season and his first in five games, earned his first victory. He came into the game with an 0-2-1 record despite a 2.66 goals-against average and .909 save percentage.

"This is a special feeling, winning the game instead of losing when you play good," Enroth said. "I think I played a pretty perfect game ... well, it was a perfect game; that goal they scored is one out of a hundred, I think, so it was a good game for me."

Enroth won a battle of Swedish goalies against Florida's Jacob Markstrom, who made 18 saves in his sixth start of the season.

Enroth also beat his former coach with the Portland Pirates of the American Hockey League, Kevin Dineen, who coached him for three seasons before becoming coach of the Panthers.

"I know what his capabilities are," Dineen said. "I also know his weaknesses. That's as well as I've ever seen him play."

Rookie Rasmus Ristolainen, the eighth pick in the 2013 NHL Draft, scored his first NHL goal for the Sabres (2-9-1). Cody Hodgson added an empty-netter with 46.6 seconds left.

Buffalo won despite being outshot 45-21.

"It's a win, and we're desperate for those right now, but we've got a lot to work on," Ott said. "We pulled it out, which was nice, but we can't give up 45 shots."

Jesse Winchester scored for the Panthers (3-7-1) off an assist from forward Sean Bergenheim, playing in his first NHL game since the 2012 Eastern Conference Quarterfinals.

The Panthers have been held to two goals or less in each of their past four games.

"Whatever hockey gods are out there, they're definitely not shining on us right now with our bounces," Panthers right wing Kris Versteeg said. "I really have no answers. The effort is there and we're putting pucks at the net. For whatever reason, it's not going in. We had a great effort tonight. Hopefully, something turns around. I think with the guys we have in this room, it can turn around, but we definitely need some bounces or something because it's a little disheartening for everyone in this room."

This was the first of four meetings between the new Atlantic Division foes, with the next one scheduled for Jan. 9 in Buffalo.

Because of the suspensions of forwards John Scott and Patrick Kaleta, the Sabres played with seven defensemen and 11 forwards, but defenseman Mike Weber left the game in the second period because of a shoulder injury.

Ott scored when he tipped Christian Ehrhoff's shot from the point. It was the Sabres captain's first goal of the season.

"That was a huge goal for us to score in the third," Enroth said. "Usually we give up the goal with a couple minutes left. That's huge for us, and hopefully we can start building on that."

Ristolainen followed fellow 2013 Sabres first-round pick Nikita Zadorov in scoring his first NHL goal when his seemingly harmless wrist shot from the point beat Markstrom to the stick side in the second period. Markstrom was screened by Sabres forward Cody McCormick and Panthers defenseman Erik Gudbranson jostling for position in front of the net. McCormick and Gudbranson ended up fighting after the goal.

Zadorov, the 16th pick in the 2013 draft, scored his first goal Wednesday during a 5-2 loss against the Boston Bruins.

"Risto's got a big shot, he's got a nice shot from the point, but Cody McCormick paid the price," Sabres coach Ron Rolston said. "He was able to get it through."

Winchester opened the scoring at 13:58 of the first period when he batted Bergenheim's cross-ice pass to the front of the net out of midair.

Bergenheim had 11:59 of ice time, including 5:26 in the third period, and had two shots on goals in his first NHL game in almost 18 months. He missed all of last season and the first 10 games this season because of abdomen, groin and hip issues.

"I thought Bergy had a good, solid game," Dineen said. "He made good, solid plays. He was in there creating offense. He had a lot of try and a lot of push. Unfortunately, like the rest of us he couldn't find the back of the net."

Buffalo has now been outscored 15-1 in the first period this season.

The Panthers outshot Buffalo 18-4 in the first period, recording a season high for shots in a period. The previous high was 15 in the third period of their 4-2 victory against the Dallas Stars in their season opener Oct. 3. Florida also ended up with a season high for a game with their 45 shots.

Buffalo did have one great scoring opportunity that didn't result in a shot, as Drew Stafford hit the post on a backhand after coming in alone on Markstrom.

The Panthers had hit the post earlier in the period when Marcel Goc fired a wrist shot from the right circle.

Florida had several good scoring chances in the second period, but Enroth came up big. His best stop came against Tomas Fleischmann on a shot from the front of the net.

"Jhonas was excellent [Friday night], especially early on to keep us in the game," Rolston said. "He's been great all year when he's been in there and gives us a chance to win, just like [Ryan Miller] does every night, and the guys were able to battle in the third to get him the two points."

Sabres forward Scott to have hearing Oct. 31

NHL.com

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Buffalo Sabres left wing John Scott will have a hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety on Thursday, Oct. 31 for a hit on Boston Bruins forward Loui Eriksson during the game Oct. 23 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 match penalty for illegal check to the head, 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 Thursday that Eriksson has a concussion and is out indefinitely.

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

Boston won the game 5-2.

Mike Milbury correct with criticism of John Scott

By Chad Finn

Boston Globe

October 25, 2013

NBC pays Mike Milbury to be opinionated, and it's easy to wonder sometimes if he gets a scaled bonus depending upon how far he goes over the top.

But Milbury deserves a stick tap for being prescient before Wednesday night's Bruins-Sabres matchup on the NBC Sports Network and compellingly blunt afterward.

Here is what Milbury had to say about Sabres enforcer John Scott on the pregame show "NHL Live": "This guy is a goon. It's bad enough in Buffalo without having this guy on your roster. I don't know what he's doing in the league."

And here's Milbury on Scott on the "NHL Overtime" postgame show after Scott's flagrant and vicious elbow to the head of Loui Eriksson knocked the Bruins forward from the game early in the third period: "This was bound to happen. This guy is a predator. He was put out there to seek and destroy."

Milbury didn't just blast Scott, who was suspended indefinitely by the NHL on Thursday. His comments on Sabres coach Ron Rolston, who may not have had the purest of motives by putting the talent-deficient Scott on the ice with a two-goal deficit, were the verbal equivalent of whacking a person with his own shoe.

"The talk in Buffalo is that this guy [Rolston] is in over his head," said Milbury, who referred to both Rolston and Scott as meatheads. "I'll tell you right now, he's in way over his head. In fact, he's drowning. That's a bush-league play by a coach that doesn't know any better, 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. I'm saddened by it."

Because he is incurably blunt, sometimes Milbury's commentary comes across as rabble-rousing shtick, even if it's coming from an honest place. But Wednesday night, in the aftermath of an incident that should anger all hockey fans, he could not have been more on point.

Money can't buy happiness for Buffalo Sabres fans

By Damien Cox

Hamilton Spectator

October 25, 2013

February 18, 2011, was supposed to be the day that the world changed for the Buffalo Sabres.

That was the day Terry Pegula, an owner with buckets of cash who loves hockey, officially assumed control of the team that the Knox Brothers founded.

No more poverty. No more bankruptcy. No more getting by on the cheap. No more being the feeder squad for the rich boys.

All good.

Instead, it's pretty much been all bad. The team is off to the worst start in franchise history and has become a yet another case study on how money doesn't always cure all in pro sports.

Two black eyes on the franchise, a 10-game suspension to uber-rat Patrick Kaleta (upheld on Thursday by Gary Bettman) and an upcoming suspension to gong show artist John Scott for his ridiculous Wednesday evening cheap shot on Boston's Loui Eriksson are just symptoms, really, of an organization that seems to have completely lost its mind.

It dresses muscle and unprepared teenagers, canned one of the best coaches in hockey to bring in a novice, has swung in two years from having the highest payroll in hockey to the 25th highest and may be in danger of having franchise goalie Ryan Miller walk out the door as a free agent next summer.

What happened to a team that used to be universally respected for being the little engine that could?

"The thing's a mess. It's a fire. It's the Titanic," opined commentator and former NHL general manager Mike Milbury.

Given Milbury's past on Long Island, he might well be able to recognize the sinking ship, if not the iceberg ahead.

Pegula inherited a team that had record back-to-back seasons of 100- and 96-points and has taken it straight downward. He threw money at the Sabres back in the summer of 2011 — GM Darcy Regier later acknowledged that was a culture shock the organization couldn't handle — by giving outrageous free agent deals to Ville Leino and Christian Ehrhoff, and re-signed youngsters Drew Stafford and Tyler Myers to big deals.

Instead of responding positively to the infusion of cash, the Sabres haven't made the playoffs since and are already basically out of it this season.

Right now, the anger seems largely directed at Regier, in his 16th year at the helm of the Sabres. But it seems to be increasingly targeted at Pegula, who has become seemingly distanced from the team and never publicly commented on either the firing of longtime coach Lindy Ruff or the results of last season.

Buffalo News columnist Bucky Gleason suggested on Thursday it's time for fans to start staying away if they want change.

"(Pegula) can say whatever he pleases, but he's like many NHL owners," wrote Gleason. "NHL owners are businessmen. They equate success to attendance. They equate attendance to acceptance. Sabres fans have come to accept failure. For now, Pegula has no pressure to listen to a fan base desperate for change."

The team has played badly, partly because Ron Rolston is icing a lineup that includes a variety of green youngsters. But the antics of Kaleta — disciplined by the league six times in the last four years — and Scott has made a bad situation embarrassing.

The two Sabres have compiled a personal hit parade of skilled NHL players that includes Phil Kessel, Eriksson, Travis Zajac, Jack Johnson, Jakub Voracek, Derek Morris and Brad Richards.

Kaleta had his 10-game suspension upheld by Bettman on Thursday, who wrote a lengthy dissertation which laid out in detail the winger's sordid history.

