



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Islanders acquire Vanek from Sabres

Associated Press

October 27, 2013

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (AP) -- The New York Islanders acquired forward Thomas Vanek from the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday night for forward Matt Moulson, a first-round pick in 2014, and a second-round pick in 2015.

The 29-year-old Vanek, a former University of Minnesota star from Austria, had four goals and nine assists in 13 games this season for Buffalo. In nine seasons with Buffalo, he had 254 goals and 243 assists in 598 games.

Moulson, who will turn 30 next week, had six goals and three assists in 11 games this season. He has 124 goals and 109 assists in 333 games in seven seasons with the Los Angeles Kings and Islanders.

Both Vanek and Moulson can become unrestricted free agents after this season.

Vanek is being paid \$6.4 million this season and carries a salary cap charge of \$7.14 million. Moulson is earning \$3.9 million and is expected to command more on the open market.

The Sabres were likely to lose Vanek in free agency after this season, the final year of a seven-year, \$50 million deal the Sabres matched after Edmonton signed him to an offer sheet in July 2007.

Whether or not the Sabres re-sign Moulson, the draft picks they acquired from New York will help in a rebuilding plan for a team that is off to an NHL-worst 2-10-1 mark and 0-6-1 at home.

The process began in earnest last season when the Sabres traded three core veterans, including captain Jason Pominville, for draft picks and prospects.

"Matt will address our current needs and provide us with support, leadership, scoring," Sabres general manager Darcy Regier said. "With where our hockey club is, the first- and second-round picks are important.

"Whether we use the picks to select players at the draft or whether we use them to continue to improve the hockey club as we go forward through this season has yet to be determined, but that was the focus for this deal."

Buffalo has had two first-round picks in each of the past two drafts.

Veteran goalie Ryan Miller also is in the final year of his contract and is another candidate to be traded. Vanek has served as a co-captain this season, wearing the 'C' for home games.

"Like a lot of players he was shocked," Regier said about Vanek. "He was very professional. I thanked him. He was as good as he could be.

"It was a deal that was worked on and off for a while. It was something we felt we had to do."

Regier said he hasn't had recent trade talks regarding other potential free agents.

"Ryan continues to play extremely well," he said. "I probably talk to a third of the league of my counterparts on a weekly basis. You end up talking about a lot of things, and I'd leave it at that."

The Islanders also are in a rebuilding process as they look to improve on last season when they reached the playoffs and provided a challenge to the Pittsburgh Penguins in a six-game, first-round series.

New York has been up and down early this season, going 4-4-3 in its first 11 games, including 2-2-3 at home.

While the Islanders are losing a fan favorite and key linemate for captain John Tavares in Moulson, they are adding another proven star and goal scorer to play with Tavares.

Moulson has led the Islanders in goals in three of the past four seasons.

"Would like to thank all the great people and fans I was able to meet in NY," Moulson tweeted. "I will miss you all. This is the beginning of a new chapter."

Vanek has scored 40 goals twice and was an All-Star in 2009.

Vanek led Buffalo in power-play goals in seven of his nine NHL seasons and topped the league with 20 in the 2008-09.

In 36 career playoff games, Vanek - the No. 5 pick in the 2003 NHL draft - has 15 goals and five assists.

"Thomas is one of the top proven scorers in the National Hockey League, but with his unrestricted status, Matt comes in. He has six goals and is off to a good start and plays in the hard areas and on the power play and will continue to contribute in that regard," Regier said. "I think this is more an overall deal that will improve this hockey club moving forward."

This trade came at a particularly curious time as chants of "Fire Darcy!" have been directed at Regier during recent home games.

"Is it a bigger challenge? Yes," Regier said when asked if he is feeling more pressure now in his job. "I'd substitute the word challenge for pressure. You can't operate. If you're under so much pressure, it's paralyzing.

"You have to find and get good players and build around that."

Buffalo will host the Dallas Stars on Monday and their new coach Lindy Ruff, the winningest coach in Sabres history, who was fired in February and replaced by Ron Rolston, whose job also isn't safe.

"It's part of the business," Rolston said of Ruff's dismissal and return. "Coaches change jobs. He did great things for the organization, and I'm sure they'll have something for that.

"We've got bigger things to focus on ourselves. Worry about things that we can have control over."

Ruff ready to face Sabres in return to Buffalo

By Jonah Bronstein

Associated Press

October 27, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. - After 16 years behind the Sabres' bench, Lindy Ruff will be back in Buffalo but coaching against them for the first time.

Ruff has more immediate concerns with his new team, the Dallas Stars, but he has allowed himself to think about returning to a city that enshrined him in its Sports Hall of Fame in 2010.

The Stars face the Sabres in Buffalo on Monday night.

"I'd be lying if I said I hadn't thought about it," Ruff said Saturday after a shootout loss to Winnipeg that dropped Dallas to 4-5-1 and into last place in the Central Division.

"It's going to be great walking in the building, say hello to old faces," Ruff said. "I've got a lot of good friends there, good memories. We had a lot of great hockey in there. It'll be a good day. I want to see our team play really well."

Ruff's ties to Buffalo go back to his days as a player. Selected in the second round of the 1979 draft by the Sabres, Ruff made the team later that year. In November 1986, he replaced star Gilbert Perreault as Sabres captain.

With a 571-432-162 record, Ruff is the Sabres' winningest coach. He is second on the NHL list for wins with one team, behind only the New York Islanders' Al Arbour (740).

Ruff has kept his home in suburban Buffalo, where his wife and kids are living. He will embrace the visitor role on Monday when the Stars start a stretch in which they will play five of six on the road.

"The No. 1 thing on my mind is our (1-4) road record," Ruff said. "Really focusing in on that on this road trip. It's not like I've been gone a long time, so it's not like I'm walking up and I've been missing for two or three years."

Ruff may be off to a slow start with his new team, but it's even worse in Buffalo, where the former coach is more popular than the current coach and general manager.

The Sabres have been a team in transition since firing Ruff in February. Under Ron Rolston, Buffalo has started this season with the NHL's worst record (2-10-1), and has been barely competitive in amassing an 0-6-1 home record.

Before the Sabres' recent road trip, Rolston said he had no thoughts about Ruff's return.

"It's part of the business," said Rolston, who was hired as Sabres interim coach after Ruff was fired and then received a contract extension over the summer. "Coaches change jobs. It's part of the business. He did great things for the organization, and I'm sure they'll have something for that. But we've got bigger things to focus on ourselves. Worry about things that we can have control over."

Chants of "Fire Darcy!" directed at general manager Darcy Regier, have become familiar during home games.

"I think the general population thinks that the wrong person was kicked out," Sabres fan Michael Bowen said. "And I think (Monday), if we could have him back, I think a lot of people would want him back. I think the place is going to go wild."

Bowen is the owner and designer of Pastuerized Tees, which used to sell a shirt in Buffalo that read, "I like it Ruff."

A redesigned shirt was recently released that reads, "I like'd it Ruff."

"I think people still have a love for the guy," Bowen said. "I don't know if people think that he got a raw end of the deal. I think they still want to hold on to him as part of Buffalo."

