



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Buffalo at Philadelphia

Associated Press

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With their offense suddenly clicking, the Philadelphia Flyers have doubled their season's win total in just over a week.

Winners of four of five games, the Flyers look for a fifth straight home victory over the reeling Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

Philadelphia (8-10-2) defeated Ottawa 5-2 on Tuesday, and has tallied at least four goals three times in its last five games after reaching that mark just once in its first 15 contests.

"The team looks good right now," defenseman Kimmo Timonen said. "A lot of things are going well for us now and we have to keep it going."

Timonen had a goal and two assists against the Senators while Claude Giroux, Sean Couturier, Wayne Simmonds and Adam Hall also scored. Steve Mason made 32 saves and has a 1.56 goals-against average in his last five starts.

"Overall, the way he played was unbelievable," Timonen said of Mason's performance. "Not just this game, the whole year. When your goalies play like that, they give you the chance to win games every time."

By picking up nine points in their last five games, the Flyers have doubled their point total from Nov. 9. They're averaging 3.6 goals in their last five after recording 1.5 per game in their first 15.

"A couple weeks ago we were down and we weren't getting bounces," Simmonds said. "Times have turned, we are starting to get bounces and now we are getting more confident and we are getting better going late into games and it's starting to show."

The Sabres (5-17-1) could use a turnaround of their own.

Buffalo, which has an NHL-worst 11 points, has just two regulation victories, and the team is coming off Tuesday's 4-1 loss to St. Louis.

Interim coach Ted Nolan, who took over on Nov. 13 for Ron Rolston, said his team's young roster still has a long way to go before it can be competitive.

"We knew it was going to be tough," Nolan said. "We've just got to keep teaching, keep learning. You could tell some of the difference between some of the young players we have and some of the mature players (the Blues) have. It's just part of maturing."

One major problem for Buffalo this season has been awful starts to games. The team has been completely dominated in the first 20 minutes of action, getting outscored 31-4. The Sabres have been outscored just 41-35 the rest of the way.

Buffalo was actually able to find the back of the net on Tyler Ennis' goal just 10 seconds into Tuesday's game. Buffalo gave it right back, however, as St. Louis tied the score less than a minute later, and added another first-period goal for good measure.

"We learned to have a start," Ennis said. "Sometimes we've been starting slow. This time, we started fast and scored. Then we kind of let off the gas. Those are the things we need to fix."

Buffalo took two of three from Philadelphia last season with each team winning at home.

The Flyers have outscored the Sabres 17-7 in winning four straight meetings in Philadelphia, including the 2011 playoffs.

Buffalo Sabres can't assign rookie

Associated Press

November 20, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Sabres center Mikhail Grigorenko was back in Buffalo on Wednesday after the NHL blocked the team's attempt to send the rookie to the minors on a two-week conditioning assignment.

In reaching its decision, the league cited its agreement with the Canadian Hockey League preventing teams from assigning players with junior eligibility to the American Hockey League.

"We determined that the assignment would not have been consistent with our obligations under the league's agreement with the CHL," NHL spokesman Frank Brown wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

Interim coach Ted Nolan accepted the league's ruling, which came a day after the Sabres demoted Grigorenko to their AHL affiliate in Rochester N.Y., for conditioning.

"We thought we were doing it by the rulebook, but unfortunately we weren't," Nolan said. "Now he's back with us. We'll have to sit down and evaluate what the next step is."

Players remain on their NHL team's roster and are paid their full salary during conditioning stints, which last no more than 14 days.

The question became whether the 19-year-old Grigorenko qualified for assignment.

The ruling limits the Sabres' options in determining how to develop a player who has had difficulty earning regular ice time in Buffalo. Grigorenko has two goals and one assist in 15 games this season and had missed two straight games and five of seven as a healthy scratch before being assigned to AHL Rochester.

The Sabres must now choose between keeping Grigorenko on their roster and returning him to his Canadian junior team in Quebec.

Rather than preparing to play against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton on Wednesday, Grigorenko practiced with the Sabres in Buffalo before the team traveled to Philadelphia for a game against the Flyers on Thursday.

Nolan said he had not yet determined whether Grigorenko would play.

The NHL's ruling was the latest twist in what's become an unsettled professional career for the Russian-born player, who was selected by Buffalo with the No. 12 pick in the 2012 draft.

Grigorenko is now playing for his third coach in Buffalo, after Nolan replaced Ron Rolston, who was fired last week.

After opening last season playing in Quebec, Grigorenko earned a spot on the Sabres roster at the end of the NHL lockout. He had a goal and four assists in 22 games before the Sabres elected to return him to Quebec. Grigorenko then came back to Buffalo to play the final three games of the season and two more for Rochester in the playoffs after Quebec's season ended.

The Sabres would prefer Grigorenko develop in the AHL rather than the juniors.

"He's a real nice young man. He's just put in this predicament," Nolan said. "Now we have to go back to the drawing board and see what else might work, and what the best situation is for him to develop his skill and be the dominant player we all think he could be in this organization."

On Wednesday, the Sabres also recalled center Luke Adam and defenseman Brayden McNabb from Rochester.