Scott, meanwhile, was suspended indefinitely by the NHL for his hit on Eriksson, who sustained a brain injury. The 31-year-old Scott pleaded for understanding on Thursday.

"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."

Nobody, however, seems to be buying what Scott, who got his coach fined but escaped punishment himself after a pre-season fracas in Toronto, was selling.

"John Scott is an embarrassment to hockey, let alone the Sabres," wrote Gleason. "He's among several players in Buffalo, along with their coach, who have no business being in the NHL."

The Buffalo hockey public and the local media are in an uproar, and even the surprising presence of four first-round picks from the past two years in the lineup

already — Europeans Mikhail Grigorenko, Zemgus Girgensons, Nikita Zadorov and Rasmus Ristolainen — hasn't inspired confidence there's a plan in place to bring success back to western New York any time soon.

Money was supposed to bring the Sabres happiness, not misery.

Haggerty: No place for goons like Scott in NHL anymore

By Joe Haggerty

CSN New England

October 25, 2013

What happened on Wednesday night in Buffalo was an embarrassment on so many levels.

From the outset it was pretty clear that the Buffalo Sabres were a rudderless group of skaters without much in the way of discipline and organization. Guys like Tyler Ennis were visibly loafing on shifts and giving up on plays that hung his teammates out to dry when they passed the puck to the area the diminutive forward was supposed to be. For a group of players to do that in a divisional game in October after getting out to a 1-8-1 start to the season is a pretty severe indictment on the lack of urgency fostered in a dressing room managed by Ron Rolston.

Unfortunately it went a lot deeper than a hockey team simply going through the motions in the third period of Boston's 5-2 victory over the Sabres at the First Niagara Center, and one of Boston's core players will miss games because of that. The wanton disregard for player safety that both Patrick Kaleta and John Scott have shown opponents throughout this dreadful start to Buffalo's season raise plenty of red flags about a lawless group running amok in Buffalo.

That's exactly what NBCSN hockey analyst Mike Milbury was getting at in a scathing diatribe against Rolston and the Sabres on Wednesday night during the postgame show NHL Overtime, and Made Mike was dead on.

"The talk in Buffalo is that this guy [Rolston] is in over his head. I'll tell you right now, he's in way over his head. In fact, he's drowning. That's a bush-league play by a coach that doesn't know any better, doesn't have enough experience in the league, and shouldn't be afforded another game – not one," said Milbury. "That's an embarrassment to the league, and to the Buffalo Sabres. I'm saddened by it. Before the league has a chance to step in, the Sabres should fire him. His team has no discipline . . . It's a mess."

Unfortunately, the milk has already been spilt with both Rolston and Scott after the 6-foot-8 Buffalo behemoth clobbered Loui Eriksson in the jaw with a dangerous blind side check to the head. Just as unfortunate was the Buffalo Sabres game operations workers playing Scott's "Big Bad John" theme song as Eriksson's teammates carried their spaghetti-legged winger off the ice never to return.

Bruins GM Peter Chiarelli released a statement on Thursday afternoon saying that Eriksson suffered a concussion due to the hit, and is out indefinitely.

Scott has been suspended indefinitely pending an in-person hearing for his actions, and that gives the NHL Department of Player Safety the freedom, per the CBA, to suspend him for more than five games. Brendan Shanahan should go far above and beyond a simple run-of-the-mill five game suspension, and make an example of one of the few true hockey goons still staining the sport.

Amazingly, Scott spoke with the Buffalo media on Thursday a day removed from the incident and tried to claim he didn't intend to hurt Eriksson.

"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."

"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. 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."

A million goals?

How about one goal scored in 187 career games, and the whopping 4:57 of ice time he's averaged this season for the Sabres?

The thought was Scott was an honest player that adhered to "The Code" prior to this season, and that was clearly the case when he whipped Thornton in a fight that concussed Boston's enforcer last season. But chasing after Phil Kessel during a face-off in the preseason and throwing a dirty, vicious head shot at a Lady Byng finalist are about as far away from "The Code" as somebody could get.

In an ideal world Shanahan would simply kick Scott out of the NHL, and make the statement that there's no place in the game for "players" that can't skate, pass, shoot, defend or do anything discernible aside from throw punches and scramble brains.

"This was bound to happen," lamented Milbury in the postgame after labeling Scott a "goon" during the NHL Live pregame show. "This guy is a predator. He was put out there to seek and destroy."

Old fashioned hockey goons like Scott are simply NHL dinosaurs that should already be extinct, and should have long completely deferred to enforcers like Shawn Thornton, Brandon Prust and Arron Asham that can both fight and still actually play the game well enough for a regular shift.

That won't happen in this age of NHLPA appeals for true hockey villains like Kaleta and Scott, but hopefully the NHL comes out of the gate swinging and clobbers Scott with a 10-15 game suspension. Perhaps then he'll get the message that the thug-like behavior won't be tolerated on the ice, and then Scott will quickly be gone from the league given his utter lack of anything resembling a hockey skill.

Instead of attempting to outlaw the act of hockey fighting that still has a place at the NHL level, a good first step would be flushing one dimensional goons like Scott out of the league once and for all.

Hey John Scott critics, NHL already missed boat on Patrick Kaleta

By Chris Stevenson

Ottawa Sun

October 26, 2013

Sorry, everybody who wants Buffalo Sabres tough guy John Scott made an example of, run out the NHL on a rail after he's been drawn and quartered and tarred and feathered.

The NHL missed its chance to make the big statement everybody seems to want now when it went light on Scott's miscreant teammate, Patrick Kaleta.

Kaleta got 10 games for his hit to the head of Columbus Blue Jackets defenceman Jack Johnson, mostly due to his previous stupidity, and if there was a chance to try and make a heavy ban stick through the inevitable appeal process, that was the one.

Scott is an easy target for the folks who are blending the anti-fighting and targeting-the-head arguments, ignoring the fact this is the first time Scott has gone off the rails with this type of hit.

He's big and lumbering, all he does is fight and is everything that's wrong with the NHL right now, according to some (never mind that Jacques Lemaire, who I think was a pretty good coach, found him useful enough to give him an average of nine minutes and 14 seconds of ice time per game in the 2008-09 season with the Minnesota Wild.)

The NHL has to eradicate the type of hit Scott gave Loui Eriksson of the Boston Bruins, but it's been a slow process.

Would a big suspension help? It helped scare Matt Cooke straight after a few tries, but hasn't done much for the rest of the league.

I just don't think given the current process under this new CBA that Scott is the right guy to be a poster boy, never mind he's entitled to due process like everybody else.

HEAR AND THERE: For people opining that a crackdown on fighting in the junior ranks -- like the OHL's escalating penalties for additional fighting majors or the "one-fight rule" introduced by the Canadian Junior Hockey League this week -- is going to ultimately cut off the NHL's supply of fighters, I offer this point: two of the toughest guys in the league, Scott and George Parros of the Montreal Canadiens, are products of the U.S. college system. Scott played at Michigan Tech and Parros, ahem, Princeton ... There's been lots of negativity around the NHL this week -- rightly so -- but there was a great moment at the Bell Centre Thursday night when Canadiens fans saluted ex-captain Saku Koivu of the Anaheim Ducks on what might have been his last game in Montreal. Good

on the Habs for putting him on the big screen during the national anthems to start it off. Good on Ducks coach Bruce Boudreau for putting him out for the last shift of the game. "I was waiting to do that," said Boudreau. "I just wish it was under better circumstances (the Ducks lost 4-1). He deserves it." Nice touch to have him named the third star for a final ovation, too ... A good indication of what Koivu meant to the Habs: former teammates Francis Bouillon and Tomas Plekanec hung around the Habs bench to watch him take his star turn and offered him a wave. You don't see that often.

THE BUZZ: OK, so Montreal's Lars Eller beaked off with his "junior team" comment about the Edmonton Oilers, but Oilers coach Dallas Eakins sure piled on with his post-game comments. If the Oilers need a slight -- intended or not -- to get them to play a decent game, what's that say about Eakins' motivational abilities on a nightly basis? ... Alex Ovechkin has 31 goals in his previous 30 regular-season games -- the hottest guy since Hall of Famer Pavel Bure in 2001 -- and it'd be cool if he could do 50-in-50, even if it is over two seasons. Ovechkin hasn't been picking his spots, either: of his 10 goals this season, four of them have come with the game tied, one with the Caps up by one and one with the Caps down by one.

JUST WONDERING: If San Jose Sharks goaltender Antti Niemi had English-speaking nieces and nephews, what do you think they would call him? ... The Ducks were awful Thursday night in Montreal. Why is that? Said one ex-NHLer who knows about these things: "They looked like a team that enjoyed Montreal."

JUST SAYING: The Boston Bruins pushed to get forward Alex Chiasson in the deal that had Tyler Seguin going to the Dallas Stars and Loui Eriksson coming back to Beantown. They got forward Reilly Smith and, instead of Chiasson, Matt Fraser. Smith was playing with Patrice Bergeron and Eriksson before the latter was hit by Scott and has been one of the nice surprises of the early season. Ditto for Chiasson's five goals to lead the Stars. If the Bruins had been able to get Chiasson in the deal, that really would have been a winner ... I enjoy a robust, spontaneous hockey fight in the heat of the battle (think Jarome Iginla against Vincent Lecavalier in the 2004 Stanley Cup final) and I'd be in favour of giving the referees latitude to give players a game misconduct for a fight off a faceoff. The skirmish between Montreal's Michael Blunden and Anaheim's Patrick Maroon Thursday night was a waste of everybody's time.

