



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

October 12, 2013

Sabres-Blackhawks Preview

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Associated Press

October 12, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres are off to their worst start in 14 years.

Facing the reigning Stanley Cup champions on the road isn't likely to change that.

The Sabres attempt to avoid a sixth straight defeat Saturday night when they meet the Chicago Blackhawks.

Buffalo (0-4-1) hasn't endured a worst start to a season since going 0-5-2 to begin 1999-2000. The Sabres have shown few signs of ending their struggles, getting outscored 14-5 while going 2 for 18 on the power play.

"We have guys in here that can make plays," goaltender Ryan Miller said. "We just have to get past this little hump we're having trouble with and you can't just work hard, get a puck and not do anything with it. We have to start doing things with it."

Buffalo didn't do much Thursday, giving up three first-period goals in a 4-1 home loss to Columbus.

Thomas Vanek and Cody Hodgson have been among the few offensive bright spots with four points each over the past three games. Those two have combined for eight of the team's 13 points this season.

Vanek, the captain for home games, had team highs of 20 goals and 41 points in 38 games last season. He's been limited to two assists in four career visits to Chicago.

Hodgson has four points in four meetings with the Blackhawks, who have won three straight games versus Buffalo, including the last two at the United Center.

Chicago is 19-2-3 over its last 24 home games, including an 11-2 mark in the playoffs en route to winning last season's Stanley Cup.

The Blackhawks improved to 2-0-1 on home ice with a 3-2 victory over the New York Islanders on Friday.

"We didn't get that extra goal, which made it close all the way to the end, but I still thought we did some good things," coach Joel Quenneville said. "But I liked what we gave up, and that wasn't much."

Chicago yielded only 19 shots to the Islanders, two days after giving up a season-high 34 in a 3-2 defeat at St. Louis. Corey Crawford, who made 31 saves in that

contest, should be back in net after watching backup Nikolai Khabibulin make 17 stops Friday.

Crawford is 1-1-1 with a 2.93 goals-against average, and has won both of his meetings with the Sabres while stopping 57 of 62 shots.

Jonathan Toews has two goals and one assist in the past two games after finding the net Friday. The captain has four points in three career home meetings with Buffalo, scoring twice in the most recent meeting, a 6-2 victory Jan. 18, 2012.

The Sabres are without Patrick Kaleta, who is suspended until attending a hearing with the NHL department of player safety Tuesday. He's facing a suspension of more than five games for his hit on Columbus defenseman Jack Johnson early in the opening period Thursday. Kaleta wasn't penalized, and Johnson remained in the game.

"The league's going to take care of that. It was a hit and they're concerned with it so they'll take a look at it and go from there," Sabres coach Ron Rolston told the team's official website. "So he will have a hearing and see what comes of it."

Sabres notebook: Kaleta suspended pending in-person NHL hearing

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 12, 2013

CHICAGO — The long arm of NHL law corraled Patrick Kaleta again late Friday night.

The Buffalo Sabres winger has been suspended pending a hearing from the league for a hit to the head of Columbus defenseman Jack Johnson during Thursday's game in First Niagara Center.

Kaleta was initially scheduled to have a hearing with the league Friday afternoon but it has been pushed back to an in-person meeting Tuesday while the Sabres are in New York to face the Islanders. Kaleta will not play until his case is heard by Brendan Shanahan, the NHL's vice president for player safety, and is thus out for tonight's game against the Chicago Blackhawks in United Center and Monday's home game against Minnesota.

An in-person hearing means Kaleta is likely looking at a ban of at least five games. This is his fourth suspension since 2009.

The hit, which came less than four minutes into Buffalo's 4-1 loss to the Blue Jackets, went relatively unnoticed during the game. Kaleta got a piece of Johnson near the boards in the Buffalo end, and was immediately engaged in a fight by Columbus forward Jared Boll. Johnson was uninjured and played a team-high 23 minutes, 13 seconds in the game.

Oddly enough, Kaleta was injured in the fight and missed several shifts while he was tended to in the dressing room. He returned wearing a full face shield and coach Ron Rolston said Friday that Kaleta was having dental work addressed.

