



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres-Devils Preview

By Jon Palmieri

Associated Press

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All it took for the New Jersey Devils to get back in the win column was their biggest period of the season.

A home matchup with the league-worst Buffalo Sabres could help them stay there.

The Devils try to build on a very impressive finish as they meet the Sabres for the first time this season Saturday night.

With five goals scored during a three-game skid and faced with a 2-1 deficit in the third period at Carolina on Friday night, the Devils didn't seem poised for an offensive outburst. But Andrei Loktionov scored the first of four unanswered goals and Jaromir Jagr capped the uprising with the 692nd of his career in a 5-2 victory.

"I didn't see (the big third period) coming," coach Peter DeBoer said. "But I felt good about where our game was and our ability to get a couple of goals in the third period."

Jagr finished with three points and Dainius Zubrus had a goal and an assist as New Jersey (10-11-5) matched its goal total from the previous three games.

The uncharacteristic offensive display benefited Cory Schneider, who needed to make only 16 saves for his second straight win.

Schneider told reporters he was "frustrated" with his lack of playing time after learning Wednesday that Martin Brodeur would make his third consecutive start in the Devils' 4-3 home loss to the Hurricanes.

It's hard to fault Schneider, who has allowed two goals or fewer in seven of his 11 starts while ranking among the league leaders with a 1.88 goals-against average.

DeBoer could come back with Schneider on Saturday or switch to Brodeur, who has posted an .890 save percentage during a personal three-game skid. Brodeur, though, is 10-2-4 with a 1.52 GAA in his last 17 appearances against Buffalo.

Jagr continues to produce for the Devils, tallying six goals and eight points in his last seven games. The 41-year-old, who is two goals away from tying Mark Messier for seventh on the all-time list, leads the team with 22 points - eight more than his closest teammate.

"I don't really chase anything," Jagr said. "I enjoy my teammates and my linemates. I enjoy the game, the way we play. Our line, I like the way our line played. When I'm happy about our game, I know the goals are going to come."

The Sabres also enter this game after snapping a losing streak, beating Toronto 3-2 in overtime Friday to end a five-game skid. Christian Ehrhoff scored 38 seconds into the extra period to help Buffalo (6-20-1) win for the second time in seven tries under interim coach Ted Nolan.

"Ever since Ted (Nolan) got here, the guys are just building on each and every game," said Luke Adam, who scored his first goal since April 5. "We feel a lot more confident as a team, as players, when we come to the rink every morning for practice. That's carrying over and we're playing a lot better."

Three goals represented an offensive explosion for the Sabres, who entered averaging a league-worst 1.62. They scored once in each of the previous four contests.

One problem preventing Buffalo from making much progress is its slow starts. The Sabres have been outscored 33-6 and outshot 351-192 during first periods this season.

Ryan Miller has remained a bright spot for the Sabres and was solid again with 22 saves Friday. He's 6-2-2 with a 1.59 GAA in his last 10 games against the Devils.

New Jersey is 4-0-3 in its last seven meetings versus Buffalo.

Sabres upend Maple Leafs 3-2 in OT

Associated Press

November 29, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Buffalo ended its five-game losing streak at home at a First Niagara Center filled with plenty of vocal Toronto fans.

And that made it all the sweeter for the Sabres.

Christian Ehrhoff scored 38 seconds into overtime and the Buffalo Sabres picked up a 3-2 win on Friday.

"It is always really fun to play," Ehrhoff said. "The fans that come down sometimes outnumber the Sabres fans and it brings out the best in our fans, too. They are up for the challenge and they were really loud again tonight."

Ehrhoff carried the puck from the right point to the center of the ice before sending a soft wrist shot on goal that went through James Reimer's legs.

"I didn't have the time to do a big wind-up there or get it hard," Ehrhoff said. "I saw the opening between the legs and just put one through there."

Matt Moulson and Luke Adam also scored for the Sabres, who got 22 saves from Ryan Miller and came from behind twice to force overtime.

Nikolai Kulemin and Phil Kessel scored for Toronto, which has lost six straight road games.

Buffalo's second home win over the Leafs was just its third win at home in 15 attempts and its sixth win overall.

The long-standing rivalry between the two teams helped drive a Sabres team that's struggled to find goals.

"We can see the guys getting a little fired up and it's about time," Miller said. "It's good. This kind of rivalry helps. It's always nice to beat them here because you feel like there's so many Leafs fans here, it's fun to send them home."

Toronto opened the scoring 2:12 into the first period when Kessel came down the left wing and put a snap shot over Miller's left pad.

Buffalo tied the score on the power play at 7:57 of the second period. With Reimer out of position, a falling Ville Leino used his backhand to find Moulson, who scored his 10th goal of the season and his second in as many games.

The Leafs took the lead back 2 1/2 minutes later after Brian Flynn gave the puck away behind the Sabres net. A pass from Trevor Smith deflected in front of the goal, where Kulemin shot it out of the air and past Miller.

Adam shot a Reimer rebound under the goalie's glove at 18:50 of the second and the teams finished the second period tied at 2.

"Ever since Ted (Nolan) got here, the guys are just building on each and every game," Adam said. "We feel a lot more confident as a team, as players, when we come to the rink every morning for practice. That's carrying over and we're playing a lot better."

The score was Adam's first NHL goal since April 5.

The third period was light on scoring chances until the 12:42 mark, when Reimer made consecutive left pad saves on Adam.

James van Riemsdyk then had a chance to end the game in regulation on a last-minute breakaway, but Matt D'Agostini caught the Leafs forward from behind and swiped the puck into the corner.

Van Riemsdyk was surprised there was no penalty on the play.

"Unless we're playing football, I don't know," he said, later adding, "Usually when you're in all alone and you get your legs taken out from under you, you expect something, especially when the calls were like they were, five or six to one."

The Leafs came into the game as the second-least penalized team in the league but picked up 10 penalty minutes on the night, while the Sabres only gave Toronto's efficient power play one opportunity.

"The breaks aren't going our way and that's when you've got to find ways to create more," Toronto coach Randy Carlyle said. "We had a power play where we didn't get much going in the third period and we gave up a power-play goal earlier in the game."

Leino and Tyler Myers each had two assists.

NOTES: Leafs LW Mason Raymond played in his 400th NHL game. ... D Brayden McNabb, C Mikhail Grigorenko and D Jamie McBain were scratches for Buffalo. ... Both teams play on the road Saturday, with Toronto visiting Montreal and Buffalo at New Jersey.

Leafs aren't ready for their closeup

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 30, 2013

Sabres center Luke Adam sets up in front of goalie James Reimer of the Leafs, worst in the league for shots on goal against.

The Toronto Maple Leafs are in enough of a fishbowl in the self-proclaimed center of the hockey universe. It's only going to get worse next week when the HBO cameras arrive to film their every move for "24/7," the acclaimed show that will chronicle the Leafs and Detroit Red Wings heading into the Jan. 1 Winter Classic.

The Leafs were supposed to be having a breakout season. Sure, the disappointment was harsh in the wake of that Game Seven choke in Boston last May. But that was just a beginning. Before the Bruins won the Stanley Cup in 2011, as the thinking went, they blew a 3-0 series lead to Philadelphia the previous spring.

You need to stub your collective toe before you stage a big march forward. Or so the Leafs said. The problem is they're not taking that step. They're stuck in the mud right now and those cameras might get an eyeful.

After a 10-4 October, the Leafs are now 4-5-3 in November after Friday's 3-2 overtime loss to the Sabres. When things don't go your way, officiating seems to get magnified too. The Leafs were furious there was no tripping call on Matt D'Agostini for his hellacious rush back to up-end James van Riemsdyk on a short-handed breakaway with 21 seconds left.

"Unless we're playing football, I don't know," Van Riemsdyk cracked when asked if he felt the play should have been a penalty. "Definitely frustrating."

Coach Randy Carlyle said he was OK there was no penalty shot called on the play but was equally baffled at no trip, even though replays showed D'Agostini got the puck first and a no-call was probably the right one.

"I thought it should have been a penalty for taking the player's knees out but they didn't make the call," Carlyle said.

The Leafs had given up 11 goals in their previous two games, a 6-0 home disaster against Columbus and Wednesday's 6-5 shootout loss at Pittsburgh. They blew a 4-1 lead in that game, just like that nightmare nearly seven months ago in Boston. But they tightened that up, to the delight of Toronto fans who were everywhere in the house Friday night.

Sabres fans clearly took advantage of platinum prices to fleece folks from north of the border and use the money for some Black Friday shopping. The Leaf fans were thus more dominant at a Buffalo home game than just about any time I've ever seen. Leafs fans take over the Sabres' building and the Bills take their game to Rogers Centre. Nice weekend, eh?

But no matter how many folks had the Blue and White jerseys on and how loud they were, you know they're concerned.

The Leafs were outshot, 17-0, in the third period Wednesday by the Penguins – their first shotless period since a 2000 game against the Sabres. For good measure, they didn't get a shot in overtime either. It was a baffling performance.

Canadian television showed a funny clip from the Leafs' practice here Thursday where Carlyle was channeling his inner Nancy Kerrigan with three straight howls of "Why? Why? Why?" at center Nazem Kadri. Who knows what HBO might catch him saying?

"I don't think you need rocket science to figure out that if you continue to give up five and six goals, you're not going to get many points," Carlyle said.

He seemed to get the response he wanted for the first 25 minutes Friday night. The second period was back to more of what the coach called "receiving the game" rather than dictating it, but the Leafs were pretty good again in the third.

They had 29 hits in the game and sacrificed themselves to block 26 shots. The effort was plainly there. Execution wasn't. Again.

That's two wins for the Sabres against the Leafs here in two weeks – and 13 in the last 15 meetings since 2008. Bizarre.

