



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

October 4, 2013

Senators-Sabres Preview

By Jeff Mezydlo
Associated Press
October 3, 2013

Although their long-time leader is now playing elsewhere, the Ottawa Senators are poised to sustain the success they've achieved the past two seasons.

For the first time since the 1995 season, the Senators will take the ice without Daniel Alfredsson when they visit the rebuilding Buffalo Sabres on Friday night.

Ottawa recorded 92 points to reach the playoffs in 2011-12 and went 25-17-6 in the lockout-shortened 2013 season, overcoming injuries to Jason Spezza, 2012 Norris Trophy winner Erik Karlsson and goalie Craig Anderson to again make the playoffs. It went on to upset second-seeded Montreal in the first round.

"We probably surprised a few people last year with our injuries and being able to finish the way that we did," forward Zack Smith told the Senators' official website. "I think this year there are a lot more expectations from different people, but if we're a healthy club it's going to be exciting to see what we can actually do."

It's who is not in Ottawa, however, that drew some of the biggest offseason headlines throughout the league.

After 17 seasons with the team, Alfredsson put off retirement and signed a one-year, \$5.5 million deal with Detroit. The 40-year-old is the franchise's all-time leader in games, goals, assists and points, but he scored 10 in 47 contests for a team that ranked 27th with 112 goals during 2013.

The Senators are clearly focused on moving on, with coach Paul MacLean responding to a question about Alfredsson at Wednesday's press conference by skirting the issue.

Asked if he was curious about the Red Wings' opener against Buffalo that night, MacLean told the team's official website, "We'll watch it because they're playing Buffalo, yeah. It's been three years since I was (a Detroit assistant coach), they've changed so much."

The Senators moved to upgrade their offense in the offseason by acquiring Bobby Ryan from Anaheim in a deal that sent talented young forward Jakob Silfverberg west. Ryan scored at least 31 goals in each of the four seasons prior to 2013, when he had 11 in 46 games.

"He shoots the puck in the net and that's something we haven't had here since I've been here," MacLean said. "Having someone with that ability certainly should help our confidence as a team as far as it comes to scoring goals."

A healthy Spezza should also help.

The recently named captain matched a career high with 34 goals in 2011-12, but back problems limited him to two and four assists in eight regular season and playoff games in 2013.

Ryan, Spezza and Karlsson hope to mesh well with young forwards Cory Conacher and Jean-Gabriel Pageau, who combined for seven playoff goals last season.

"I don't think we'll be 27th (in scoring)," general manager Bryan Murray said of this season. "But you never know. But I think we've got enough offense."

Ottawa's offensive deficiencies in 2013 were largely offset by its conference-best 2.08 goals-against average. Anderson went 12-9-2 with a 1.69 GAA despite missing 18 games due to an ankle injury, while backup Robin Lehner had a 2.20 GAA in 12 starts.

Ottawa won the first three meetings with the Sabres last season before losing 4-2 at Buffalo on April 5.

The Sabres look to bounce back from their 2-1 loss at Detroit on Wednesday. Zemgus Girgensons scored in his NHL debut, but Buffalo went 0 for 7 on the power play and failed to convert on a pair of two-man advantages.

The Sabres ranked 29th on the power play last season at 14.1 percent.

"(The veterans) know that we're going to have to lead the team, especially the power-play guys," co-captain Steve Ott told the Sabres' official website. "In low-scoring games, in a 2-1 game, those are the ones that win you games."

The 19-year-old Girgensons was one of three teenagers in the Sabres' lineup.

Buffalo's Thomas Vanek had a team-high 20 goals and 21 assists in 38 games last season, but he's been held to two assists in his last eight games against the Senators.

Karlsson has six goals and four assists in his last nine versus Buffalo.

Sabres forward Ville Leino is out indefinitely due to a broken rib suffered against the Red Wings. Leino played in eight games last season because of a hip injury.

Sabres LW Leino out with broken rib

Associated Press

October 3, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Oft-injured Buffalo Sabres forward Ville Leino is out of the lineup once again, this time because of a broken rib. Coach Ron Rolston announced Thursday that Leino is out indefinitely after he was hurt in Buffalo's season-opening 2-1 loss at Detroit a day earlier. Rolston said Leino was hurt in the first period, but continued playing. The severity of the injury wasn't revealed until Leino was examined before practice Thursday. Leino played in just eight games last season because of a hip injury. He also missed 10 games the previous season with a broken foot after being signed to a six-year, \$27-million contract. Forward Marcus Foligno (shoulder) returned to practice Thursday, but is not expected to play until next week. Buffalo opens its home schedule against Ottawa on Friday.

Sabres' youth, power play may test fans' patience in home opener

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 3, 2013

So how ready are Buffalo Sabres fans to endure a rebuilding project? Among many ways to gauge it: Give a listen in the home opener tonight in First Niagara Center the first time an Ottawa Senators skater heads to the penalty box.

Sabres fans seemed to spook their own team at times last season when the Buffalo power play sputtered at home and the boo birds rose to the rafters. And after an 0-for-7 start with the man advantage in Wednesday's 2-1 loss at Detroit, you have to wonder how much rope the paying customers will give their team no matter how young parts of the roster may be.