Rip Simonick, the Sabres' longtime equipment manager, formed a close relationship with Ruff over the years.

"I've had numerous coaches go and come back and coach with different teams — average coaches, good coaches, great coaches," said Simonick, who has been an employee of the Sabres since shortly after the club's 1969 inception.

"Lindy, he was a combination of everything. He's funny. He's witty. He's had some rough times and he's had some great times," he said. "I had Lindy when he was 18 years old when he came from Western Canada. He never once came to work and didn't enjoy what he was doing."

Rob Ray, a former Sabres' forward now working as a team broadcaster, said Buffalo fans could relate to Ruff.

"He brought that hard-working, kind of in-your-face, yell, scream kind of guy intensity that people here like," Ray said. "It was easy for people to relate to him that way, and that's why they accepted him as a player and as a coach."

Simonick acknowledged it will be strange to see Ruff coaching the visiting team.

"The only time I think I ever saw him on the other bench was during training camp when I was on one bench and he was on the other," Simonick said. "It's going to be different."

It might also sting Sabres fans to see Ruff representing a Stars franchise that has been vilified in Buffalo since the Stars defeated the Ruff-coached Sabres in the 1999 Stanley Cup finals.

"That's the worst place he could've went because of the history," Ray said. "All of a sudden, we've hated them for so long, not because of what they did, but because of other things, and then him ending up going there and coaching there."

"And now he's going to have to end up to say, 'Hey, this is such a great place, and it's this and that,' where it gave you probably the worst experience of your NHL life."

AP Sports Writers John Wawrow and Schuyler Dixon, in Dallas, contributed to this report.

Sabres send Vanek to Islanders, get Moulson and two picks in return

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 27, 2013

The rebuilding of the Buffalo Sabres took its biggest step yet Sunday night as the team traded co-captain and perennial scoring leader Thomas Vanek. It's a deal that added substantial assets to the organization and has the potential to bring even more.

The Sabres shipped Vanek to the New York Islanders for accomplished scorer Matt Moulson, a first-round pick in the 2014 NHL draft and a second-round selection in 2015. It's a blockbuster swap that would generate headlines at the frantic trade deadline, and it's even more significant this early in the season.

"It was a deal that has been worked on off and on for a while," General Manager Darcy Regier said in First Niagara Center. "It was something that we felt we had to do. Our focus is on trying to acquire assets, in this case draft picks, that are going to allow us to continue improving."

Regier has sold owner Terry Pegula on a plan to reconstruct the faltering organization through the draft. Based on their 2-10-1 record, the 30th-place Sabres are in position to pick near the top next June and will also have the Islanders' pick. In addition, Buffalo possesses three second-round selections in each of the next two years.

"I don't love where we are," Regier said. "I love what we're doing, and I believe in the direction we're going."

"With where our hockey club is, the first- and the second-round picks are important. Whether we use the picks to select players at the draft or we use them to continue to acquire and improve the hockey club as we go forward through this season has yet to be determined."

Moulson, like Vanek, is in the final year of his contract. He is expected to arrive in town for tonight's game against Lindy Ruff and the Dallas Stars, but it's very possible he won't stay long. Pending unrestricted free agents are prime targets to move at the trade deadline, and Moulson is a three-time, 30-goal scorer who should attract interest and bring a substantial return.

"Most of these deals in the past have been deadline deals," Regier said. "The deadline will come again."

The heat has been on the Sabres, and specifically Regier, to do something to improve the fortunes and morale of the hapless club. Though the departure of Vanek does nothing to help the immediate outlook, the picks provide hope – if they are used correctly.

“It is exciting when you can get young players and you can see them grow,” Regier said. “The hard part is when you don’t win games while they’re growing. It makes it difficult. It’s short-term pressures and it’s a long-term plan that is going to get it done, and you have to deal with those two.”

Regier has heard fans chant for his firing during games, but he has historically refused to bow to outside pressures. He said that was again the case with this deal.

“You have to believe in what you’re doing,” Regier said. “I don’t want to show any lack of respect to our fans, but internally it’s just doing the work and focusing on what our plan is and trying to execute it as well and as soon as possible. That is on behalf of the fans.”

The departure of the 29-year-old Vanek has been expected since last season. He wasn’t willing to sign a contract extension with the rebuilding organization, and the Sabres couldn’t let him walk away without getting something in return.

The 2003 first-round draft pick leaves as one of the best scorers in Buffalo history. He recorded 254 goals and 497 points in 598 games with the Sabres, with the goal total placing him fifth on the franchise’s all-time list.

“He’s been an outstanding player, outstanding teammate, citizen to the organization,” Regier said. “We wish him only the best going forward.”

Vanek heads to an improving Islanders team that boasts Most Valuable Player candidate John Tavares. The Islanders are also looking to make a splash prior to their 2015 relocation to Brooklyn.

“Even when you know it’s coming there’s the initial surprise,” Stephen Bartlett, Vanek’s agent, said by phone after talking with his client. “Once he started thinking about it, he started to get excited that he may have the chance to play with Tavares and have the tools for a good season.

“He’s enjoyed his time in Buffalo, and it’s tough to leave friends and the team. At the same time it’s a clear rebuild, which is why he put off the process of re-signing. It’s good that he decided to wait.”

Moulson is also a 29-year-old left winger who has impressive scoring ability. He’s eclipsed the 30-goal mark three times for the Islanders, topping out at 36 in 2011-12. He had 15 goals and 44 points in 47 games last season and has recorded six goals and nine points in 11 games this year.

He’s finishing a three-year, \$9.4 million deal that includes a salary cap hit of \$3.13 million. Vanek’s cap number is \$7.14 million.

“On one hand surprised by the trade but another not really,” Moulson’s agent, Wade Arnott, said in an email to The News after talking with the winger. “Matt will now have the opportunity to choose where he wants to play whether that is Buffalo or elsewhere in free agency. He is heading to Buffalo with an open mind. No conversations yet but interested in hearing Sabres plans.”

The transaction focus for the Sabres turns to goaltender Ryan Miller. He’s also in the last year of his contract and hasn’t wanted to negotiate a new deal. Though goalies are harder to trade and historically bring a less-substantial return, the 33-year-old is having a solid season despite getting little help in front of him.

“I’ve really had no discussions of late with regard to any of our other potential free agents,” said Regier, who added he converses weekly with other general managers. “Anytime a player plays better you get more, and when he plays worse you get less. It’s obviously good for our organization. It’s great for Ryan and it means a lot.”

The trade came on the eve of Ruff’s much-anticipated return. Ruff, fired in February during his 16th year as coach, will walk to the visitor’s bench in First Niagara Center for the first time tonight.

“He’s got a fresh new perspective on things, and some of that applies here as well,” Regier said. “Hopefully, I’ll have a chance to talk to him. It’ll be good to see him.”

Ruff expects happy return vs. Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 28, 2013

Lindy Ruff will walk into First Niagara Center tonight, looking dapper in his suit and designer tie, and do something the home team has been unable to accomplish so far.

He's going to give Sabres fans a reason to cheer.

One of Buffalo's legendary sports figures is back in town, and the welcome-home party is in full swing.