The Leafs' young players – think Kadri, and defensemen Jake Gardiner and Cody Franson – seem to have stagnated and not shown much improvement. Phil Kessel and captain Dion Phaneuf, who is plus-12, have been good. They need more help.

"You don't want to be too high or too low," Van Riemsdyk said. "We're in a decent position still, with a lot of games left. We have to keep trying to find ways to figure out what's going wrong."

The Leafs are in Montreal tonight. Then it's on to December, when the world will see everything about them.

They need a quick turnaround. Because we're about to watch every little detail. And it may not be pretty.

Special teams play role in Sabres victory

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

November 30, 2013

Special teams have been a special point of emphasis since Ted Nolan took over as coach of the Buffalo Sabres.

Friday night, the units started to come together. A power-play goal and a big penalty kill helped key the Sabres to their 3-2 overtime win over the Toronto Maple Leafs at First Niagara Center.

“That’s what makes the difference in hockey games,” Nolan said. “It’s the difference between winning some and losing some. Our special teams did a great job tonight.”

It started with a power play goal from Matt Moulson in the second period. And while the Sabres went just 1-for-4 with the man advantage, they did generate scoring chances. Working the puck in the Toronto zone, with leftover power play time to start overtime, Christian Ehrhoff notched the game-winner 10 seconds after a penalty to Paul Ranger expired.

“Special teams are huge in the NHL,” Moulson said. “It’s hard to get goals five-on-five. You have to take advantage when you have the power play. I thought we had a lot better power play today than we have in the last couple games. ... I thought we were competing for pucks. That’s the biggest thing. I think we can still do a better job of that but I thought we were competing to get back pucks after we lost them or after rebounds. Being hungry in front of the net. That’s how you get goals in this league.”

The flip side of that is being hungry to clear the puck on the penalty kill.

Toronto had just one power play all night when Henrik Tallinder was called for high sticking early in the third with the game tied, 2-2.

It was an opportunity for the Sabres to sigh with a hear-we-go-again mentality. That’s certainly been the prevailing attitude over the previous five games in which the Sabres have given up at least one power-play goal.

But this time the penalty kill cleared pucks and kept the Leafs from setting up shop in their zone. It did wonders for the Sabres’ confidence.

“The PK shutting the door and not giving them any momentum is a big deal,” said Sabres captain Steve Ott who was on the ice for half of the penalty kill. “What I think happened more than anything is killing momentum.”

“We’ve put a lot focus on it. It’s a big thing for guys who penalty kill. We want to be successful. There’s a lot of issues there. Guys put out there are usually heart-and-soul guys that want to block shots, want to do well on the penalty kill. ... bearing down, getting the clears, putting the extra work in and just sacrifice to get the kill.”

...

In his first game as a Buffalo Sabre, Matt D’Agostini made the key defensive play of the night.

With 20.4 seconds left in regulation, while the Sabres were on the power play, Toronto’s James van Riemsdyk found himself on a partial breakaway. But before he could get off a shot, D’Agostini swept the puck out from underneath him.

“I couldn’t believe I was last man back,” D’Agostini said. “I thought I just tried to get as much puck as I can. I think he tried to step through me, through my stick there. I think it was a good no-call.”

He was on the ice for Ehrhoff’s game-winning goal as part of the power play unit, he had three shots in 15:39 of ice time.

“I’m just trying to contribute in any way,” D’Agostini said. “Early on you don’t want to try to do anything special, just work hard, shoot the puck. I think I passed up a couple shots when I had opportunities but it felt good to get the first one under my belt.”

...

With Ryan Miller getting the start Friday night, Jhonas Enroth should get the nod tonight in New Jersey.

Nolan said earlier in the week that the goalies would rotate in the sixth back-to-back games for the team this season.

It will be the first start for Enroth since he gave up four goals on 22 shots in a 4-2 loss to the Maple Leafs in Toronto Nov. 18. That was the second game behind the bench for Nolan, who seemed ready to give most of the goaltending duty to Miller after that. Enroth is 1-5-1 and has appeared in eight games this season He has a 2.88 goals against average and .906 save percentage.

...

Scratched for the Sabres were defensemen Jamie McBain and Brayden McNabb along with forward Mikhail Grigorenko.

Sabres take down Maple Leafs, 3-2

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

November 29, 2013

The Leafs fans who invaded Buffalo were not only singing the blues, they were flinging them, too.

The Sabres were too busy celebrating to care.

The first Labatt can soared from the stands the moment Christian Ehrhoff scored the overtime winner Friday. It was the first of dozens tossed by irate Toronto backers, who littered the ice after Buffalo's 3-2 victory.

The Sabres ducked a few, caught one and kept on partying with a group hug and stick-raising salute to the Canadians who annexed First Niagara Center for a night.

"We know there's always going to be a rambunctious crowd coming down from Ontario to watch these games, so we wouldn't expect anything less," Sabres forward Drew Stafford said. "Maybe not beer cans and pop cans on a home-ice win, but we won. Nothing else matters."

While Leafs fans looked dumb, the Sabres played their smartest game of the season to snap a five-game losing streak.

"The last couple days the players are starting to get to know me better and I'm starting to get to know them," coach Ted Nolan said. "We're starting to understand one another. The last couple of games, we're starting to come. We're doing some good things. We're starting to finish our checks. Defensive zone, we're getting a lot better.

"We're just feeling a lot better about ourselves."

That tends to happen against the Leafs. One-third of the Sabres' six victories have come against their neighbors to the north. They are 13-1-1 in the last 15 meetings in Buffalo.

A long list of players contributed to the latest victory. Ehrhoff gets the top spot after slipping a shot through the pads of James Reimer only 38 seconds into overtime.

"I just got it through there, and I don't think the goalie saw it," said Ehrhoff, whose goal came just after Toronto's Paul Ranger left the penalty box for holding. "We really deserved that power play we got at the end. There were three or four situations where I thought we should get a call, and we finally did. We worked really hard for it, and it set us up for the goal."

Newcomer Matt D'Agostini had a front-row seat for the win, and he helped make sure the Sabres had a chance. Playing his first game since getting claimed off waivers Wednesday, the forward dived to stop James van Riemsdyk's breakaway with 20 seconds left in regulation.

D'Agostini followed up by screening Reimer on Ehrhoff's net-seeking shot.

"Not only did he make a great defensive play on that one situation, he was a net-front presence on the goal," Nolan said. "He didn't stand off and try to tip it. He was in a good position to screen, so that was a big play."

There were plenty of key plays for Buffalo. Matt Moulson scored on the power play to make it 1-1, giving him goals in two straight after an 11-game slump. Luke Adam scored his first goal in four games this season to pull Buffalo into a 2-2 tie late in the second.

"Last game I thought I should have had a couple goals," Adam said. "Even in the first period and early on in the second I missed a couple in front of the net. It was nice to finally get that one to go in."

Ryan Miller made 22 saves to up his record to 31-15-1 against Toronto. Ville Leino had two assists. Stafford attempted seven shots, registered four hits and worked the point on the power play.

The score sheet was littered with contributions, which was better than an ice surface littered with beer cans. The Sabres will try to anger another crowd tonight when they visit the New Jersey Devils.

"It was a great game," Nolan said. "I thought it was an entertaining game, and the result was what we wanted, so that was good."

Sabres, Devils meet after ending losing streaks

By Mike G. Morreale

NHL.com

November 29, 2013

SABRES (6-20-1) at DEVILS (10-11-5)

TV: MSG-B, MSG

Last 10: Buffalo 3-7-0; New Jersey 6-4-0

Season series: The first of three games. The New Jersey Devils won two of the three last season, which all required a shootout.

Big story: Each team is coming off a victory Friday. The Buffalo Sabres snapped a five-game losing streak with a 3-2 overtime win against the Toronto Maple Leafs, and the Devils ended a three-game losing streak with a 5-2 victory against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Christian Ehrhoff scored 38 seconds into overtime for the Sabres at First Niagara Center. The Devils scored four times in the third period to overcome a 2-1 deficit at PNC Arena, giving goalie Cory Schneider (16 saves) his second straight victory in his first start since Nov. 21.

"I liked our game right from the drop of the puck," Devils coach Peter DeBoer said. "I thought we had good energy, good legs. We created a lot of things. ... We found our game again in the third."

Team Scope:

Sabres: Forward Matt D'Agostini, claimed off waivers by the Sabres from the Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday, made his debut for the team Friday. The 27-year-old scored 21 goals for the St. Louis Blues in 2010-11 but has 12 goals in 93 games since. D'Agostini, who played on the second line with center Ville Leino and Sabres captain Steve Ott, had three shots on goal and a plus-1 rating in 15:39 of ice time.

"To get a guy like him, it's fortunate for us and we'll see if we can get his career back going," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "When you get a goal-scorer, you've got to put him in position to score some goals. Hopefully that will help."

The Sabres average an NHL-low 1.67 goals per game and are second to last with 25.5 shots per game. The Devils average the fewest shots (25.0).

Devils: Defenseman Anton Volchenkov returned to the lineup Friday after missing seven games with a leg muscle pull and finished with five blocked shots, five hits and a plus-2 rating in 19:11 of ice time. Jaromir Jagr's third-period goal

tied Steve Yzerman with 692 career goals for eighth place in NHL history. Jagr is two goals behind Mark Messier (694) for seventh place. Jagr, who had a goal and two assists, leads the Devils in goals (11), assists (11), points (22) and game-winners (three).

Who's hot: Matt Moulson has four goals and 11 points in 14 games since joining the Sabres via a trade from the New York Islanders on Oct. 27. ... Devils defenseman Andy Greene has points in four straight games (one goal, four assists) and two goals and nine points in the past 11 games.