The injuries were not serious and Rolston said that Kaleta would have been available tonight had there not been a ruling from the league.

"The league is going to take care of that," Rolston said following practice. "It's a hit and they're concerned with it so they'll take a look at it and we'll go from there. He'll have a hearing and we'll see what comes from it."

The penalty is expected to be a stiff one because Kaleta is a repeat offender. He was, of course, suspended for five games in March for his highly publicized boarding infraction against Brad Richards of the New York Rangers but was also suspended four games in 2011 for a head-butt and two games in 2009 for a high stick. Both of those incidents came in games against Philadelphia.

The Blue Jackets, naturally, were not amused by Kaleta's antics.

“I thought it was blatant,” Johnson told the Columbus Dispatch after practice Friday, adding that he had Kaleta lined up for a hit late in the third period. “I was looking for him,” Johnson said. “Absolutely. I was going to hit him whether he had the puck or not, to be honest with you. If he doesn’t show any respect for us, we’re not going to show any respect for him. It’s a two-way street.”

...

Kaleta and center Cody Hodgson were the only players to sit out practice Friday at the FNC before the team boarded its flight here. Hodgson sat out his second straight practice for maintenance of an undisclosed ailment but played a regular shift Thursday and is expected to be fine for tonight

Defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body) is progressing but won’t play tonight. The target for his return is Monday against Minnesota.

...

Dan Dunleavy will have the play-by-play call tonight on MSG in place of Rick Jeanneret. It will be the first television appearance of the season for Dunleavy, who signed in September to work a growing number of games for three seasons before Jeanneret retires in 2016.

It will actually be Dunleavy’s third regular-season Sabres broadcast, as he was a fill-in for Jeanneret during a 2010 game in Anaheim and a contest in 2011 in Ottawa. Analyst Rob Ray and intermission host Brian Duff will be in their usual roles on tonight’s telecast.

Sabres' Myers searching for pluses

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 12, 2013

CHICAGO — There are no slumped shoulders, no soft voice. Tyler Myers is meeting the questions head-on and standing tall while doing it, all 6-foot-8 of him.

But the improved body language belies what's taking place on the ice. The former first-round draft choice is playing like a bottom-pair defenseman again, looking far too much like the confused, out-of-shape player he was during last year's lockout-shortened season.

A full summer of physical and mental training has left Myers' conditioning no longer in question. But improvement has been slow. The Sabres' pop-gun offense is the main reason they're 0-4-1 and have the worst record in the NHL.

But dissection of Myers' play because of his size – and bloated \$38.5 million contract signed in 2011 – is a daily topic in Sabreland. Poor reviews so far.

Myers was a complete spectator on Tampa Bay's overtime winning goal Tuesday and was a minus-3 with partner Mike Weber during the first period of Buffalo's 4-1 loss to Columbus on Thursday night. He's already minus-7 for the season and Sabres fans everywhere are wincing at the thought of what disaster lurks tonight in the United Center, when the Sabres play the Stanley Cup champion Chicago Blackhawks.

“It's a great opportunity for us,” Myers said Friday after practice in First Niagara Center before the team flew to the Windy City. “We're in a tough spot to start the season. To go into the defending champs' home arena to try to get our first win is a great opportunity for us to start some real momentum. It's going to take hard work. It's not going to come easy. Especially against those guys, we're going to have to compete.”

That's for sure.

Myers talked after Thursday's game about how he understands better in his fifth year in the league about quickly resetting after a tough night, and this schedule doesn't allow the Sabres to fret.

After tonight's game, they have four games next week, starting with Jason Pominville's return Monday against Minnesota. Then a quick trip to the Nassau Coliseum for a game Tuesday night against the New York Islanders is followed by home games against Vancouver on Thursday and Colorado on Saturday.

Conversely, the Sabres hope the Hawks' schedule is something they can take advantage of. The Hawks lost Wednesday at St. Louis, 3-2, and hosted the New York Islanders Friday night, so tonight's game will be their third in four nights.

But that's really grasping for straws on Buffalo's part. The Sabres are last overall in the NHL with one point, have a league-low five goals in five games and entered Friday with New Jersey as the only teams without a win.