THE LAST WORD: Sorry, but hearing Edmonton Oilers defenceman Andrew Ference pontificating on Scott's hit loses a little of its credibility when one is reminded of a collision between Ference's shoulder and the head of then Montreal Canadien Jeff Halpern #accidentallyonpurpose.

chris.stevenson@sunmedia.ca

twitter.com/CJ_Stevenson

SOMETHING (Not So) SPECIAL

Anaheim Ducks

Power-Play Situations: 39

Goals: 3

Percentage: 7.7%

Rank: 30

The Ducks went 0-for-3 on the power play in their game against the Montreal Canadiens Thursday night to continue their struggles with the man advantage this season. They are now 2-for-23 at home and 1-for-16 on the road heading into their game against the Senators in Ottawa Friday. So what's the problem? It's the absence of any real scoring threat from the blueline. They don't have a defenceman with even one goal this season, never mind a goal on the power play. Without that threat from the point, teams can cheat on their power play and gang up down low on forward threats like Corey Perry, Ryan Getzlaf and Teemu Selanne.

GO FIGURE

13,216

The number of kilometres the Anaheim Ducks will travel on their 16-day road trip to Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Columbus, Philadelphia, Boston, Buffalo and New York. They go home for a four-game homestand and then hit the road for another four-game road trip. That's a stretch of 12 out of 16 games on the road. The trip is not off to a good start with losses to the Leafs and Habs going into Friday's game against the Senators.

1

The number of wins the New York Rangers have with one game left in their season-opening stretch of nine games on the road (they were ousted from Madison Square Garden while renovations are being done). The Rangers have been outscored 31-12 so far. They play the Red Wings in Detroit to close out the trip and play their home opener Monday night against the Montreal Canadiens.

1

The number of goaltenders who have played every minute of their teams' games so far. That would be Antti Niemi of the San Jose Sharks. He has played 549 minutes. Do you even know who is the Sharks backup? There are six teams that have played their backup for just one game: Boston, Montreal, Pittsburgh,

Columbus, New York Islanders and the Winnipeg Jets. Sharks No. 2 goaltender? Alex Stalock.

1

The number of times the Chicago Blackhawks have trailed by two goals so far this season. That came in the first period of what turned out to be a 6-5 overtime loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning Thursday night when they gave up goals to Matt Carle on the power play and a shortie to Nate Thompson. Things have been close for the 'Hawks so far this season. Eight of their 10 games have been decided by one goal.

THE BLOCK MARKET

A bi-weekly snapshot of the race for the starting goaltender's job with Canada's Olympic hockey team. Signs of improvement. (Stats are as of Thursday's night's games).

Last Rank W L OT/SO GAA S% The skinny

1. Carey Price, Montreal Canadiens 5 5 4 0 2.13 .936 Save percentage up almost 30 points in two weeks.
2. Marc-Andre Fleury, Pittsburgh Penguins 2 7 1 0 1.74 .930 I know, I know. You still don't trust him, do you?
3. Corey Crawford, Chicago Blackhawks 3 5 1 2 2.04 .921 Dropped GAA by almost a goal in last two weeks.
4. Roberto Luongo, Vancouver Canucks 1 6 3 1 2.54 .908 Reigning champ in a tough bout to keep his job.
5. Mike Smith, Phoenix Coyotes 6 5 2 2 3.08 .907 273 saves second only to Price's 277 so far this season.
6. Jean-Sebastien Giguere, Colorado Avalanche NR 3 0 0 0.67 .981 Interesting to see if former Cup winner keeps it up.
7. Braden Holtby, Washington Capitals 8 4 4 0 2.78 .919 .920 SP at even strength leaves him behind the leaders.
8. Jonathan Bernier, Toronto Maple Leafs 4 5 3 0 2.12 .936 Numbers have weakened considerably after hot start.
9. Martin Brodeur, New Jersey Devils 7 0 2 2 3.40 .865 Looks like he's 1B behind Schneider in New Jersey.

FRESH BATTERIES

A look at your best bet for quality viewing in the upcoming NHL week:

Wednesday

Boston Bruins at Pittsburgh Penguins

This is going to be the first regular-season meeting since the Bruins hammered the Penguins in last spring's Eastern Conference final, sweeping them while allowing the talented Penguins just two goals.

Thursday

Buffalo Sabres at New York Rangers

There's three games on the schedule on Halloween night. Do you think there's any chance the Sabres show up with the best costume and pose as a legitimate NHL team? Nah, didn't think so.

Buffalo Sabres are a complete embarrassment, from John Scott to owner

By Ryan Lambert

Yahoo Sports

October 25, 2013

Let's first acknowledge that it's not the Buffalo Sabres' fault that they are the way they are.

Every cheap hit in the last few years, every embarrassing fistic melodrama, is entirely the fault of Milan Lucic for running over Ryan Miller and getting away with it.

This was not only on the ice when no one from the Sabres tried to fight him in the immediate aftermath, but also because the League barely even gave the incident a second look. Dug a deep chip into the organization's shoulder, and ever since the league — including the Bruins (but not Lucic himself) — has been paying the price.

That incident led the Sabres' abhorrent and incompetent general manager to go out that summer and acquire John Scott and Steve Ott in a misguided and ultimately tragic pursuit of "toughness," and that summer also gave Patrick Kaleta a three-year extension for the exact same idiotic reason.

The incident in which Scott tried to hit Loui Eriksson's head, in such a way that it screwed up and off his body like a bottle cap, is just the latest point which highlights why the Sabres don't deserve to even compete in the National Hockey League this season, and the reasons why are obvious.

What, for example, was Scott, who is widely known as perhaps the most pathetic actual hockey player in the NHL (even Paul Bissonnette has the bomb of a one-timer, right?) doing on the ice against the other team's top line in the third period of a game his team was losing by two goals?

The answer wasn't "generating a goal that would bring the team back within one," though at this point in the season you could probably say that about any Sabres player not named Thomas Vanek or Cody Hodgson, because they're almost as useless in attack as Scott is. The Sabres have 14 goals this season in 11 games, which is just sad. You'd have to think even a pretty-good AHL team would have more than that.

The hit was so clearly intended to do what it did, though, that it leads one to ask a very simple question:

How stupid is Scott, really?

All the evidence you've ever needed came as he was sitting in the box, waiting for word that of course he was getting five and a match penalty. He literally said, incredulous that this was the call, "Headshot?"

With a question mark.

Can you imagine how dumb, or at least ignorant, you have to be to drill someone in the chin like that a good second after he releases the puck, see the guy helped off the ice by two teammates, and try to act as though you did not in fact do the thing you just did? If he thought he was fooling anyone, he's an idiot. If he thought he didn't hit Eriksson in the head, he is absurdly negligent and has no place in the league.

Well, he has no place in the league regardless, but you see the point.

On the other hand, maybe Scott really didn't know it was a headshot, and his brain does work about as well as he plays hockey. In that case, he is just a dangerous idiot, unaware of his own injurious capabilities. At least George had the common decency to take Lennie out to the pond and put him out of his misery. That the Sabres continue to not only pay him hundreds of thousands of dollars, but use him in the lineup just about every night, tells you all you need to know about the kind of malicious intent with which they enter every game.

(Scott, by the way, definitely seems like the kind of person who accidentally hugged a rabbit to death as a kid.)

The problem with suspending Scott is that this does nothing to hurt a team that apparently needs to have an entire library's worth of books thrown at it before it gets any kind of message.

Give him five, 10, hell even 40 games. What happens? Oh no, they can't dress a useless piece of trash for those games! What are they going to do, call up a good player from the AHL and give him more minutes than John freaking Scott? How will they ever deal with that kind of tough bounce?

(This goes without mentioning, by the way, that Scott is somehow not a repeat offender and likely won't catch as much in the way of a suspension as all that.)

But it's all for the team, right? That's why Scott still has a job in this league, isn't it? Well when given the chance to talk about the incident, Scott predictably turtled, preferring instead to say nothing — or maybe because he couldn't find an primatologist to translate his grunts and gestures. Instead, he let his teammates offer their own sheepish no-comments because there was nothing they could say that wouldn't have been seen as stabbing him in the back.

Obviously, though, the continual use of Scott is an organizational imperative. They have more skilled players they could be using, but they choose not to

because of toughness and the importance placed on it by this misguided and woebegone circus of a hockey team. Perhaps it's to serve as a distraction from the fact that the Sabres employ two of the dirtiest players in hockey, and seem not to discourage those that don't fall into this category from similar behavior.

Wednesday's incident, for instance, overshadowed the fact that Kevin Porter tried to board Torey Krug earlier in the game. If he had waited an extra half-stride, the crosscheck he put right between the numbers while the rookie defenseman was trying to retrieve the puck near the endboards would have resulted in a major penalty, rather than a minor, and likely a call from Brendan Shanahan.

That it didn't is only happenstance, and perhaps incompetence on Porter's part. I'd say you'll get 'em next time, kid, but the team just put you on waivers.

Of course, not even having John Scott act as a diversion isn't enough to hide what a dirtbag Patrick Kaleta is. The fact that there are players in the NHLPA upset that he's even wasting union resources appealing the suspension tells you the low opinion his brethren have of him, largely because of what he's likely to do to them the second they turn their back to him on the ice. Kaleta's actions at any given moment of his career are highly likely to be inexcusable, probably even among his teammates, but he's still getting 10 minutes a night in Buffalo over the course of his unfortunate career.

It's only fitting, really, that Steve Ott is the captain of this ship of fools.