The season opener started poorly as the Sabres had a two-man advantage for 91 seconds after just four minutes of play. But they were unable to capitalize and it set a negative tone for the night.

"It's frustrating, especially with the first five-on-three to start the season. That's a juicy opportunity with clean ice," Tyler Ennis said after practice Thursday. "It would have been nice to kick the season off with a quick five-on-three goal like that. Definitely frustrating but it's not going to get any better complaining and whining and pouting about it."

The power play will obviously be a main focus tonight, as will Buffalo's growing kiddie corps.

The Sabres are expected to again have teenagers Rasmus Ristolainen, Mikhail Grigorenko and Zemgus Girgensons in their lineup. And 21-year-old center Johan Larsson, acquired from Minnesota in April in the Jason Pominville trade, will make his debut here because winger Ville Leino suffered a broken rib in the first period Wednesday. Larsson, who played one game last year for the Wild, is expected to center Ennis and Steve Ott after Ennis played center in the opener.

Leino played 16 shifts and finished the game but the injury was discovered Thursday morning. Coach Ron Rolston said Leino – who played only eight games last season due to hip and lung injuries – will be out indefinitely.

Leino joins Marcus Foligno (shoulder strain), Joel Armia (broken hand) and Corey Tropp (broken jaw) on the list of injured Sabres forwards. Foligno said Thursday his chances of playing this weekend are "slim" and that he's targeting Tuesday's visit by Tampa Bay for his return.

While the Sabres are toeing the company line that the power play was what cost them the opener, the reality is they were very fortunate to be in a close game.

Were it not for a solid 32-save performance by Ryan Miller, it could have easily been a blowout as the Red Wings outshot them, 34-20, and controlled play.

The Sabres gave up two goals in a 36-second span of the first period and then blanked the Wings for the final 47 minutes thanks to Miller.

Rookies like Ristolainen and Girgensons found their bearings as the game moved on, with Girgensons getting the Sabres' only goal in the third period.

But at the other end, the Sabres weren't working into the Red Wings' zone with any efficiency on the power play, with overpassing or downright poor passing undoing their efforts.

"You can't relax and think that you have a man more and it will get handed to you," defenseman Christian Ehrhoff said. "You have to outnumber them. It usually starts with getting some pucks at the net from the point. That's when things open up for you down low, when you make the penalty killers more aware of the point shots and they drift out higher."

The Buffalo forwards as a whole did little in Detroit, combining for just 10 shots on goal the entire game. That's far too low a number over 60 minutes to give a team a reasonable chance to win.

"I think we're just a little too stationary," Ennis said. "There needs to be a little more movement as a whole. When you're standing still and moving it back to the point and everyone is flat-footed and shooting pucks, it's hard. When there's motion, it's easy to get pucks back because everyone is moving and you know you've got your feet."

"I thought we played slow on the power play," agreed Rolston. "I think at times I think we have to 'pass' it in the net. We just played slow, didn't move it quick enough and once we got the puck out top we didn't get things down there."

Rolston knows there will be plenty of pomp prior to this one that might further unnerve his young players. The word around the building is that pregame ceremonies will include some sort of spectacular laser projection show. And remember, it will be the coach's first home opener in the NHL.

"I'm looking forward to us getting better on a daily basis," Rolston said. "I'm looking forward to the new game production to make the game great for the fans. And I think we owe it to the fans to put that kind of energy on to the ice too."

Lather/rinse/repeat: Injured Leino out indefinitely, Larsson to play in home opener

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 3, 2013

Ville Leino wasn't on the ice for Sabres practice today in First Niagara Center and media antennas understandably went up. A couple players said they didn't know anything (sometimes that's true) but coach Ron Rolston then confirmed suspicions: Leino is injured again and will not play in Friday's home opener against Ottawa.

And, in fact, the cracked rib Leino suffered in the first period Wednesday in Detroit is going to keep him out indefinitely.

"It happened in the first period, probably about 3-4 shifts in," Rolston said. "It was just sore and it seized up overnight and we had it checked."

Leino played 12:36 in the game, registering no shots on goal. He was even on the ice inside the final two minutes so there were no obvious signs of injury. So for those scoring at home, that means Leino has now played nine games since the end of the 2011-12 season; he was limited to eight last year due to hip and lung injuries.

The Leino injury means Johan Larsson will move into the lineup at center, likely with Tyler Ennis and Steve Ott. Ennis will go back to the wing. Larsson played one game for Minnesota last year and will make his Sabres debut in the home opener.

"He's going to get a good opportunity," Rolston said. "I like everything about him. His attitude, the way he works, preparation. He's a good detail player. This will give him a good opportunity to play with some good players and show us what he can do. It's a good thing. He's ready."

After Wednesday's 0-for-7 clunker on the power play, the special teams got plenty of attention at today's practice.

"I thought we played slow on the power play," Rolston said. "I think at times I think we have to pass it in the net. We just played slow, didn't move it quick enough and once we got it out top we didn't get things down there."