In the preseason, Myers looked refreshed. He played with a swagger, a confidence in carrying the puck out of his zone and making plays heading down the ice.

It's gone away. Quickly.

In the last couple of years, he might have quibbled about such an observation. Not Friday. Myers acknowledged he "got back into old habits" against the Blue Jackets, including getting outfought at the crease for a loose puck on the visitors' first goal and making a bad pinch that led to a two-on-one and a killer third goal in the final two minutes of the opening period.

"For me, it's a matter of not forcing things," said Myers. "It's just a matter of really staying focused on letting the game come to me and that's what I need to do going forward here. Once we start competing the way we know we can, stuff will start happening for everybody."

"A lot of it is just in the details," said coach Ron Rolston. "Awareness and stick position and body position. All those things are details they've got to do consistently and right now we just haven't done them consistently, especially those two guys."

Myers skated with Alexander Sulzer during Friday's practice while Weber (minus-8) was with Nikita Zadorov, the rookie on the mend from a pinky injury.

That would seem to indicate that Weber could be a scratch tonight. Rolston would only smirk and not confirm a move with Sulzer when he was asked Friday.

"We'll see," Rolston said. "He's practiced real well. He's one of the best puck movers and passers we have. Quite possibly."

While Myers seems to have escaped the press box this time, he could be on a short leash.

It would be easy to simply flip-flop Myers and Weber as scratches, and the Sabres still have to decide what to do with Zadorov when he's healthy. They could give him his nine-game junior tryout before returning him to London of the OHL.

With this team's record, anything is possible.

“It’s certainly not the start we wanted,” Myers said. “It’s a situation we’re in and we’re going to have to work that much harder to get out of it.”

Blackhawks try to keep Sabres winless

By Brian Hedger

NHL.com

October 12, 2013

SABRES (0-4-1) at BLACKHAWKS (2-1-1)

TV: NHLN-US, MSG-B, WGN

Season series: This is the first of two meetings between the Chicago Blackhawks and Buffalo Sabres this season; the teams won't see each other again until March 9 at First Niagara Center. The last time they played each other was Jan. 18, 2012 at United Center, when the Blackhawks routed the Sabres 6-2 by breaking a 2-2 deadlock with four straight goals. All six Chicago goals were scored against Jhonas Enroth, including two by Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews.

Big story: Chicago is looking to sweep its first of 18 sets of back-to-back games this season and the only one with both games on home ice. The Blackhawks were outstanding in back-to-back games last season, going 20-2-2 overall - posting identical 10-1-1 records in the first and second games. Buffalo is looking for its first victory of the season.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Buffalo comes into this game with two power-play goals in 18 opportunities (11.1 percent) and is averaging one goal a game. Emotions are starting to boil already inside the locker room and on the ice. After losing 4-1 on home ice Thursday to the Columbus Blue Jackets, defenseman Mike Weber vented afterward about the pass the Sabres are getting from some because they have such an inexperienced group.

"I'm tired of hearing it's a young team, I'm really tired of hearing it," said Weber, who finished the game with a minus-4 rating. "There's no excuses in here. All these guys have played now five games in this League. We need to find a way. We're going to make mistakes. But we need to make plays. We need to generate something. We need to get something going."

Blackhawks: After leaving three points on the table in a pair of stinging defeats, Chicago got back to winning by grinding out a 3-2 win against the New York Islanders on Friday night at United Center. It wasn't their prettiest game, but coach Joel Quenneville didn't complain about the two points.

"We've been close the last few nights," Toews said after the game, in which he scored his second goal of the season. "In the game against St. Louis and obviously against Tampa Bay we felt that there [were] a few points there that we left on the table. [This] could be one of those nights where you maybe fall into that trend,

where you start squeezing the stick a little bit too hard late in the game when you're only up one goal, but I think we just maintained our composure."

Who's hot: Thomas Vanek has scored goals in two of the past three games. He and Cody Hodgson have points in three straight games for the Sabres. ... Toews has scored in back-to-back games, putting up a pair of goals and an assist, while Patrick Kane scored a goal in the first three games of the season.

Injury report: Buffalo's Nikita Zadorov (hand) is questionable, while Ville Leino (ribs), Corey Tropp (jaw) and Henrik Tallinder (upper body) are out. ... The Blackhawks report no injuries.

