



Buffalo Sabres

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Toronto at Buffalo

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Since Buffalo beat the Toronto Maple Leafs in its first game after undergoing an organizational shakeup earlier this month, the Sabres have yet to win.

They'll look to avoid a sixth consecutive defeat while trying to extend the Maple Leafs' season-high road skid to six Friday night.

Buffalo (5-20-1) had reason to feel optimistic after a 3-1 home victory over Toronto on Nov. 15, which came two days after owner Terry Pegula fired general manager Darcy Regier and coach Ron Rolston. Ex-Sabre Pat LaFontaine was named to the newly created role of president of hockey operations, then selected his former Buffalo coach Ted Nolan to fill the same capacity.

However, the visiting Sabres lost 4-2 to Toronto (14-9-2) the next night and have recorded one goal in each game while being outscored 14-4 over the last four. The Sabres, whose 45 goals are by far the fewest in the NHL, fell to 2-11-1 at home after Wednesday's 3-1 defeat to Montreal.

"It is the same theme and it's simply not good enough," captain Steve Ott told the Sabres' official website. "I'm not going to sugarcoat. What's going on here is nothing to be proud of by any means.

"We found a way to lose. Good teams, confident teams find ways to battle in it and stick with a game. For us, we need to find that going forward and collectively."

Though Buffalo has been outscored 11-1 after the first period of the last four games and allowed its last five opponents to go 7 of 19 (36.8 percent) on the power play, Nolan believes his club is making progress.

"The one thing we asked our team to do is compete, and we competed," he said. "When things are difficult, it's easy to point fingers, but this group is really starting to pay attention. We're making strides in the right direction."

He hopes Matt Moulson will continue to produce after snapping an 11-game goal drought Wednesday. Moulson, who is likely to play after taking a hit to the boards in the second period, has five goals and two assists in his last six games against Toronto.

Though the Maple Leafs' situation isn't as dire as Buffalo's, they are trying to avoid losing six straight on the road for the first time since an 0-7-1 slide Oct. 23-Nov. 27, 2010.

After being limited to three goals in the previous four road games, Toronto held a 4-1 second-period lead Wednesday before Pittsburgh scored four of the next five to force overtime and win 6-5 in a shootout.

"We've got some talented players on the team, we've just got to find ways to finish games," said forward James van Riemsdyk, who had two goals with an assist. "It's not doom and gloom but we've got to find ways to win games like that."

Three of Pittsburgh's final four goals came on the power play. In consecutive losses to Columbus and the Penguins, the Maple Leafs have managed to kill four of nine penalties.

"We take penalty after penalty and take our momentum away," said coach Randy Carlye, whose team was outshot 17-0 in the third period Wednesday.

Van Riemsdyk snapped a four-game goal drought since scoring twice at home against the Sabres. Those are his only four goals in his last 11 contests.

D'Agostini welcomes fresh start with Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

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Somewhere inside Matt D'Agostini is a 20-goal scorer, a guy who made the most of his chance when given minutes on a non-playoff team. He's been missing for a while.

D'Agostini and the Sabres hope he resurfaces in Buffalo.

The newest member of Blue and Gold skated with the team for the first time Thursday, and he'll have a prominent role in the lineup tonight when Toronto visits First Niagara Center.

"I'm excited about another new opportunity," D'Agostini said. "It's just another opportunity to come in and try to prove myself and prove that I can be a good NHL player every day."

The Sabres claimed D'Agostini off waivers from Pittsburgh on Wednesday after discussing his history and skill set. Ted Nolan remembered a talented junior player, and everyone involved recalled the winger scoring 21 goals with St. Louis in 2010-11.

D'Agostini has scored 12 goals in 92 games since his career year.

"To get a guy like him, it's fortunate for us and we'll see if we can get his career back going," said Nolan, who plans to use D'Agostini alongside captain Steve Ott and center Ville Leino. "When you get a goal scorer, you've got to put him in position to score some goals. Hopefully, that will help."

D'Agostini, 27, did fine playing on a scoring line with the Blues. With linemates such as David Backes, Andy McDonald and Alexander Steen, D'Agostini put up 21 goals and 46 points in 82 games to finish fifth on the team in scoring.