Injury report: Buffalo forward Cody McCormick (undisclosed) could return Saturday. ... Devils forward Stephen Gionta (ankle) is on injured reserve, defenseman Adam Larsson (lower body) is questionable, and forward Ryane Clowe (head) and defenseman Bryce Salvador (foot) are doubtful.

Ehrhoff scores in OT to lift Sabres past Maple Leafs

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

November 29, 2013

BUFFALO -- Christian Ehrhoff scored 38 seconds into overtime to give the Buffalo Sabres a 3-2 victory against the Toronto Maple Leafs at First Niagara Center on Friday.

Ehrhoff's goal came just as a penalty to Toronto's Paul Ranger ended, and the shot from the point beat Maple Leafs goalie James Reimer through the five-hole. It was Ehrhoff's second goal of the season.

"It was definitely nice," Ehrhoff said. "It wasn't a big blast, it just found a little lane there and put it through [Carl] Gunnarsson's legs and Reimer didn't see it."

Ehrhoff was helped out by a screen in front by newest Sabres forward Matt D'Agostini. The Sabres claimed D'Agostini off waivers from the Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday.

"[Ranger] was coming out of the box behind [Ehrhoff] there," D'Agostini said. "So I just figured he'd try to get it on net. He did a good job just getting it through."

The win ended the Sabres' five-game losing streak.

"It's one of those things where we're trying, we're trying," Sabres forward Drew Stafford said. "We're competing. The effort's there. We just haven't been able to have a full 60-minute effort. I thought tonight we had a pretty solid night and also scored some goals. You're not going to win a lot of games 1-0."

The Sabres ended a streak of four straight games in which they scored one goal per game.

Ranger took a holding penalty with 1:32 left in the third period, giving the Sabres a power play at the end of regulation, but it was Toronto's James van Riemsdyk who had the best chance during it. With 20.4 seconds remaining, van Riemsdyk broke in on Sabres goalie Ryan Miller only to be taken out of the play by D'Agostini.

"Usually when you're in all alone and you get your legs taken out from under you, you expect something, especially when the calls have been what they were," van Riemsdyk said. "We can't use officiating as an excuse. We've got to find ways to be better."

Miller said, "Great effort by D'Agostini. He got back hard and forced the ref to make a decision. The ref decided he got the puck, and we haven't changed that rule where if you get a hold of that puck first they're probably not going to get a

tripping penalty. Great effort getting back and it helps us get to overtime. I thought it was a nice job."

The Sabres were 1-for-4 on the power play; the Maple Leafs went 0-for-1.

Phil Kessel put the Maple Leafs ahead 1-0 beating Miller on a quick 2-on-1 rush. It developed when Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers was caught out of position. That left Mike Weber alone to defend Kessel and van Riemsdyk. The goal was Kessel's 14th of the season.

"[Kessel] backed me up a little bit too far," Miller said. "I don't like giving up one there. After that, I thought the guys settled in."

Matt Moulson tied the game 1-1 on the power play with his 10th goal of the season at 7:57 of the second period. Moulson put away a loose puck from a shot by Ville Leino in front of the net with Reimer out of position.

Nikolai Kulemin put the Maple Leafs ahead with his second goal of the season at 10:23 of the second period. Trevor Smith set up the play when he floated a pass over the net out in front for Kulemin, who batted the puck midair past Miller to make it 2-1.

"I don't think he was trying to go over the net," Miller said. "I think he's just, 'I need this to go that way' and it just ended up being a little bit of an alley-oop. I had really no idea where it was, I just sensed people were coming towards me. That's the only reason I really turned."

Luke Adam's first goal of the season tied the game 2-2 with 1:10 to play in the second. He scored off a rebound of a Zemgus Girgensons shot that Reimer deflected right to him. Adam was playing in his fourth game of the season since being recalled by the Sabres on Nov. 20.

"It feels good, it's a relief," Adam said of scoring. "I think each and every game I've been playing since I got here I've been building a little bit at a time and getting more and more confident. I think I should've had a couple more tonight, but I won't complain with one."

Miller made 22 saves for the Sabres. Reimer finished with 26.

"That was a great game, I thought we worked really hard for it," Miller said. "It was good to see, having to battle back there in the second period; I thought that was one of our strongest periods of the entire season. I think overall it was one of our best games."

The loss was the third in a row for the Maple Leafs.

"The breaks aren't going our way," Maple Leafs coach Randy Carlyle said. "That's when you've got to find ways to create more."

The Sabres play at the New Jersey Devils on Saturday night. The Maple Leafs head to Bell Centre to face the Montreal Canadiens.

Sabres 3, Maple Leafs 2 (OT)

By Mark Ludwiczak
The Sports Xchange
November 29, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Defenseman Christian Ehrhoff scored 38 seconds into overtime to lead the Buffalo Sabres to a 3-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday night.

Ehrhoff's blast from the blue line found its way through traffic and beat Toronto goaltender James Reimer between his legs.

The goal came as Leafs defenseman Paul Ranger exited the penalty box for a holding penalty.

Left winger Matt Moulson and center Luke Adam also scored for the Sabres (6-20-1), who ended a five-game losing streak. Goalie Ryan Miller made 22 saves.

Left winger Nikolai Kulemin and right winger Phil Kessel scored for the Maple Leafs (14-10-2). Reimer made 26 saves.

The Sabres came back from one-goal deficits on two separate occasions in the game.

Adam evened the score at 2 with 1:10 remaining in the second period on his first goal for Buffalo this season. Adam took advantage of a juicy rebound from Reimer and buried a shot from the right circle. It was Adam's first goal since April 5 and only his second since Dec. 17, 2011.

Kulemin made it 2-1 on a highlight-reel goal just past the halfway point of the second period. After Leafs center Jerred Smithson and Sabres center Brian Flynn battled for the puck behind the Buffalo net, Smithson ended up sprawled on the ice and flipped the puck over the net to Kulemin, who swatted it out of the air and past Miller at 10:23.

Buffalo tied it at 1 eight minutes into the second period on Moulson's first goal in 12 games. With Reimer down and out to the side of the crease, Moulson put home a rebound following a pretty feed from left winger Ville Leino.

Kessel opened up the scoring 2:12 into the game with a blistering wrist shot.

Kessel skated untouched through the left circle before beating Miller high to the short side. It was Kessel's 14th goal of the season.

There was a scary moment 12 minutes into the second period when Leafs defenseman Cody Franson boarded Sabres right winger Drew Stafford. Stafford returned later in the period.

NOTES: RW Matt D'Agostini played in his first game for Buffalo. D'Agostini joined the Sabres off waivers from Pittsburgh on Wednesday. ... C Peter Holland, LW Frazer McLaren and D Mogan Rielly were scratched for the Maple Leafs. Toronto was also without LW Joffrey Lupul (groin) and C Dave Bolland (ankle). ... D Jamie McBain, C Mihail Grigorenko and D Brayden McNabb were scratched for the Sabres. ... This was the third of five meetings between the Sabres and Maple Leafs this season and the 191st game all-time between the two teams. Heading into Friday night's game, the Sabres led the series with a 105-62-23 record.

Is Buffalo the worst team in the NHL's three-point game era?

By James Mirtle
Toronto Globe and Mail
November 29, 2013

They are in dead last in the NHL by a wide margin, with just 11 points in 26 games.

They have won just one of their last 14 games in regulation. Three of their five wins have come in the coin flip that is the shootout.

Yes, the Buffalo Sabres, deep into the 2013-14 season, are on pace for just 35 points in a league where it takes more than 90 to usually make the playoffs.

That is about as bad as we've ever seen in recent history in the NHL.

Since the 2004-05 lockout, which brought in the last collective bargaining agreement and a salary cap, the worst a team has ever finished in those eight seasons is the 2006-07 Philadelphia Flyers.

They won only 22 of 82 games, with a 22-48-12 record that gave them 56 points.

Only two other teams have ever finished with fewer than 60 points in a full season: The 2005-06 Pittsburgh Penguins (58 points) and St. Louis Blues (57 points).

So the Sabres are tracking to be the weakest team we've seen in a while.

Historically speaking, it's very unlikely they challenge the worst seasons of all time. The 1974-75 Washington Capitals hold the record for fewest points in a full season with just 21 in 80 games – they won only eight as an expansion team – and three other teams have had 30 or less.

Those records, however, were all set before there were all these three-point games. With 15 per cent of NHL games now going to a shootout, there are more points available than at any other time in league history, making a 35-point season by the Sabres probably right up there in the top five if adjusted for era.

Since the NHL started awarding points for overtime losses beginning in 1999-2000, by far the worst a team has ever finished is the expansion Atlanta Thrashers in the first season with three-point games, when they managed only 39 points.

That team was outscored 313-170 on the season and its save percentage was an unthinkably bad .877.

So far this year, Buffalo has had competent goaltending from Ryan Miller but is on pace to score just 132 goals, which would beat the record of 133 set in 1953-54 by the Chicago Blackhawks.

And that was in a 70-game season.

But the Sabres underlying statistics are also just as ugly. They have the worst Fenwick Close (possession rating) of any team since the number has been kept at 38.5 per cent, and while their PDO suggests they may be a little unlucky, it's also possible their shooters are just that bad.

They've done it with a roster making more than \$57-million, with boat anchor contracts like Ville Leino's six-year, \$27-million one on the books until 2017.

Cody Hodgson is the only Sabre with more than four goals this season, after 26 games. No Buffalo player has a positive plus-minus, and some of the high-priced help like Christian Ehrhoff is minus-10 this month alone.

The Sabres highest scoring player at even strength, meanwhile, has just nine points, which is 137th in the league.

Whoever Pat LaFontaine hires as this team's next GM, in other words, has their work cut out for them.