The man who spent half his life in the Sabres' organization will shake hands with former players, say hello to arena employees, then walk to the visitor's bench for the first time and wave to what's expected to be an appreciative crowd.

Needless to say, this early season game against Dallas should be memorable.

"I'd be lying if I said I hadn't thought about it," Ruff said in Dallas over the weekend. "It's going to be great to walk into the building and say hello to old faces. It really is. I've got a lot of old friends there, a lot of good memories. We had a lot of great hockey in there.

"It'll be a good day. I want to see our team play really well, and it'll be a good day."

The Sabres are looking forward to the visit, too.

"Everyone really did appreciate Lindy as a person," goaltender Ryan Miller said. "I hope they just have fun with it. Everyone's path takes them on all different kinds of journeys, especially in this kind of career, and it's good to see that he's on another team so quickly. Obviously, he's a great coach."

It will be Ruff's first public appearance at the foot of Washington Street since his farewell news conference in February, which came two days after he was fired during his 16th year as coach. There's no doubt it will be emotional for the Western New York resident.

"I'm sure it'll be more emotional for him than the players with as much time as he spent in Buffalo," Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers said. "He was a big part of the organization and a big part of the fan base."

Though the Sabres have conspicuously ignored the returns of other alumni, they're expected to formally recognize Ruff.

“I’m sure they’ll have a nice little ovation for him – deservedly so,” right wing Drew Stafford said.

Ruff’s return would generate buzz and interest anytime, but ...

“Given the current situation here, it’s going to be real interesting,” Miller said.

Ruff is coming back to face a team that is much worse than when he left. The 30th-place Sabres are a dispirited, answer-lacking bunch with a 2-10-1 record under Ruff’s replacement, Ron Rolston.

“We’re focused on trying to turn this thing around, win some games,” said Stafford, who was benched alongside center Cody Hodgson during the latest loss Saturday in Tampa Bay. “Once we get through the initial hello, how’s everything going, it’s back to work. We have to keep our focus on trying to win a game.”

Said Miller: “Looking at the bigger picture, we have a lot that we need to focus on ahead of Lindy, who’s hopefully not going to get too involved other than calling out lines and drawing up plays. You don’t want to see him jump into the in-between space like he’s tried to a few times.”

Then again, maybe folks do want to see some passion and fight. It would certainly enliven the arena, which has been either silent or jeer-filled as the Sabres have opened with a home mark of 0-6-1.

Ruff and Dallas assistant James Patrick, another longtime player and coach in Buffalo, want to make that 0-7-1.

Either way, a party is on tap.

“I’m obviously happy for him that he’s back in the league,” Thomas Vanek said before being traded Sunday night to the New York Islanders. “I think we saw it when he was let go here that he was ready to go back. For him and Jeep, I’m happy that they found a spot. Hopefully, they’ll do well there.”

Analysis: Vanek deal is good for Sabres, risk for Isles

By Dan Rosen

NHL.com

October 28, 2013

New York Islanders general manager Garth Snow laid down a huge bet Sunday night by pulling off a blockbuster trade with Buffalo Sabres general manager Darcy Regier, who was all too happy to make the deal.

Snow sent Regier and the Sabres three-time 30-goal scorer Matt Moulson, New York's first-round pick in 2014 and its second-round pick in 2015 in exchange for Thomas Vanek.

Snow told Newsday that he was not happy with the team's record (4-4-3) and the way it had been playing, so clearly he felt the need to shake things up. He said the Islanders "need to take the next step" and indicated Vanek will help them get there.

But Vanek and Moulson are currently scheduled to be unrestricted free agents after the season. Neither is a lock to re-sign with their new teams, and that's why this trade is such a coup for the Sabres and a risk for the Islanders.

Buffalo is rebuilding, and stocking up on high draft picks is the best way to do that in the salary-cap world. The Pittsburgh Penguins and Chicago Blackhawks can attest to that.

While it's still early, nothing about the Sabres' first 13 games (2-10-1) suggests they're a team destined to make the Stanley Cup Playoffs this season. Now they're clearly hoping the Islanders don't either, because that could give them two of the first 14 selections in the 2014 NHL Draft.

In addition, the Sabres have roughly four months to see if Moulson has chemistry with any of their centers, most notably Cody Hodgson, before deciding if they want to try to re-sign him or deal him before the trade deadline (March 5, 2014) for more picks.

It's a win-win situation for Buffalo.

For the Islanders, though, the trade isn't as cut-and-dried. Snow is taking a huge chance that Vanek will help the team be a better team this season than Moulson would have, and that he will sign a long-term contract extension.

"We had an opportunity to acquire an elite player and given where we are right now, you go for it," Snow said.

Where the Islanders are right now is third in the Metropolitan Division with a 4-4-3 record. They have goaltending concerns and their defense needs an upgrade,

but they are a legitimate playoff contender and Vanek will help them, especially if he finds chemistry with John Tavares the way Moulson did.

However, Vanek is not coming to New York with a pre-arranged contract extension, something that would have made a lot of sense for the Islanders. Instead, Vanek's agent, Steve Bartlett, told TSN's Bob McKenzie, "We'll take it day-by-day and focus on the short term for now, and see where we are at season's end."

The key words there are "season's end." They should scare Snow, the Islanders and their fans.

If Vanek isn't interested in signing a multi-year contract extension during the season, the Islanders risk of losing him over the summer grows exponentially higher. Even if he likes it in New York, Vanek could decide to test his worth on the free-agent market. That's his right and the route many players choose to go. The elite players may only be UFAs once in the prime of their careers, if at all. It's an enticing opportunity.

Now imagine the fallout if the Islanders don't re-sign Vanek. It would mean they essentially gave away Moulson, a first-round pick and a second-round pick for not even a full season with Vanek.

The only way that scenario isn't a punch in the gut is if the Islanders go on to win the Stanley Cup this season. But Vanek, for as good as he is, does not make the team any more of a favorite than Moulson did, not with the goaltending and defense issues it has.

Vanek had 106 goals over 267 games from 2009-12 and has four in 13 games this season. Moulson had 112 goals over 293 games from 2009-12 and has six in 11 games this season. Their production is virtually even.

Logic, though, dictates that Snow would not have made this trade if he didn't think he had the inside track to re-signing Vanek. It makes sense, too, because what right wing in their right mind wouldn't want to play with Tavares for a long time?

Tavares helped Moulson become an elite scorer in the NHL after he signed a one-year, \$575,000 contract prior to the 2009-10 season. Tavares is the face of the Brooklyn-bound franchise and one of the elite centers in the NHL. He should be a lock to play for Canada at the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

If the Islanders sign Vanek to a long-term contract extension, New York would have front-line scoring potent enough to match most, if not all teams in the NHL. The trade will have made a lot of sense at that point because for as good as Moulson has been with Tavares, Vanek has long been considered better and never has played with a center of Tavares' ilk.

So, Snow is gambling that Vanek and Tavares will have chemistry. He's gambling that Vanek will help the Islanders be a better team this season. He's gambling that Vanek will want to stay in orange and blue for a long time.