Sabres' Patrick Kaleta gets disciplinary hearing

CBC Sports

October 11, 2013

Buffalo Sabres tough guy Patrick Kaleta is already well-acquainted with the NHL's head disciplinarian Brendan Shanahan, and he will get to know him even more — for the wrong reasons.

The 27-year-old forward has been offered an in-person hearing with the league for an incident against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday night in Buffalo, which could result in a five-game suspension or more.

Kaleta's infraction involved a hit to the head of Columbus blue-liner Jack Johnson at 3:10 of the first period of the Blue Jackets' 4-1 win. Kaleta, a six-foot-one, 198-pound winger, was not penalized on the play but later got a five-minute fighting major for duking it out with Jared Boll, who came to his teammate's aid.

Johnson would stay in the game.

Kaleta most recently was given a five-game suspension for shoving New York Rangers forward Brad Richards into the boards from behind last March and can now be considered a repeat offender.

Sabres' Patrick Kaleta suspended for illegal hit, has in-person hearing scheduled

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 12, 2013

BUFFALO – Sabres agitator Patrick Kaleta has been suspended pending an in-person hearing Tuesday for an illegal check to Jack Johnson's head, the NHL announced late Friday.

The Sabres play twice – tonight in Chicago and Monday at home against Minnesota – before Kaleta meets with the NHL Department of Player Safety. In-person hearings carry a minimum five-game suspension.

The 27-year-old Kaleta wasn't penalized after zooming into the Buffalo zone and hitting Johnson high early in Thursday's 4-1 loss to Columbus. Jared Boll immediately fought Kaleta, who left the game and returned wearing a full face shield.

Opponents detest Kaleta. The winger's aggressive play and history of questionable hits have put him under the microscope.

Kaleta has a long history of suspensions. The league banned him five games in March for cross-checking the New York Rangers' Brad Richards head-first into the boards.

When Shanahan suspended Kaleta four games for head-butting Philadelphia's Jakub Voracek in 2011-12, he cited several previous incidents.

Kaleta was also banned two games in 2009-10 for hitting Philadelphia's Jared Ross face-first into the glass from behind.

Sabres could scratch struggling Mike Weber

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 12, 2013

BUFFALO – His coaches and the media have nothing on struggling Sabres defenseman Mike Weber, who calls himself his hardest critic.

Right now, the 25-year-old's reeling, enduring arguably the roughest stretch of his 179-game career. His wretched minus-8 rating ranks dead last – 599th, to be exact – in the NHL. He was an ugly minus-4 in Thursday's 4-1 loss to Columbus.

Following the game, a bearded Weber was visibly agitated, growing angrier by the word.

"I expect nothing but the best for myself," a clean-shaven Weber said Friday inside the First Niagara Center after the winless Sabres prepared for tonight's tilt in Chicago. "But I'm not a perfect person, not a perfect player, and that's why I come with the same attitude of every day I've got to continue to get better day in, day out. That was a speed bump for myself."

Weber might get bumped from tonight's lineup against the Blackhawks, the reigning Stanley Cup champions.

Sabres coach Ron Rolston skated Weber beside 18-year-old rookie Nikita Zadorov, who's recovering from a finger injury, during Friday's practice, a sign he could be scratched.

Meanwhile, defenseman Alexander Sulzer practiced with Tyler Myers, Weber's partner much of the last two games.

Will Sulzer, a healthy scratch since his recall late last week, make his season debut?

"We'll see," Rolston said. "He's practiced real well. He's one of the best puck-movers we have, passers. So (it's) quite possible."

Clearly, the Sabres (0-4-1), one of two remaining winless teams, must change anything they can.

Tonight's David and Goliath matchup against South Buffalo native Patrick Kane and the mighty Blackhawks will be one of the season's toughest challenges.

A win could ignite the Sabres and ease the pain of a terrible 10-day stretch. A loss would move them a game closer to the worst starts – 0-4-3 in 1990-91 and 0-5-2 in 1999-00 – in franchise history.

“It’s a great opportunity for us,” Myers said. “We’re in a tough spot to start the season. To go into the defending champs’ home arena to try to get our first win, it would be a great opportunity for us to start some real momentum.”