Sabres recall McNabb, Adam to face Philly, but Grigorenko placed in limbo

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 20, 2013

Three prospects arrived from Rochester and skated Wednesday morning with the Buffalo Sabres in First Niagara Center. Two will be in the lineup when the Sabres play the suddenly-streaking Philadelphia Flyers tonight in Wells Fargo Center.

The third seems stuck in limbo.

While Luke Adam and Brayden McNabb took their paces in preparation for making their season debuts, Mikhail Grigorenko had no idea what was next for him. The National Hockey League rejected Grigorenko's 14-day conditioning assignment to Rochester and the 19-year-old was instructed to return to the NHL.

The Sabres don't appear to have any plans for using Grigorenko, who has been a healthy scratch for six of the last eight games and all three under interim coach Ted Nolan. And there are obstacles to sending Grigorenko back to his junior team, the Quebec Remparts, because of junior rules about imports on the roster.

Still, a continued seat in the press box doesn't seem like the best way to develop a former first-round draft pick, either.

In rejecting the conditioning assignment – which is normally used for players coming off injury – the NHL is clearly backing its agreement with the Canadian Hockey League, the governing body of the junior ranks, which prevents its clubs from assigning players to the AHL if they have junior eligibility remaining.

"It's just one of those situations where I thought we were doing the right thing," Nolan said after practice. "All of a sudden, it is what it is. We'll have to sit down and evaluate what the next step is.

"You read the rules, see how they work," Nolan said. "We thought we were doing it by the rule book. Unfortunately we weren't."

Grigorenko had driven to Rochester before receiving a phone call Tuesday night after 10 from Mark Jakubowski, assistant to the vacant general manager's post, instructing him to drive back to Buffalo for practice the next morning.

"I needed to play. I lost a little bit of my conditioning so I needed to get it back," said Grigorenko, who had been battling the flu and gave his consent for the Rochester assignment. "There, I would have had a lot of ice time."

The Sabres did not make new president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine available for comment on the Grigorenko situation, and said in a brief release that “the team respects the League’s decision.” Still, the club was clearly surprised by the NHL’s ruling.

“We talked about it and thought this could be one of the solutions,” Nolan said. “Unfortunately it didn’t work. We have to go back to the drawing board and see what else might work and what’s the best situation for him to develop his skills and be the dominant player we all think he could be in this organization.”

Nolan said he sympathized with Grigorenko’s predicament moving forward. Grigorenko, who has two goals and an assist in 14 games, insisted he’s ready to play when the Sabres call on him.

“He’s a really intense coach,” Grigorenko said of Nolan. “He wants everyone to play with passion and work hard. He wants everyone to be the best player he could be.”

Adam entered Wednesday tied as the best goal scorer in the AHL with 13 goals in 18 games. He said he’s kept a tunnel vision approach to his game, especially since he fell out of favor with former coaches Lindy Ruff and Ron Rolston, and ex-General Manager Darcy Regier.

“I was focused on what I could control,” said Adam. “I wasn’t focused a whole lot on coming back here, getting back to Buffalo and how Buffalo was doing.”

Adam had 10 goals in 52 games for the Sabres in 2011-12, starting the season red-hot as the center between Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville and getting chosen for the All-Star rookie festivities in Ottawa. But his play has never matched that hot streak, with Ruff benching him and Regier completely passing him over in camp this year.

“He’s always had his opinions on what type of player I was, how I could help this team, how I couldn’t help this team,” Adam said of Regier. “To have a fresh staff in here, it’s exciting. I see guys in here that are pretty excited and ready to move forward.”

Adam skated on left wing Wednesday, with Steve Ott centering and Zemgus Girgensons at right wing. Nolan said Girgensons, a natural center who has played in the middle the last three games, will move back to the wing tonight and may stay there for the foreseeable future.

McNabb led Rochester defensemen with 12 points in 15 games. He played 25 games for the Sabres in 2011-12 but did not appear in the NHL last season. McNabb set career-highs in goals (5), assists (31) and points (36) while appearing in 62 games for the Amerks last season.

The Sabres completely bypassed McNabb last year as he struggled in Rochester prior to the lockout. It was pretty much the same drill for him in training camp as he fell behind rookies Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov.

“I took it to heart,” McNabb said. “I wanted to be here from the get-go. You face some adversity. I had some last year and you learn a lot from that kind of thing. Last year was a learning curve for my career but I think it’s helped me.”

McNabb shuffled through the defense pairs in practice Wednesday so it’s not clear who he will partner with tonight.

Trip to Philadelphia a test of young Sabres' character

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

November 20, 2013

Ted Nolan remembers what it was like to take a young team into Philadelphia.

The Flyers are tough, aggressive and their fans are passionate. It's not an easy place to play. And back in 1995, during his first stint as the Buffalo Sabres' head coach, he saw his team reveal its own grit and character in those games.

Nolan hopes to see a bit of that come alive with his current club as the Sabres play in Philadelphia tonight.

"I look back and I think the last time we had this many young kids on our team was 1995 with Jay McKee, Wayne Primeau, Vaclav Varada and Curtis Brown," Nolan said. "Going into a place like Philly, I was a little bit worried for them at the time, but they showed me what kind of character they really did have. And that was a turning point. We weren't afraid. We weren't intimidated. We went down there and competed and all of a sudden we had some rough games with them. I'm hoping this is a similar type of thing. We don't have to be intimidated. We just have to go down and play."