"We weren't making the playoffs that year," D'Agostini said. "That was a time I got my minutes and got some goals under my belt and got some confidence. I'm hoping to get back to those ways.

"Hopefully, if I get the playing time and get the minutes out there, I'll get my confidence back and get back to my old game."

The Blues dealt D'Agostini to New Jersey last year after watching him open with one goal and two points in 16 games. He had two goals and four points in 14 games with the Devils, who didn't present a qualifying offer to the restricted free agent.

The Penguins signed him to a one-year, \$550,000 deal. He was injured during training camp and couldn't claim a regular spot in the lineup, playing just eight games before getting waived.

"The last couple years have been struggles, obviously, to find my game and stuff like that," D'Agostini said. "This year was nothing but the same with the way it's been going with the injury and kind of a slow start. I'm hoping to get a fresh start here and rebuild myself as a player."

D'Agostini and Nolan are both from Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., and the coach paid attention when D'Agostini left town to play juniors with Guelph of the Ontario Hockey League. The winger totaled 49 goals and 76 points in 125 games.

The Canadiens selected him in the sixth round of the 2005 draft, and he recorded 58 goals and 127 points in 159 games with their minor-league club.

"He can definitely put the puck in the net," said Sabres defenseman Henrik Tallinder, who played with D'Agostini last season in New Jersey. "Hopefully, he will find some chemistry with some guys and he can light it up a little bit."

The Sabres could use scoring help. They've scored just once in each of the last four games and are last in the NHL at 1.62 goals per game. No one else is under two.

"I'm hoping to reward them with a little bit of good play and show myself," D'Agostini said. "I like to think I can see the ice and play with good players. Whatever line it's on, whatever role they want me to play, I can go out there and do that."

Little-used Tropp waived after 43 games

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

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The Buffalo Sabres caught Corey Tropp's eye during the 2007 playoffs. Little did he know, he was in their sights, too.

"I remember in '07, my actual draft year, watching the Sabres and how cool it looked in Buffalo," Tropp said to The News by phone Thursday. "Then, a month later, I was getting drafted by them."

It turns out Columbus General Manager Jarmo Kekalainen also was watching Tropp back then, so he pounced when the Sabres waived the 23-year-old. Tropp's run in the Sabres' organization came to an end Thursday when the Blue Jackets claimed the right winger.

"I was a little disappointed with what transpired," Tropp said while getting ready to head to Ohio. "It was an honor to be a Sabre. One of my greatest memories is my first game I ever played at home. It was real excitement.

"They were great to me and gave me an opportunity to get my first NHL games and help me grow as a person on and off the ice."

The Sabres helped him hone his competitive spirit, and it will be on display with the Blue Jackets. He's eager to show the Sabres they made a mistake.

"I'm a passionate player, and I think that shows," Tropp said. "It was definitely tough getting the news, but it's exciting to have a good opportunity in front of me. At the end of the day, I've got to go out and hopefully make Buffalo regret making that move."

There's a chance of that happening. The former third-round pick has hustle and grit, but he's coming off a knee injury that cost him nearly of all last season. He couldn't find a spot under new Buffalo coach Ted Nolan, who wanted to see what Tropp could do with significant playing time in Rochester.

"If we're going to start developing players, we can't develop them with five, six minutes on the fourth line," Nolan said. "We have to give them some real minutes and let him see what kind of player he can be. I don't know if he's going to be a fourth-line chipper or if he's going to be a third-line guy. We have to let him play and find that out.

"You're happy for the young guy," Nolan added. "That's unfortunate that we don't have enough positions or room for him right now. It's good for him to be picked up by somebody else and get his career going there. Unfortunately, it just wasn't happening here at that moment. You take a chance, and now it's good for Corey."

Tropp played 43 games for the Sabres during his four seasons in the organization, putting up three goals and nine points. He had just one assist and a minus-8 rating in nine games this season.

“We’ve got to start shaking the tent here a little bit and start making these guys appreciate where we are,” Nolan said. “We’re in the National Hockey League, and you have to be on your toes every game because this could happen to anybody.”