He hasn't faced supplementary discipline in a while, but the three suspensions and a fine he picked up early in his career tell you everything you need to know about him. Here he is running Gregory Campbell. Here he is low-bridging Stephane Yelle. This kind of thing is very instructive as to what the Sabres value: garbage, plain and simple.

Maybe he's good in the room, but leading by example? Hoo boy.

That game where he tried to take out Yelle's knees, he also took a number of other runs at Bruins players, then refused to fight Shawn Thornton, Shane Hnidy, Zdeno Chara, or Milan Lucic to back it up — as per The Code — and instead let Sean Avery take on Andrew Ference instead. When you're deferring in the honor and toughness department to Sean Avery, you're a coward and weasel of the lowest order, slumped so close to the ground that it's a wonder the front of his jersey doesn't have ice shavings on it after every shift.

This hidebound view of how to play hockey when you're not good enough to win is obviously pushed by new coach Ron Rolston, who's as complicit in Scott and Kaleta's actions as anyone else.

Again, Scott was out there in the final period of a two-goal game, and you don't send him over the boards with anything but malice. He might not have said, "Go

take someone's head off, Johnny," but he didn't need to. That's implicit in putting him out there at all. Even if you were senseless enough to ask him to score, he's still going to be the scorpion that stings the frog taking him across the river; you can't expect him to not-do the thing he's only ever been asked to do.

This is true of Kaleta as well. Kaleta's role is to make sure everyone on the ice has their head on a swivel, and maybe thinks twice about turning to face the boards, because if they do, there's a good chance they're getting their faces mashed into them at 60 miles an hour.

Mike Milbury was overstating things when he said Rolston should be fired — again, the Sabres probably view this kind of thing as meritorious because of how deranged they've grown — but supplemental discipline? Absolutely. He already got a \$10,000 fine for player selection (not coincidentally also involving Scott) a month ago. That was the preseason, and nothing even happened, really, as a result. This was in a real game, and did real damage to an actual first-line player. The fine has to be more considerable, and he should be suspended too. John Tortorella was suspended for a game in 2009 for squirting a fan with a water bottle, then throwing it into the stands, and really, this is so much worse.

And that's the thing: These are the kinds of players the Sabres can roll at any time, and if this is going to be their response every time they're down a few goals in the third period, the other teams might just stop coming out of the dressing room so they don't get one of their best players killed.

Maybe with no one else out there Buffalo can actually complete a comeback. There's still 71 games left of this season, and that's a lot of opportunity for someone to really get hurt very badly. Scott and Kaleta probably won't even be suspended for a healthy percentage of them.

If you're Miller or Vanek or anyone else with an expiring contract, how do you not demand a trade right this second? Who would want to go down with this ship? Not only is it taking on water at a rate that makes the Titanic look like a minor nautical inconvenience, it's also morally indefensible. Imagine having to answer questions about the latest disgusting on-ice incident du jour for another six months? Good lord.

Whether you'd actually be traded is another matter entirely, given that the guy running your team is just about the worst general manager in all of professional sports. Again, that Darcy Regier allowed his team to grow this bad is entirely entirely the overreaction to the Miller/Lucic accident, and that's even after the terrible contracts extended to Ville Leino (four more years at \$4.5 million per), Tyler Myers (six more at \$5.5 million a season), Christian Ehrhoff (\$4 million per through 2021, at which point he will be pushing 40). Plus the Kaleta and Scott extensions this summer.

There's also the matter of the mishandling of Mikhail Grigorenko under his purview, and a litany of other baffling decisions, but it's only recently that even the dumbest of dumb Buffalo fans have started calling for his head. Filling the rink and chanting "Fire Darcy" is all well and good, but you dummies are still buying tickets.

And that's really all fanboy owner Terry Pegula cares about. Remember all the proclamations when he first bought the team — no, not the ones about winning multiple Stanley Cups, although, haha — that he wasn't in this to make money? "If I want to make money, I'll go drill another natural gas well," and whatever else he said. Well, ticket prices went up between \$1 and \$4 for 2011-12, between \$2 and \$8 for the partially locked-out 2012-13 campaign, and an additional \$1 to \$4 this year. During that time, the Sabres point totals dropped from 43 to 39 to 21 to (currently) three.

And also, Pegula is the one signing off on all transactions. He had to rubber-stamp the Leino and Ehrhoff and Myers and Kaleta and Scott contracts. He had to OK the Ott trade. He had to approve the Rolston hire. He has continually given his vote of confidence to Regier, who's done nothing to deserve it. Hell, he probably had to sign off on that third jersey.

From top to bottom, this is an organization bereft of reason, care or accountability, and it probably always will be because they're still selling close to 96 percent of their seats for home games. Nothing is going to change because nothing has to change. It's tough to say fans are complicit, per se, but by purchasing tickets they're voting with their wallets. And that vote is for disgusting, deleterious hockey. Straight ticket.

It's reprehensible and unjustifiable. And it's not going to change.

Buffalo Sabres losing but opponents pay the price

By Gregg Patton

The Abu Dhabi National

October 25, 2013

The more Buffalo Sabres lose, the worse it gets for their opponents' health.

At least that's the way it appears with the woeful Sabres, who seem to be taking out their frustrations in an increasingly dangerous way.

The team's towering enforcer, the 117kg John Scott, and Patrick Kaleta, another noted "bad boy", were suspended in back-to-back games in the past week for taking cheap shots at opponents.

Kaleta earned a 10-game penalty for an illegal, brutal body check on defenceman (and defenceless) Jack Johnson of the Columbus Blue Jackets. It was the fourth suspension of Kaleta's crude career. His past offences were cited in the league ruling, and may have doubled his sentence.

Four days later, against Boston Bruins, Scott charged across the ice and whacked Loui Eriksson on the jaw with an upraised arm.

Eriksson, wobbly, was helped off the ice. Scott received a match penalty and word from the NHL that a suspension, length to be determined, is coming.

The Sabres are 1-9-1, leading to speculation that their coach, Ron Rolston, will be replaced.

There may be another, better reason to see him gone. Rolston mysteriously sent the little-used brute Scott onto the ice against Boston in the third period of a relatively clean game, with Buffalo losing 4-2. Scott has not scored a goal in four years.

For the safety of non-Buffalo players, we can only hope the Sabres start winning, or the irritated Rolston stops using his players like cudgels.

Kevin Porter clears waivers, assigned to Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 25, 2013

BUFFALO – Kevin Porter cleared waivers today and will go to the Rochester Americans, where the center starred last season before the Sabres summoned him in February.

With forward Cody McCormick returning from a two-game absence tonight after blocking a shot last week, the Sabres created room on the 23-man roster by waiving Porter on Thursday.

The 27-year-old was pointless in nine games this season and had been scratched twice.

He captained the Amerks last season, compiling 15 goals and 44 points in 48 games. The Sabres recalled him Feb. 20, the same day they promoted coach Ron Rolston from their AHL affiliate.

Porter had four goals and nine points in 31 NHL games last season.

His presence puts the Amerks over the veteran limit, according to the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle's Kevin Oklobzija, meaning they'll have to sit an experienced player.

The Sabres play the Panthers tonight in Florida. The Amerks, meanwhile, have a road contest against the Hamilton Bulldogs.

In other news, John Scott has a 10 a.m. in-person hearing Thursday in New York for his headshot on Boston's Loui Eriksson on Wednesday, according to Sportsnet's John Shannon. The NHL has suspended the tough guy indefinitely. The Sabres face the Rangers the same day.

Sabres top Panthers to record rare win

By Walter Villa
The Sports Xchange
October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, Fla. -- In 11 games entering Friday, the Buffalo Sabres enjoyed a lead for a combined total of less than 10 minutes.

That's astonishing, but the Sabres were able to chip away a bit at that negative trend Friday night.

Sabres captain Steve Ott scored with 7:18 left in the third period and Buffalo held on from there to get a rare win, beating the Florida Panthers 3-1 at the BB&T Center.

"We were able to get a couple of point shots through, and on both goals we had some good net presence," Sabres coach Ron Rolston said.

The Sabres entered Friday with the worst record in the NHL at 1-9-1. Their only previous win came in a shootout.

On the winning goal, defenseman Christian Enrhoff put a slap shot on net while Ott, creating traffic in front, got the tip to make it 2-1.

"There was a wide open lane for me to go out on front," Ott said. "I was lucky enough to get a tip on it."

Sabres backup goaltender Jhonas Enroth, giving Ryan Miller a night off, took it from there and finished the night with 44 saves.

"'Jhony' was excellent for us, especially early on to keep us in the game," Rolston said. "He's been great all year. He's given us a chance to win, just like (Miller) does every night."

Enroth, who hadn't played in a week and a half, said he was tired but ready to go Saturday at Tampa if he is needed. Mostly, though, he was just grateful the Sabres got the late goal.

"That was a huge goal for us," he said. "Usually we give up a goal with a couple minutes left. Hopefully we can build on that."

Panthers coach Kevin Dineen said he was impressed with Enroth's performance on Friday.

"Jhonas played for me for two years in Portland," Dineen said. "I know what his capabilities are, and I also know his weaknesses. That's as well as I've ever seen him play."

Cody Hodgson added an empty-net goal with 46.6 seconds left. He has one goal in each of his past three games.

Florida goalie Jacob Markstrom took the loss, making 18 saves. Markstrom was upset the Panthers lost despite outshooting their opponent 45-20.