So far, momentum has been non-existent.

The Sabres have scored five goals and held a lead for about 10 of the 302 minutes played.

“It’s the situation we’re in now,” Myers said about the poor start. “We’re just going to have to work that much harder to get out of it.”

Like Weber, Myers is slumping badly. His minus-3 effort Thursday made him minus-7 on the young season.

The 23-year-old, a colossal disappointment last season, spent the summer working on his mental and physical conditioning and enjoyed a strong training camp.

But Myers hasn’t showcased any progress during the regular season. His lack of on-ice awareness has been alarming.

“It’s a matter of not forcing things for me, and (Thursday) I got back into old habits,” said Myers, who was caught pinching on the Blue Jackets’ third goal. “It’s just a matter of really staying focused on letting the game come to me. That’s what I need to do going forward here.”

Going forward, the gritty Weber must also cut down on his miscues. He’s been a minus in each game since earning his first opening-night assignment.

“There’s a lot of good parts of my game,” Weber said. “I’ve been playing hard, battling hard. ... I made four mistakes in the game and they all wound up in the back of our net. Just coming to work every day, I know my job. I know my responsibilities. I know what I have to do to be successful in this league and for this team.”

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Sabres center Cody Hodgson had another maintenance day Friday but will play tonight, Rolston said. He said he’s not worried about Hodgson’s injury lingering.

Winger Patrick Kaleta, who’s been suspended pending a Tuesday hearing for hitting Columbus’ Jack Johnson, missed the session. Rolston said Kaleta’s absence was injury-related.

“A couple loose chiclets,” Rolston said.

Kaletka left Thursday's game after fighting Jared Boll and returned wearing a full face shield.

Rolston said Henrik Tallinder (upper body) could return Monday. The defenseman, out the last three games, has been practicing in a non-contact role. He just started shooting again.

Sabres Myers taking things in stride

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 11, 2013

Buffalo, N Y (WGR 550) -- Tyler Myers has been trying to get his game back for three years the changes he made this past summer have been well documented.

This season really has been no better as he was minus three vs Columbus. His minus seven is tied for second last in the NHL. Teammate Mike Weber is the worst at minus eight. Myers has been very calm talking about and hasn't had that standoffish attitude he developed last season. Myers said, "It's a matter of not forcing things for me. Last night I got back into old habits and it's just a matter of really staying focused on letting the game come to me and that's what I need to do going forward. Once we start competing the way we know we can, stuff will start happening for everybody."

I thought Myers skated very well in preseason and got up in the play well causing problems for other teams. He said he doesn't think he should be doing that, "No, not at all. That's the last thing I need to be focusing on. Definitely want to jump when the opportunity presents itself, but that's exactly what I'm talking about and what I've talked about with Ron is not trying to force the rush and not trying to force jumping into the play. Take what's given to me."

Passing has been a problem not only for Myers, but for the whole team. Thomas Vanek has tried to help, "I think that's what you need. That's what I've been telling Mysie the past year in a half, for him to be successful, it's move the puck first, then join. A lot of times I think guys carried it themselves and got in trouble and before you know it, four guys are standing around and they're going on a 2-on-0."

The team practiced in Buffalo on Friday and then left for Chicago to play the defending Stanley Cup champions on Saturday.

Sabres Tallinder not ready

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 11, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Henrik Tallinder told me that he won't be ready to play in Chicago and seemed pretty iffy about Monday's home game. Ron Rolston said, "He's starting to shoot a little more. We knew it was going to be each day evaluating what he could do, so I would imagine Monday he would be back in there." He was still wearing the red noncontact jersey at practice on Friday. Ron Rolston did say that Alex Sulzer may get into a game soon.

Cody Hodgson has missed the last three practices for maintenance, but continues to play in games.

Pat Kaleta missed practice due to his teeth. Rolston said if he wasn't suspended by the league, he would be ready to play on Saturday.

As far as Kaleta's hearing with the NHL about the head shot to Jack Johnson Rolston said, "The league's going to take care of that. It was a hit and they're concerned with it, so we'll take a look at it and go from there."