A few weeks ago, the Philadelphia faithful were losing patience with their Flyers. The Flyers suffered through their worst start in franchise history (1-7-0) but have rebounded to go 7-3-2 in their last 12 games, including a 5-2 win over Ottawa on Tuesday.

But Nolan isn't getting too caught up in his opponent's situation. He's far more concerned with helping the Sabres figure out themselves.

"Philly's Philly," Nolan said. "They've had the same type of environment there for years and years and years. I don't think that's going to change at all. It's going to be an aggressive hockey game. We have to be ready but above all, I'm not too concerned with how other teams are playing right now. I'm really concerned with how we have to play. We have to get better defensively. We have to get better moving the puck. We have to get better in a lot of areas."

Matt Moulson is very familiar with the Flyers, who are in the same division as his former team, the New York Islanders. In 24 career games with the Islanders against the Flyers, he has nine points (four goals, five assists) and is a minus-6.

"They're always a tough team to play against. The Islanders faced them a lot of times over the last couple of years and they play hard, especially in their own building," Moulson said. "They have a lot of guys with some pretty good offensive skill and also have guys that play a real gritty game. They're a tough team to play against."

“It will be good for us to get back to the game we want to play. I think we got away from that last game. I didn’t have much success there in my career in Philly, but it’s good to hear the Sabres did so hopefully we’ll keep that going.”

The Sabres lead the all-time series with the Flyers, 93-57-27, and are 4-5-1 in their last 10 meetings. In their last 10 games in Philadelphia, the Sabres are 4-6-0.

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Improving communication has been a theme for Nolan since he took over as interim coach last week. If you want players to talk to each other on the ice, it starts with them engaging with each other in the hallways.

“It’s just good old communication. That’s what we have to teach this team,” Nolan said. “We have to get off the iPads and we have to get off texting and we have to say ‘hello’ and ‘how are you’ and ‘good morning’ and ‘I got this guy, you got that guy.’ We’ve got to communicate better.”

...

Rochester forward Patrick Kaleta is “day-to-day” with a lower body injury, Rochester coach Chadd Cassidy said to reporters before the team’s morning skate at Blue Cross Arena on Wednesday. Cassidy said he is hopeful Kaleta can return to the Amerks lineup this weekend. Rochester hosted the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins Wednesday, then faces the Utica Comets on Friday and Saturday.

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Tyler Ennis missed practice Wednesday.

“He just tweaked a little something there last night. Nothing serious. He’ll be ready to play tomorrow,” Nolan said.

Newcomers ready to help Amerks; Adam, McNabb called up

By Kevin Oklobzija

Democrat and Chronicle

November 20, 2013

Sometimes in order to take two steps forward, you must take one step back; or, in the case of Rasmus Ristolainen and Johan Larsson, you must drive 73 miles east.

That's how both players say they are looking at their reassignment from the Buffalo Sabres to the Rochester Americans.

The Sabres shipped both players to Rochester on Tuesday, along with Mikhail Grigorenko. Ristolainen and Larsson joined the Amerks for today's morning skate, a tune-up for tonight's 7:05 home game against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins.

Late Tuesday night, the Sabres called up center Luke Adam and defenseman Brayden McNabb from the Amerks, and announced the promotions this morning.

Grigorenko was not allowed to join the Amerks, however. The NHL put the kibosh on the conditioning assignment, ruling there was no justification for it other than to skirt the rules.

By rule, Grigorenko cannot simply be reassigned to the Amerks because he is still eligible for play in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. While he would be allowed to come to the AHL on a 14-day conditioning assignment, there must be a legitimate reason for rehab.

But since there had been no documented injury for Grigorenko, and because the second-year centerman played in 15 games of Buffalo's 23 games (2 goals, 1 assist), the NHL saw no justification for conditioning.

It's possible that Grigorenko's agent or the NHLPA whispered to the league. It's more likely that the NHL simply has become much more vigilant in policing what once was a common excuse to stash a player in the AHL and/or delay making a roster move involving waivers.

For now, Grigorenko remains with the Sabres. He quite likely will go back to the QMJHL once his team, the Quebec Remparts, or another team, frees up a roster spot. Quebec teams are limited to two "imports" and the Remparts, along with most other teams in the league, have two already.

As for the players that did join the Amerks, Ristolainen and Larsson both said they're anxious to play big minutes and have a prominent role.

"It's a really good thing," Larsson, 21, said of the return to Rochester, citing his lack of recent playing time in Buffalo. He had one assist in 17 games and last played on Nov. 8.

"I've been out of the lineup and I didn't play over 10 minutes (when he was in the lineup) so I'm really excited to get out there," Larsson said.

Ristolainen, 19, scored one goal in 19 games and was minus-4 in plus/minus. Over his past six games, he averaged 18 1/2 minutes and was a plus-1.

The native of Finland was chosen with the eighth overall selection in the NHL draft in June and, despite his age and lack of North American experience, was given a spot on the Sabres roster out of training camp.

He said it was "a little bit tough" in the first couple weeks, but that he thought he had played "OK" recently. Coming to the Amerks will give him a chance to play on the power play, something he enjoys.

"My goal is to stay up (in Buffalo) but now I'm here and I'm ready to play tonight," Ristolainen said. "I'm here, let's go."