Stars' Ruff makes return to Buffalo

By Eric Goodman

NHL.com

October 27, 2013

STARS (4-5-1) at SABRES (2-10-1)

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

Last 10: Dallas 4-5-1; Buffalo 2-7-1

Season series: This is the first of two games between these clubs. The Buffalo Sabres are 7-2-0 in their past nine games against the Dallas Stars.

Big story: Stars coach Lindy Ruff returns to Buffalo to face his former team for the first time since being fired by the Sabres on Feb. 20, 2013. Ruff was in his 15th season with Buffalo when he was let go, making him the longest-tenured coach in the NHL at the time. Sabres captain Steve Ott plays against his former team for the first time since being traded from Dallas to Buffalo in the 2012 offseason. The Sabres have five wins and a tie in their last six home games against Dallas. The last time the Stars won in Buffalo was in 1999 and they skated around the rink with the Stanley Cup afterwards.

Team Scope:

Stars: In addition to the winless streak in Buffalo, Dallas has dropped every road game this season since a win against the Winnipeg Jets on Oct. 11. The Stars will look to avoid a sixth straight road loss, while attempting to build off two strong showings at home last week that earned them three points. While Dallas did manage a point in a 2-1 shootout loss against the visiting Jets on Saturday, coach Ruff wasn't happy with the way his team started the game.

"In the first period we resembled the team that practiced [Saturday] morning," Ruff said. "We weren't crisp [Saturday] morning and we didn't come out crisp, and I thought that hurt us."

Sabres: There will likely be some reminiscing and reunions for much of the Sabres organization as Ruff returns, but Buffalo will need to remain focused on breaking out of its recent cold streak. The Sabres are losers of four of their last five games and were last in the NHL as of Sunday with an average of 1.46 goals scored per game.

While veteran Thomas Vanek (tied with Cody Hodgson for a team-leading nine points) and goaltender Ryan Miller continue to turn in solid efforts, much of the supporting staff has not been producing. Vanek scored a goal and Miller made 36

saves Saturday against the Tampa Bay Lightning, but two late goals by Tampa helped defeat the Sabres, 3-2.

Coach Ron Rolston did not hold back in the post-game interview Saturday, singling out two players who he benched for most of the final period.

"Cody Hodgson. He didn't play. He just didn't play," Rolston said. "[Drew] Stafford too. Your best players have to be your best players. At the end of the day, that's what is going to happen."

Who's Hot: Stars goalie Kari Lehtonen is 3-0-1 in his last four starts with a 0.75 goals-against average. ... Vanek is in the midst of a four-game point streak for Buffalo with a goal and three assists over that span.

Injury Report: For the Stars, forward Ryan Garbutt is serving a five-game suspension for a hit against the Anaheim Ducks on Oct. 20. He is eligible to return Sunday, Nov. 3. ... Defenseman Mike Weber is the latest Sabre to get bitten by the injury bug, being placed on injured reserve Saturday with a thumb injury. Defenseman Henrik Tallinder is questionable with an undisclosed injury, while forwards Ville Leino (ribs) and Corey Tropp (broken jaw) are out indefinitely. Forward John Scott remains suspended indefinitely as he awaits a disciplinary hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety in regards to a hit Oct. 23 against the Boston Bruins.

Islanders acquire Vanek from Sabres

NHL.com

October 27, 2013

Thomas Vanek is now a member of the New York Islanders.

The Islanders acquired the left wing from the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday night in exchange for left wing Matt Moulson, New York's first-round pick in 2014 and a 2015 second-round pick.

Vanek, 29, has four goals and five assists in 13 games for the Sabres this season. Buffalo's first-round pick (No. 5) at the 2003 NHL Draft, he has 254 goals and 243 assists in 598 games, all with the Sabres. The 6-foot-2, 217 pound forward has played in 36 Stanley Cup Playoff games, totaling 20 points (15 goals, five assists).

New York is coming off a 5-2 loss to the Philadelphia Flyers at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Saturday night, which dropped its record to 4-4-3. Islanders general manager Garth Snow feels his club is capable of more.

Vanek is expected to make his Islanders debut Tuesday night against the New York Rangers at the Coliseum.

"I can tell you I'm not happy with where we are record-wise. We're better than this," Snow told Newsday. "I wasn't going to sit by and let games pass."

Moulson, 29, was signed as an unrestricted free agent by the Islanders in the summer of 2009. He enjoyed three straight seasons of 30 or more goals for New York and went 15-29-44 in 47 games last season. Moulson had nine points (six goals, three assists) in 11 games for the Islanders this season.

The Sabres host the Dallas Stars on Monday night.

"I believe Matt will address our current needs and provide us with support, leadership, scoring," Sabres general manager Darcy Regier told reporters. "With where our hockey club is, the first- and the second-round picks are important. Whether we use the picks to select players at the draft or whether we use them to continue to improve the hockey club as we go forward through this season has yet to be determined. But, that was the focus for this deal."

Vanek and Moulson are both set to become unrestricted free agents next July.

"Would like to thank all the great people and fans I was able to meet in NY..I will miss you all..this is the beginning of a new chapter," Moulson tweeted Sunday night.

Why Islanders GM thinks Thomas Vanek is a good gamble

By Elliotte Friedman

CBC.ca

October 27, 2013

A few weeks before the 2007 NHL trade deadline, Garth Snow walked up to Kevin Lowe and said, "If you decide to trade Ryan Smyth, we're interested."

After a failed, bitter negotiation, Edmonton sent the winger to Long Island for Robert Nilsson, Ryan O'Marra and a first-round pick who became Alex Plante.

The Islanders beat the Devils in a shootout on the last day of the regular season to make the playoffs, losing in five games to Buffalo. Smyth had 19 points in 23 games, but, as a free agent, left for Colorado in the summer.

Snow thought it was a good gamble then, just as he believes Thomas Vanek is a good gamble now, trading Matt Moulson, a first-round draft pick in 2014 and a second-rounder in 2015 to Buffalo for the Austrian winger.

Both players will be unrestricted free agents this summer. Snow did not discuss an extension with Vanek prior to the deal. Judging from the timing, he probably wasn't too keen on extending Moulson.

Moulson was a very popular teammate, but Snow certainly doesn't believe the core group was making enough of a positive statement.

"I didn't like the way we'd been playing," he told Newsday's Arthur Staple on Sunday night. "We're better than our record indicates and we need to take the next step."

He is letting them know that if it doesn't get better, more is coming.

Other teams were wary of giving major assets for Vanek, believing he will take a long look at Minnesota this summer. He went to school there, his wife is from there and he has a home there. But the Islanders convinced Evgeni Nabokov and Lubomir Visnovsky to stay put after both balked when first acquired.

Dynamic player

A couple of those other teams said they still viewed Vanek as a dynamic player. No doubt, he'll be energized playing alongside John Tavares.

And, if it doesn't work, Snow could always flip Vanek, couldn't he?

Say what you want about Darcy Regier, who is not Mr. Popularity in Sabreland, but he's dealt Vanek and Jason Pominville for Matt Hackett, Johan Larsson,

Moulson and Nikita Zadorov, with a first-rounder and two second-rounders to come.