But they should have some pretty good draft picks to work with.

Sabres beat Leafs in overtime, send legions of Toronto fans home unhappy

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 30, 2013

BUFFALO – It wasn't a normal postgame NHL salute. Then again, the Sabres' exciting 3-2 overtime triumph against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday wasn't a normal game.

Leafs fans, who normally comprise at least half the raucous crowd when Toronto visits the First Niagara Center, outnumbered Sabres fans perhaps three to one in the capacity crowd of 19,070.

They ruled the building, chanting loudly all night.

So when the Sabres skated to center ice and raised their sticks after Christian Ehrhoff's winner 38 seconds into overtime, some of the Leafs' faithful saluted the players.

"Look what happened after the game was over," winger Drew Stafford said following the Sabres' first win in six games. "After a home win you get beer cans thrown at you. We'll take it. Everyone's happy in here. We got to remember how this feels."

Incredibly, the Leafs have won 10 of the 47 games they've played here since the building opened in 1996-97.

"It is always really fun games to play in," Ehrhoff said. "The fans that come down sometimes outnumber the Sabres fans. Still, it brings out the best in our fans, too, and they are up for the challenge, too."

The Sabres, who hadn't won since beating the Leafs 3-1 here Nov. 15, interim coach Ted Nolan's debut, had been building toward just their sixth triumph all season.

Despite the string of losses, the Sabres have performed noticeably better in many facets of the game under Nolan.

"It's one of those things where we're trying, we're trying. We're competing," Stafford said. "The effort's there. We just haven't been able to have a full 60-minute effort. I thought tonight we had a pretty solid night and also scored some goals. You're not going to win a lot of games 1-0."

Ehrhoff's goal – his second this season and first past a goalie – came seconds after Paul Ranger's holding penalty expired.

Instead of blasting a shot, Ehrhoff simply wristed the puck through traffic from the point.

“I knew there guy was coming out of the box,” the defenseman said. “I had a little room between (Carl) Gunnarsson’s leg, and he was in the shooting lane. I just tried to get it through there. I don’t think (James) Reimer saw it.”

Winger Matt D’Agostini, a waiver acquisition who made his Sabres debut Friday, was in front screening the goalie.

“The guy was coming out of the box behind Hoffer there,” D’Agostini said. “So I just figured he’d try to get it on net. He did a good job just getting it through.”

D’Agostini made perhaps the play of the game in the waning seconds of regulation, stymying James van Riemsdyk’s short-handed breakaway by racing back, diving and hitting the puck before he hit van Riemsdyk, who fell down.

Leafs fans howled for a penalty.

“I just tried to get as much puck as I can,” D’Agostini said. “I think he tried to step through me through my stick there. I think it was a good no-call.”

Nolan added: “Not only did he make a great defensive play, he was a net-front presence on the goal.”

D’Agostini skated 15:39, mostly on the right wing beside center Ville Leino and captain Steve Ott.

“I haven’t played that much in a long time,” D’Agostini said.

Early on, it looked like it could be a long night for the Sabres.

Phil Kessel opened the scoring 2:12 into the contest, beating Ryan Miller on a two-on-one break.

But Matt Moulson’s power-play goal from the slot – he’s scored in the last two contests after an 11-game drought – tied it 7:57 into the second period.

Nikolai Kulemin put the Leafs up 2-1 at 10:23. The Russian has two goals in 14 games this season, both against the Sabres.

“I thought probably the first 10 minutes of the game they came really hard and they had more of the game,” Ehrhoff said. “But then we really picked it up. Second and third period I thought we played really well. We stayed out of the box, which killed us in some of the previous games.”

Then Luke Adam converted Zemgus Girgensons' rebound from the left circle at 18:50, his first goal in four games this season and just his second in his last 28 NHL contests dating back to 2011-12.

The Sabres play the Devils tonight in New Jersey. Backup goalie Jhonas Enroth is expected to start.

Sabres' Mikhail Grigorenko and Brayden McNabb should return tonight after healthy scratches

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 30, 2013

BUFFALO – These aren't regular healthy scratches. Interim coach Ted Nolan, who's been charged with evaluating and developing the Sabres' young lineup, wants some of his prospects to sit occasionally.

So he scratched center Mikhail Grigorenko and defenseman Brayden McNabb for Friday's 3-2 overtime win against Toronto Maple Leafs inside the First Niagara Center.

Both should return tonight in New Jersey against the Devils, however.

"I'm not unhappy," Nolan said Friday morning about Grigorenko's play. "It's just when you develop a young guy like that, once in a while it's better to sit back and see. He's going to sit back and watch tonight. He'll be back in the lineup."

What about McNabb?

"Same thing," Nolan said. "Last time I thought maybe he jumped in a little too much, quicker than he should've. He's a fine young prospect. He's going to be fine. Both those guys will probably be back in."

Meanwhile, defenseman Mike Weber returned from a two-game absence. Jamie McBain sat his third straight contest.

Carrying eight defenders can be "tough," Nolan said.

"But we're in a competitive sport, and the guys ... they got to try to keep their positions," he said. "They slip off a little bit, somebody's right there to take your job. There's nothing like a good old competition."

With Grigorenko out after three straight appearances, Tyler Ennis shifted from wing back to center between Luke Adam and Zemgus Girgensons.

"He's a gifted little guy that needs to have some room to skate with the puck and do some things with it," Nolan said about Ennis. "We don't need him battling along the boards."

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The numbers, of course, are still bad. Sabres center Ville Leino has zero goals, four assists and just 10 shots 15 games into his season.

That's it.

But Leino, having played 20:19 and 19:23 in two games earlier this week, is beginning to earn Nolan's trust.

Leino assisted on Matt Moulson's power-play goal Friday, his third helper in the last five games.

In Wednesday's 3-1 loss to Montreal, Leino had Canadiens goalie Carey Price beaten, but the puck trickled through and hit the post. It would've been his first goal since March 30.

"It's obviously frustrating when you're not scoring," Leino said Friday morning. "But I'm happy with getting chances. I'm happy with making plays. There's a lot of good things. Results are important. Producing is important. But if you keep playing like that and getting chances like that, start circling posts, you're going to get some goals at one point. Better soon than later."

Nolan recently switched Leino from wing back to center, a position he played early in 2011-12.

"It's been pretty good so far," Leino said. "I've been getting a lot of pucks, making a lot of plays. I'm feeling pretty comfortable. Can't complain. The only thing I can complain is not getting it in, but it's my own fault."

Leino pivoted newcomer Matt D'Agostini and captain Steve Ott on Friday.

Notes: Nolan said Cody McCormick (upper body, three games) could return Saturday. The Sabres would have to make a roster move to activate the forward from injured reserve. ... Friday was the Leafs' second and final visit here this season.

HAMILTON: Sabres new winger works well on the walls

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 29, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres didn't look very good in the first 20 minutes against Toronto, but I thought their new player did.

Matt D'Agostini played right wing with Ville Leino and Steve Ott. On his first shift, D'Agostini caused a turnover at the Toronto blue line, but couldn't get the puck in. There were a couple of times where D'Agostini went to work along the wall and controlled battles. He got one puck to the paint, but Ott couldn't get to it.

In the first 20 minutes he had seven shifts for 4:45. He played on the number two power play and had one shot.

The Sabres started to get control of the game in the second half of the second period. The biggest thing I noticed from D'Agostini in that period was a great effort on a back check that turned a 3-on-2 into a 3-on-3.

After 40 minutes he had 15 shifts for 10:37 with two shots total.

It was nice to see Luke Adam get on the board. He converted a Zengus Girgensons rebound for his first goal in the four games he's played.

Buffalo needs to watch out in the third. Toronto has not had a power play through 40 minutes and we all know the Sabres knack for taking bad penalties.

Coming down the right wing, D'Agostini picked up Buffalo's first shot of the third period, over eight minutes in. Late in regulation, with Buffalo on the power play, D'Agostini dove to knock the puck away from James van Riemsdyk on a shorthanded breakaway. van Riemsdyk crashed into the Buffalo net and he, along with the Leafs fans at First Niagara Center, wanted a call on D'Agostini, but the new Sabre definitely made contact with the puck before van Riemsdyk tumbled to the ice.

"I couldn't believe I was the last man back," D'Agostini said. "I just tried to get as much puck as I could. I think [van Riemsdyk] tried to step through my stick there, so I think it was a good no call."

"Great effort by D'Agostini," said Ryan Miller. "He got back hard and he had to have the ref make a decision. The ref decided he got the puck."

D'Agostini also contributed on Christian Ehrhoff's overtime winner, blocking James Reimer's view of the Buffalo defenseman. Ehrhoff was able to work the puck through traffic and into the net for the 3-2 Buffalo win.

"[D'Agostini] was a front presence on the goal," Ted Nolan said. "He didn't stand off and try to tip it, he was in a good position to screen, so that was a big play."

Overall, D'Agostini finished with 15:39 of playing time on 22 shifts with three shots on net.

"Players that come from St. Louis and Pittsburghs, they know how to play the game right," said Nolan. [D'Agostini] did it tonight."

Ehrhoff gives Sabres 3-2 OT win over Toronto

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

November 29, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Welcome once again high atop ice level at First Niagara Center, into the Ted Darling Memorial Press Box. We have moved back down to our normal location after Wednesday night's affair, and await the Buffalo Sabres post-Thanksgiving showdown with the Toronto Maple Leafs. We hope you all had a very nice holiday, and that it continues into the weekend.

Matt D'Agostini is ready to join the blue and gold on the ice less than 48 hours after being claimed off of waivers from the Pittsburgh Penguins. Tyler Ennis has gone back to center, while D'Agostini occupies his former spot on the wing with Steve Ott and Ville Leino. Ryan Miller is expected back between the pipes against "Optimus Reim" James Reimer. For more from the morning skate, click here for Paul Hamilton's pregame primer.