The reassignment of Ristolainen and Larsson were part of Buffalo's plan to allow the younger players to develop in a learning environment. Interim coach Ted Nolan and president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine don't think it's healthy for player development or team development to have an overload of youngsters -- especially teenagers -- in the NHL lineup.

Nolan and LaFontaine took over last Wednesday when coach Ron Rolston and general manager Darcy Regier were fired. At the time, the Sabres were 4-15-1 (they are 1-2 under Nolan).

The overhaul wasn't a surprise to the players.

"You have to win," Larsson said, "and if you don't win there has to be changes."

Ristolainen knows it all too well. His team in Finland last season, TPS Turku, went through a coaching change.

"It's a very similar situation," he said. "We played very bad hockey and our coach got fired."

At least he's joining a competitive team now. The Amerks are 7-4-2-2.

"Guys have smiles on their faces and hopefully I can give something back," Larsson said.

Sabres visit Philadelphia to face surging Flyers

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

November 20, 2013

SABRES (5-17-1) at FLYERS (8-10-2)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, CSN-PH

Last 10: Buffalo 3-7-0; Philadelphia 5-3-2

Season series: It's the first of three times this season the Philadelphia Flyers and Buffalo Sabres will meet. The Sabres won two of the three games the teams played last season, but in their only game in Philadelphia, the Flyers won 3-2.

Big story: The Flyers continued their strong play with a 5-2 win against the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday that moved them out of seventh place in the Metropolitan Division and put them two points behind the third-place New York Rangers for the final automatic spot in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Sabres still are trying to adjust to how interim coach Ted Nolan wants them to play, especially defensively. Practice has involved lots of work on positioning and communicating.

"If one hand knows what the other hand is doing it's much easier," Nolan said. "We have to communicate, we have to talk, we have to stop and start in our defensive zone. Some things change but some things stay the same. Strong defensive hockey wins lots of games."

Team scope:

Sabres: After sending out three young players Tuesday, the Sabres will give two others a chance Thursday against the Flyers.

Nolan told reporters in Buffalo that Luke Adam and Brayden McNabb, recalled from Rochester of the American Hockey League, would be in the lineup Thursday. Adam played left wing on a line with center Zemgus Girgensons and right wing Steve Ott, while McNabb split time with a few different defensemen.

Adam is tied for the AHL lead with 13 goals in 15 games, while McNabb has 12 points and a plus-5 rating in 15 games. Nolan said strong play is why they're skating with the Sabres now.

"He [Adam] is having a great year in the American league," Nolan said. "When kids do that they have to be rewarded. That's what the American Hockey League is about. He's being rewarded for his play. McNabb the same way; he's playing real well in a different way. We want to reward guys down there and keep guys up

here on their toes because there's always somebody coming in the back door. You never know where they're going to come from."

Flyers: With back-to-back 90-point seasons, Sean Couturier was considered one of the most offensively gifted players in the 2011 NHL Draft class when the Flyers chose him with the eighth pick.

However, that offense hasn't been seen as much a quarter of the way through his third NHL season. After scoring 13 goals as a rookie, he had four in 46 games last season, and snapped a 25-game goal drought when he scored in the second period of the Flyers' 5-2 win against the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday.

"I feel 20 pounds lighter just getting that in," Couturier said Wednesday. "Sometimes you think too much when things aren't going your way. In the first period [when he missed an open net], maybe you think too much about that chance I had."

Couturier has contributed in other ways -- he's the Flyers' best defensive forward and his plus-2 rating is the best among the team's forwards who have been in Philadelphia all season. Now the hope is this sudden burst of offense can bring him some added confidence.

"It's huge for [Couturier] to get a goal," coach Craig Berube said. "He goes out and does a great job checking for us and playing a good role against teams' top lines and penalty kill, faceoffs and little things.

"To get rewarded with a goal here and there, and he's had opportunities to score a goal and it hasn't gone in, I think he'll start putting it in a little bit now. Sometimes you get that first goal and feel better and more confident."

Who's hot: Flyers captain Claude Giroux has two goals, three assists and a plus-5 rating in the past five games; in his first 15, he had had seven points, all assists, and a minus-11 rating.

Injury report: The Sabres and the Flyers report no injured players.

NHL blocks bid to send down Mikhail Grigorenko

By Mike Brehm

USA Today

November 20, 2013

Rookie Mikhail Grigorenko is back in the NHL after the league blocked the Buffalo Sabres' bid to send to the American Hockey League on a conditioning assignment.

Under NHL rules, a player under 20 who was drafted out the Canadian Hockey League can't be sent outright to the AHL. The Sabres announced on Tuesday that it was sending Grigorenko, 19, to Rochester, N.Y., on a conditioning assignment, which would have allowed him to go to the minors for 14 games.

The NHL saw otherwise.

"We determined that the assignment would not have been consistent with our obligations under the league's agreement with the CHL," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said by email.

Tweeted the Sabres: "The team respects the league's decision."

The Sabres had drafted Grigorenko 12th overall in 2012 and recalled him from the Quebec Remparts after the lockout. He played for 25 games last season, burning the first year of his entry-level contract before being returned to Quebec because he wasn't NHL-ready.

This season, he had two goals and an assist in 15 games while averaging a little more than 11 minutes a game. But he was a healthy scratch the past two games and six total.