Tyler Myers and Mike Weber were a combined minus seven against Columbus. Weber told me he's harder on himself than any coach or media member could be. Rolston said, "It's probably not just those guys, but just coming to the rink and trying to get better in terms of being positive and having that mindset right now and not beating themselves up. Overall whether it's those guys or other guys, the attitude's been really good, their job is to park that and get better and to have a better game tomorrow night."

KALETA FACES DISCIPLINARY HEARING

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 11, 2013

Buffalo Sabres forward Patrick Kaleta faces a hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety on Friday.

Under review is a play that occurred Thursday night in which Kaleta hit Columbus defenseman Jack Johnson along the boards inside the Buffalo zone at 3:10 of the first period. No penalty was assessed for the hit, but Kaleta dropped the gloves with Jared Boll immediately after and received a fighting major.

Kaleta did not practice with the team at First Niagara Center, but Sabres coach Ron Rolston said that was more because of an injury. After the fight, Kaleta played much of the game on Thursday with a full face shield.

Rolston said Kaleta had a “couple loose Chiclets and things like that to be cleaned up.” Kaleta would have been healthy enough to play against the Chicago Blackhawks on Saturday.

A pending suspension would obviously make him unavailable.

“The League’s going to take care of that. It was a hit and they’re concerned with it so they’ll take a look at it and go from there,” Rolston said. “So he will have a hearing and see what comes of it.”

Cody Hodgson also did not participate. The coaching staff gave him a maintenance day and Rolston said there’s no concern about Hodgson’s lower-body injury becoming a lingering one.

Henrik Tallinder skated in a red non-contact jersey and he will not be available Saturday.

“He’s starting to shoot a little more. We know it was going to be each day evaluating what he can do and now he’s able to do some more shooting and stuff so I’d imagine Monday he’ll be back in there [against Minnesota],” Rolston said.

The Sabres did not practice any line drills Friday, but some of the defensive pairings were flipped. Alexander Sulzer was paired with Tyler Myers for much of the session. Christian Ehrhoff worked with Mark Pysyk, Jamie McBain skated with Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov and Mike Weber were a tandem.

Sulzer may see game action soon. He was recalled on Saturday from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League after Tallinder sustained his injury and has yet to make his season debut.

“We’ll see. He’s practiced real well,” Rolston said of Sulzer. “I mean, he’s one of the best puck movers we have, passers, so [it’s] quite possible.”

Forwards: 8 Cody McCormick, 9 Steve Ott, 12 Kevin Porter, 21 Drew Stafford, 22 Johan Larsson, 25 Mikhail Grigorenko, 26 Thomas Vanek, 28 Zemgus Girgensons, 32 John Scott, 63 Tyler Ennis, 65 Brian Flynn, 82 Marcus Foligno.

Defensemen: 3 Mark Pysyk, 4 Jamie McBain, 6 Mike Weber, 10 Christian Ehrhoff, 52 Alexander Sulzer, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 57 Tyler Myers, 61 Nikita Zadorov

Goaltenders: 1 Jhonas Enroth, 30 Ryan Miller

Injured: 20 Henrik Tallinder

Did Not Practice: 19 Cody Hodgson, 23 Ville Leino, 33 Joel Armia, 78 Corey Tropp

FORTON COMES HOME

By Marc Davies

October 11, 2013

Former Niagara University Assistant Coach and University at Buffalo Alumni Jerry Forton is back in Western New York, this time as an assistant coach for the Buffalo Sabres.

After a two-year stint as an assistant coach for Harvard and two years with UMass Lowell, the Buffalo native is happy to be back home.

“I have so much family and friends from here and my wife’s from here,” Forton said. “It’s pretty special. The opportunity to coach in the NHL is unbelievable, but to be able to do it in your hometown makes it that much more special.”

Forton, a 17- year collegiate coaching veteran, began his coaching career with Niagara University as a volunteer assistant coach for the Purple Eagles, before joining the staff full time after two seasons.

During his time with the Purple Eagles, Forton helped the team move from an independent Division-III team in 1996-97, to a Division-I Conference Champion in 2000. Forton was also part of three conference regular-season championship teams and three conference tournament teams, along with two NCAA tournament bids in 2004 and 2008.