The deal gives Buffalo nine selections in the first two rounds of the next two drafts.

"With where our hockey club is, the first- and the second-round picks are important," he said in a Sunday night media conference.

Regier should get a call from the A&E television network, asking him if he wants to guest star on "Hoarders."

It's very likely more of these picks are coming, as Regier acknowledged the possibility Moulson moves again this season. And, no one is forgetting another UFA-to-be, Ryan Miller.

All he's done is make GMs think, "If he's that good behind that team, what can he do for ours?"

ISLANDERS ACQUIRE VANEK FROM SABRES FOR MOULSON, PICKS

TSN.ca

October 27, 2013

The New York Islanders have acquired forward Thomas Vanek from the Buffalo Sabres in exchange for forward Matt Moulson, a first round draft pick in 2014 and a 2015 second round pick.

Vanek, 29, is set to become an unrestricted free agent at the end of the 2013-14 season. In 13 games this season, he has scored four goals and added five assists.

The Austrian is in the final year of a seven-year deal he signed with the Sabres prior to 2007-08 worth an average annual value of \$7.142 million.

"We had opportunity to acquire an elite player and given where we are right now (.500), you go for it," Islanders general manager Garth Snow told TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie.

"If we hadn't drafted so well, if we didn't have good prospects, we couldn't afford to take the risk," Snow told McKenzie on the steep price the Islanders paid to acquire Vanek.

The Islanders had not held contract extension discussions with Vanek prior to acquiring him.

Vanek's agent Stephen Bartlett told McKenzie that his client is "excited to be an Islander."

"We'll take it day by day and focus on the short term for now and see where we are at season's end," Bartlett told McKenzie..

Vanek has scored 254 goals and 243 assists in 598 career NHL games, all with the Sabres. He has eclipsed the 30-goal plateau on four occasions, including a career-high 43 in 2006-07. The Sabres originally selected him fifth-overall at the 2003 NHL Entry Draft.

Moulson has scored six goals and three assists with the Islanders in 11 games so far in 2013-14. He, too, is set to become an unrestricted free agent at season's end.

He is in the final season of a three-year deal worth an average annual value of \$3.13 million.

Moulson has emerged as an offensive threat alongside Islanders captain John Tavares. He has scored 30-or-more goals in his last three full NHL seasons, including a career-best 36 in 2011-12.

He was originally selected in the ninth round (263rd-overall) by the Pittsburgh Penguins in the 2003 NHL Entry Draft. He has scored 124 goals and 109 assists in 333 career NHL games with the Islanders and Los Angeles Kings.

The Sabres are currently last in the Eastern Conference with a 2-10-1 record and just five points through their first 11 games.

Vanek was one of two high-profile Sabres playing out the final year of a contract alongside goaltender Ryan Miller.

NUMBERS GAME: VANEK TO ISLANDERS FOR MOULSON, PICKS

By Scott Cullen

TSN.ca

October 28, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres started their rebuilding project in earnest, dealing their best player to the New York Islanders for a first-line winger and two draft picks.

Numbers Game breaks down the deal sending Thomas Vanek to the Islanders for Matt Moulson and picks.

The Islanders Get: LW Thomas Vanek.

Vanek, 29, is one of the most prolific goal-scorers in the league, having tallied 229 goals since 2006-2007, ranking fifth in the league behind Alex Ovechkin, Ilya Kovalchuk, Jarome Iginla and Dany Heatley over that span. Given the age and circumstances around the others in that group, Ovechkin would be the only one of those four that holds more current value as a goal-scorer.

This season, Vanek has four goals, nine points and a minus-5 rating in 13 games, and the minus rating is relatively fitting to the lopsided puck possession stats when Vanek (or most of the Sabres) have been on the ice this season. Throughout his career, Vanek's puck possession numbers have been okay, but not outstanding, largely because the strength of his game is not carrying the puck and creating chances, it's more about his finishing ability and what he can do when he gets the puck deep in the offensive zone.

Even this season, with his most common linemates including Cody Hodgson, Steve Ott and Drew Stafford, Vanek is generating a career-high 3.85 shots per game, playing a career-high 18:37 per game, but he's scored on a career-low 8.0% of his shots, well below his career average of 15.1%, so if Vanek continues to get significant ice time with the Islanders and he can continue to generate shots at this rate, he could put up some big numbers by season's end.

Pro-rating his shots per game, combined with his career-shooting percentage in the 71 games the Islanders have remaining, would give Vanek 41 goals, in addition to the four he has already. Of course, Vanek may not score at his career rate or generate shots at the same rate that he has through 13 games with the Sabres this season, but if 45 goals is the upside based on those numbers, it's certainly reasonable to expect 30-35 goals.

In the last year of a contract that pays him nearly \$7.143-million, Vanek will be an unrestricted free agent at season's end. There has already been speculation that Vanek, who played collegiately at the University of Minnesota, wants to sign with the Minnesota Wild when that time comes.

But that's well in the future. Vanek might find out he likes it on the Island, playing with John Tavares and fellow University of Minnesota alum Kyle Okposo. For whatever it's worth, the Islanders also have another Austrian, Michael Grabner, on the roster.

The opportunity to produce for a more competitive team and play with a fellow countryman won't have as much sway as the contract that Vanek gets offered as a free agent and that is where the Islanders are in a tricky spot. If they decide that Vanek is as good as advertised and they want to commit to him long-term, they're going to be paying for whatever production he gives them after the age of 30, which means decline is going to be a major factor when it comes to a deal that is likely going to be in the neighbourhood of seven or eight years.

Worse, if Vanek is productive this year, there will probably be other teams lined up to offer that long-term contract, because teams are easily seduced by goal-scorers and Vanek can score goals.

While it's definitely worth being aware of those scenarios, they are situations to be dealt with in the future. By adding Vanek, the Islanders give themselves a better shot at this year's playoffs, perhaps feeling more aggressive in a weakened Metropolitan Division, and the chance to make a second straight playoff appearance would be progress for a franchise that hasn't made back-to-back playoff appearances since 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.

If it all goes wrong and the Islanders fall out of playoff contention, they could still flip Vanek before the trade deadline to mitigate their loss of assets.

The Sabres Get: LW Matt Moulson, a first-round pick in 2014 and second-round pick in 2015.

Moulson, who turns 30 November 1, is a three-time 30-goal scorer, and ranks 10th with 118 goals since the start of the 2009-2010 season.

The issue that pops up when evaluating Moulson is whether or not he can continue produce at a high level without John Tavares as his centre. Not surprisingly, Moulson fares better with Tavares than without, but it's not a massive difference, so it's fair to expect Moulson to be able to score if he plays alongside Cody Hodgson on the Sabres' top line and gets regular work on the first power play unit.

It's also worth noting that PA Parenteau had that same question lobbed in his direction when he left the Islanders as a free agent, but he's done just fine, scoring 50 points in 58 games with Colorado.