Newly hired president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine changed the team's philosophy on player development from fired general manager Darcy Regier's approach and on Tuesday, sent defenseman Nikita Zadorov to his junior team and youngsters Johan Larsson and Rasmus Ristolainen to the AHL to give them the opportunity to play more.

Buffalo has two options for Grigorenko: Keep him on the roster or return him to Quebec.

The Sabres also announced on Wednesday that they recalled center Luke Adam and defenseman Brayden McNabb from Rochester.

An NHL first at Flyers vs. Sabres

By Marcus Hayes
Philadelphia Daily News
November 21, 2013

THEIR ANCESTORS helped develop the game centuries ago. There have been Indians in the NHL for 60 years.

But not until today will two Natives meet as head coaches in the NHL.

They are First Nations men, to be precise; that is the correct nomenclature in Canada. Sabres coach Ted Nolan is an Ojibwe from Ontario. Flyers coach Craig Berube is part Cree, and from Alberta.

"It's huge," Nolan said upon his arrival in Philadelphia yesterday. "The significance of it is not really what it means to me, or Craig Berube, but what it means when you think of what our ancestors went through."

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"I guess you'd think about it. You'd think there'd be some other Native coach that would've come out by now and been a coach," Berube said. "It's pretty cool."

Bryan Trottier is the only other First Nations head coach in NHL history.

The confluence of Nolan and Berube was first noticed by William Douglas, who runs the Washington-based blog, colorofhockey.com. Even those commissioned with advocating for aboriginals were unaware of the significance of the puck-drop tonight at the Wells Fargo Center.

"These coaches are real trailblazers in sport, especially in the NHL," said Peter Dinsdale, chief executive officer of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). "It's remarkable, given all the barriers that exist for First Nations peoples."

Dinsdale spoke yesterday morning from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, at the AFN's National Youth Summit, where the focus is on healthy communities for First Nations kids at a greater risk from drugs, alcohol, poverty, poor diet and suicide.

Children growing up on reserves - what Americans call reservations - seldom get the chances afforded Canada's general population.

"I think there would be so many more coaches like Ted and Craig, if more people had access to equipment and resources," Dinsdale said.

Berube, 47, did not grow up on a reserve, but he said he often played for hockey and fast-pitch softball teams on the reserves around Calahoo. He isn't sure how much Cree he has in him - it comes mainly from his grandmother, but he probably isn't even 50 percent Cree - and he isn't particularly sensitive about it.

He has his nickname, "Chief," written on his shower shoes, his alias since he was a 16-year-old in junior hockey. He has never considered it derogatory. He has never experienced racism.

He is indifferent about the Washington football team's nickname: "It doesn't bother me at all."

Nolan has said he considers the term "Redskins" highly offensive. He believes a good old boy network limited chances for First Nations candidates to get jobs, to retain them, to be promoted.

"You had to be tougher than the average bear," Nolan said. "There weren't too many places you went that you didn't take some abuse. And you felt you had to be better than others just to get a chance."

Berube's theory is less pointed.

"There's a lot of Natives that played hockey. Good players over the years," Berube said. "I guess they just weren't interested in coaching. In the NHL, there might be disinterest because you've got to earn it down in the minors, in junior, put your time in, work your way up."

The best First Nations players were Trottier, who scored 500 of his 524 goals with the Islanders, and goalie Grant Fuhr, who anchored the Oilers' dynasty to four Stanley Cups before moving on to five other teams.

The first Native player was Fred Sasakamoose, who played 11 games in the 1953-54 season for the Black Hawks.

The best Flyer aboriginal was Reggie Leach, a key component during the glory years now almost 40 years removed.

George Armstrong coached the Maple Leafs for 47 games in 1988-89.

Nolan, 55, was the second Native coach, hired in 1995 to coach Buffalo, where he won the Jack Adams Trophy as the NHL's top coach in his second season. He was part of a toxic situation in Buffalo, however, which helped the Sabres decide to not to extend his contract. He got sniffs soon thereafter, but did not coach in the NHL again until 2006, lasting two seasons with the Islanders.

Nolan said in his time away from the NHL he suffered from stigmas: "There were innuendos. Spiteful hearsay. It was especially tough, raising two boys. Very emotionally taxing."

Nolan's elder son, Brandon, 30, made it to the NHL for the 2007-08 season. Jordan, 24, won a Stanley Cup as a rookie with the Kings in 2012.

In between Nolan's jobs with the Sabres and Islanders, Trottier coached the Rangers for 54 games of the 2002-03 season. Perhaps Islanders assistant John Chabot, 49, will make it to the top.

"This is the second wave of First Nations players," Dinsdale said.

Perhaps someone like 36-year-old Rocky Thompson will fight his way out of the AHL, where he is an assistant in Oklahoma City. Maybe goaltender Carey Price or right wing Aaron Asham will get the urge to coach. At least the list of candidates is growing.

"They," Dinsdale said, "are real role models for First Nations peoples."

Fan creates Ted Nolan T-shirt

By James Fink

Business First

November 20, 2013

He's only been back behind the Buffalo Sabres' bench for one week, yet Ted Nolan is already the subject of at least one t-shirt that's selling well and gaining traction in the social media world.

Store 716 on its website is selling blue-and-gold t-shirts that read "My Shirt Says Ted Nolan." The shirts sell for \$14.95 and are going better than expected, officials said.

