



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres-Canadiens Preview

Associated Press

December 6, 2013

The red-hot Montreal Canadiens have jumped into first place in the Atlantic Division.

Ensuring they remain there for more than 48 hours won't require anything extraordinary - just a win Saturday night against the lowly Buffalo Sabres at the Bell Centre.

The surge that got the Canadiens (18-9-3) to the top of the division has been more impressive. They're 8-0-1 since Nov. 19 and haven't allowed more than three goals in 13 straight games.

It doesn't seem league-worst Buffalo (6-21-2) should throw them off track. While Montreal can win six straight at home for the first time since a nine-game run to close 2006-07, the Sabres try to avoid a sixth consecutive road loss after dropping the last five by a 17-5 margin.

Thursday's 2-1 home win over Boston extended Montreal's overall winning streak to four while pushing the team one point ahead of the Bruins for the Atlantic lead.

"For us, it was the ideal opportunity to give it our all," defenseman P.K. Subban told the team's official website. "It's really satisfying to know that your team is on top because you worked hard. We're proving day after day that this team is part of the elite in the NHL."

Carey Price made 32 saves to win a sixth consecutive start during the team's streak without a regulation loss, and he hasn't allowed more than two goals in nine straight. His .954 save percentage since Nov. 12 is the league's best.

The win over Boston was Montreal's third in four days, and backup Peter Budaj has made such stretches quite a bit easier on Price and coach Michel Therrien with his 5-1-1 season record and 1.80 GAA.

"There are a lot of things I like about our team this year, starting with our goalies," Therrien said. "They are both playing great hockey and giving us a lot of confidence. Peter Budaj has given us great performances, which lets Carey Price to come out rested and ready every time."

Price has a 1.74 GAA in 13 career home games against Buffalo.

One of the league's best penalty kills also has keyed the recent defensive consistency. The Canadiens' 86.3 percent mark has been bolstered by killing 17 straight over the last six games.

Max Pacioretty has highlighted the Canadiens' play in the offensive zone during the hot streak with nine goals in nine games, including the winner late in the second period Thursday.

The Sabres have won seven of eight in Montreal but only one of their last eight overall. They're the only team in hockey without 20 points, and given the pace at which they've reached 14, they're still a ways off.

Offensive struggles have doomed them all season, but the problem has been magnified recently. They've scored 10 goals in eight games after Thursday's 3-1 home loss to the New York Rangers.

"Sometimes we show it, sometimes we don't," coach Ted Nolan said. "That's been the common theme since I've been here. We try to find that button to push to say, "Let's do it not sometimes but all the time."

They typically look to Ryan Miller to earn them the occasional win when in such jams, but he's 2-3-0 with a 3.67 GAA against the Canadiens since the start of last season.

Montreal has won two straight meetings, including 3-1 in Buffalo on Nov. 27, as Brendan Gallagher and Alex Galchenyuk scored in both.

Sabres winger Matt Moulson also had a goal in last month's matchup and has six points in his last four games against the Canadiens.

Miller: Lundqvist deal sets the goalie market

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

December 6, 2013

Just as he has been his entire career, Ryan Miller was straightforward with a small group of reporters Friday afternoon in First Niagara Center.

Miller said he appreciates the words of Ted Nolan, likes some early give-and-take he's had with Pat LaFontaine and still feels good about his game even in the face of his team's terrible record.

Everyone knows Miller is a student of the game, both the on-ice side and the business side. And hockey as a business is a big part of Miller's story this year, with his bid for the U.S. Olympic team coming as he's heading into unrestricted free agency.

Miller took keen notice of the seven-year, \$59.5 million contract Henrik Lundqvist signed with the New York Rangers on Wednesday. And he made it sound like if the Sabres have any interest in keeping him, that's the ballpark they have to be talking about.

"I thought it was actually lower than he was probably going for," a smiling Miller said when asked about the Lundqvist deal. "I think he got a good term, good money and with the salary cap going where it's going, I think he sets the standards."