"This was definitely a tough loss," Markstrom said. "We played a great game, absolutely a great game defensively and offensively. The only thing that was missing was the goals. Their goalie played a hell of a game."

Early on, though, it looked light it would be the Panthers' night.

With 6:02 left in the first period, Sean Bergenheim made his presence felt, streaking down the left side and feeding Jesse Winchester in front. Winchester hit it out of the air for a goal and a 1-0 lead.

"That goal was one out of a hundred," Enroth said. "I had no chance. I don't think they could do that play again. It was a very good play by them but a little bit lucky, too."

Bergenheim, a left winger, was playing his first game since the end of the 2012 season due to abdominal and hip surgeries.

The Panthers ended the first period with an 18-4 advantage in shots on goal. The second period was more of the same, as the Panthers outshot the Sabres, 16-10.

But with 6:28 left in the second period, the Sabres broke through with a goal by Rasmus Ristolainen, his first of the season, to tie the score at 1. The assists went to Thomas Vanek and Jamie McBain.

"Maybe the reason why I scored was there were a couple of guys in front of their goalie," Ristolainen said. "We really needed that win."

The Sabres play at Tampa on Saturday before returning home for Monday's game against Dallas. The Panthers (3-7-1) are just 1-2-1 so far in their six-game homestand that continues Sunday against Tampa.

NOTES: Panthers veteran G Scott Clemmensen is back on the team as a reserve. He takes the roster spot of G Tim Thomas, who is on injured reserve through at least this weekend due to a groin injury. ... Panthers D Ed Jovanovski (hip) is also on injured reserve. ... RW Corey Tropp (jaw) and LW Ville Leino (rib) of the Sabres are on the injured list. ... LW John Scott and RW Patrick Kaleta of the Sabres are serving suspensions. ... The Panthers took two of the three meetings from the Sabres last season, with C Shawn Matthias scoring three goals in the series. Matthias, though, has no goals this season. ... RW Scottie Upshall was inactive for the Panthers on Friday, benched in favor of the return of LW Bergenheim

CHIPP: Letter from a disgruntled Sabres fan

By Timothy Chipp

Niagara Gazette

October 26, 2013

Niagara Gazette — Dear Mr. Terry Pegula:

I needed a moment to collect my thoughts after Wednesday's Buffalo Sabres game against the hated Boston Bruins.

I say hated because the game was the "Rivalry Night" matchup on national television, the fourth time in the season's first 11 games the hometown hockey squad's been featured in front of millions (maybe) of non-traditional viewers. And after the team's display, I'm happy we won't be back there again until January.

It certainly was difficult to watch the third period of that game on television. Suffering, a buzz word thrown around by your underlings after the conclusion of last season, is only the tip of the adjective tree fans have used to describe their emotions so far, and I'm no different.

My problem is I see no point to this suffering. I see no point in cheering for your hockey team.

I bought in to the idea when team President Ted Black and – though he shouldn't have been involved – General Manager Darcy Regier laid out their plans this past spring. I sat in the team's media room with my contemporaries that morning and took what they said to heart.

We were promised a youth movement, had a coach forced upon us said to be phenomenal at teaching the game to young players. And the team certainly is young and in need of some teaching.

But that is the extent of what management got right. From personnel to coaching to man management to doing stuff to boost team morale to energizing a fan base, you have failed.

I say you because these are your employees. You're responsible for their failures.

There's so much wrong with this team, from failing to trade away assets Thomas Vanek and Ryan Miller, guys who I believe we'll see become major league distractions to accompany their major league ability in the coming weeks, to a porous defensive play from the veterans, not the youth.

But the biggest disappointment in my eyes is the continued shaming of Mikhail Grigorenko.

For whatever reason, your head coach – the same guy who’s supposed to be a teacher – has it in his mind he has to try to win hockey games right now. He sets his lineup like it, at least. And nowhere is this more evident than his handling of the team’s supposed ultra-talented pivot.

When Lindy Ruff, your hero, was fired, part of the criticism centered around Grigorenko’s playing time, or lack thereof. It seemed the Russian, and no one else, was the reason Regier hired Ron Rolston to follow in Ruff’s footsteps. I just didn’t think it would be this literal.

I’m no hockey expert. But I have studied the game since I was five. I’m now in my 30s. And I can guarantee you having Grigorenko on the ice with Patrick Kaleta and John Scott is not a productive use of the 19-year-old’s time or energy.

Of you, I demand a new approach. I demand the actual suffering I’ve bought into, that we’ve all bought in to. That means ensuring Grigorenko, whether he’s earned the playing time to date or not, as much time on the ice as he can stomach. He should be close to puking from exhaustion, not because he’s upset with his situation. From now on, he earns his time going forward instead of from his past.

I don’t care if we’re bad because of him, I’m willing to accept that.

I know it’s a new concept for your team. It’s the reason a player like Drew Stafford, who shows up to play once every handful of games, plays on a line with Vanek and not the fourth line in Rochester, a place he should be calling home.

Your part starts with the simple change. You know the one I mean, the fans have been chanting it at every home game this entire calendar year. You give us that and you’ll give us a renewed sense of purpose. We’ll continue to support your team. That’s the new contract you have to live with, the one I think we’d all be willing, as Sabres fans, to honor.

Sincerely,

Timothy Chipp and Sabres fans everywhere

GAMENIGHT: Sabres Beat Panthers 3-1

WGR 550

October 25, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres defeated the Florida Panthers 3-1 in Sunrise, Fla., on Friday night.

The first period opened up with the Panthers dominating the chances, but the Sabres had several shots at putting a puck in the net including a 2-on-1 in which Drew Stafford hit the post.

Jhonas Enroth was strong to start the game, stopping 17 of 18 shots in the first period and only allowing one goal against. Florida's goal came on a crossing pass by Sean Bergenheim, tapped in by Jesse Winchester.

The Panthers dominated the beginning of the second period, but Enroth was strong again, thwarting several great opportunities. At 13:32 of the second, Rasmus Ristolainen scored the first goal of his career on a wrist shot from the blue line that found the back of the net.

The Sabres and Panthers finished the second period knotted at one. During the period, Mike Weber suffered an upper body injury. It was announced that he would not return.

In the third period, the Sabres got more shots to the net, one of which resulted in the game-winning goal by Steve Ott. The Sabres' co-captain tipped in a point shot from Christian Ehrhoff.

1st Period

Goals

13:58 - FLA - Jesse Winchester (2)
Assists: Sean Bergenheim, Erik Gudbranson

Penalties

7:58 - BUF - Nikita Zadorov: 2 Minutes for Hooking Marcel Goc
19:55 - FLA - Brad Boyes: 2 Minutes for Hooking Christian Ehrhoff
20:00 - BUF - Steve Ott: 5 Minute Major for Fighting Erik Gudbranson
20:00 - FLA - Erik Gudbranson: 5 Minute Major for Fighting Steve Ott

Second Period

Goals

13:32 - BUF - Rasmus Ristolainen (1)

Unassisted

Penalties

Erik Gudbranson: 5 Minute Major for Fighting Cody McCormick

Cody McCormick: 5 Minute Major for Fighting Erik Gudbranson

Mikhail Grigorenko: 2 Minutes for Hooking Kris Versteeg

Third Period

Goals

12:42 - BUF - Steve Ott (1)

Assists: Christian Ehrhoff, Marcus Foligno

19:13 BUF - Cody Hodgson (4) (Empty Net)

Assist: Cody McCormick

Goaltending

BUF - Enroth - 44 saves on 45 shots

FLA - Markstrom - 18 saves on 20 shots

Three Stars

J. Enroth (Sabres - G): Saves: 44, Save Pct.: .978

S. Ott (Sabres - C): Goals: 1, Assists: 0

J. Winchester (Panthers - C): Goals: 1, Assists: 0

HAMILTON: Grigorenko moves to right wing

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 25, 2013

Sunrise, FL (WGR 550) -- Ron Rolston gave us a different look to start the game moving Mikhail Grigorenko to right wing. It was a surprise, but I thought it looked good.

Marcus Foligno was the center and Steve Ott the other winger. The kid went offside right off the opening faceoff as Christian Ehrhoff tried to shoot it in, but off the defensive zone faceoff, Grigorenko got a pass on the wall and immediately relayed a perfect pass up the middle and the Sabres were easily out.

Grigorenko got caught on the ice for 1:50 which means he had two shifts in one. Brian Flynn never got out with Thomas Vanek and Cody Hodgson. With those two he came flying down the slot and took a pass from Hodgson only to have his shot blocked. Vanek jumped the rebound and was stopped by Jacob Markstrom. It's possible the very long shift annoyed Rolston.

The reason I don't think that was the case is with seven defensemen dressed, they're short a forward and the young Russian got the first double shift.

Halfway through Rolston put Flynn in Grigorenko's place, Drew Stafford in Flynn's place and Grogorenko down to the fourth line.

He was on the ice for Florida's goal, but had nothing to do with it. Cody McCormick lost the puck at the Florida blue line causing a three-on-two. The goal was scored on a saucer pass.

As the period wound down, he took a drop pass from Flynn on the right wing side and took a nice screen shot that was stopped.

In the period Grigorenko had seven shifts for 5:26 of work. He was 0-for-2 on face offs.

In the second period Rolston did put Grigorenko back with Foligno.

Grigorenko has been playing on the power play for the past few games and I liked him getting to the net looking for a rebound. He was out of position and couldn't get to it, but that part of it can be taught.

In a five-on-five he did fall asleep and allowed his point man Matt Gilroy a good shot. Later he made a really good read coming all the way back below the goal line to give Tyler Myers an out. He got the puck, spun away from his man and got it out.