Said Ennis: "We had golden opportunities there with 5-on-3 with clean ice. Those have to go in."

In other news, Marcus Foligno skated in a non-contact role and said he's targeting Tuesday's visit by Tampa Bay for his return. Zemgus Girgensons confirmed his parents had travel issues coming from Latvia and arrived in Detroit well after Wednesday's game ended, missing his first NHL goal. They were driving to Buffalo today so they could attend Friday's game.

Senators open season with visit to Buffalo

NHL.com

October 3, 2013

SENATORS (0-0-0) at SABRES (0-1-0)

TV: SNET-E, TVA, MSG-B

Season series: Last season, the Ottawa Senators took three of four games from the Buffalo Sabres. Erik Karlsson had two goals in two games, including a game-winner, and Craig Anderson was brilliant in his two starts, stopping 62 of 65 shots in a pair of wins. Drew Stafford had two goals and Ryan Miller went 1-1-1, allowing eight goals in three starts for the Sabres.

Big story: How will the Senators deal with the loss of former captain Daniel Alfredsson, who after 17 seasons in Ottawa, signed a one-year deal with the Detroit Red Wings in the offseason? Who will step up for the Sabres offensively? Buffalo ranked 12th in the Eastern Conference in goals for last season.

Team Scope:

Senators: True, they lost in the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs to the Pittsburgh Penguins, but Paul MacLean was named coach of the year after leading the Senators to the postseason despite a slew of injuries. Karlsson, Anderson, Jason Spezza and Milan Michalek are all healthy after missing large portions of last season.

After losing Alfredsson, the Senators acquired Bobby Ryan from the Ducks in exchange for Jakob Silfverberg and Stefan Noesen. MacLean promised Ryan's role with the team will be front and center.

"He's going to play in a top-six, a top-three role, all the time so it's a responsibility of preparation on a nightly basis to go with that and we feel he's ready, he's already a known factor in the league that he can, he's scored 30 goals in the league so he's a bona fide player that can do that and we're going to give him the opportunities he needs to get better," MacLean told the Senators' website on Wednesday.

Sabres: Thomas Vanek, recently named captain for all home games, has eight straight seasons with 20 or more goals and the Sabres will need that out of him again after struggling offensively last season. Buffalo had 20 shots in a 2-1 loss to the Detroit Red Wings on Wednesday. Miller was brilliant, allowing two goals on 34 shots; the goals came in a 36-second span in the first period.

"It wasn't a game that got away from us. It was a game we definitely were in. We could've tied it up and if we play that kind of hockey all year against good hockey teams, we're going to be on the winning side of some of those," Miller told team's website. "And if we're on the losing side, we're going to have a chance to come back and that's something good to see. Now we just have to show that we can come back and we've got a knack for a little bit of the dramatic at the end."

Injury report: Spezza (groin) and defenseman Eric Gryba (upper body) are both listed as probable for the Senators. ... The Sabres will be without forwards Ville Leino (cracked rib), Marcus Foligno (strained shoulder), Corey Tropp (jaw surgery) and Nikita Zadorov (lacerated finger).

Ottawa at Buffalo

CBS Sports

October 3, 2013

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Girgensons scores 3 firsts

The Baltic Times

October 3, 2013

RIGA - On Oct. 2, promising Latvian forward Zemgus Girgensons made his NHL debut with the Buffalo Sabres, during which he also scored his first NHL goal, reports LETA. Girgensons scored his team's only goal in the 57th minute, but it was not enough to erase a two-goal deficit, as the Detroit Red Wings won the game, 2:1.

The 19-year-old Girgensons was on the ice for 12 minutes, during which he took two shots on goal, blocked one shot, and ended the game with a +1 efficiency rating. Girgensons has become the 19th Latvian to play in the NHL, and is also the youngest ever Latvian to take to the ice in an NHL game.

Last season, Girgensons played for Buffalo's AHL farm-club the Rochester Americans. He also made his debut with the Latvian national men's ice hockey team at this year's Ice Hockey World Championships.

Girgensons was selected by the Sabres as the 14th selection in last year's NHL Draft, becoming the first ever Latvian ever selected in the first round of the draft.

Sabres' Tyler Myers hoping to recapture elite form back beside Henrik Tallinder

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 4, 2013

BUFFALO – Skating beside Tyler Myers again feels natural, almost like “we were never apart,” Sabres defenseman Henrik Tallinder said.

Their partnership began four years ago, on Oct. 3, 2009, and lasted 88 straight games.

Back then, Tallinder was struggling to regain his confidence, a shell of his old, smooth self. Myers was a slick 19-year-old rookie beginning a Calder Trophy campaign.

The two clicked immediately. Tallinder morphed into a calm, cool veteran again, complimenting Myers perfectly – on and off the ice.

“What he did for me my first year coming into the league ... not many guys get that,” Myers said Thursday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight’s home opener against the Ottawa Senators. “It was a huge contribution to the success I had that year and the success he had that year.”

But their careers went separate ways.

The Sabres passed on re-signing Tallinder, so the likable Swede inked a four-year deal with New Jersey. Myers, meanwhile, has suffered a stunning regression.