Nearly \$60 million for a goaltender used to make teams blanch. Not anymore. Boston's Tuukka Rask, Nashville's Pekka Rinne and Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick all got big bucks the last two years, and the NHL's influx of money from its new Canadian television deal that starts next year only figures to bloat the salary cap past \$70 million.

"I anticipate with the TV deals and such, it's going to keep going up," Miller said of the cap, before returning to a chilling Lundqvist point. "Maybe that will seem like a pretty average price down the line."

Miller is likely to start for the Sabres tonight against the Montreal Canadiens in Bell Centre. It's interesting to note both he and Lundqvist have pretty similar stats.

Both have played 21 games this season, with Lundqvist posting a 9-11 record while Miller is 5-16.

Miller entered Friday's games second in the NHL in saves (700) and third in shots against (763) and had somehow managed a .917 save percentage in spite of

a 3.05 goals-against average. Lundqvist was at 2.43 and .919 while facing 182 fewer shots – nearly nine per game.

It's the same story for their careers as well.

Lundqvist has 285 wins, a 2.26 GAA and .920 save percentage in the regular season while he's 30-37 in the playoffs. Miller has 274 wins, a 2.61 GAA and .915 save percentage while going 25-22 in the postseason.

The difference is Lundqvist is 31 and Miller is 33, but Miller said Friday he sees no reason why he can't play into that range of 38-40 years old.

"I feel good now. I'm trying to do some good things for this club," Miller said. "I enjoy the challenge and don't really picture myself stopping until they tell me to. As long as there's a spot in the NHL, I think I'll be competing to do the best I can.

"Obviously I want to win a championship and feel that kind of team success. I'll chase it as long as I can."

Miller has not been peppered with much contract talk by the media this year because there's been nothing new to discuss. But interim coach Nolan brought the issue out Wednesday by saying he'd rather build around Miller than trade him. Miller then confirmed Friday he's had a few general conversations with LaFontaine, the team's president of hockey operations.

Miller on Nolan: "It's nice to hear. I appreciate that kind of gesture from somebody that's been around hockey for a long time. I just have to see what the plan is around here. His opinion goes a long way but it's going to be up to Patty LaFontaine and whoever he brings in as GM to make that ultimate player personnel decision. It's nice that your coach believes in you. You take it as a positive but there's still a lot to see around here."

Miller termed his talks with LaFontaine as "exploratory." He said the former Sabres star is still taking stock of an organization that has been in selloff mode, most recently the Oct. 27 trade of Thomas Vanek to the New York Islanders.

"You have to pause for a minute and evaluate where you're at," Miller said. "You just can't keep shedding everything I guess. I think they're trying to figure out guys they want to hang on to and they think they can build a core around. We'll see how it goes."

If the Sabres are interested in keeping Miller, something owner Terry Pegula has also indicated he wants to entertain, they're going to have to accelerate their rebuilding phase. But Miller said it can't be through idle words.

“I’ve heard a lot of talk over my time. It’s about actions at this point,” he said. “I’m not going to sit around and let promises get thrown around. There’s improvement but there’s a long way to go. We have to stick with it.

“This is the team I’m with, the team I’m a part of. It’s the organization and city I’ve grown to love and I need to do what I can to set a foundation here, whether it’s the next 4-5 months, 4-5 weeks, 4-5 days – or if it’s years in the future.”

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As for tonight’s game, the Sabres are 2-6-1 under Nolan and have scored just 13 goals in the nine games. They have just two regulation wins in 29 games this season and just 10 in the 60 games since Lindy Ruff was fired in February.

The Canadiens, meanwhile, have burst to the top of the Atlantic Division with four straight wins. They’ve gone 8-1-1 in their last 10 games and 10-1-2 in their last 13.

Sabres notebook: Hodgson regrets one that got away

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

December 7, 2013

It was a beautiful chance.