He picked up a penalty which the Sabres killed and came out of the penalty box fast. Drew Stafford hit him which caused a three-on-two. It looked like Grigorenko had a good chance, but he fanned on his shot.

After two periods he had 15 shifts for 11 minutes of work. He got credit for one hit.

He started the third period and right off the faceoff came in hard to the slot and right to the wall on the forecheck.

Grigorenko had a nice break into the zone and then sent in Stafford, but the veteran got stuffed.

Right before Ott tipped in a puck to take the lead, Grigorenko had a slight two-on-one. His shot was blocked and then he tried to hit Foligno breaking, but the pass was too far in front of him.

Overall I think this was Grigorenko's best game this season by far. He skated with confidence. Maybe there's something to this right wing thing.

Sabres short forwards for Florida

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 25, 2013

Sunrise, FL (WGR 550) -- The Sabres will go with seven defensemen for the foreseeable future.

The team waived Kevin Porter and sent him to Rochester which puts Cody McCormick back in. With John Scott and Pat Kaleta suspended by the NHL, Henrik Tallinder is the only healthy scratch.

Friday is game seven of Kaleta's 10 game suspension which means he'll come back November 2nd at home against the Ducks. With having to go with seven defensemen, Ron Rolston said it's a challenge, "Yes, for sure, but that's where it's at right now with the roster and we'll have seven back there. If anything happens up front, then we can move a guy up there." Rolston added, "We'll see how this goes with Johnny Scott and Patty suspended right now and it takes up two roster spot, so we'll just play it day to day and make decisions as we move forward."

The defensive pairings to start will be Pysyk/Ehrhoff, Zadorov/Myers and Weber/Ristolainen. McBain will start as the odd man out.

No lines shown at the morning skate. Thursday they were:

Vanek/Hodgson/Flynn
Foligno/Grigorenko/Ott
Girgensons/Larsson/Ennis
McCormick/Stafford

Ville Leino was hoping to be ready this weekend, but Rolston said it won't be until next week with Monday a possibility. As far as the reason why he isn't ready yet Rolston said, "He's just getting back in shape right now and being comfortable with what he's got to do when he's playing. That's taking hits, getting hit and if he's going to have the puck, he's going to get hit, so he's got to be ready for that."

Being 1-9-1 and not having won at home, things were getting pretty testy at the arena. The Sabres won their last road game in Long Island and are 1-3 on the road with losses in Detroit, Pittsburgh and Chicago. Rolston said it's good to get out on the road, "It's good for us to get away I think for guys to continue the bonding process, especially with some of the young guys and it gives us the opportunity to play a simpler game and go out there and do what we need to to work through the process right now and it gives guys a chance to gain some chemistry and play the game simpler."

Florida hasn't been great with a 3-6-1 record. Its leading scorer is Tomas Fleischmann who has nine points in 10 games.

Former Sabre Brian Campbell has no goals and five assists in 10 games. He is plus two after being a league worst minus 22 last season.

Tim Thomas is back in hockey with the Panthers, but he's out with a lower body injury. Ed Jovanovski has missed the whole season so far with a lower body injury.

Until last game the Sabres had gotten great goaltending from Ryan Miller and Jhonas Enroth, but the goals are starting to pile up against. The team goals against has gone from 8th in the NHL down to 22nd.

Enroth is in net tonight. Miller had played four straight. Enroth is 0-2-1 with a 2.66 goals against and .909 save percentage.

Youth is served as Sabres top Panthers 3-1

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, FLA. – Finding four teenage hockey players skating together on a Friday night in Buffalo isn't uncommon, especially if you spend any time at Holiday Twin Rinks or the Northtown Center. So when the Buffalo Sabres iced a lineup featuring a quartet of fresh-faced teens in an NHL game played in the center of the geriatric universe, they forced league historians to rewrite the record books.

When they dressed teenagers Mikhail Grigorenko (19), Zemgus Girgensons (19), Nikita Zadorov (18) and Rasmus Ristolainen (18), the Sabres became the first team in almost 18 years to play four teenagers in the same game. You have to go all the way back to March 10, 1996, when the original Winnipeg Jets lost 5-2 to Detroit with a roster that featured four teens named Shane Doan, Oleg Tverdovsky, Deron Quint and Chad Kilger.

Buffalo's quartet of teens teamed up for a different result, as the Sabres defeated Florida 3-1 for just their second win of the season, and second in a row on the road. Steve Ott scored the game winner at 12:42 of the third, and Jhonas Enroth was stellar in net making 44 saves to earn the victory. Ristolainen opened the scoring with his first career goal, and Cody Hodgson bookended it for Buffalo with an empty netter with 47 seconds left in the game.

The icy-cool Ristolainen scored his first career goal at 13:32 of the second period to even the score at 1-1, converting a play that has become his trademark early on. Ristolainen, who will turn 19 on Sunday, took a pass at the right point from Thomas Vanek, easily stepped around a defender and floated a perfectly-placed wrist shot through a Cody McCormick screen past goaltender Jacob Markstrom.

It was the second game in a row that one of Buffalo's teen blueliners entered the Sabres' record book, following up Zadorov's first goal on Wednesday against Boston. Ristolainen, who will celebrate his 19th birthday on Sunday, is now the 295th player in franchise history to score a goal in a Sabres uniform.

Head coach Ron Rolston lauded the performance of his teenagers, especially the offensive contributions from defensemen Ristolainen and Zadorov.

"Risto has a nice shot; he's got a good shot from the point. (Cody) McCormick paid the price in front, and he was able to get it through, find its way," Rolston said. "I know Big Z had a couple of opportunities from the point too. That was the difference tonight, as our offensive blueline work was better."

It's no secret the negatives have far outweighed the positives so far this season for the Sabres. However, on nights like this, it's easy to see what the future holds for the franchise.

"We talk about it that we pretty much have eight guys in the lineup who are learning how to play hockey and develop at the NHL level. And they've done a good job," Rolston said. "Again, they're going to make mistakes, but it's part of the process that we're in. I like where our young guys are now, where they're going and where we're headed."

In many ways, Friday's game could probably have been labeled as #BlueprintPersonified for both teams. The Sabres and Panthers are almost mirror images of each other when it comes to the talent in their respective pipelines.

Of the 20 players that Buffalo dressed, nine were born in 1990 or later. The Panthers countered with six players who will never truly know what an '80's hair band' is.

Rookie Aleksander Barkov was the only teenager in the Panthers lineup, having just turned 18 on September 2. The 6-foot-3 center was the second overall pick in this June's Entry Draft, and already has seven points in his first 11 games. Along with last year's Calder Trophy winner Jonathan Huberdeau (20), Florida is forming a formidable young duo up front like the Sabres hope they have in Grigorenko and Girgensons.

Grigorenko has struggled with the pro game at times, but there were moments on Friday that saw his confidence start to bubble to the surface. He was moved away from his normal center role at times, starting the night on the right side with Steve Ott and Marcus Foligno. But long after his linemates had left the ice, Grigorenko remained out for a whopping first shift of 1:48.

The conditioning that has been called into question wasn't an issue, as Grigorenko played both ends of the ice with zest and aggression throughout the extended shift. He was held off the scoresheet, but Grigorenko was instrumental in creating the play that resulted in Ott's third period game-winner. Grigorenko's 16:23 of ice time was his season high, and second only to the 17:10 he played last season in Washington on January 27.

"We just wanted to get him some minutes. He played the right, we played him a little bit up the middle, just trying to get him some extra minutes," Rolston said. "I liked what he did. He was moving his feet, I thought he was physical at times. He did some good things out there. It was something to build on."

Piling up points likely won't be Girgensons' calling card in years to come, but expect him to leave a trail of crumpled bodies along the boards of arenas around the league. Girgensons has the typical power forward mentality: go hard to the

net and knock down anything that gets in his way. Dmitry Kulikov found that out very early in the night, as the burly defenseman was stapled to the boards by a Girgensons check. Latvia's highest drafted NHL'er spent most of his night on a line with Johan Larsson and Tyler Ennis, recording two shots on goal and three hits in a career-high 19:16 of action.

Just three games into his NHL career, Zadorov has displayed an offensive knack and physical prowess that many scouts talked about leading into the 2013 Entry Draft. Whether it's in front of the net or along the boards, opposing forwards have quickly found out that it will be difficult to stay out of Zadorov's crosshairs. Zadorov rattled the BB&T Center glass numerous times on Friday, including a thunderous blast of Barkov that left the sturdy Finn shaking his head as he struggled to his feet. Zadorov finished with a game-high seven hits, giving him 14 in his first three games.

Zadorov played just over 20 minutes of ice time on the night, and was paired with Tyler Myers for several crucial shifts as time ticked down. He forced a pair of Panthers turnovers after Buffalo had taken the lead, with the most important coming late in the third when he leveled Marcel Goc as he was cutting towards the slot.

The Sabres lost Mike Weber with an upper body injury after the second period, and Rolston said afterwards that Weber is expected to miss some time.

SABRES WILL DRESS SEVEN D-MEN IN FLORIDA

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, FLA. -- A lingering injury combined with a pair of suspensions will force the Buffalo Sabres to dress only 11 forwards and seven defensemen for tonight's game against the Florida Panthers.

Henrik Tallinder will be the lone scratch on the blueline, and Jamie McBain will return after being a healthy scratch in Wednesday's 5-2 loss to Boston. Following a two-game absence with a leg injury, forward Cody McCormick has been activated from Injured Reserve and is expected to start the game as part of Buffalo's two-man fourth line along with Drew Stafford.