Be sure to add your comments in the thread below. I will toss in my two cents in between the scoring plays tonight as well. And be sure to give myself and Brian Koziol a follow on Twitter for more: @PatWGR and @BrianWGR.

First Period

17:38 - MAPLE LEAFS GOAL. Mike Weber played the 2-on-1 play perfectly skating back into his own zone, but Phil Kessel beat Ryan Miller with a shot just under his right arm and the visitors take a one-goal lead. You would have thought Toronto was the home team with the reaction from the crowd. 1-0 TOR.

14:17 - It has been pointed out by many of my colleagues in the press box that there are far more Leafs fans here tonight than Sabres fans. I have been to almost every one of these games in Buffalo the last seven years, and this is by far the most blue and white I have seen, and heard, in this building.

7:52 - Shots on goal are 5-3 in favor of Toronto, but I think they have carried the play much more than that. The Leafs could have had two or three goals right after Kessel's tally less than three minutes into the game. They have been dominant early.

4:28 - We have been penalty free to this point, and the game has had very good flow to it. I have liked the energy on and off the ice tonight.

2:51 - Matt D'Agostini is getting a chance to play. He is on the power play with Steve Ott and Ville Leino.

End of Period

Goal Summary

BUF: none

TOR: 2:12 - Phil Kessel (14) (Tyler Bozak, Jake Gardiner)

Penalty Summary

BUF: none

TOR: 16:01 - James van Riemsdyk (2 min., hooking)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 7, TOR - 9

Second Period

16:13 - There have been just three shots total through the first few minutes of the period, but man have I really liked the end to end play from both sides tonight. The fans are into the game, and it appears as if they players are feeding off of that.

13:52 - As Paul Hamilton just commented to me, Tyler Ennis just did his best Derek Roy impression to draw a penalty on Toronto. Paul Ranger had a hold of the forward's stick, but did not have enough leverage on it to force him to the ice.

12:03 - SABRES GOAL. That was a real hard working shift by the Sabres power play unit that directly led to the score. Matt Moulson is able to score on a rebound chance with James Reimer out of the net. Credit Ville Leino and Tyler Myers with the assists on the goal as well. 1-1 tie.

9:37 - MAPLE LEAFS GOAL. Much like their counterparts, the Sabres could have added another goal right after Moulson's tally. Instead, Toronto weathers the storm and is able to beat Miller with a fluky one-time shot by Nikolai Kulemin. 2-1 TOR.

7:37 - In case you were wondering; yes Nikolai Kulemin has two goals all year, and yes they both were scored against the Sabres.

7:18 - How Cody Franson just gets two minutes for boarding Drew Stafford in the Toronto zone is beyond me. And to add to it, the closer of the two referees did not signal the penalty. This league sometimes.

3:16 - We have not seen Stafford on the bench, or on the ice since he went heard first into the boards. He is still in the locker room.

2:34 - Just as I write that, Stafford is back on the Sabres bench. He must have been sent to the quiet room for evaluation and passed. Just my guess.

1:10 - SABRES GOAL. Luke Adam picks up the game-tying goal as he buries a rebound chance past a sprawling James Reimer. The net minder would definitely want that one back, and credit Adam for burying an easy chance. 2-2 tie.

End of Period

Goal Summary

BUF: 7:57- Matt Moulson (10) PPG (Ville Leino, Tyler Myers). 18:50 - Luke Adam (1) (Zemgus Girgensons, Christian Ehrhoff).

TOR: 10:23 - Nikolai Kulemin (2) (Trevor Smith)

Penalty Summary

BUF: 12:28 - Matt Moulson (2 min., roughing)

TOR: 6:08 - Paul Ranger (2 min., holding). 12:28 - Cody Franson (2 min., roughing). 12:28 - Cody Franson (2 min., boarding).

Shots on Goal

BUF - 11 (18), TOR - 5 (14)

Third Period

18:31 - Henrik Tallinder is in the box for high sticking. We will see if the blue and gold can kill off the minor, or if this PK will yield another go-ahead goal for Toronto.

14:16 - Buffalo killed off Tallinder's penalty and now have all of the momentum in their favor. They have hemmed Toronto in their own zone for the last minute or so.

12:56 - Ted Nolan has called his timeout.

10:47 - We are seeing a different Luke Adam tonight. First he scored a goal, not he snuck around the back side of the net and stole the puck away from Reimer. It created a scoring chance for Buffalo. Will need to see more of that out of the young forward in the future as well.

6:37 - How many times are the Sabres going to shoot wide or over top of the net tonight?! Yes, it is a pattern that crops up almost every game but seems like it has happened more tonight than regularly.

3:52 - This has not been a banner night for Reimer. He has been up to the task for 24 of the 26 Sabres shots, but none have looked easy.

2:02 - This game has overtime written all over it.

1:01 - Sixty one seconds separate us from an extra five minutes, but Paul Ranger is still in the box for the Leafs.

End of Period

Goal Summary

BUF: none

TOR: none

Penalty Summary

BUF: 1:09 - Henrik Tallinder (2 min., high sticking)

TOR: 18:28 - Paul Ranger (2 min., holding)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 9 (27), TOR - 10 (24)

Overtime

4:22 - SABRES GOAL. Christian Ehrhoff did not shoot the puck too early from the point. Instead, he waited until the time was right and slid a shot along the ice to beat James Reimer and the Toronto Maple Leafs for the game-winning goal. 3-2 BUF.

End of Game

Buffalo 3, Toronto FINAL/Overtime

Goal Summary

BUF: 0:38 - Christian Ehrhoff (2) (Tyler Myers, Ville Leino)

TOR: none

Final Thoughts

I know the number of Leafs fans outweighed how many Sabres fans were here tonight, but there was a great energy in the building that made this game so entertaining. Drew Stafford was physical tonight, so was Matt Moulson at times. If the blue and gold put forth more efforts like this they will be so fun to watch. However, there is no time to rest on this victory. The team is back at it on Saturday night in New Jersey. The Sabres and Devils drop the puck at 7 o'clock on the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network - WGR Sports Radio 550. Pregame coverage with Brian Koziol starts at 6 p.m.

Sabres D'Agostini wants to get his game back

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 29, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Matt D'Agostini will make his Buffalo Sabres debut against the Leafs. He will take over right wing from Tyler Ennis playing with Ville Leino and Steve Ott. Ennis will slide into Mikhail Grigorenko's spot who's scratched. Mike Weber is also going in for Brayden McNabb.

The Penguins had waived D'Agostini with the intent of sending to the minors. He of course is glad he avoided that, "I'm very excited, the thought of someone wanting you. It's just another new start for me and I want to get off to a good one."

He only played eight games in Pittsburgh and had one assist. D'Agostini said a lot went into him not doing well there, "Things didn't go my way. It was a tough start, I had injuries to start the year, probably didn't make the best of my opportunity when I got back so, hoping to get back to my game and prove to the Sabres that I can be a good player in this league."

Toronto has one win in four games giving up 17 goals in the process.

In the last game against Pittsburgh, Jonathan Bernier gave up five goals on 48 shots. The game before that James Reimer let in six on 21 shots in 51 minutes of work.

Phil Kessel has goals in just two on his last nine games. He's gone 12 games without an assist.

The one thing the Leafs having going for them that they didn't have last time they were here is Tyler Bozak and Nazem Kadri are back. Bozak has a goal and an assist in the two games since returning from injury. Kadri has two goals and an assist in four games since returning from suspension.

James van Riemsdyk had goals in just one of 10 games until netting two at Pittsburgh on Wednesday. The only other goals he had scored before that during the 10 games were two in Toronto when the Leafs beat the Sabres.

The teams split the home and home series a few weeks ago. Buffalo did get 62 shots in the two games and scored five goals. On the other hand they gave up 55 shots in two games which is fewer than normal.

Ryan Miller gets the start against the Leafs which means Jhonas Enroth gets the start Saturday in New Jersey. Miller is 30-15-1 against Toronto with a 2.45 goals against and .922 save percentage.

Ted Nolan's only win this time coaching the Sabres was his first game here against Toronto. Since then the team's lost five straight being outscored 18-6.

Sabres hoping to follow recent rebuild history

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

November 29, 2013

I'll bet you're wondering how this whole rebuild thing is going to work out for the Buffalo Sabres? Will all this suffering or as the new regime calls it, "patience", be worth it? Will it result in the Sabres winning the first Stanley Cup in franchise history?

I have no idea but recent history might make you feel better about the future. The last four Cup winners all fell to the bottom of the NHL for multiple seasons before rising to the top.

The Chicago Blackhawks won the Cup last year and back in 2010 but prior to that it was sad to see just how far the once proud, original six franchise had fallen. When the Blackhawks missed the playoffs back in 1998, it ended a streak of 28 straight years with a post season appearance. It also kicked off a stretch where the Hawks made the playoffs just once in 10 years.

In 2004, Chicago bottomed out with 59 points, the second worst point total in the league. In 2006 they finished with 65 points and 28th out of 30 teams but in that year's draft, Chicago selected Jonathan Toews with the 3rd overall pick. In 2007 the Hawks ended up with 71 points leaving them 26th but were able to grab South Buffalo's Patrick Kane with the top choice in the draft. Three years later the Hawks were skating around the ice in Philadelphia with Lord Stanley's Cup.

The Los Angeles Kings won the Cup in 2012 but went through their own extended suffering. LA missed the playoffs for six straight years from 2003 through 2009. They had back to back 40 plus loss seasons in 2007 and 2008, finishing 28th and then 29th in the NHL. LA moved up to 26th overall in 2009.