If the Sabres give Moulson the ice time that was going to Vanek, that ought to provide an opportunity to challenge for his fourth career 30-goal season. Moulson already has six goals, nine points and a plus-3 rating through 11 games

this season, but he's scoring on a career-high 21.4% of his shots thus far, a number that is notably higher than his career shooting percentage (14.0%), so some regression ought to be expected.

For the Sabres' purposes, though, if they can cajole some goal scoring out of Moulson, that could leave open the possibility of dealing Moulson, who will be an unrestricted free agent, before the trade deadline (and possibly much sooner) and netting another first-round pick, perhaps with a prospect or another pick. Adding that potential return for Moulson, to the picks that the Sabres received for Vanek, brings a return that would have been difficult to acquire from a single team, so there is reason to be optimistic about the total haul of assets being acquired.

At the same time, this is a rebuilding job that is going to take some time because the Sabres, who are already the worst team in the league right now, are dealing away their best player. By the time those picks become productive NHLers, if they even become NHLers, Vanek and Moulson may be in the twilight of their careers.

If a first-round pick from the Islanders falls in the 15-20 range, there is a better than even chance that the pick will be an NHL player, though highly unlikely that the pick would yield a star player.

Add in a second-round pick that yields about a 30% chance of producing an NHL player and the Sabres ought to eventually have something to show for dealing Vanek, but that's small consolation to a team sitting at the bottom of the standings that just moved out their best scorer.

Is Darcy Regier the right GM to rebuild the Sabres?

By Ken Campbell
The Hockey News
October 28, 2013

It seems only fitting that on the week of Halloween, the GM with more lives than any other in the NHL would make a blockbuster trade. And for many Sabres fans, the news that Darcy Regier was at the helm to make it will be greeted with as much happiness as a zombie apocalypse.

Because the big news Sunday wasn't so much that the Sabres traded Thomas Vanek to the New York Islanders. It was that Regier was the one who engineered the transaction. That can mean only one thing for the Sabres – Regier is the man whom owner Terry Pegula thinks is most suited to usher in the rebuild of the franchise.

So Sabres fans, particularly those who have been chanting, "Fire Darcy!" at every Sabres home game, it would probably be best if you got used to it. It appears now that instead of firing Regier, Pegula has handed the GM the keys to the station wagon after Regier has accidently driven it in a demolition derby.

The Sabres, it appears have made their decision. It will be Regier who trades goalie Ryan Miller. It will be Regier who ultimately fires a coach (Ron Rolston) who appears to be in way, way over his head at the NHL level and looks like he'd be more in his element coaching in the Federal League. It will be Regier who will decide whether or not to auction off the expiring contracts of Steve Ott and Henrik Tallinder at the trade deadline. Heck, if the Sabres are bad enough, maybe he'll even deal the guy he got from the Islanders, Matt Moulson, to a contending team that needs to rent a scorer.

So the question now is, does Regier have the chops to get the Sabres out of the cataclysmic mess he himself has made? Regier has his critics, legions and legions of them, but his history also suggests he can rebuild a team as well as anyone. After all, Regier was at the helm when the Sabres were truly putrid, missing the playoffs each of the three seasons before the 2004-05 lockout, then retooled the team into one that had back-to-back 100-point seasons and advanced to the Eastern Conference final in successive seasons.

And if Regier has done one thing right in Buffalo, it has been drafting and developing players. This season, the Sabres have four teenagers in their lineup, which is probably a testament to how bad they are as much as it is a credit to the young men who are playing, but Regier and his staff have always been able to identify young talent. The Sabres, both in their days of bankruptcy and riches, have always had a steady stream of NHL talent to push the veterans or provide them with currency.

And this trade was all about the draft picks, given they dealt one expiring contract for another, but picked up a first-round pick in 2014 and a second-rounder in 2015. (Actually it's a credit to Regier and Garth Snow, his Islanders counterpart, that they got out in front of this one so early.) With at least two first-rounders in 2014, perhaps including the first overall selection, Regier is well positioned to conduct the rebuild.

And now that nobody will want to come to Buffalo for a while, just like the good old days when the Sabres had no money, the prediction from this corner is Regier will now do his best work. When the Sabres were eking out their existence and finishing in last place, Regier went out and got Chris Drury for Rhett Warrener and Daniel Briere for Chris Gratton. Once 'Moneybags' Pegula came onto the scene predicting Stanley Cups, Regier signed Ville Leino and Christian Ehrhoff to ridiculous contracts and gave Tyler Myers an enormous extension instead of a bridge contract.

Of course, Regier also badly miscalculated the Sabres needed an abundance of toughness after Miller got flattened by Milan Lucic, which prompted an assemblage of enforcers that not only goes against Regier's personal philosophy, but has helped make the Sabres the worst team in the NHL at the moment.

Everything good and bad about this organization for the better part of the past 15 years has Regier's fingerprints all over it. Does that make him the best man in hockey to rebuild this franchise? Probably not. But if the Sabres were going to fire Regier, you'd have to think they would have done it before signing off on trading Vanek. And it's not as though he has no experience doing it.

Now that the Sabres have to start actually building a roster rather than throw money around, Regier will be right in his element.

Islanders acquire Thomas Vanek from Sabres in exchange for Matt Moulson, draft picks

By Stephen Lorenzo
New York Daily News
October 27, 2013

There's been a blockbuster on the Island.

The Islanders made a huge move on Sunday night, trading left winger Matt Moulson, a first-round pick in 2014 and a second-rounder in 2015 to the struggling Buffalo Sabres for explosive forward Thomas Vanek.

Moulson, 29, was in his fifth season with the Islanders, where he tallied 223 points in 304 games. He ranked fourth on the team in points before the trade, with six goals and three assists on the year.

Vanek, also 29, was the home captain of the Sabres and has 254 goals in his career, four of them this season.

The Islanders depart with locker-room favorite Matt Moulson, along with two draft picks.

Al Bello/Getty Images

The Islanders depart with locker-room favorite Matt Moulson, along with two draft picks.

Both players are in the final years of their contracts, making the move a bit puzzling at first glance from the Isles' perspective.

Moulson is a well-liked player in the locker room and with the fan base, and his departure — along with two draft picks — seems to be a lot considering Vanek could be nothing more than a rental at season's end. One must also wonder the effect this move might have on captain John Tavares, who was family friends with Moulson before they became teammates.

What the move does do is assert that the organization is ready to win now. Vanek is a proven offensive weapon while Moulson has flirted with breakout status for the past four seasons.

As it turns out, Moulson and Vanek both recorded goals when the Islanders and Sabres faced off on Oct. 15. The Isles lost that game, 4-3, in a shootout, one where Moulson and Vanek also found the net.

Stunner: Sabres deal co-captain Thomas Vanek to Isles for Matt Moulson and two high draft picks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 28, 2013

BUFFALO – In the short-term, the hapless Sabres are no better after dealing co-captain and top scorer Thomas Vanek to the New York Islanders late Sunday for 30-goal winger Matt Moulson and a first-round pick in 2014 and second-round selection in 2015, general manager Darcy Regier said.

But the shocking trade, which Regier worked on with counterpart Garth Snow “off and on for a while,” wasn’t about improving the 2-10-1 club immediately.

“This is more the overall deal, which I believe will improve this hockey club moving forward,” Regier said inside the First Niagara Center.