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The Sabres host Toronto tonight, and the Maple Leafs arrived Thursday after a 6-5 shootout loss in Pittsburgh. Toronto lost, 6-0, to Columbus on Monday.

“Obviously we’ve given up 11 goals in two games, and that’s not going to cut it,” coach Randy Carlyle said in First Niagara Center. “That’s not going to work in the NHL.”

The Leafs had a 4-1 lead over the Penguins early in the second period before collapsing under the weight of penalties. Pittsburgh went 3 for 5 on the power play.

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Forward Cody McCormick took part in the Sabres’ optional holiday skate, but he doesn’t expect to play against the Leafs. He’s a possibility for Saturday’s game in New Jersey, but Nolan doesn’t expect him until next week.

“Another day might do it some help,” said McCormick, who suffered an upper-body injury Nov. 21 in Philadelphia. “I just took a stiff hit and didn’t react well to it.”

Sabres aim to end skid against Maple Leafs

By John Kreiser

NHL.com

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MAPLE LEAFS (14-9-2) at SABRES (5-20-1)

TV: RDS; LEAFS TV; MSG-B, BELL TV

Last 10: Toronto 4-4-2; Buffalo 3-7-0

Season series: The Toronto Maple Leafs and Buffalo Sabres split a home-and-home series two weekends ago, with each team winning in its own building. They meet twice more this season; both games are at Air Canada Centre.

Big story: The Maple Leafs come to Buffalo after seeing a 4-1 lead against the Pittsburgh Penguins turn into a 6-5 shootout loss Wednesday night. The Sabres have dropped five in a row after beating Toronto in their first game under interim coach Ted Nolan.

Team Scope:

Maple Leafs: Toronto took a seemingly secure 5-3 lead into the dressing room after two periods against Pittsburgh despite having been outshot 29-24. But everything fell apart after that.

Pittsburgh outshot the Maple Leafs 17-0 in the third period and got goals by James Neal and Evgeni Malkin to force overtime, took the only two shots in a scoreless overtime, then got goals by Sidney Crosby and Malkin in the shootout to take home the extra point.

"We stopped skating. We stopped forechecking. We stopped playing," said Leafs coach Randy Carlyle, whose team is being outshot by an average of 10 per game (36.1-26.1). "There's no explanation for us not getting any shots in the third period.

"We've got an old enough group and a veteran core that should be able to grab a hold of it."

Sabres: A 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday left Buffalo with two victories in 14 home games. Despite a 1-5-0 record and the continuing struggles at First Niagara Center, Nolan said he's seeing progress from a team whose 11 points are last in the overall standings.

"The one thing we asked our team to do is compete, and we competed," Nolan said. "When things are difficult, it's easy to point fingers, but this group is really starting to pay attention. We're making strides in the right direction."

Matt Moulson ended an 11-game drought by scoring the Sabres' lone goal.

Who's hot: James van Riemsdyk had two goals and an assist against the Penguins. ... Ryan Miller's goaltending continues to give the Sabres a chance to win. Despite a 4-15-0 record, he has a save percentage of .918.

Injury report: Toronto is without forward Joffrey Lupul (groin) and center Dave Bolland (ankle). ... Buffalo has been missing forward Cody McCormick (undisclosed) for a week, but Nolan said he could return either against Toronto or Saturday night against the New Jersey Devils.

Maple Leafs: Five things to know about the Buffalo Sabres

By Mark Zwolinski

Toronto Star

November 28, 2013

The Leafs are in Buffalo to take on the Sabres Friday night (7:30 p.m., LEAFS TV, TSN Radio 1050.) Here are five things to know about the Sabres:

1. Buffalo's 3-1 loss to Montreal Wednesday left the Sabres with only two wins on home ice this season in 14 games. They are 1-5-0 at home since Ted Nolan took over, with the only win coming against the Leafs earlier this month in Nolan's first game behind the bench

"The one thing we asked our team to do is compete, and we competed," Nolan said after the Montreal loss. "When things are difficult, it's easy to point fingers, but this group is really starting to pay attention. We're making strides in the right direction."