Nolan, who coached the Sabres from 1995 to 1997, was brought back as the team's coach on Nov. 13 following the firing of Ron Rolston and general manager Darcy Regier.

With conditioning assignment rejected, Sabres trying to find 'best solution' for Mikhail Grigorenko

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 21, 2013

BUFFALO – Mikhail Grigorenko figured he'd be starting a two-week AHL conditioning assignment Wednesday. The 19-year-old Sabres prospect had already dropped his equipment off at the rink and checked into a Rochester hotel when a team front office member contacted him at 10 p.m. Tuesday.

The NHL had rejected the assignment.

Grigorenko drove back to Buffalo and practiced with the Sabres hours later.

What happened?

"You read the rules and see how they work," interim coach Ted Nolan said Wednesday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight's road tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers. "We thought we were doing it by the rule book."

The team didn't elaborate much more. In a statement, the Sabres said they respected the league's decision and followed all guidelines in the collective bargaining agreement.

According to section 13.8 of the CBA, "If the Commissioner has reason to believe or determines the Club has used the Conditioning Load to evade Waivers, or otherwise Circumvent any provision of this agreement, he may take such disciplinary action against the Club as he deems appropriate."

As a junior-age player, Grigorenko can't be assigned to Rochester outright because of the NHL's agreement with the Canadian Hockey League.

"He's a great kid. He's a nice young man," Nolan said. "He's just put in this predicament. It has nothing to do with him. We want to make sure we find the best solution to make him better."

Grigorenko added: "I needed to play. I lost a little bit of my conditioning. So I need to get it back."

So what's next for Grigorenko, a healthy scratch twice under Nolan? The Russian practiced Wednesday at left wing with Ville Leino and Marcus Foligno.

Nolan and Pat LaFontaine, the president of hockey operations, have been discussing their options.

"We've only been here for six days," Nolan said. "We talked about it and thought this could be one of the solutions we thought we could do in the meantime."

Unfortunately, it didn't work. Now we have to go back to the drawing board and (see) what's best for him to develop his skill and be a dominant player we all think he can be in this organization."

Right now, the Quebec Remparts, Grigorenko's junior team, have two import players, the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League maximum. The Sabres could send him down after the league's Jan. 7 trade deadline.

Grigorenko said the Sabres haven't mentioned sending him back to junior, something they did in March. Nolan isn't sure if he'll play him soon. Grigorenko has sat five of the last seven contests.

"I believe I'm ready to play in the NHL," said Grigorenko, who scored two goals Nov. 8 in Anaheim.

But two other coaches, Ron Rolston and Lindy Ruff, didn't feel comfortable playing Grigorenko. Now Nolan, his third just 10 months and 40 games into his NHL career, isn't using him.

Grigorenko has often skated on the fourth line again this season. He's averaging 11:15 in his 15 appearances.

Still, the 12th overall pick in 2012 hasn't lost his confidence.

"My confidence is pretty high because the last four games I played I had all my points this season," said Grigorenko, who has two goals and three points this season. "I thought I've been playing really good. I scored two goals in the second-last game I played."

Does he believe Nolan will give him a chance?

"I didn't really know much about Ted," Grigorenko said. "So I didn't know what to expect. I was just ready for anything, for good or bad."

Grigorenko, whose compete level has been questioned, called Nolan "a really intense coach."

"He wants everyone to play with passion," he said. "He wants everyone to be the best player you can be."

Center Johan Larsson and defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, the two prospects sent to Rochester on a regular assignment, played in the Americans' 3-1 loss to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins on Wednesday.

Grigorenko played with Rochester twice in the playoffs last season because Quebec's season had ended.

Sabres reward Luke Adam and Brayden McNabb for strong starts with Amerks

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 21, 2013

BUFFALO – Luke Adam figured he had fallen out of the Sabres' plans. The 23-year-old winger, a strong Calder Trophy candidate two years ago at this time, barely received a look during the exhibition season.

The struggling, goal-starved team then refused to summon Adam from Rochester as he began piling up scores and recapturing his old form.

"I think they kind of had their mind made up," Adam said Wednesday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres recalled him and defenseman Brayden McNabb.

But the Sabres' recent housecleaning has given Adam, who has an AHL-high 13 goals in 15 games, another chance.

"He's having a great year," interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "When kids do that, they have to be rewarded. That's what the American Hockey League's all about. It's not just going down there and seeing what happens. They have to be rewarded."

Nolan and Pat LaFontaine, the president of hockey operations, replaced former coach Ron Rolston and general manager Darcy Regier last week.

The new duo wants to "keep guys up here on their toes," Nolan said.

"There's always someone coming back door," Nolan said. "You never know where they're going to come from."

Both players will dress tonight in Philadelphia against the Flyers, Nolan said.

Adam earned a brief four-game recall in April, his first stint in 14 months. McNabb hasn't played an NHL game since April 7, 2012, the 25th of his strong rookie campaign.

But the Sabres didn't even summon McNabb for their abbreviated training camp when the lockout ended in January. Then the 22-year-old, who struggled a bit last season, suffered a season-ending knee injury.

Had McNabb stayed healthy, the Sabres almost certainly would've recalled him late last season as injuries ravaged the blue line.