They had drafted Dustin Brown in the first round in 2003 and Anze Kopitar in round one in 2005. Jonathan Quick was a third round selection in 2005 and Drew Doughty was taken second overall in 2008. The team was built through the draft but the final pieces to the puzzle came via big trades that brought Mike Richards and Jeff Carter out west.

For the Boston Bruins, who won the Cup in 2011 and lost in the Finals last year, the down time wasn't as long. It was really only two years. The Bruins were 26th in the league in 2006 and 23rd in 2007 but made the playoffs the next three years before winning the Cup. They built through the draft but not necessarily with high picks. David Krejci, Patrice Bergeron and Milan Lucic were all second rounders and Brad Marchand was a third round pick. The top part of the draft addition was Tyler Seguin, who Boston grabbed with the number two choice in 2011.

The shining example of bottoming out and using the upper reaches of the draft to bring a franchise back to life is the Pittsburgh Penguins. They missed the playoffs from 2002 through 2006 and finished 26th, 29th, 30th and 29th. But the Penguins were rewarded for all of that misery. They used the first overall pick in the 2003 draft to take Marc-Andre Fleury and in 2005, Sydney Crosby. In 2004 and 2006, the Penguins had the number two overall slot and grabbed Evgeni Malkin and Jordan Staal respectively. They were back in the playoffs in 2007, lost in the finals in 08 and won the Cup in 09.

SABRES WIN ON EHRHOFF'S OVERTIME TALLY

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 30, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres put together one of their best 60-minute efforts of the season against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday. However, they needed to sustain it for a bit longer in order to earn two points against their Atlantic Division rival.

Defenseman Christian Ehrhoff's wrist shot from the point 38 seconds into overtime gave Buffalo a 3-2 victory at First Niagara Center.

Matt D'Agostini, who was claimed off waivers by the Sabres on Tuesday, was screening Maple Leafs goaltender James Reimer, when Ehrhoff's shot went in five-hole.

"I saw somebody was there and I had a little room to shoot through [Maple Leafs defenseman Carl] Gunnarsson's legs and just got it through there," Ehrhoff said. "I don't think the goalie saw it."

Actually, he had less room than he thought. Ehrhoff's shot went through Gunnarsson's skate in the space between Gunnarsson's boot and skate blade on its way to – and past – Reimer. The goal came just as a Buffalo power play had expired.

"I think that's his first wrist shot of the year, so that was pretty good. Maybe he's got to shoot like that more often. He's got a pretty good snap shot," Sabres forward Matt Moulson joked.

Moulson also scored for the Sabres. He now has goals in back-to-back contests. Ryan Miller made 22 saves in the winning effort.

Luke Adam recorded his first goal of the season to tie the game 2-2. He's had numerous opportunities to score the past few games and was involved in several scoring chances against Toronto.

"It feels good. It's a relief," he said. "I think each and every game I've been playing since I got here, I've building a little at a time and getting more and more confident. I think I should have had a couple more tonight but I won't complain with one."

Adam was tied for the most goals in the American Hockey League when was called up on Nov. 19 from the Rochester Americans. In the short time he's been back with the team, he's noticed a difference in the team's demeanor, particularly under interim coach Ted Nolan.

Nolan was named interim coach on Nov. 13 and many players, including Adam, have said they feel like the confidence in the room has been growing since he took over. Nolan's first win this season was at First Niagara Center against the Maple Leafs on Nov. 15.

"I think as a team, we're getting more and more confident each and every game," he said. "Ever since Ted got here, I think the guys are just building on each and every game and we feel a lot more confident as a team, as players. When we come to the rink in the morning for practice, when we come for the game, that's carrying over. I think we're playing a lot better."

Nolan attributed some of that to the fact that he and the players are building relationships. Getting on the same page has been an important piece to their steady improvement.

"[In the] last couple days, players are starting to get to me a lot better, I'm starting to get to know them and the last two or three days of practice, I felt like we're really starting to understand one another," he said.

Phil Kessel and Nikolai Kulemin scored for Toronto. Reimer stopped 26 shots.

With the victory, Buffalo improves to 13-1-1 in their past 15 home games against the Maple Leafs

One key for the Sabres against Toronto was staying out of the penalty box. Late penalties in close games have been detrimental to the team lately and, most recently, it cost them an opportunity to stage a comeback against Montreal on Wednesday. But in the game with the Maple Leafs, Buffalo found themselves shorthanded only once in the game.

"It was a total team effort by us, from the first to the last guy, everybody did their job tonight," Ehrhoff said. "It was a hard fought victory for us and I'm glad we won it."

Buffalo was able to tie the game twice.

The visitors opened the scoring. Kessel scored on a 2-on-1 with James van Riemsdyk 2:12 into the game. Skating down the left wing, Kessel roofed a shot over Miller's blocker.

Moulson's tying tally with at 7:57 of the second period came with 11 seconds remaining on a Sabres power play. Ville Leino stretched to shovel a rebound from a Tyler Myers shot into the slot where Moulson finished the play into an empty net.

Toronto regained the lead 2:20 later. Down on the ice behind the net, Trevor Smith flipped a puck up that ended up in front of the goal. Kulemin was there to cash it in to make it 2-1.

Buffalo tied it up late in the second period. Adam won a faceoff to Reimer's right and then moved over to the right side of the net. Zemgus Girgensons threw a shot on net and Adam put home the rebound off Reimer's pads with 1:10 remaining in the period.

"I was kind of in a lucky spot at the right time and able to get it off," Adam said. "I thought their goalie played really well tonight and made some other big saves on me. It was nice to finally get that one to go in."

D'Agostini was involved in two key plays for Buffalo late in the game.

With 20.4 seconds remaining in regulation, van Riemsdyk skated in alone shorthanded on Miller. D'Agostini was the first one on the backcheck and laid out to knock the puck away to eliminate the scoring chance. Many Maple Leafs fans in attendance expected a penalty to be called on the play.

"I couldn't believe I was the last man back and I thought I just tried to get as much puck as I can," D'Agostini said. "I think he tried to step through me, through my stick there so I think it was a good no-call."

Then, he was in front of the net, screening Reimer on the overtime winner.

"If you look at the goal, D'Agostini, not only did he make a great defensive play on that one situation, but he was a great net-front presence on the goal," Nolan said. "He didn't stand off, try to tip it, he was in a good position to screen so that was a big play."

The Sabres are back in action Saturday night against the New Jersey Devils at Prudential Center at 7 p.m.

D'AGOSTINI SET TO MAKE SABRES DEBUT

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 29, 2013

They say familiarity breeds contempt. That'll be put to the test Friday night when the Buffalo Sabres and Toronto Maple Leafs face each other for the third time in two weeks.

Matt D'Agostini will make his debut with the Buffalo Sabres on Friday when they host the Toronto Maple Leafs at 7:30 p.m. at First Niagara Center. He was claimed off waivers on Tuesday and will skate on the team's second line with center Ville Leino and captain Steve Ott. He knows all about rivalries with the Maple Leafs having started his career the Montreal Canadiens.

"Being an Ontario boy, it's always nice to play and beat the Leafs," D'Agostini said after the morning skate at First Niagara Center.

Faceoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

The Sabres have had problems scoring goals this season and have just one goal in each of their past four games.

"There are guys who can score, but nobody's scoring right now and it's going to have to start sooner or later," Leino said. "But we're playing better, we're getting more chances so hopefully we'll get a couple good wins, a couple good goals and there's no better place than starting tonight."

Buffalo hopes that the addition of D'Agostini will help ease those scoring woes. He scored 21 goals in 2010-11 with St. Louis and his new linemates will look to utilize his shot.

"He's a big time shooter. He's scored over 20 in this league already, so getting him the puck's going to be key," Ott said. "I'm sure he's going to want to prove a lot of his game, obviously, getting picked up and getting a fresh chance on a new team. He wants to bring it."

D'Agostini knows Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan as both are from Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. and he's gotten acquainted with his teammates fairly quickly as well.

"Teddy's a great guy, really easy to talk to," he said. "Just from getting the vibe from around the room here, a lot of the boys really appreciate what he's brought to the team."

Buffalo is also looking to improve their penalty kill. They've allowed at least one goal while shorthanded in each of their past five games. They gave up two power-play goals against the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday.

"We had a long meeting about that today. Special teams win and lose you games now, especially the last few years in this league and that's what's happening again," Ott said. "Our P.K. has been dismal in the last little while, two against last game. We have to shore

up a lot of things, clears are very important. A lot of them, if you don't clear that puck the first or second time, it's coming back in your net and that's kind of what's happened in the last little while."

Nolan said that when it comes to killing penalties, the easiest thing to do is committing to staying out of the box.

"Don't take bad penalties. We have a lot of work to do in that area," he said. "You don't mind killing off the real good penalties. Once in awhile, the ones we have been taking are not very good. We just have to get better in the shot lanes."

Mikhail Grigorenko, Jamie McBain and Brayden McNabb will be healthy scratches for Buffalo. Nolan said that Grigorenko and McNabb will likely be back in the lineup Saturday night in New Jersey.

Tyler Ennis will move to center, taking Grigorenko's place between Luke Adam and Zemgus Girgensons on the third line.

"I think he's a gifted little guy that needs to have some room to skate with the puck and do some things with it," Nolan said. "We don't need him battling along the boards so we'll put him in the middle."

Center Cody McCormick, who is on injured reserve with an upper-body injury, won't be ready to play Toronto, but may be available against the Devils on Saturday, according to Nolan.

Ryan Miller was the first goaltender off the ice at practice and is expected to start in goal. Nolan said Jhonas Enroth would play this weekend as well, so he'll likely start against New Jersey.