2. Goalie Ryan Miller is a story line every time he faces the Leafs. He has 30 career wins vs. Toronto, the most of any team he's faced. His record is 4-15-0 but he still sports a .918 save percentage.

3. Matt Moulson broke an 11-game scoring slump with a goal against the Habs. Moulson's only other goal was in his debut with Buffalo after the trade from the Islanders in late October.

"I want to help this team win," Moulson said. "That's the thing. Obviously, it wasn't enough. We have to come back and be able to produce to help this team win."

4. The Sabres are a hard-luck team, and when it comes to breaks, they can't seem to get one off the ice either. Rick Dudley, widely rumoured to be a favourite choice by the Sabres for their vacant GM post, signed an extension with Montreal, taking him off the list of potential GMs.

In fact, Dudley interviewed with the Sabres but had signed the extension prior to his meeting with Sabres front office personnel.

"I went to Montreal because of Marc Bergevin," Dudley said in a press box meeting with reporters prior to Wednesday's game against Montreal. "I enjoy the people I work with. It's fun. It's a great gig. If you enjoy something a great deal, why change if you don't have to?"

5. Nolan hinted that backup goalie Jhonas Enroth will play either against Toronto Friday or New Jersey Saturday . . . Matt D'Agostini, claimed off waivers from Pittsburgh, may also break into the Buffalo lineup against the Leafs . . . Buffalo placed Cory Tropp on waivers (claimed by Columbus), which opened the door to more ice time for John Scott (he was a healthy scratch vs. Detroit last week) . . . Cody McCormick, who left last Thursday's game against Philadelphia with an upper body injury, may also get back into the lineup against Toronto.

Matt D'Agostini ready for any role with Sabres; Ted Nolan happy Corey Tropp can stay in NHL

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

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BUFFALO – Matt D'Agostini had just experienced NHL waivers, what he described as “the most anxious 24 hours of your life.”

The Pittsburgh Penguins, his third team since the beginning of last season, released him Tuesday. The 27-year-old winger could've gone to the minors for the first time in four years.

But the hapless Sabres claimed D'Agostini on Wednesday, awarding him perhaps his final NHL chance.

So before D'Agostini spoke to the media Thursday inside the First Niagara Center, he grabbed two new Sabres hats from his stall, picked out his favorite, peeled the stickers off and proudly wore it.

“Just another opportunity to come in and prove myself and prove I can be a regular NHL player every day,” D'Agostini after his first practice.

Interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan will skate D'Agostini beside center Ville Leino and Steve Ott tonight against the Toronto Maple Leafs, an early opportunity for him to impress.

“When you get a goal scorer,” Nolan said about D'Agostini following an optional skate, “you got to put him in a position to score some goals.”

D'Agostini added: “Whatever line it's on, whatever role they want me to play, I can go out there and do that.”

To create room for D'Agostini, the Sabres waived Corey Tropp, who was claimed by the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday.

More on the 24-year-old winger later.

D'Agostini, the 190th overall pick by Montreal in 2005, is an intriguing talent. He compiled a career-high 21 goals and 46 points in 82 games with the St. Louis Blues in 2010-11. But he has only 18 goals and 25 points in 92 contests since then.

What has happened?

“I don't know, man,” D'Agostini said. “I've been trying to find it myself. Confidence is the main thing. Hopefully, by getting the playing time and getting the minutes, I'll get my confidence back and get back to my old game.”

D'Agostini said he played with David Backes and Andy McDonald, two strong scorers, some of his career season, although he rotated on lines.

The Blues traded D'Agostini to the New Jersey Devils early last year. New Jersey didn't tender a contract in the offseason, making him a free agent. Pittsburgh signed him, but he suffered an undisclosed injury during training camp.

The 6-foot, 198-pound D'Agostini, who possesses a strong shot and good wheels, has one assist in eight games this season.

"Off to kind of a slow start," he said. "Hopefully, I kind of get a fresh start here and rebuild myself as a player."

Of course, the flip side of bouncing around is always being wanted and landing on your feet.