"I took it hard," McNabb said about staying in the minors so long. "I wanted to be here this year from the get-go. It takes a little adversity. I had some last year, so you learn a lot from that kind of thing."

McNabb has two goals and 12 points in 15 games this season.

Adam, who had only 15 goals in 67 AHL games last season, has spoken honestly about his struggles. Forgetting about the Sabres and worrying about himself and the Americans has helped him reach the NHL again.

“I don’t think there was any doubt in my mind that I could get back to the NHL and I was an NHL player,” Adam said. “So it was just maturing in certain situations and becoming that player where I kind of understand what it takes to play in this league.

“It just doesn’t come. You don’t wake up in the morning and know what to do and know how to compete and know how to get to this level. ... I don’t think I ever stopped believing in myself.”

Adam practiced with Steve Ott, who moved to center, and Zemgus Girgensons on Wednesday. McNabb had multiple partners.

Brian Flynn could be scratched tonight. The winger skated as a spare on the fourth line at times.

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Long-term, Nolan said, the Sabres project Girgensons as a winger. So despite three impressive games at center, the 19-year-old Latvian switched back to the side Wednesday.

“If we’re going to ask him to be a winger, we better play him in that position,” Nolan said this afternoon following practice inside the First Niagara Center. “If he’s going to be a center ice man, we better put him in that position. The verdict was out, and I got some good insight in that the last couple days.”

Nolan, who coached the rookie with the Latvian national team, said he “looked really good to me” at center.

“He’s going to look as good to me at the wing as he does at center ice,” Nolan said. “We have to figure out how we’re going to best utilize his skills and his skill set, a nice, powerful winger like him. He’s only 19 years old. He turns into 22, 23, he’s going to be a man in that position. He can be a very powerful power forward for us.”

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Winger Tyler Ennis will play tonight after tweaking “a little something” Tuesday, Nolan said. He missed Thursday’s practice.

Sabres Grigorenko back at practice

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 20, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Mikhail Grigorenko was back practicing after the NHL denied the Sabres request to send him to Rochester on 14 day conditioning assignment.

Ted Nolan did not know why the NHL denied it. He said, "It's one of those situations where we thought we were doing the right thing and it is what it is and now he's back with us and we'll have to sit down and evaluate what the next step is." Nolan added, "We read the rules and thought we were doing it by the rulebook, but unfortunately we weren't."

It's still very much up in the air on what they're going to do with the young Russian, but Nolan has a good first impression of Grigorenko, "He's a great kid, he's a nice young man and he's just put in this predicament, it's nothing to do with him personally, we want to make sure we find the best solution to make him better. Now we have to find what's the best situation for him to develop his skill and be a dominant player that we all think he could be in this organization."

Grigorenko didn't sound thrilled about the assignment to Rochester, but he did accept it, "I needed to play, I had lost a little of my conditioning, but I'm feeling better so everything's good." Grigorenko did say that the Sabres have not mentioned going back to junior to him.

Nolan has had one-on-one conversations with all the players since showing up a week ago. Grigorenko said, "He told me to keep working hard, but he didn't tell me I'm not ready or anything. I believe I'm ready to play in the NHL. There are some players that aren't ready, but I think I'm ready."

A surprise move in practice, at least to me was moving Zemgus Girgensons back to wing. Steve Ott was the center and Luke Adam the right wing. Nolan said, "The long term projection we're going to look at is is this kid going to be a center iceman for us or is he going to be a winger and the consensus right now is everybody seems to be leaning towards the wing position. I've gotten some good insight the last couple of days and learning the wing position at a younger age is a lot different than center ice."

Since he's looked so good at center my next natural question was why switch it? Nolan said, "He's going to look as good to me at the wing as he does at center ice so, we have to figure out how we're going to best utilize his skillset. He's only 19 years old and when he turns 22 or 23, he's going to be a man at that position so he can be a very powerful power forward for us."

Tyler Ennis missed practice with what Nolan called a tweak and should play in Philadelphia.

The lines Wednesday were:

Moulson-Hodgson-Stafford
Girgensons-Ott-Adam
Foligno-Leino-Grigorenko
Scott and Flynn-McCormick-Tropp

ADAM, McNABB RECALLED, EXCITED TO BE BACK

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 20, 2013

Luke Adam and Brayden McNabb are getting another chance in the NHL and hope to take full advantage of the opportunity presented to them.

Luke Adam

The Buffalo Sabres recalled them from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League on Wednesday and interim coach Ted Nolan said both will play Thursday night in Philadelphia.

Adam, 23, currently leads the Americans with 18 points through 15 games. The left wing has 13 goals with Rochester this season, which is tied for most in the AHL.

“The kid’s having a great year and when kids do that, they have to be rewarded. That’s what the American Hockey League’s all about. It’s not just going down there and seeing what happens. They have to be rewarded and he was rewarded by his play,” Nolan said after practice at First Niagara Center. “McNabb’s the same way. He’s playing pretty well in a different way. We want to reward guys down there and keep guys up here on their toes because there’s always someone coming in the back door. You never know where they come from.”

Adam said that the coaching staff in Rochester, particularly head coach Chadd Cassidy and assistant coach Chris Taylor put a lot of trust in him to play in all different situations and eat up a lot of minutes.