Sabres head coach Ron Rolston understands the challenge of juggling an extra defenseman, but also realizes he's in a tough spot with the 23-man roster.

"We'll rotate seven guys back there. But that's kind of where we're at with the roster," explained Rolston following today's morning skate at the BB&T Center. "We'll have seven back there, and if anything happens up front, then we can move a guy up there."

Ville Leino has been skating for the past few days and had hoped to come off IR this weekend, but he'll remain out while nursing a rib injury that has sidelined him for the past 10 games. Rolston categorized Leino as a possibility for Monday's home game against Dallas.

"It's basically about him getting back in shape now, and being comfortable doing what he's gotta do when he's playing," said Rolston. "That's taking hits and getting hit. And if he's gonna have the puck he's gonna get hit. So he's gotta be ready for that and comfortable with that, so it's probably going to be next week."

Forwards Patrick Kaleta (seventh game missed) and John Scott (first game) are both out of the Buffalo lineup due to their respective suspensions. Kaleta traveled with the Sabres and took part in today's skate, while Scott remained in Buffalo.

Jhonas Enroth will get the start in goal for Buffalo tonight, and it will be the first time he's ever faced the Panthers. Enroth's counterpart in the Florida cage will be fellow Swede Jacob Markstrom.

Forward Kevin Porter was placed on waivers Thursday, and was assigned to Rochester today after officially clearing as of 12 Noon. Rolston thinks very highly of Porter, and said the decision to waive him was a difficult one.

“It’s always the toughest thing you have to do, to cut somebody or waive somebody, whatever the case may be. I have a lot of respect for [Kevin]. He came here last year when I got here, and worked really hard for us and played really well. He’s a guy that brings it every day and battles, and he’s a real good teammate.

“It’s a difficult thing, but it’s kind of where we’re at. Especially with the amount of young guys that are getting opportunity here. It’s a tough thing and I know he’ll land on his feet and have a good attitude about it and keep working.”

The Panthers are midway through a season-high six-game homestand at BB&T Center, going 1-1-1 through the first three. Their last game was a 3-2 shootout loss to Chicago on Tuesday, after having battled back from a two-goal deficit in the third period. Rookie Aleksander Barkov is second on the Panthers in scoring with seven points (3+4) in 10 games, numbers that rank him third among NHL freshmen.

The Sabres have swept nine of their 30 Florida/Tampa Bay road trips in franchise history, including six of the last 14 since 2005. Buffalo has a record of 19-8-1 in the Sunshine State during this time, and they are 6-3-1 in the last 10 on the road against the Panthers.

Tonight’s game opens Buffalo’s third of 13 sets of back-to-back games this season. The Sabres are 0-2-0 in the first game of back-to-back sets and 1-1-0 in the second game this season. Buffalo’s point breakdown in back-to-back sets this season is: four points (0), three points (0), two points (1), one point (0) and zero points (1).

Panthers dominate but still lose to Sabres

By George Richards

Miami Herald

October 26, 2013

The Panthers have had more than their share of games they would like to forget over the past decade or so, but Friday's unexplainable loss may move to the top of that list.

Despite being dominated all night, the hapless Sabres scored three goals in the final 27 minutes of the game to beat the Panthers 3-1 in front of an announced 12,984 mostly ticked off fans at BB&T Center.

Florida took aim at backup goalie Jhonas Enroth — whom Florida coach Kevin Dineen coached in the minors — 79 times with 45 shots on goal (Buffalo blocked 17 shots and the Panthers misfired on another 17).

All the Panthers got for their effort was one goal and a lot of boos from those who stuck around until the end.

“It's a hard loss for us,” a sullen coach Kevin Dineen said. “At the end of it, we weren't trading chance-for-chance. It was three or four, then one against. It's just the quality of that one chance against. ... We're still looking for that complete effort on both sides of the puck. We couldn't crack that nut out there, and that's the frustrating part of the game.”

For Buffalo, Friday's win is one to celebrate — and perhaps savor because it won't enjoy that winning feeling much this season.

The Sabres came into Friday's game with one win in their first 11 games and had held a lead for a whopping 9:35 this season. That number almost doubled Friday.

When Steve Ott scored at 12:42 of the third to give Buffalo a 2-1 lead, that gave the Sabres only their second lead in a game this entire season. Buffalo led Friday's game for the final 7:28 as Cody Hodgson ended Florida's comeback hopes with an empty-net goal with 47 seconds left.

Buffalo was being outshot 30-10 when Rasmus Ristolainen fired a shot from 65 feet away. Goalie Jacob Markstrom (18 saves) never saw the puck as it skipped into the back of the net.

That tied the score at 1 with 6:28 left in the second period. Florida, truth be told, should have been up 5-0 at the time. Enroth, however, turned back one shot after another. Tomas Fleischmann, Kris Versteeg and Tomas Kopecky had a combined 17 shots on goal yet never saw the scoresheet.

“I don’t know why the hockey gods aren’t shining on us right now,” said Versteeg, who was on the ice for all three of Buffalo’s goals and was credited with seven shots. I have no answers. Personally, I’ve never been this snakebitten in my life. And it [stinks]. Really bad.”

Florida took a 1-0 lead with 6:02 left in the first period when Sean Bergenheim — playing in his first game since the 2012 playoffs — took a feed from Erik Gudbranson after he picked the puck off.

Bergenheim worked the puck down the left boards and rifled a shot at the net. Florida’s Jesse Winchester was crashing the net at the time, slammed on the brakes and popped the puck past Enroth.

It was a nifty goal, one the Panthers definitely thought they would get more of as the night went on. Buffalo, after all, had one of the league’s biggest disparities in goals at minus-18.

The Sabres got a few back against the Panthers.

“If we have to win 1-0, we have to do that,” said Brian Campbell, who was drafted by the Sabres and spent eight seasons in Buffalo.

“We have to work hard to score goals, get ugly ones, whatever. We’re not a fancy team, make the pretty plays. Look at our record. This was a must-win game. We needed to finish that team off.”

Bergenheim back

Bergenheim was back in the Panthers’ lineup for the first time since Game 7 of the 2012 playoffs against New Jersey.

Bergenheim missed all of last season after having surgeries involving his abdomen, groin and hip.

“It’s been a while,” Bergenheim said Friday morning. “When I look at how many months it’s been since I played, I don’t feel that on the ice.

“I don’t feel it’s been that long. I’m really happy to be back. I missed this.”

With Bergenheim back in the lineup, Dineen now has three extra players on the roster. For the second time in five games, Scottie Upshall found himself on the bench as a healthy scratch. Upshall, who makes \$3.5 million per season, joined Krys Barch and Ryan Whitney on the shelf Friday.

Panthers dominate everything but scoreboard in 3-1 loss to hapless Sabres

By Harvey Fialkov

South Florida Sun Sentinel

October 25, 2013

This had all the makings of a feel-good victory for the Panthers, especially after Sean Bergenheim, who was making his NHL return after an 18-month absence, assisted on the first goal in the opening period.

Especially, after dominating the game from the opening faceoff and finishing with a season-high 45 shots, compared to 25 for the hapless Sabres, a season-low by any Panthers' opponent.

Especially against this opponent, an undermanned, beat-up, young Sabres' team off to a franchise-worse 1-9-1 start, one that had scored more than two goals in just one game this season.

Surely, the new scoreboard must've had the 3-1 victory for the wrong team, but no, as the disgruntled Panthers fans booed their team off the ice Friday night at BB&T Center.

After valiantly stealing a point from the defending Stanley Cup champion Blackhawks on Tuesday, the Panthers couldn't solve backup goalie Jhonas Enroth (44 saves) as they dropped to 1-2-1 on this seasonlong, six-game homestand.

"Whatever hockey gods are out there they're definitely not shining on us with bounces," Panthers forward Kris Versteeg said. "I definitely have no answers. We're putting pucks on the net. For whatever reason they're not going in. We had a great effort, and hopefully something turns around."

The Sabres were ranked last in goals per game, 28th in goals against, but they were tied 1-1 after two periods. They took the lead for good at 12:42 when Panthers goalie Jacob Markstrom chose not to divert a slow, wide shot that ended up on Christian Ehrhoff's stick at the point. His slapper was tipped in by Steve Ott.

With 1:28 left Panthers snakebit forward Shawn Matthias stole the puck but was unable to jam it through Enroth. Then with Markstrom out of the net for an extra skater, Cody Hodgson picked up a loose puck in the neutral zone before wringing in for the dagger with 46.6 seconds left.

"I don't think we tightened up," said a somber Panthers coach Kevin Dineen. "The chances continued to be there. Mistakes were made on both goals that were preventable. When you're pushing as hard as we were on offense, you have to remember our complete game."

"It's a hard loss for us."

Despite dominating the Sabres throughout the first 33 minutes with a 30-10 shot edge, Buffalo tied it 1-1 on their 11th shot when Panthers' killer Tomas Vanek set up rookie defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen for a long snapshot that got past a screened Markstrom at 13:32.

For Ristolainen, a former World Junior Championships Finnish teammate of Panthers rookie Aleksander Barkov, it was his first NHL goal. Two days shy of his 19th birthday, Ristolainen was one of four teenagers in the Sabres lineup - Zemgus Girgensons, Mikhail Grigorenko and Nikita Zadorov – for the first time this season.

According to Elias Sports Bureau it's the first time a team has done that since 1995-96 when the Sabres, Jets and Panthers had at least four teens in a game.