"It always gives you a little bit of confidence," D'Agostini said. "You're let go by one team but it's good to know you're wanted by someone else. I'm hoping to reward them."

He added: "I hear nothing but good things about this organization."

D'Agostini's from Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., where Nolan has coached and played. He's served as an instructor at Nolan's hockey school. Nolan said he's known him since he was 15 or 16 years old.

Pat LaFontaine, the president of hockey operations, brought D'Agostini's availability up to Nolan.

Meanwhile, Nolan isn't disappointed the Sabres lost Tropp, the 89th overall pick in 2007.

"You're happy for the young guy," he said. "Pittsburgh lost a guy to us (D'Agostini). That's unfortunate we haven't got enough room for him right now. It's good for him to be picked up by somebody else and get his career going."

The Sabres wanted Tropp, who has one assist in nine games this season, to play "real minutes" in Rochester to further his development, Nolan said.

Tropp tore up his knee early last season and broke his jaw during a preseason fight this year. He has three goals and nine points in 43 NHL games.

D'AGOSTINI READY FOR ANOTHER NEW OPPORTUNITY, WILL PLAY WITH LEINO AND OTT

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

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A day after being claimed off waivers, Matt D'Agostini was on the ice with his new club, the Buffalo Sabres, shaking hands and getting to know some of his new teammates.

D'Agostini had been waived by the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday and had to wait until noon Wednesday to find out if he'd be on his way to the minors or another NHL city.

"[Pittsburgh] told me the news and then you have the most anxious 24 hours of your life," D'Agostini said after Buffalo's optional practice Thursday at First Niagara Center. "Again, that's just the way it goes in this sport. Guys come and go so I'm excited about my opportunity."

Buffalo is D'Agostini's fourth NHL club in the past two years. St. Louis traded him to New Jersey last season – where he played with Sabres defenseman Henrik Tallinder – and he signed a one-year contract with the Penguins this summer.

In 275 NHL games, he's scored 96 points (47+49), including 21 goals with the Blues in 2010-11.

The 27-year-old forward is from Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., which is also the hometown of Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan. Nolan said that he's known about D'Agostini since he was a teenager playing junior hockey with the Guelph Storm. When president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine suggested the Sabres claim D'Agostini, Nolan was on board.

"I've known of him since he was about 15, 16 years old and I remember him going to another Ontario Hockey League team [and playing] against his hometown of Sault Ste. Marie. I was wondering why he got away," Nolan said.

D'Agostini is looking forward to being in the lineup against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday.

"Hopefully [I can] get back to my ways and my confident self again," he said. "Confidence is everything in this league I think, so get some playing time under my belt and hopefully get back to my old game."

He'll likely get a lot of ice time as Nolan said he'll put D'Agostini on the wing with center Ville Leino and captain Steve Ott.

“When you get a goal scorer, you have to put him in a position to score some goals so hopefully that’ll help,” Nolan said.

To make room for D’Agostini on the roster, the Sabres waived right wing Corey Tropp. Thursday afternoon, the Columbus Blue Jackets announced that they had claimed Tropp.

The Sabres were hoping to send Tropp to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League where he could play a lot of minutes in all situations. Tropp has battled injuries the past two seasons and in nine games with Buffalo this season, he’d averaged 10:29 of ice time while on the fourth line.

“I don’t know if [Tropp being claimed is] disappointing. You’re happy for the young guy,” Nolan said. “Pittsburgh lost a guy to us. It’s unfortunate that we haven’t got enough positions or room for him right now. It’s good for him to be picked up by somebody else and get his career going there. Unfortunately it wasn’t happening here at that moment. You take a chance and it’s good for Corey.”

Center Cody McCormick skated with the team again. He’s been on injured reserve since he took what he calls a “stiff hit” on Nov. 21 against the Philadelphia Flyers. Nolan said that he may not be ready for this weekend’s pair of games. McCormick declared himself day-to-day with an upper-body injury.

“We’re still kind of seeing how it’s going to react tomorrow morning,” McCormick said. “If the game was tonight, I don’t think it would work but another day might do it some help.”