Cody Hodgson had a breakaway Thursday night in the third period as the Buffalo Sabres trailed the New York Rangers, 1-0.

But he couldn't finish the play.

And then, as he turned toward the corner to attempt a second effort at regaining the puck, his stick got caught in skates, sending Hodgson to the penalty box for tripping.

The Rangers scored on the ensuing power play, giving them a 2-0 lead, something that against this woefully low-scoring team might as well be an insurmountable deficit.

"Cody goes down for a great opportunity, could tie it up and then all of a sudden, boom, we're down 2-0," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "I don't think he meant to do it but those are those little mental adjustments we have to do. Not sometimes. We have to do it all the time. When you go through something like this you have to go through it together. You can't expect some guys to start scoring that haven't been scoring for us."

But Hodgson knows that he is expected to score. He has just one goal in the last nine games and although he generated five shots Thursday night on the top line with Matt Moulson and Drew Stafford, he knows he had better start producing.

"I think we're doing a better job of getting in spots and getting in places where we can get chances," Hodgson said. "That's something we've had to work on and work to get in those positions. So that's a positive but at the same time once we get those chances we need to score. That's our job. That's what we're paid to do."

So what's keeping the puck out of the net?

"A lot of times it's just a little hesitation, whether it's looking for an extra pass or looking to take extra seconds and then a stick's in the lane, a body's in the lane or a goalie gets across," Hodgson said. "I think it's just getting more familiar with each other. As we get going we're a lot better than we started. The chances are

there. That's a good thing. Eventually if you get enough chances you're going to score."

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Defenseman Jamie McBain returned to the Sabres' lineup Thursday after sitting the last four games as a healthy scratch.

He was rewarded with the most ice time he's received all season – 23:50. In his 23 shifts he took three shots and blocked two.

"I really liked his game and when I talked to him about coming into the lineup, he asked he why he was out," Nolan said. "There was no specific reason as to why. It was just one of those situations where I'm trying to find a who's who on this team. He was just one of those guys that had the least amount of problems at the beginning. We had to fix the other guys."

McBain, often dubbed a power-play specialist, played on both Sabres man advantages in the game, but impressed Nolan more with his five-on-five play.

"We don't want to hear about his power-play time because our power play hasn't been going very well," Nolan said. "He's good on the offensive but we have to have an overall good game for him," Nolan said. "Last night I thought he had a great game for us."

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The Sabres shook Mikhail Grigorenko's hand and wished him luck. The forward would not be making the trip to Montreal, instead staying behind so he can catch his Sunday flight from Toronto to Russia to prepare for the World Junior Championships.

And frankly, expectations for his performance are high.

"He has to go down there and be one of the best players," Nolan said. "He can't just go down there and be a player. He has to be one of the best players. Once you dominate one level it gets you ready for the next level. You go through the history of all those young stars, they all have to do it."

Grigorenko will join Nikita Zadorov on the Russian team while J.T. Compher was named to the preliminary list for Team USA.

Add another Sabres prospect to the list as Gustav Possler will play for Sweden. He was the Sabres' fifth-round pick last June.

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The Sabres had some food for thought on the wipe board in their dressing room.

The space usually reserved for opposing team's line charts and defensive pairings instead contained this quote from Nelson Mandela, who died on Thursday:

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never failing but in rising every time we fall.”

Sabres' Miller has exploratory talks with LaFontaine

NHL.com

December 6, 2013

Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller told reporters Friday he's had some talks with Sabres president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine, but termed them exploratory.

Miller is due to become an unrestricted free agent after the season.

"Just exploratory, get to know each other," Miller said. "They're trying to get up to speed on the organization before making any decisions. They (LaFontaine and interim coach Ted Nolan) came into a situation where some things happened, one very recently with the [Thomas] Vanek trade. You have to pause for minute and evaluate where you are because you can't keep shedding everything. I think they're trying to figure out the guys they want to hang on to and think they can build a core around and see how it goes."