Since reacquiring Tallinder in July, the Sabres have insisted the 34-year-old’s not back to jumpstart Myers, who started training camp playing beside other defensemen.

“I’m here to play for the Sabres, not just Mysie,” Tallinder said Thursday. “Whatever happens, if I play with him, great. I think we have good chemistry together.”

Myers added: “You guys make it out to be like we’re gods together.”

Gods or not, Sabres coach Ron Rolston, as many expected, reunited the duo recently. They played together during Wednesday’s season-opening 2-1 loss in Detroit, their first meaningful appearance since April 26, 2010.

“I think we’re picking up pretty close to where we left off,” Myers said. “It’s just a matter of we keep building.”

Where’s Myers’ game now?

“When he is forcing things is when he gets in trouble,” Rolston said. “When he lets the game come to him and plays off the game, he’s outstanding. And he’s still learning the maturity of doing that.”

Tallinder’s presence might help Myers recapture the form that once made him arguably the NHL’s best young defenseman. But Myers began picking up the pieces from his wretched, career-worst season months ago, long before Tallinder’s return.

Myers’ trying 2012-13 – the first season of a seven-year, \$38.5 million contract – is well known in these parts. Despite playing in Austria during the NHL lockout, he reported to January’s abbreviated training camp woefully out of shape.

The 23-year-old never recovered, struggling from the get-go. Lindy Ruff scratched him twice in February, shortly before the Sabres fired the longtime coach.

Myers improved a bit under Rolston – “I felt like I was getting back to where I needed to be at the end of last year,” he said – although he showcased little aggressiveness or offense.

He finished with three goals, eight points and a minus-8 rating in 39 games before suffering a season-ending hairline fracture in his left leg blocking a shot April 11.

“You have a year like you had last year you want to change some things,” Myers said recently. “I’ll be the first to say that’s not me as a player last year. I have to be much better.”

Mental woes have plagued Myers over the years. Trying to replicate his Calder season overwhelmed him. So has living up to that huge contract.

“That’s the hardest thing,” Tallinder said about dealing with struggles. “When you get older, you kind of let it off a little bit. But when you’re young, you take it straight to heart basically. So I think that’s what he did. It gets into his head, too. He’s fine.”

So, in addition to training with an increased vigor, Myers spent what he called his best offseason also working with a sports physiologist.

The mental aspect was new to him.

“That was, I feel like, the biggest difference for me this summer,” he said. “It’s just a matter of trying to continue that training throughout the season and so on. But it’s a process. ... It’s tough to break (23 years of) habits.”

For Myers, last season is history.

“I’ve been trying hard not to think too much about last year,” he said. “ ... In saying that, there was still a lot of building to do. There’s still a lot of building to do now.”

Ville Leino's cracked rib opens up opportunity for Sabres rookie Johan Larsson

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 34 2013

BUFFALO – Sabres winger Ville Leino just can't stay healthy.

Leino, who played only eight games last season while battling a hip and lung injury, cracked a rib early in Wednesday's season-opening 2-1 loss in Detroit and is out indefinitely.

The Finn should only miss a couple of weeks, Sabres coach Ron Rolston said Thursday inside the First Niagara Center.

Leino stayed in the game, skating 12:38. But Rolston said the rib "seized up" overnight.

With Leino out, center Johan Larsson will make his Sabres debut in tonight's home opener against the Ottawa Senators.

The 21-year-old Larsson pivoted Steve Ott and Tyler Ennis, who had been playing center, during Thursday's practice.

"He's going to get a good opportunity," Rolston said about Larsson. "I like everything about him, the way he works, his preparation. He's a good detail player. But this will give him a good opportunity to play with some good players and show us what he can do. Another young guy in the lineup, but I think it's a good thing because I think he's ready. Now it's just gaining those experiences in the league."

Larsson, whose strong preseason earned Rolston's praise, played his only NHL game with Minnesota last season.

Meanwhile, Leino, who underwent offseason hip surgery, joins forwards Joel Armia (broken hand), Marcus Foligno (muscle strain) and Corey Tropp (broken jaw) on the sideline.

Foligno practiced in a non-contact role Thursday and could return early next week.

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After some shaky play early in their NHL debuts Wednesday, teenage rookies Zemgus Girgensons and Rasmus Ristolainen settled down.

“Me and Risto definitely remember the first shift, pretty rough one,” Girgensons said. “We watched some video on it. It’s pretty funny. We made a couple mistakes. It wasn’t funny at that point. But they didn’t score, so it’s fun to look at.”

Girgensons later scored the Sabres’ only goal. But his parents, who were traveling from Latvia to Detroit, missed it.

“I think they got delayed in Norway,” the 19-year-old said.

xxx

Longtime Sabres analyst Mike Robitaille is retiring following this season. Former Sabres winger Brad May will be joining the 25 broadcasts this season for pregame, intermission and postgame work.

May, whose famous overtime “May Day” goal eliminated Boston from the 1993 Adams Division semifinal, will begin full-time analysis work next season.