After Forton’s 13-year tenure as assistant at Niagara ended, he joined the coaching staff at UMass Lowell for two years, where he helped guide the River Hawks to a successful 19-16-4 season and a No. 3 ranking in the national polls.

In 2011, Forton accepted another coaching position as an assistant with Harvard. The Crimson went on to a successful 2011-12 campaign. They ended the season ranked 18th in the nation and made a trip to the conference championship game.

After a successful climb through the college ranks, Forton joined Buffalo’s coaching staff in August. The transition from college to the NHL has come natural according to Forton.

“It’s the same game and it’s the same model in terms of responsibilities among the coaching staff and interaction with the coaching staff,” he said. “That’s the one part of the job that hasn’t changed too much.”

Despite his long involvement in the hockey world, Forton has a diverse background. In college, he was a two-sport athlete, playing both hockey and soccer. Forton was a standout goalkeeper in soccer, gaining numerous awards including Tournament MVP and a first team selection the National Soccer Coaches Association his junior and senior seasons. Before he started coaching

hockey at Niagara, Forton spent six years as the head coach of the University at Buffalo men's soccer team.

If that wasn't enough, Forton earned his law degree and opened his own practice in the Buffalo area. His busy schedule and diverse background is something Forton says that helped him in his coaching career.

"In this business you have to be a quick study and be learning all the time," he said. "Everything I've been involved with in the past forced me to learn on my feet and it is no different here."

Forton has a wife and two daughters and as he becomes accustomed to a hectic schedule as an NHL assistant coach, he's found that he has little time to pursue the interests he did when he was younger.

"Right now I don't have a lot of time for much besides coaching and family," Forton said. "Any time you get free time is precious and you try to spend it with your kids."

Off-ice coverage:

PSU readies for first game at Pegula Ice Arena

By Tal Pinchevsky

NHL.com

October 11, 2013

When Buffalo Sabres owner Terry Pegula made an initial \$88 million contribution to Penn State University in 2011, the campus-wide anticipation for the first game of the 2013-14 college hockey season began in earnest. The donation was made so the school could establish two NCAA Division I hockey programs, both of which would play in a new, state-of-the-art arena.

Two years after Pegula's game-changing contribution to Penn State, that day finally is here.

The Nittany Lions open their second season as a Division I program Friday against Army. In the process, they'll open the doors of Pegula Ice Arena, a 6,000-seat, multipurpose facility that is the talk of college hockey.

But Penn State's season opener won't just unveil the newest building on campus; it will usher in a new era of college hockey, as the team begins competition in the newly-formed Big Ten Conference, a grouping that comes into the season already boasting three of the nation's top 10 teams in USA Today/USA Hockey Magazine's preseason poll: No. 3 Wisconsin, No. 5 Minnesota and No. 10 Michigan.

The task of balancing the prominent campus buzz with the challenge of winning in a competitive new conference falls on Penn State coach Guy Gadowsky. He's looking forward to it.

"It's an interesting emotion," Gadowsky told NHL.com on the eve of his team's season opener. "For two years that's why everyone came here -- to be a part of Penn State University, be a part of Big Ten hockey and get a chance to play in front of the best student body in the world in this beautiful arena. You know it's coming for two years. Now the reality sets in and it gets you amped up."

Despite being new to Division I hockey, Penn State made major strides as the 2012-13 season went on. The team finished 13-14-0 and struggled through a midseason stretch during which it lost seven of nine games. But with the team's freshmen starting to generate chemistry and confidence, the Nittany Lions pulled out a series of late-season wins, including a big victory at Michigan State and a season-closing overtime upset of 16th-ranked Wisconsin.

Heading into a landmark season where they'll be competing in a new conference and in a new building, the lessons learned last season should come in handy for Penn State.

"I think we made huge improvements throughout the season," said sophomore forward Casey Bailey, who led the team in scoring last season with 27 points. "Having us younger freshmen coming in, it took us a little while to build up confidence. Once we had that confidence, we really took some strides. That was a huge reason why a lot of us came here. We knew we would get an opportunity to represent Penn State in their first season as a Division I program. That's something we have a lot of pride in."