The rebuilding Sabres, who’ve been selling off veteran assets since April, have now accumulated 17 first- and second-rounds pick for the drafts from 2012-15.

“I don’t love where we are,” Regier said about the bottom-feeding club. “I love what we’re doing, and I believe in the direction that we’re going.”

Given the Sabres’ wretched start, many believed the 29-year-old Vanek, one of the NHL’s slickest wingers, wanted out. The Austrian, an unrestricted free agent following the season, has said he would look elsewhere if the rebuilding process was long.

But Regier said he didn’t know if Vanek had closed the door on re-signing with the Sabres, who drafted him fifth overall in 2003.

“The absolutely sure thing I don’t think was possible given where we were, where we look at the core group,” he said. “I think our focus is on trying to acquire assets, in this case draft picks.”

What was Vanek’s reaction to the deal?

“Like a lot of players, he was shocked, very professional,” Regier said. “I thanked him. He was good. He was as good as he could be.”

Regier, who’s notorious for holding onto players until he gets the deal he wants, believes he got the best return he could right now.

“Could that change down the road hypothetically?” Regier asked. “Who knows?”

Clearly, the reeling Sabres, who have an NHL-low two wins and five points, needed to make some sort of move. They host former Sabres coach Lindy Ruff and the Dallas Stars tonight still looking for their first home win.

But Regier said outside influences didn't force the deal.

"I don't want to show any lack of respect to our fans, but internally it's ... just doing the work and focusing on what our plan is and just executing it as well and as soon as possible, and that is on behalf of the fans," he said.

Having scored 254 goals and 497 points in 598 games, including four scores and nine points this season, Vanek leaves town one of the best players in franchise history.

Vanek grew from an enigmatic rookie to a respected presence on and off the ice during his nine seasons. Sabres coach Ron Rolston named him a co-captain with Steve Ott earlier this month.

Meanwhile, the 6-foot-1, 200-pound Moulson has 124 goals and 233 points in 333 NHL contests. He scored 30 goals three straight years from 2009-12, including a career-high 36 in 2011-12.

The 29-year-old's also an unrestricted free agent following the season.

"He's got six goals ... and is off to a good start and is a goal scorer and plays in the hard areas, on the power play," said Regier, who said Moulson should join the Sabres this morning.

What about Moulson's future? He could fetch another high pick at the trade deadline.

"Right now, he's here for the rest of the season," Regier said.

With Vanek gone, speculation will turn to Ryan Miller, the 33-year-old franchise goalie who's also a free agent come July.

"I've really had no discussions as of late with respect to any of our other potential free agents," Regier said.

Regier said he talks to about 10 of the league's other GMs "about a lot of things" and he would "leave it at that." The market, he said, is slow because of the hectic schedule and so many injuries. Still, he said there are more conversations than in the past.

Even with a long contract and ownership's support, Regier's probably under more pressure now than at any other point of his 16-year tenure.

Regier, however, said he likes to “operate as though it’s a challenge.” That operation, he said, has “maybe a little more directness than the early years.”

“You have to find the enjoyment in doing your work,” he said. “You have to find the positives, be hopeful.”

Regier said he understands it’s hard to patient with such a young lineup.

“It is exciting when you can get young players. You can see them grow,” he said. “The hard part is when you don’t win games when they’re growing, and it makes it difficult. But the nature of this business is short-term pressure and it’s a long-term plan that’s going to get it done, and you have to deal with those two.”

Former Sabres coach Lindy Ruff returns home to Buffalo with Stars

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 28, 2013

BUFFALO – This city, of course, is still Lindy Ruff's home. Always will be, the former Sabres coach said shortly after his stunning Feb. 20 dismissal.

At times, it felt as if Ruff, having survived so much turmoil and change over his 15 seasons, would never leave.

But 250 days ago, Darcy Regier, Ruff close's friend, drove to his Clarence home and fired him, the Sabres' regression too much for the general manager to handle.

Ruff returns tonight to the First Niagara Center as the Dallas Stars' coach.

Think about that for a second, Ruff – the local icon who played 608 games with the Sabres, captained the team and coached another 1,165 contests – leading the hated Stars, whose infamous “No Goal” beat out his Sabres for the 1999 Stanley Cup.

It will be an odd sight, indeed.

What's going to happen? How will Sabres fans greet Ruff? Heck, will the organization even acknowledge his presence? Will it get emotional?

“I've thought about it,” Ruff said about returning home Saturday in Dallas following the Stars' 2-1 shootout loss to Winnipeg. “I've had friends try to get a hold of me already. I can't lie and say I haven't thought about it.

“The No. 1 thing on my mind is our road record (1-4). I'm really focusing in on that with this road trip. It's not like I've been gone a long time, so it's not like I'm walking in after it for two or three years.”

Ruff also said: “It's going to be great to walk in the building and see the old faces. I've got a lot of good friends there. They love their hockey, and it will be a good day. Hopefully, our team will play really well, and it will be a good day.”

What does new Sabres coach Ron Rolston think about Ruff coming back?

“It's part of the business,” Rolston said Tuesday. “Coaches change jobs. It's part of the business. He did great things for the organization, and I'm sure they'll have something for that. But we've got bigger things to focus for ourselves. Worry about things that we can have control over.”

Ruff coached the Sabres through thick and thin, guiding them to within two wins of a championship, to the 2006-07 Presidents' Trophy and even survived the awful 2002-03 bankruptcy season, a trying year many have pegged as the low point in the franchise's 43-year history.

But this season is quickly becoming the worst ever. The Sabres have an NHL-low two wins (2-10-1) and five points under Rolston. Their feeble offense has 19 goals, or 1.5 a game.

The goal, Regier said in discussing Ruff's dismissal eight months ago, was for the struggling Sabres to make the playoffs. Six weeks later, the GM began breaking up the team and starting over.

Regier warned following the season "suffering" could accompany the organization's new philosophy.

But no one expected the hapless Sabres, who had Sunday off, to perform this miserably.

Fresh off Friday's 3-1 win in Florida, the Sabres blew a 2-1 third-period lead Saturday and fell 3-2 in Tampa Bay.

Rolston benched No. 1 center and leading scorer Cody Hodgson, who signed a six-year, \$25.5 million extension last month, and \$4 million winger Drew Stafford, who has just one goal, during the third period.

When asked about Hodgson, who skated a season-low 12:10, Rolston repeated, "He didn't play" three times during his brief postgame chat.

Later, shaking his head, Rolston said about Hodgson and Stafford: "Your best players have to be your best players."

The Buffalo Sabres trade Thomas Vanek to the NY Islanders

WGR 550

October 27, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres have traded Thomas Vanek. The trade information was first broken by Newsday Islanders beat reporter Arthur Staple on Twitter at 8:30pm Sunday night - Thomas Vanek has been traded by the Buffalo Sabres to the New York Islanders. The Sabres official Twitter page confirmed the news shortly after. The Sabres will receive in compensation forward Matt Moulson as well as the Islanders 1st round pick in 2014 and their 2nd round pick in 2015.