Robitaille cited health concerns from a car accident he suffered a few years ago and the desire to spend more time with his family as retirement factors.

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Rolston on the Sabres’ power play, which was scoreless in seven tries Wednesday: “We just didn’t do a good job. I thought we played slow on the power play. I think at times we think we have to pass it into the net.”

xxx

Minnesota has signed former Sabres captain Jason Pominville to a five-year, \$28 million extension.

Sabres Leino cracks a rib. Foligno improving

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 3, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Ville Leino didn't even get a full period in during Buffalo opening game before getting injured. Ron Rolston said, "He's got a cracked rib and out indefinitely, at least a couple of weeks. It happened in the first period, probably about three or four shifts in."

Johan Larsson is going to get his chance with Tyler Ennis moving to wing with Steve Ott. Ron Rolston is looking forward to seeing the young Swede, "Very excited. We're going to see, he's going to get a good opportunity. I like everything about him, I like his attitude, the way he works, his preparation, he's a good detail player, but this will give him a good opportunity to play with some good players and show us what he can do. He needs to be put in game situations and be in there."

Larsson has been the odd man out all week and he's of course happy, "I've been sitting around here in wait so I'm glad to be out there and I'm ready."

Larsson just turned 21 in July after being a second round pick of the Minnesota Wild in 2010. He played his first NHL game for the Wild last season. In 69 games with Houston and Rochester he had 16 goals and 25 assists for 41 points. Larsson now looks forward to his second NHL game and showing Buffalo what he's about, "It's a new team so it's going to be real exciting to go out here."

Marcus Foligno practiced on a non-contact basis for the first time since injuring his shoulder in the Toronto preseason game. The winger said, "It felt better. Obviously being able to shoot and stick handle and try to get power on your shots, is good so right now it's day to day."

The tough winger got barreled into the end wall and it was borderline whether a penalty needed to be called. Foligno didn't think the hit needed to be made, "No, I don't think so. The tough thing about it was where he shoved me. It took out my legs and so it was hard for me to gain my balance and I was playing the puck so the way my shoulders were moving it was dangerous. It was juts one of those pushes that we try to get rid of in this league."

Foligno hopes to be back Tuesday.

Sabres Prepare for Home Opener, Lose Leino

YNN

October 3, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. - One game down and a man down for the Sabres. Ville Leino missed practice - he's out indefinitely with a cracked rib suffered in the first period against Detroit. Johan Larsson is slated to take his spot in the lineup.

The Sabres back to work Thursday after falling 2-1 to the Red Wings. Another division game on tap with the home opener against Ottawa on Friday evening.

A slow start cost the Sabres, along with struggles on the power play. The team went 0-for-7 with the man advantage, including a pair of 5-on-3's.

"It needs to get to the net. We just didn't do a good job," head coach Ron Rolston said. "I thought we played slow on the power play. I think at times we think we have to pass it into the net. We just played slow, we didn't move it quick enough, and once we got it up top, we didn't get things down there."

"Well I think movements and shots (can improve)," said co-captain Steve Ott. "Anytime you try to pepper shots it usually wears out a PK. For us we didn't generate many opportunities. So sticking with it, having good movement and hopefully finding some good scoring chances."

A little bitter sweet for Zemgus Girgensons on Wednesday night. The Latvian born player made his NHL debut. His parents flight got held up on their way to Detroit and they missed what turned out to be an extra special night.

The 19-year-old Girgensons netted the first goal of his young career. It came in the third period and cut the Red Wings lead in half.

"I think it's pretty big to just get it out of the way because you don't have to think about it the next game, or as long as it takes," Girgensons said. "Getting that first game definitely brings the confidence up, calms you down and makes it a little bit easier."

Marcus Foligno participated in some drills in practice Thursday but is still limited to non-contact work. The forward's been out with a muscle strain since September 22. He has a slim chance to return over the weekend, but it's more likely he'll be back on Tuesday.

LEINO OUT INDEFINITELY; LARSSON TO PLAY

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 3, 2013

What's another rookie in the lineup?

Sabres coach Ron Rolston said after practice at First Niagara Center on Thursday that Ville Leino is out indefinitely with a cracked rib and that rookie Johan Larsson will step in to pivot the team's second line Friday night in the home opener against Ottawa.

Leino sustained the injury early on in the team's 2-1 loss in Detroit on Wednesday. He did not skate with the team on Thursday.

"It happened in the first period, probably about three or four shifts in," Rolston said. "It was just sore and obviously overnight, it seized up and had it checked."

Tyler Ennis will slide over to the wing to make room for Larsson. Steve Ott will be on the other side. Larsson was a healthy scratch against Detroit and Rolston said he's very excited to see what the young center can do.

"He's got a good opportunity. I like everything about him. I like his attitude, the way we works, his preparation," Rolston said. "He's a good detail player, but this will give him a good opportunity to play with some good players and show us what we can do."

Larsson, acquired as part of the package from the Minnesota Wild at the 2013 NHL Trade Deadline for Jason Pominville, has played in only one NHL game. He'll join Mikhail Grigorenko, Zemgus Girgensons, Mark Pysyk, Rasmus Ristolainen and Brian Flynn as players in the lineup with less than 30 NHL games played.