Gadowsky isn't targeting a set number of wins for his team this season. He previously coached established programs at the University of Alaska and Princeton before arriving at Penn State, a new program that offered a unique opportunity and a slew of unique challenges. After more than a decade coaching college hockey, Gadowsky took over the burgeoning PSU program in 2011 and immediately started work to build a team that could compete in time for the opening of Pegula Ice Arena. It was a unique challenge that few coaches in any sport encounter. But just 18 months after taking the job, the big day is here and Gadowsky, who brought both of his assistants from Princeton with him, is ready to roll.

"It's a great opportunity for all of us in the program, everyone from the student athletes to the staff to our alumni and supporters," Gadowsky said. "It's going to be great for college hockey. The guys we have here are those who embrace an extreme challenge. We're not naïve as to how great these programs are in the Big Ten. We have a lot of respect for them. But at the same time, we want guys who are hungry for that extreme challenge and really take pride in building something that will compete in this tremendous league."

Buffalo bid launched for NCAA hockey, lacrosse events

By James Fink

Buffalo Business First

October 11, 2013

The Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference has submitted a series of bids to the NCAA to host a number of high-profile events including the Frozen Four men's hockey finals back to First Niagara Center and the Division I men's lacrosse quarterfinals to Ralph Wilson Stadium.

Canisius College and Niagara University are members of the MAAC.

Using Canisius, Niagara, Visit Buffalo Niagara and the Buffalo Sabres as partners, the MAAC has submitted a bid to bring the Frozen Four back to First Niagara Center during a four-year window between 2015 and 2018. The Frozen Four was held at the downtown Buffalo arena in 2003.

First Niagara Center has hosted a number of NCAA men's basketball tournament regionals and will do so again in March 2014.

Buffalo is facing steep competition for the Frozen Four. Among the competing bids is that of Quinnipiac University, which although located near New Haven, Conn., is partnering with Orlando's Amway Center to host the Frozen Four during that same 2015-2018 window.

"We're definitely in a better place to host the Frozen Four than we were in 2003," said Michael Even, Visit Buffalo Niagara senior vice president.

Even noted downtown Buffalo has undergone a major transformation since 2003's Frozen Four. The city has more full-service hotels including the Embassy Suites on Delaware Avenue and the 200-room Marriott that will help anchor the HarborCenter when it opens. The HarborCenter will be directly connected to First Niagara Center. Canisius College's men's hockey team is one of the HarborCenter's anchor tenants.

"There is a strong partnership between Niagara, Canisius and the MAAC and that helps," Even said. "That partnership carries a great deal of respect inside the NCAA."

Richard Ensor, MAAC commissioner, said his conference is being very aggressive in landing more top level NCAA events. Besides the hockey and lacrosse competition, it is also vying for NCAA Division I men's wrestling to be held at Philadelphia's Wells Fargo Center and Division I women's basketball and volleyball at Albany's Times Union Center.

"The current bid submissions are a continuation of that commitment and the strategic planning of the conference," Ensor said.

Ted Black, Buffalo Sabres' president, said his organization's legacy of successfully hosting various NCAA events should help the MAAC, Canisius and Niagara.

Bringing the Frozen Four back to Buffalo was at the top of the Sabres' wish list, Black added.

"We're very proud of the resume we've built hosting large-scale sporting events," Black said. "Our ability to cater to the demands of big events will only be accentuated with the arrival of the HarborCenter next year. Buffalo is well known for being a sports-crazy town, especially in hockey, and our facilities will soon rival any across the country."

Organizers also hope to tap into the same local passion for the growing sport of lacrosse.

Again, using Niagara and Canisius as the lead, the MAAC has submitted a bid to bring the NCAA's Division I men's lacrosse quarterfinals to Ralph Wilson Stadium during a four-year window running between 2014 and 2018. If awarded, it would mark the first time the lacrosse competition was held in the region.

The Buffalo Niagara region has a strong lacrosse following, thanks to its proximity to Canada and several nearby Indian nations. The Buffalo Bandits indoor lacrosse team attracts near capacity crowds for the 19,070-seat First Niagara Center.

The NCAA is expected to award its various bids later this fall and early winter.