“I think I was just focused on what I could control and I wasn’t focused a whole lot on coming back here or getting back to Buffalo or how Buffalo’s doing,” he said. “I just focused on my game and focused on Rochester.”

Adam was last called up by the Sabres on April 1, 2013, scoring one goal in his four-game stint in Buffalo.

He said he isn’t going to try to change his game much, if at all, and will try to continue to do the same things that have made him successful in the AHL so far this season.

“I’m just going to try to keep playing the same way I’ve been playing down there. Hopefully I’ll be able to help this team win a few games,” Adam said. “I’m not going to come in here and expect anything to be given to me or expect to be put in situations that I’m not earning and not deserving.”

Brayden McNabb

McNabb, a 6-foot-4, 207-pound defenseman, hasn't played in Buffalo since 2011-12. He finished that season in Buffalo, but started the next season in Rochester because of the lockout. A logjam of defensemen kept him in Rochester when the NHL season resumed and by the time the Sabres were ready to make a call-up for the blueline, McNabb was sidelined with a knee injury.

In 25 career NHL games, all with Buffalo in 2011-12, McNabb has recorded eight points (1+7) and 15 penalty minutes.

McNabb set career-highs in all offensive categories, including goals (5), assists (31), points (36) and penalty minutes (50) while appearing in 62 games for the Amerks in 2012-13. He's looking forward to being back in the NHL after such a long time away.

"It was tough. Especially when you get a taste, you want to be there," he said. "It was unfortunate and a learning curve for my career and I think it's helped me throughout this year and hopefully further on in my career."

Drafted by the Sabres in the third round of the 2009 NHL Draft, he is in the last year of his three-year entry-level contract.

After three games at center, rookie Zemgus Girgensons skated on the wing at practice. Organizationally, there's a consensus according to Nolan that Girgensons may project out to be more successful at wing so they're going to work him there now. Steve Ott centered his line with Adam. Despite the move, Nolan was very impressed with Girgensons' play down the middle.

"He looked good to me. He looked really good to me," Nolan said. "I think that could be an option when situations present itself that we could always do that, but right now, we want to make sure we put him in a good situation where he's going to flourish. Playing with a guy like Steve Ott could help that process that much quicker."

Forward Tyler Ennis missed practice. Nolan said Ennis "tweaked a little something" Tuesday night against the Blues, but will be ready to go against the Flyers.

Rookie center Mikhail Grigorenko was returned to the club. He was to be sent down to the Amerks on a conditioning stint. However, after complying with all guidelines in the Collective Bargaining Agreement as they relate to player conditioning assignments, the Sabres' assignment for Grigorenko was ruled against by the NHL and the team said in a release that they respect the League's decision.

Grigorenko said he had been feeling under the weather and had lost some of his conditioning. He was in a hotel in Rochester when he received a call at 10 p.m. Wednesday night that he had to return to Buffalo for practice the next morning.

“Last week I was a little bit sick, so we decided I’m going to go to Rochester for a conditioning basis, but something happened,” he said. “They just told me to come back, so I’m here now.”

Nolan said he would meet with President of Hockey Operations Pat LaFontaine to figure out what the next step for Grigorenko should be.

“Now we have to go back to the drawing board and see what else might work and what’s the best situation for him to develop his skill and be a dominant player that we all think he could be in this organization,” Nolan said.

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POST-GAME NOTEBOOK: NOV. 19

By Rob Poling

Sabres.com

November 20, 2013

The Sabres got off to a quick start in Tuesday's 4-1 loss to St. Louis, as Tyler Ennis opened the scoring with his fourth goal of the campaign just 10 seconds after the opening faceoff. Ennis' goal was the fastest Sabres goal to start a game since Drew Stafford also scored 10 seconds into the game against Edmonton on January 27, 2009. Alexander Mogilny owns the franchise record for the fastest goal to start a game, scoring just five seconds in on December 21, 1991.

Unfortunately, this would be the only Sabres tally of the night. Buffalo was able to sustain a consistent forecheck throughout the game, but ultimately could not generate enough offense to get the win.

"I think our compete level was high; a lot of hits, a lot of effort," said Ennis. "Sometimes when you're skating around and playing hard, you leave spaces on the ice open and they were able to capitalize."

Interim coach Ted Nolan felt like the Sabres youth and lack of experience were the main reasons why the Sabres fell short to a seasoned Blues squad on Tuesday.

"Our youth really showed tonight," said Nolan. "This is one of the better teams in the National Hockey League. We just have to keep pushing forward. We have a lot of work to do. We just have to be patient. Keep teaching, keep learning."

The Sabres welcomed back former teammate Derek Roy to the First Niagara Center on Tuesday.

Roy, who was drafted by Buffalo in the second round of the 2001 NHL Entry Draft, spent eight seasons as a member of the Sabres from 2003-2012. Roy was a popular player during his Sabres tenure, tallying 421 points (161+266) in 549 games with the team.

Former Sabre Jordan Leopold is also with St. Louis now, but did not make the trip due to injury. Leopold played with the Sabres from 2010-2013, recording 67 points (25+42) in 174 games during his time in Buffalo.

Tuesday marked the first of two meetings between the Buffalo Sabres and the St. Louis Blues this season and the Sabres first home game against the Blues since November 12, 2008. Buffalo will play in St. Louis on April 3.