"[Larsson is] another young guy in the lineup and I think it's a good thing because I think he's ready and now it's just gaining those experiences in the League like our younger players did last night," Rolston said. "He needs to be put into game situations and get in there."

Marcus Foligno was a participant in practice for the first time since straining his upper-body in an exhibition on Sept. 22. Still wearing a red non-contact jersey, he was able to work out in some drills with the team.

He said there's a slim chance he'll be able to play this weekend against Ottawa on Friday and in Pittsburgh on Saturday. It's more likely he'll be ready by the game

against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday. Rolston agreed with that assessment.

“Being able to shoot and stickhandle and kind of get power on your shot is good. Right now, I’m day-to-day. We’ll see how I feel tomorrow,” he said.

Forwards: Tyler Ennis, Brian Flynn, Marcus Foligno, Zemgus Girgensons, Mikhail Grigorenko, Cody Hodgson, Patrick Kaleta, Johan Larsson, Cody McCormick, Steve Ott, Kevin Porter, John Scott, Drew Stafford, Thomas Vanek

Defensemen: Christian Ehrhoff, Jamie McBain, Tyler Myers, Mark Pysyk, Rasmus Ristolainen, Henrik Tallinder, Mike Weber

Goaltenders: Jhonas Enroth, Ryan Miller

Did Not Skate: Joel Armia (broken hand), Ville Leino (cracked rib), Corey Tropp (broken jaw), Nikita Zadorov (lacerated finger)

Off-ice coverage:

Ch.4's Walker hits another career milestone; Sabres No. 1 in ratings

By Alan Pergament

Buffalo News

October 3, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres' season-opening 2-1 loss to Detroit Wednesday on the NBC Sports Network was the highest-rated program of the night with an 9.8. ABC's "Modern Family" was the only broadcast network series near it with an 8.3. It looks like local viewers are relying more and more on their DVR and On Demand features when live sporting events of interest are being carried.

Sabres notebook: Robitaille hanging up mike at season's end

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 3, 2013

Just as they're undergoing on the ice, the Buffalo Sabres are slowly moving through a major transition in the broadcast booth.

The latest changes came Wednesday as the team announced longtime analyst Mike Robitaille will retire after this season and former Buffalo forward Brad May will join the television team on a limited basis before moving into Robitaille's slot full time next season. It's similar to the phased-in role for Dan Dunleavy, who will replace Rick Jeanneret as the play-by-play man in 2016.

Robitaille, a former Buffalo defenseman who spent four of his nine NHL seasons with the Sabres, was hired in 1980 to join the Sabres radio/TV crews. He has served multiple roles and one of his most well-known was as the original host of "Hockey Hotline," the popular Empire Sports Network postgame show that reached its zenith in the late '90s and early 2000s when Robitaille was teamed with Brian Blessing.

Robitaille is 65 years old and has been slowed by a 2010 car accident that resulted in spinal surgery. Robitaille has dealt with back and neck pain since suffering a career-ending broken neck with Vancouver in 1977.

"It's never an easy decision to walk away from doing something that you love," Robitaille said. "Hockey and the Sabres have been a major part of my life for the better part of 33 years and I felt now was a good time for me to step away. Many things factored into my decision, one being that the health effects from my car accident a few years back have become more of a struggle to work through. More importantly, however, is my desire to have more quality time to spend with my family."

"Roby epitomizes hockey in Buffalo and he's treated the fans here to more than three decades of his incredible knowledge and passion for the game," Sabres President Ted Black said. "His insight and humor will be missed on our broadcasts next season but he will certainly be around our Sabres family for years to come. It will be special to see Roby pass the torch to Brad, who brings a similar player's perspective to his analysis."

May, a former Sabres first-round draft pick, will work approximately 25 road games and some home games. He will continue to work this season for Rogers Sportsnet in Toronto, where he has been an analyst for three seasons.

"It's very exciting to see my career come full circle," May said. "I was drafted by the Sabres 23 years ago and now I'll have the opportunity to come back to Buffalo to start another chapter of my hockey life and my broadcasting career. My goal is

to bring my experiences as a player to the broadcasts and help fans get another perspective .”

...

Zemgus Girgensons’ parents traveled from Latvia to Detroit to see their son’s NHL debut Wednesday but ran into delays in Norway and arrived after the final buzzer, missing the 19-year-old scoring the Sabres’ only goal in his first NHL game.

Girgensons said his parents were driving from Detroit to Buffalo on Thursday morning so they could attend the game tonight.

Girgensons had a rough first shift in the NHL with a couple of giveaways but Ryan Miller made a couple of saves and eventually killed the play to bail out his teammates. Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, the 18-year-old the Sabres drafted with their top pick in June, was also on the ice at that time.

“Me and Risto definitely will remember the first shift,” Girgensons said Thursday. “A pretty rough one. We had good laughs this morning. We watched some video of it and it was pretty funny to look at the couple mistakes. It wasn’t funny at that point but they didn’t score so it’s kind of fun to look at it.