It didn't take long for Bergenheim to show what the Panthers have been missing.

On his third shift, Bergenheim flipped a perfect pass toward a charging Jesse Winchester, who tomahawk-chopped it in for a 1-0 lead at 13:58 of the first.

It was Bergenheim's first point since his last NHL game when he assisted on the tying goal in the third period of Florida's 3-2 double-overtime loss to the Devils in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals on April 26, 2012.

Bergenheim, 29, who underwent multiple surgeries on his hip and groin in March and May, said earlier Friday that despite not skating for nine months at one point during his rehabilitation,

The Panthers outshot the hapless Sabres 18-4, for their highest shot total in any period this season. Still, if not for a metallic save on a Drew Stafford breakaway, it would've been tied after one.

Sunrise — This had all the makings of a feel-good victory for the Panthers, especially after Sean Bergenheim, who was making his NHL return after an 18-month absence, assisted on the first goal in the opening period.

Especially, after dominating the game from the opening faceoff and finishing with a season-high 45 shots, compared with 21 for the hapless Sabres, a season-low by any Panthers' opponent.

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Bergenheim, 29, who underwent multiple surgeries on his hip and groin in March and May, said earlier Friday that despite not skating for nine months at one point during his rehabilitation, he felt as if he had never been gone.

"I think it was nine months off the ice completely," said Bergenheim, who skated on the fourth line with Scott Gomez and Winchester. "It's the longest time off ice since I first put on skates at 3 years old. To be honest, when I did put the skates on I felt like I had skated yesterday."

The Panthers outshot the hapless Sabres 18-4, for their highest shot total in any period this season. Still, if not for a metallic save on a Drew Stafford breakaway, it would've been tied after one.

Panthers Wrap-Up: Sabres 3, Panthers 1

By Glenn Odelbralski

Panthers.com

October 25, 2013

SUNRISE, FL — (NHL.com) - The Buffalo Sabres got a rare victory Friday night, and they can thank goalie Jhonas Enroth for it.

Enroth stopped 44 shots and Steve Ott broke a 1-1 tie with 7:18 left in the third period to help the Sabres beat the Florida Panthers 3-1 at BB&T Center.

QUOTABLE

"There's a lot of hard work put into that game and there's no reward at all. There's no points. There's no consolation prize for playing hard and well and creating offense. At the end of the day we're all about the two points so on that note it's not a good night."

- Head coach Kevin Dineen.

THREE TAKEAWAYS

1. On The Board: Florida came out flying against the Sabres, looking to jump on the visitors and a team that had won just once in their first 11 games. They attacked the Buffalo zone and came up with great scoring opportunity after great scoring opportunity and were finally rewarded thanks to the return of forward Sean Bergenheim. Playing his first game in a year and a half, Bergenheim sent a shot on Jhonas Enroth. Crashing the net, Jesse Winchester neatly deflected the puck past Enroth with 6:02 remaining in the first period, giving the home crowd something to cheer about before the intermission hit.

2. Lead Change: Buffalo, pinned in their own zone for what seemed like most of the night tied the game with a goal in the second period as a screened Jacob Markstrom was beaten by a point shot from Rasmus Ristolainen with 6:28 left in the period. The visitors would score the eventual game-winner in the third with 7:18 remaining. Battling Erik Gudbranson in front of the net, Buffalo captain Steve Ott tipped Christian Ehrhoff's point shot past Markstrom for a 2-1 lead.

3. Everything But The Kitchen Sink: Florida had their chances. Boy did they. They outshot Buffalo 45-21, the 45 shots a season high but Enroth had an answer for all but one of them. Time and time again the Sabres netminder came up with a big save, one of the biggest coming with 9:40 to play in the second and the Panthers holding on to a 1-0 lead. There, Kris Versteeg sent a cross ice pass that Aleksander Barkov eventually corraled and then in turn found Tomas

Fleischmann all alone outside the crease but Enroth was there with the pad save to keep it a one-goal game.

TWITTER TAKE

@MathiasMejia_: Every Night I hear @goldieonice Say 'missed the net wide!' That's not good for the #FlaPanthers! Shoot it to the net and good things happen

@DRokSH: I can't believe the #FlaPanthers lost at home to the #Sabres how do you do that!?!

@markymarcsports: Very Disappointing ... #FlaPanthers lost to the #Sabres 3-1.. mind boggling why the goals dont come more often..

@todderickearl: Really Panthers! You've got to be kidding me! #FlaPanthers

FACEBOOK POST

Memorable fan posts from the game.

Zachary Bruckner: 45 shots, 1 goal. How demoralizing of a game

Jimmy Alfredo Castro: I didn't see the game unfortunately but by the stats u see of the game it looks like this was a frustrating one.

Stephen Watts: Panther fans. Look on the bright side. 45 shots on goal. Their goalie played a great game. That's why we lost.

Jim Tracy: Cats just ran into a hot tender, simple as that.

NUMBERS GAME

1. It's been a long time since Sean Bergenheim played a game in a Panthers uniform (April 26, 2012) but he made an impact in his first game back, setting up the game's first goal on a great pass/shot to a crashing Jesse Winchester. Bergenheim finished with two shots and two hits along with the assist on 11:59 of ice time.

2. The Panthers and Sabres dropped the gloves twice in the game and defenseman Erik Gudbranson was involved in both of them, fighting Steve Ott at the end of the first period and then Cody McCormick in the second period.

18. A shot barade by the Panthers in the opening 20 minutes as the Cats recorded a season-high 18 shots on Jhonas Enroth. The previous high came in the third period of the season opener in Dallas (15).

45. Besides setting a season high in shots in a period, the Panthers also easily bested their season high for shots in a game. The 45 shots were six more than the 39 they posted in the season opener in Dallas.

45. While Florida took the shot count, Buffalo earned the hit category, outhitting Florida 45-17. Buffalo was led by rookie defenseman Nikita Zadorov who recorded seven in the game.

STAR OF THE GAME

Jhonas Enroth

Was easily the best player on the ice in keeping the Panthers off the board following a Jesse Winchester first period goal. Numerous difficult saves.

45 Shots, 44 Saves, .978 SV%

UP NEXT

Florida is back in action on Sunday for a 5pm start against in-state rival Tampa Bay in the second game of the race for the Governor's Cup. The Panthers look to even the season series at a game a piece after Tampa earned a 7-2 victory on Oct. 10th in their home opener. Tampa will play Saturday night, hosting the Sabres before traveling to Sunrise for the game. The Lightning have earned 12 points (6-3-9) in their first nine games and are led by superstars Steven Stamkos (14 points in nine games) and Martin St Louis (12 points in nine games).

SABRES EMPLOYEES ENJOY HOMECOMING

By Marc Davies

Sabres.com

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When Sam Korotkin and Craig Kanalley heard they had been hired by the Buffalo Sabres, it was more than the chance to take a new job, it was a homecoming.

Korotkin and Kanalley are local products who left home for college without knowing if they'd ever be able to move back.

They're now co-workers in the Sabres' Marketing Department.

Korotkin is the videographer and editor for Sabres.com while Kanalley signed on as the Sabres social media manager.

A Getzville native, Korotkin attended the University of Missouri and, after graduating in 2012, remained out of state as a sports producer, anchor and reporter for the NBC affiliate in Memphis, Tenn.

He is responsible for creating most of the video available on the website, including locker room interviews, practice footage and features about community events. Producing and distributing Sabres content is something that is very rewarding, Korotkin says, especially since he's both an employee and a fan.

"The content I'm producing is also for me," he said. "I want to see all this stuff and I know my friends, family and all the Sabres fans want to see this stuff so that's rewarding and it's nice to see and to be a part of."

Kanalley grew up in Tonawanda and had a similar fate, traveling away to St. John Fisher for college and attending DePaul for graduate school. Like Korotkin, Kanalley got a job after college outside of the Western New York area.

"I worked at the Huffington Post for three years in New York City," said Kanalley. "I was doing a lot of things for them – social media, trends – and I was a senior editor there. I also was at NBC news for a very short time"

Kanalley is responsible for all of the team's social media endeavors, including those on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram and YouTube. His position allows him to interact with fans on a daily basis, which is something he enjoys.

"I engage with fans, giving them opportunities to win giveaways and contests," Kanalley said. "I am able to communicate on behalf of the team to all the fans. That part is also very rewarding."

After spending time away from home, both Korotkin and Kanalley were eager at the opportunity to work back in their hometown. After hearing the good news from the Sabres, both were ecstatic.

“Oh, it was crazy,” Korotkin said. “It was a dream scenario. I always wanted to come back to Buffalo, obviously.”

Kanalley was also eager live in Buffalo again, but wasn't sure if he would ever get the chance.

“When I moved to New York City, I thought there would be no way to get back to Buffalo, so that part I'm even more surprised about,” Kanalley said. “I think it was one of those moments where I had to pinch myself because I couldn't believe it was happening.”

Both Korotkin and Kanalley are life-long Sabres fans, which made the experience even more special. Korotkin can still recall his earliest memories of the Sabres.

“When I was 3 years old I would mute the TV, imitate Rick Jeanneret and all that good stuff,” he said. “I went to my first game at The Aud and we lost to the Lightning 6-1 when I was 3 or 4 years old, a long time ago.”

Kanalley has similar memories and wished at an early age that he could go to every Sabres game.

“Just to get paid to watch all the games is awesome because I would watch them all anyways,” Kanalley said. “When I was younger, I dreamed of getting season tickets one day, so this is even better.”