In his time on the Island, Moulson topped the thirty goal mark in each of his first three seasons. An injury shortened his 2012-2013 campaign limiting his production, but this year in eleven games Moulson already has six goals and three assists. In his 333 career games Moulson has totaled 124 goals and 109 assists and has a career -12 rating. Matt Moulson is also in the last year of his entry-level contract and will become an unrestricted free agent at the end of the season.

Like Moulson, newly named Captain Thomas Vanek, who will also become a restricted free agent when his contract expires after the 2013-2014 campaign ends, and also has 9 points so far this season. During his time in Buffalo the Austrian native played in 598 games totaling 254 goals, 243 assists, and acquired a +29 rating. The Sabres and Islanders do not meet again this season until March 15 on Long Island.

Hamilton: The Vanek trade is a good one, but it won't make this season any easier

By Paul Hamilton

October 27, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Trading Thomas Vanek to the Islanders may make this season even more painful, but it had to be done.

Owner Terry Pegula liked Vanek very much and was hoping beyond hope that the winger would want a contract extension from the Sabres, but with the way the team has been playing, it just was never going to happen.

Darcy Regier had acknowledged in the past that Vanek's trade value would go down the longer they waited.

In my mind they got excellent value in return. Matt Moulson is also 29 years old and has scored 30 goals for the Islanders three different times. He also played for Los Angeles and has 124 goals and 109 assists in 333 NHL games. That works out to 31 goals and 27 assists for 58 points every 82 games. The Sabres co-captain averaged 35 goals and 33 assists for 68 points every 82 games. This season Moulson has six goals and three assists for nine points in 11 games. Vanek has notched four goals and five assists for nine points in 13 games.

Vanek leaves Buffalo just two games short of 600, all with Buffalo. He was the Sabres first round pick in 2003 and leaves with two 40 goal seasons and four 30 goal years. Last season he would've had 43 at the pace he was on, but the lockout stopped him at 20.

Darcy Regier wouldn't say if they'd be interested in re-signing Moulson who's also an unrestricted free agent. My guess is no as they could turn him into more picks before the trade deadline.

With all the picks acquired this is what Buffalo now has in the next two seasons. In 2014 they have their own first round pick as well as the Islanders. The three second round picks they now own are theirs, Minnesota's for Jason Pominville and the Kings for Robyn Regehr. In 2015 Buffalo has its first round pick and another three in the second round, theirs, the Islanders and again the Kings for Regehr.

Moulson should be here for tomorrow's game against Dallas. This is what he tweeted out, "Would like to thank all the great people and fans I was able to meet in NY. I will miss you all..this is the beginning of a new chapter." He also told Katie Strang of ESPN New York, "I was surprised...I thought this could be a possibility but I didn't think this was going to happen."

Vanek has not commented, but his agent Steve Bartlett told our Howard Simon, "Hopefully it will be a breath of fresh air."

After making the trade Darcy Regier spoke with the media live on WGR Sports Radio 550. As far as Moulson goes Regier said, "Matt I believe will address our current needs and provide us with support, leadership and scoring and with where our hockey club is, the first and the second round picks are important." He added, "This is more of a deal that will improve this hockey club going forward."

There has been a lot of fan pressure put on this organization lately including 'Fire Darcy' chants at the last three home games. Regier said, "I don't want to show any lack of respect to our fans, but internally it's just doing the work and focusing on what our plan is and try to execute it as well and as soon as possible." As far as letting outside influences rush you into decisions Regier said, "Outside influences? This is on behalf of the fans, you have to believe in what you're doing or what we're doing as a team member. As a General Manager you're higher up on that team, but you're working with your ownership, your scouting staff, you're working with the President of the hockey club trying to understand their concerns. You have to work internally as a team member within this group and believe in the people you're working with and do it for the people that are coming to the games, so it's not a disregarding of the outside, it is in fact for the outside."

Of course the status of Ryan Miller came up. Regier said, "No, I've really had no discussions of late with respect to any of our other potential free agents. Ryan continues to play extremely well."

Lindy Ruff is here Monday with his Dallas Stars and when he looks at the players in Buffalo Sabre uniforms, there will be quite a few new faces.

SABRES ACQUIRE MOULSON & 2 PICKS FOR VANEK

Sabres.com

October 27, 2013

Buffalo Sabres General Manager Darcy Regier has announced that the team has traded forward Thomas Vanek to the New York Islanders in exchange for forward Matt Moulson, the Islanders' first-round draft selection in the 2014 NHL Entry Draft, and the Islanders' second-round selection in the 2015 NHL Entry Draft.

The 29-year-old Moulson had six goals – including a league-leading five on the power play – and three assists in nine games for the Islanders this season, with his six goals coming on just 28 shots.

Moulson posted three straight seasons of 30 or more goals for New York from 2009-12, and scored 44 points (15-29) in 47 games during last year's lockout shortened schedule. A native of North York, Ont., Moulson joined the Islanders as unrestricted free agent on July 6, 2009.

Originally drafted by Pittsburgh in 2003 (263rd overall), Moulson made his NHL debut with the Los Angeles Kings in 2007-08, after signing with them as a free agent in September 2006. In 322 career NHL games, Moulson has 124 goals and 109 assists.

COMMENTS FROM DARCY REGIER:

"I'd like to start by thanking Thomas Vanek for the contributions that he's made to our organization going back to his draft year, 2003 – 10-plus years. He's been an outstanding player, outstanding teammate, citizen. The organization and we wish him only the best going forward."

"Matt, I believe, will address our current needs and provide us with support, leadership, scoring. And with where our hockey club is, the first- and the second-round picks are important, whether we select them at the draft, use the picks to select players at the draft or whether we use them to continue to improve the hockey club as we go forward through this season is yet to be determined. But that was the focus for this deal. It was a deal that has been worked on off and on for awhile and it was something that we felt we had to do."

"Matt's a very good player... [He's] off to a good start and is a goal scorer and plays in the hard areas and on the power play. And will continue to contribute in that regard, but this is more an overall deal which I believe will improve this hockey club going forward."

"I don't love where we are. I love what we're doing and I believe in the direction we're going."

"It is exciting when you can get young players and you can see them grow. The hard part is when you don't win games while they're growing and it makes it difficult. But the nature of this business is it's short-term pressures and it's a long-term plan that is going to get it done and you have to deal with those two."

With tonight's trade, the Sabres will now have a combined 17 first- and second-round picks over a four-year span from 2012-2015 – the most in the 43-year history of the Sabres' franchise.

The picks breakdown as follows:

2012

1st round: Mikhail Grigorenko (12th overall), Zemgus Girgensons (14th)

2nd round: Jake McCabe (44th overall)

2013

1st round: Rasmus Ristolainen (8th), Nikita Zadorov (16th)

2nd round: J.T. Compher (35th), Connor Hurley (38th), Justin Bailey (52nd)

2014

1st round: 2 picks (own, NYI- Vanek trade)

2nd round: 3 picks (own, MINN- Pominville trade, LA- Regehr trade)

2015

1st round: 1 pick (own)

2nd round: 3 picks (own, LA- Regehr trade, NYI- Vanek trade)