“Everyone plays more intense but definitely it was just you get a little nervous. That’s about it. You just overthink some stuff. In the third period everyone played really well. We had patience. Every period we improved.”

...

The Sabres are planning an elaborate opening ceremony tonight. Large screens have been hanging from the roof of the building this week, presumably to project player images and video in the manner used by teams such as Vancouver. There is also a pregame Party in the Plaza running from 4:30 to 6:30. p.m.

Tonight is Ottawa’s season opener. Former Canisius College star Cory Conacher, traded to the Senators from Tampa Bay in April, is expected to open on the second line with center Kyle Turris and former Sabre Clarke MacArthur. Ottawa’s top line will feature Jason Spezza centering Milan Michalek and newly acquired Bobby Ryan.

Sabres' announcer Robitaille to put down mic

By James Fink

Buffalo Business First

October 3, 2013

The changing of the guard within the Buffalo Sabres broadcasts continues with the decision by former defenseman Mike Robitaille to retire after this season and the addition of another ex-Sabre, Brad May.

Robitaille will work all Sabres TV broadcasts on the MSG network this season, beginning with Friday's home opener at First Niagara Center. May, a former first round draft choice, will work 25 games this season in an analysis role during pre-game, intermission and post-game segments. He will join the TV broadcast on a full-time basis next season,

Robitaille has been part of the Sabres broadcast team for 33 years, beginning in 1980, just a few years after he retired as a player.

"It's never an easy decision to walk away from doing something that you love," Robitaille said. "Hockey and the Sabres have been a major part of my life for the better part of 33 years and I felt now was a good time for me to step away. Many things factored into my decision, one being that the health effects from my car accident a few years back have become more of a struggle to work through. More importantly, however, is my desire to have more quality time to spend with my family."

Prior to his broadcasting career, Robitaille played defense in the National Hockey League for nine seasons including four with the Sabres. He played in 382 career games, amassing 128 points (23+105) and 280 penalty minutes while playing for the Sabres, New York Rangers, Detroit Red Wings and Vancouver Canucks.

"Roby epitomizes hockey in Buffalo and he's treated the fans here to more than three decades of his incredible knowledge and passion for the game," said Ted Black, Sabres president.

Over the years, Robitaille has appeared on WGR-AM, WGRZ-TV and the former Empire Sports Network.

May, who is best known for his "May Day" overtime goal that eliminated the Boston Bruins in the 1993 playoffs, will join the Sabres TV broadcast team for approximately 25 road games and some home games. He comes to the Sabres from Rogers Sportsnet in Toronto, where he has served as a hockey analyst for the past three years. May will continue to work for Sportsnet this season.

"It's very exciting to see my career come full circle," May said. "I was drafted by the Sabres 23 years ago and now I'll have the opportunity to come back to Buffalo to start another chapter of my hockey life and my broadcasting career. My goal is

to bring my experiences as a player to the broadcasts and help fans get another perspective on the game.”

Drafted 14th overall by the Sabres in the 1990 NHL Entry Draft, May played seven seasons with Buffalo before being traded to Vancouver in 1998. Through 18 seasons in the NHL, May played in 1,041 games, recording 289 points (127+162) and 2,248 penalty minutes. Beyond Buffalo and Vancouver, May played for the Phoenix Coyotes, Colorado Avalanche, Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings, and he won a Stanley Cup with the Anaheim Ducks in 2006-07.

The shake-up began with the announcement that longtime broadcaster Rick Jeanneret will retire in three years as this season he starts to work on a reduced schedule. Jeanneret is being replaced by Toronto's Dan Dunleavy.

Buffalo Sabres president on 3rd jersey: 'If it's a turd burger ... I'll have to eat it'

By Sean Leahy

Yahoo Sports

October 3, 2013

Last month, after dragging the reveal process out for what felt like the length of Ville Leino's contract, the Buffalo Sabres showed off their new third jerseys for the 2013-14 season.

And boooooooy did it not go over well with anyone.

The jerseys were mocked in all corners of the Internet by hockey fans and fans of good fashion. Steve Ott seemed OK with it, but even he admitted to our Nick Cotsonika he had received "mixed" reviews from people.

That would somehow mean there were people who actually thought the jerseys looked pretty good. Those people are always out there.

When reached for comment last month, Sabres president Ted Black gave a "no comment" to the Buffalo News. (That's how you sell it!)

On Thursday morning, Black finally did comment on the jerseys during an appearance on the Howard Simon Show on WGR Radio.

"It's received a ton of criticism and a lot of attention. I think it had over 4 million mentions on Twitter. I've seen it. It's something that doesn't offend me. I think people have had a lot of fun with the criticisms of it. Judge for yourself whenever you see it. If you come into the store and you look at it and say I don't want to buy it or you do buy it, in terms of moving the needles on revenues, it won't do anything.

"If it doesn't sell, it won't really mean anything to our bottom line. It's a third jersey. If it's a turd burger I'll have to put it on a bun and eat it. It's the way it is.