26 Matt Moulson – 19 Cody Hodgson – 21 Drew Stafford
9 Steve Ott – 23 Ville Leino – 27 Matt D'Agostini
72 Luke Adam – 63 Tyler Ennis – 28 Zemgus Girgensons
32 John Scott – 65 Brian Flynn – 82 Marcus Foligno

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 52 Alexander Sulzer
20 Henrik Tallinder – 57 Tyler Myers
6 Mike Weber – 3 Mark Pysyk

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth

Scratched: 4 Jamie McBain, 25 Mikhail Grigorenko, 44 Brayden McNabb
Injured Reserve: 8 Cody McCormick

Maple Leafs drop OT decision against Sabres

By Rob Longley

Toronto Sun

November 29, 2013

BUFFALO - If the Maple Leafs, at some point, were going to build themselves into a team worthy of serious playoff contention, presumably they were in an opportune place to start that process here on Friday night.

With a visit against the worst team in the National Hockey League.

Nothing is that easy for this team, however, a stark fact we are learning by the night.

Leafs loss No. 13 of the past 15 at the First Niagara Center — a 3-2 overtime defeat that ended in mild controversy from a Toronto perspective — comes with particular alarm given the steady slide the team has endured in November.

Losers of six in a row on the road, coach Randy Carlyle's outfit has officially undone much of the good from the opening month of the season. The defensive weaknesses that they somehow got away with earlier are being exposed, not just on the ice but in the standings, as well.

Facing a Sabres team that is by far the worst offensively in the NHL — and one that hadn't managed more than a goal in any of its previous four games — the Leafs couldn't take advantage of what should have been a golden opportunity.

And after allowing the Sabres to sniff around long enough, defenceman Christian Ehrhoff wristed home the winner through traffic and past Leafs goaltender James Reimer just 38 seconds into overtime.

Sure, a sharp Ryan Miller in the other net — regular Leafs killer that he is — made it difficult, but both of the Sabres regulation-time goals were typical of the defensive breakdowns that are anchoring the Leafs of late.

"The breaks aren't going our way and that's when you've got to find ways to create more," Carlyle said. "You've just got to put your nose to grind it out and find ways."

The Leafs will get another chance on Saturday night in Montreal, but it will be their fifth game in eight nights with their confidence no doubt waning. And it's more than the breaks that aren't going their way.

Recapping the week so far: They had a 6-0 blowout loss at home to middling Columbus, blew a 4-1 lead in Pittsburgh to lose in a shootout and couldn't get things righted against the basement-dwelling Sabres.

Though the Leafs were somewhat careful not to hang this one on the refs, for the second loss in a row they were livid with the officiating.

To summarize, the Sabres got a power-play with 1:32 remaining in regulation when Paul Ranger was nabbed for holding. The Leafs didn't have an issue with that ruling, but, in the final minute, James van Riemsdyk was hauled down on a near breakaway by Buffalo's Matt D'Agostini.

No penalty shot, not even a penalty.

The Sabres didn't officially win it on the power-play, but when Ehrhoff's point shot made it through, Ranger was back on the ice for just six seconds.

"Well, unless we're playing football, I don't know," van Riemsdyk said, not choosing his words all that carefully. "Usually when you are all alone and you get your legs taken out from under you, you expect something.

"But we can't use officiating as an excuse. We've got to find ways to be better, but I don't know ..."

Carlyle said the explanation he was given from officials was that D'Agostini was playing the puck.

"In my mind, I didn't think it was deemed a penalty shot," the Leafs coach said. "But it should have been a penalty."

There were plenty of woulda-coulda-shouldas in this one as the Sabres outshot a team (29-24) in a win for the first time this season. Buffalo has won just six games this season and two have come against the Leafs.

With goals from Phil Kessel, his 14th, and Nikolai Kulemin (his second), the Leafs twice held a one-goal lead, but the disjointed defensive play that has dragged them down all season bit again.

On the second Sabres goal, a juicy rebound from Reimer wasn't enough. Two defencemen and four of the five Leafs players were caught on the wrong side of the net. Not only that, all five Toronto players were like the 19,000-plus in the arena, attempting to watch the puck.

That allowed Luke Adam what was a gift-wrapped first goal of the season, essentially a bang-bang deposit into an empty net.

As it often is when the division rivals clash here, it was a lively Friday-night crowd, one that, for much of the night, sounded decidedly pro-Leafs. When it ended, though, beer cans littered the ice, presumably from Toronto fans either peeved at the result, the non-call, the Leafs' effort in general or all of the above.

“After a home win, you get beer cans thrown at you,” Sabres forward Drew Stafford said. “We’ll take it.”

And given their play of late, the Leafs will take what they get.

Maple Leafs: Woes continue with OT loss in Buffalo

By Kevin McGran

Toronto Star

November 29, 2013

BUFFALO—Yikes.

Now the Maple Leafs can't beat the worst team in the league and have taken to blaming the officials and cursing that the breaks aren't going their way.

Not good. And they play Montreal at the Bell Centre on Saturday night.

Christian Ehrhoff's shot from the point in overtime at the end of a Paul Ranger holding penalty gave lowly Buffalo the 3-2 win on Friday night. It's just the Sabres' sixth win of the year. But it is their second against Toronto.

The Leafs weren't complaining that Ranger was called for holding — he does that frequently. They were complaining that there was no call when Matt D'Agostini swept in on James van Riemsdyk's short-handed near-breakaway in OT. D'Agostini swept the puck, and the player, away.

“Usually when you're in all alone and you get your legs taken out from under you, you expect something, especially when the calls have been what they were — what was it, five or six to one?” said van Riemsdyk. “We can't use officiating as an excuse. We've got to find ways to be better.”

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D'Agostini, playing his first game as a Sabre, thought he did everything right.

"I just tried to get as much puck as I can," D'Agostini said. "I think he tried to step through me, through my stick there. I think it was a good no-call."

Ehrhoff's winner came after another Leaf broke a stick, the second time in two games they've been hit with such bad luck. The first was on the Penguins' game-tying goal in Pittsburgh on Wednesday night, a goal that set up the home side's shootout win.

"What can you do?" said coach Randy Carlyle. "Those are the things that are happening to you right now. We just have to put our nose to the grindstone and grind it up."

"The breaks aren't going our way. You've got to find ways to create more and we had a power play that didn't really get much going in the third period, we gave up a power-play goal earlier in the game."

"Late, we had a chance to clear and then the last one wasn't a power-play goal, but the guy coming out of the box didn't really have any effect on the play and it went right in the middle of the net. What can you do?"

What can they do? Switch goalies.

James Reimer was flipping and flopping all night. Reimer plays that, to put it politely, athletic style. He scrambles, he flips and flops. He's sometimes out of position. And that hurt him at times against Buffalo. It's the kind of style that's exciting to watch, but it can make the coach gasp and it contributes to that panicky feel that the Leafs display so often in their own end.

Jonathan Bernier is more contained, more calm. He rarely looks like he panics. Coaches like that even if, statistically speaking, very little separates Reimer and Bernier.

Bernier will likely play Saturday in Montreal.

“I don’t know yet if I’m in,” said Bernier on Friday. “It will be Randy’s call. Obviously it would be nice to play in Montreal in front of my family. But it’s out of my control.”

The Leafs led in 1-0 and 2-1 against Buffalo on Friday, just as they had against Pittsburgh on Wednesday. They have been looking for a way to shut down teams. But they didn’t find it Friday.

Phil Kessel and Nikolai Kulemin scored for Toronto, now winless in three games as the team’s legion of critics grows larger. But Carlyle found positives in their performance.

“We did better tonight,” said Carlyle. “We still made some mistakes from our systems as far as diving in when we shouldn’t have, and giving up too many odd-man rushes.

“In the second period, we got into that mode of more receiving the game, but we were better in the third. We got it back and we did more of the things we need to do as far as putting pressure and getting a forecheck.”

NOTES: The Leafs called up Carter Ashton on Friday with Joffrey Lupul (groin) moved to the injured list. “It seems like he’s got a black X on him right now,” Carlyle said of the oft-injured Lupul ... The Leafs scratched Morgan Rielly, Frazer McLaren and Peter Holland.

Maple Leafs: When in Buffalo, it's wings and pizza time

By Kevin McGran

Toronto Star

November 29, 2013

BUFFALO—It's quite the sight — professional athletes chowing down on pizza and chicken wings after a game.

And when the Maple Leafs visit Buffalo, they are no exception.

The team orders food from Ricota's Pizza & Subs into the room — they even feasted on it after Thursday's practice. The restaurant opened up just for them on Thanksgiving.

“The food's delicious,” said Leafs forward Frazer McLaren. “The sandwich was the best. But it's just to tide people, because you'll eat on the plane or at the hotel.”

The Leafs normally bus it home from Buffalo, although this weekend they flew to Montreal.

Pizza and wings are a rare treat for players who are groomed on protein shakes and vegetables and who otherwise treat their body as a temple.

“Sometimes, the temple needs to be fed,” said winger David Clarkson.

But not all participate in the tasty albeit greasy feast.

“I usually don't eat at the rink after the game,” said Leafs defenceman Carl Gunnarsson.

SIEGEL: GLOOMY NOVEMBER CONTINUES FOR LEAFS IN BUFFALO

By Jonas Siegel

TSN

November 30, 2013

BUFFALO – November has proven a gloomy month from start to (near) finish for the Leafs.

What began with a disastrous 4-0 defeat in Vancouver continued Friday with another loss to the league's worst team, a 3-2 overtime edging by the Sabres at First Niagara Center, their fourth in the past five games.

It was the eighth loss in 12 games in November for the Leafs (4-5-3) and sixth straight defeat on the road. Buffalo has just three wins outside of regulation all season, two of them coming against Toronto in the past two weeks.