"We kept the logo the same. We wanted to do something that was a little bit more non-traditional, so it's two-toned; it's gold in the front and blue in the back; it has different colors for numbering; it has the Buffalo font in the front. Like I said, no one's gonna twist your arm, put a gun to your head if you don't wanna buy it, Howard, you don't have to."

Black said the jerseys will be available to fans sometime in November; that is, unless the shipments somehow get re-directed to whatever deep hole those mid-'90s St. Louis Blues alternates that never saw the light of day rest.

The Sabres will wear them for the first time on Nov. 24 against the Detroit Red Wings.

"I know our team is going to wear it proudly for 10 games," Black said.

The design process, Black said, was a collaboration between the creative department of the Sabres' front office and Reebok. (See, it's not just Nike that can eff up a jersey!)

Finally, reassuring for Sabres fans, focus groups sound like they will become part of the jersey design process in the future, according to Black, making sure this abomination never happens again.

"If we do this again, when we do this again, I don't think that's a bad idea."

MROZIAK: A hockey fan, you say? Prove it.

By Michael Mroziak

Tonawanda News

October 4, 2013

Tonawanda News — At this time last year, I was serving as the media relations director for the Buffalo Junior Sabres. I'll readily admit it was a fun gig, promoting a Junior-A (college prep level) team run by members of the Sabres Alumni.

In the weeks that followed, I came to learn that there are really two kinds of people in Western New York who call themselves "hockey fans."

In one camp were those who really enjoy the game and, with the National Hockey League shut down for months by a labor lockout, decided to get their hockey fix by coming out to the Northtown Center at Amherst. Many walked away pleasantly surprised by the high-caliber level of hockey that is played at the Junior-A (college prep age) level. Many of them kept coming back.

In the other camp were those who called themselves fans but continued to whine "there's no hockey" for the duration of the lockout. If it wasn't the Buffalo Sabres, it simply didn't count. I call them not hockey fans but rather "Sabres watchers."

It wasn't just the fan base. Shortly before Christmas the Jr. Sabres received a call from a local television station wanting to do an "off the wall" angle featuring the team as a holiday story. Apparently the fact that the Jr. Sabres, who compete in an Ontario-based league, were then among the top ten ranked Junior-A teams in all of Canada wasn't newsworthy. Meanwhile, on-air personalities continued with the complaint "there's no hockey."

The Jr. Sabres weren't alone. Up on Monteaugle Ridge, Niagara University was playing some pretty good puck as well. Nationally ranked, regular-season conference champions.

Still, when explaining that to many local "Sabres watchers," it was the same complaint: "but there's no hockey."

One year later, as the Sabres were about to open their season against the Detroit Red Wings, there was a sentiment among many that Buffalo has a better claim to being "Hockeytown USA" than the Motor City. No offense intended, but I think Buffalo hasn't quite proven that yet. The hockey institutions have stated their cases but not necessarily the greater fan base.

Niagara hockey has shown its respect for the game in Western New York, opening its doors to several local players including current Purple Eagles Kevin Ryan and Mike Benedict (Eden), Vincent Muto and Pat Conte (Niagara Falls), Sam Alfieri (Buffalo), Chris Paulin (Lockport) and Mike Conderman and Rocky Gruttadauria

(Rochester). Having so many Western New Yorkers on the roster is evidence the Purple Eagles coaching staff recognizes the depth of talent in its own region.

The Sabres organization, which of course is the linchpin of local hockey, has certainly done its part to grow the game beyond its arena. They've demonstrated this by their involvement in projects including bringing the World Junior Championships to Buffalo back in December 2010. For the second straight year, they are sponsoring a 12-Under team that will compete in the prestigious Quebec International Pee Wee Tournament. Their HARBORcenter project, when finished, will be home to Canisius College hockey and, although the t's are not all crossed yet nor all the i's dotted, a more centralized youth program designed to develop the region's best young players under the Jr. Sabres name.

When the term "Hockey Heaven" was first uttered by Ted Black on the day Terry Pegula was introduced as the Sabres' new owner in 2011, I was left with the impression that they fully grasped that local hockey goes well beyond what was being played within First Niagara Center (let's not forget, Pegula has also put millions of his own dollars into boosting the hockey program at his alma mater, Penn State).

This is not to put down Sabres fans. To the contrary, I respect them as some of the most passionate fans among the U.S.-based teams in the NHL. If you want to continue being a "Sabres watcher," by all means enjoy it.

If you like to call yourself a "hockey fan," however, do yourself a favor and take a good look at what else is happening on the ice throughout Western New York, at the collegiate, junior, midget and other levels, beyond the FNC or your TV screen.

In other words, if you like to believe you're truly a "hockey fan," go out there and prove it.

Robitaille to Retire Following 2013-14 Season

WGR 550

October 3, 2013

Longtime Sabres broadcaster Mike Robitaille announced on WGR's Sabres Hockey Hotline this morning that he would be retiring from broadcasting following this season, which began last night. Robitaille has been involved in the NHL as a player and broadcaster since 1968. He was one of the founders of the original Hockey Hotline on Empire Sports Network in the early 90's. "Roby" will continue to work Sabres broadcasts for the 2013-14 season and will be joined on-air by former Sabre Brady May.