"We've just got to stick with it," said James van Riemsdyk, following the latest loss. "You can never be too high or too low. It's a long season. We're in a decent position right now still."

With just two regulation wins all month, the Leafs are now tied for fifth in the Atlantic Division – the Canadiens have an identical 14-9-3 record with the two clubs meeting in Montreal on Saturday – their 6-1-0 start to the season far in the rear-view mirror.

Only an elite power play unit and sturdy goaltending have remained intact (though that too is regressing somewhat in recent days) through the opening two months.

Mustering fewer than two goals of offence per game in November (1.92 to be precise) while yielding more than three against (3.08), the Leafs are struggling right now on both sides of the puck. A once confident penalty kill too has fallen into turmoil. The unit allowed its 14th power play goal of the month to the Sabres, dipping to 71 per cent in that span.

On this night, the Leafs jumped out to a 1-0 lead on the 14th goal of the year from Phil Kessel, grabbing the edge once more on the second this season from Nik Kulemin. Both leads were erased, however, the Sabres coming from behind to win on a goal from Christian Ehrhoff 38 seconds into overtime.

The goal came just minutes after van Riemsdyk was hauled down by Matt D'Agostini on a shorthanded rush in the closing moments of regulation. No call was made on the play.

"The breaks aren't going our way," said head coach Randy Carlyle, his frustration obvious.

The Leafs will close the month of November with their second road date of the season in Montreal. December looms with a particularly difficult schedule, the Sharks, Bruins, Kings, Blues, Blackhawks and Penguins all on the calendar.

"We still have a lot of games left so we've just got to keep trying to find ways to figure out the things that are going wrong and then keep doing some of the things that we're doing well," said van Riemsdyk.

Five Points

1. Road Woes

The defeat marked the sixth straight away from the Air Canada Centre for the Leafs, now 5-5-3 on the road this season. Outscored 19-10 during the six-game stretch, their last win outside of Toronto came on Oct. 30 in Calgary.

2. Late Call in Question

Streaking down the right side of the ice with the Leafs killing off a late penalty to Paul Ranger, van Riemsdyk had his legs swept out beneath him by D'Agostini, his body crashing into the vacated net.

"They said that he played the puck and he made contact with the puck," Carlyle said D'Agostini, "thus he's allowed to cross-block and take our player out. In my mind, I didn't think it deemed a penalty shot, but I thought it should've been a penalty for taking the players' knees out. But they didn't make the call."

"I don't want to get into too much," said van Riemsdyk, "but I tried to slide [the puck] over to my forehand and then my legs went out from under me so that's all I remember."

The Leafs would eventually kill off the penalty to Ranger, but the Sabres would score in overtime before he could rejoin the play. "You can't take your hand off the stick and grab the player," Carlyle said of Ranger's penalty, a holding call which saw him grab Ville Leino. "That's new rules hockey."

3. Shorthanded Draws

Moments before Ehrhoff scored the winner did the Leafs lose a shorthanded draw, a rare loss by Jerred Smithson in this instance. A subtle point in their struggles on the penalty kill this season (now 20th overall) has been diminished effectiveness on the draw shorthanded.

Tyler Bozak and Jay McClement, who absorb the majority of faceoffs in such situations, have not been quite as successful this season as they were a year ago.

The pair combined to win a healthy 52 per cent in 2013, but have so far dipped to just 42 per cent. Bozak in particular, has struggled considerably. The 27-year-old has won just 35 per cent of his shorthanded draws in 14 games this winter.

Added to the roster last month, Smithson has actually been the team's most efficient faceoff man on the penalty kill and at even strength. The 34-year-old is now 18-33 on the penalty kill in 11 games.

Tyler Bozak 35% 53%
Jay McClement 46% 50%
Jerred Smithson 55% 54% *
* With Edmonton and Florida

4. November Leaders

Though he's played in just seven games this month, Trevor Smith has vaulted to the top of the Leafs scoring chart in November. Indicative of their offensive troubles this month, Smith, with six points, is now tied with van Riemsdyk and Mason Raymond for the monthly scoring lead.

Slightly behind in that race is the team's overall scoring leader. While he did not score his 14th this season, the 26-year-old Kessel has gone 13 straight games without an assist, boasting five goals and five points in 12 games this month.

5. Mix on Defence

Paired together for all but five games of the 2013 regular season, Mark Fraser and Cody Franson were reunited this week in Carlyle's search for some stability beyond his top pair of Dion Phaneuf and Carl Gunnarsson.

"It's great how comfortable we are with one another," said Fraser before Friday's game, "whether it's just the talking to each other – the vocabulary – [or] our body language. We played long enough with one another that we can really read off of each other. We're definitely excited to be back."

Jake Gardiner returned to the lineup after sitting for the first time all season in Pittsburgh. The 23-year-old replaced Morgan Rielly alongside Paul Ranger against the Sabres, notching an assist in 21 minutes. "I thought we all played a decent game tonight, played hard, competed and they capitalized at the end," said Gardiner.

Stat Pack

6-2-2 – Career record for James Reimer versus Buffalo.

8 – Blocked shots for Mark Fraser against the Sabres, a game-high.

1.92 – Goals per game for the Leafs this month.

6 - Points for Trevor Smith in November, tied for the team lead.

13 – Consecutive games without an assist for Phil Kessel.

4-5-3 – Leafs record in November.

34-48 – Toronto penalty kill over the past 12 games.

Special Teams Capsule

PP: 0-1

Season: 24.4%

PK: 3-4

Season: 79.2%

Quote of the Night

"I don't think [you] need rocket science to figure out that if you continue to give up five and six goals, you're not going to get many points. We have to buckle down definitely in that area. We've got to get our defensive game going to a higher level. And maybe part of that is to create a little bit more in the offensive zone as far as time in there."

- Randy Carlyle, on his team's struggles defensively.

Up Next

The Leafs conclude a three-game road trip in Montreal on Saturday evening.

Leafs swimming in a pool of frustration

By Chris Johnston

Sportsnet

November 30, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. – The beer cans started flying out of the First Niagara Center stands moments after Christian Ehrhoff's shot went through James Reimer's legs – presumably the work of Toronto Maple Leafs fans that would rather show their frustration than finish the last drink.

It may give the thousands who ventured up the QEW some comfort to know that the players in blue and white were even more frustrated than they were.

There was no positive spin to be put on a 3-2 overtime loss against the NHL's worst team. Even the loser point they earned against Buffalo brought little comfort on Friday night. It was the second game in a row where Toronto blew a lead and it dropped the team's record to 4-5-3 in what has been a rather forgettable November.

Perhaps more than anything, the effort underscored the need for the players to bear down and grind their way out of a tough stretch. The game featured some good moments – just like in Pittsburgh two nights earlier – but it wasn't even close to a 60-minute performance and some familiar problems kept it from being a victory.

The most notable of those was undisciplined penalties. Paul Ranger was serving a holding infraction when Matt Moulson tied the score 1-1 in the second period and he had only just been let out of the penalty box seconds before Ehrhoff's overtime winner. On the Moulson goal, the Sabres were enjoying even more of an advantage because Leafs centre Jerred Smithson broke his stick – a repeat of what happened to Tyler Bozak against the Penguins on Wednesday night.

"What do you do?" Toronto coach Randy Carlyle said rhetorically. "Those are the things that are happening to you right now and we just have to put our nose to the grindstone and grind it out and find ways."

The mounting losses seem to have shaken the team's confidence – although that's probably something that can be cured with a big victory or two. They will certainly have plenty of chances with a game against Montreal on Saturday and an extremely tough December schedule that includes games against seven of the top nine teams in the NHL standings: Chicago, San Jose, St. Louis, Boston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and Phoenix.

How they come through that stretch could go a long way to determining if there will be a second straight trip to the playoffs this spring. Despite the recent slide, Toronto currently holds down one of the Eastern Conference's wild card spots.

"We've just got to stick with it and try to find the positives," said Leafs winger James van Riemsdyk. "It's a long year and you don't want to get too negative. You can never be too high or too low.

"We're in a decent position right now still and we still have a lot of games left."

There was plenty of frustration on the Toronto bench when van Riemsdyk was knocked down on a partial breakaway in the final minute of the game and a penalty wasn't called. Even though Sabres backchecker Matt D'Agostini appeared to sweep the puck away just before tripping the Toronto player, the visitors felt it should have evened things up.

"Unless we're playing football, I don't know (why that wasn't called)," said van Riemsdyk. "Definitely frustrating. Again, we have to be better but some of those things can change the game."

Added Carlyle: "The breaks aren't going our way and that's when you've got to find ways to create more."

That will be the biggest challenge when they arrive for what should be an emotional atmosphere at the Bell Centre on Saturday night. Toronto's fifth game in eight days comes with the team nursing plenty of bumps and bruises – most notably to defenceman Cody Franson and top-line winger Phil Kessel.

Franson was seen limping to the team bus on Friday night while Kessel missed the start of the third period and is believed to be experiencing some discomfort with his right wrist. Even though he scored another goal and generated a game-high seven shots, he appeared to be laboring on a couple shifts.

Kessel declined to speak with reporters after the game. Like many of his teammates, he was in a foul mood after failing to secure another point that was there for the taking.

That it happened against a Buffalo team currently on pace to be the worst of the NHL's Salary Cap Era made it all the more frustrating. The Sabres are now 2-5-0 under interim coach Ted Nolan and both victories have come against the Leafs in this building.

As you might expect, there were plenty of smiles in the home dressing room after just the sixth victory in 27 games during this miserable season.

"Look what happened after the game was over," said Sabres forward Drew Stafford. "After a home win you get beer cans thrown at you. We'll take it. Everyone's happy in here. We've got to remember how this feels."

The same can be said for the Leafs.