The Sabres are 2-6-1 since Nolan and LaFontaine came on board, but Miller said he has noticed things turning in a positive direction.

"There's improvement but there's a long way to go," he said. "We have to stick with it. ... We're improving in the right areas and games are becoming hockey games instead of lopsided events. We're in games and we have to find ways to win."

Miller said he pays attention to what goes on around the NHL, including injuries to goalies and the contract extension recently signed by the New York Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist. However, Miller said his focus right now is making the Sabres better and he's comfortable letting the future play itself out.

"My thinking has just always been to wait to see what plan presents itself," he said.

Nolan went on the record with the Buffalo News recently saying he wants Miller to stay right where he is.

"You look at all the championship teams and it starts from goaltending out. ... I prefer you build around him rather than use him as a pawn to try and get something to make you better," Nolan said. "You learn to deal with the now as a coach and we've got one of the better goaltenders in the world here and I'd like to build around him myself."

Miller said he appreciates hearing that from his coach but said it doesn't change his mindset or his plans for the future.

"I've heard a lot of talk in my time," he said. "It's about action at this point. I'm not going to sit here and let promises get thrown around."

First-place Canadiens face division rival Sabres

By Tal Pinchevsky

NHL.com

December 6, 2013

SABRES (6-21-2) at CANADIENS (18-9-3)

TV: CBC, RDS, MSG-B

Last 10: Buffalo 3-6-1; Montreal 8-1-1

Season series: The Montreal Canadiens won their first game against the Buffalo Sabres, 3-1, on Nov. 27. After Saturday, they won't meet again for three months before facing off twice in a week in March.

Big story: These longtime rivals enter the game looking at each other from different ends of the Atlantic Division. Montreal beat the Boston Bruins 2-1 on Friday to overtake them in the division standings, although Boston holds two games in hand. Buffalo's difficult season continues as their 14 points is the lowest total in the NHL. With one win in their past eight games, the Sabres would like nothing more than to rebound against their division rival.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Since winning their first game after Ted Nolan was brought in to replace fired coach Ron Rolston on Nov. 13, Buffalo has gone 1-6-1, with the lone victory coming in overtime against the Toronto Maple Leafs. The Sabres hoped to turn things around Thursday as the New York Rangers visited First Niagara Center. But Rick Nash's goal 17:47 into the first period put them in a familiar and unfortunate position. The game on Thursday marked the 22nd time they have trailed after 20 minutes in 29 games. With a 5-16-0 record when trailing after one entering the game, the Sabres had some work to do.

After a scoreless second period, Buffalo outshot the Rangers 14-10 in the third. But Brad Richards and Mats Zuccarello scored 6:18 apart in the final period to extend the New York lead. Tyler Ennis scored with 2:06 left, but it wasn't enough as the Sabres lost, 3-1. It was the sixth time in their past seven games that the Sabres were held to one or fewer goals.

"I think we just have to keep working," forward Matt Moulson said. "It's one not getting chances. We're getting chances. We just have to bear down."

Canadiens: Since opening November with four straight losses, Montreal has been among the League's hottest teams, going 10-1-2. That run has been due in large part to a stingy defense and the re-emergence of Max Pacioretty, who has scored nine goals in his past nine games.

That hot streak for both Pacioretty and his team continued Thursday in their matchup against the Bruins. With first place on the line, Boston jumped early on a Montreal team playing their third game in four nights. Boston outshot Montreal 10-3 in the opening period and Gregory Campbell opened the scoring off a great feed from Milan Lucic. But the second was all Montreal, which outshot Boston 18-7 in the period and got the tying goal from Tomas Plekanec before Pacioretty scored the go-ahead goal with 2:18 remaining in the period. Carey Price stopped 16 shots in the third to preserve the victory, marking the ninth straight game in which he has allowed two or fewer goals.

"There's a lot of character in this room and we all know we have a lot more to give," Pacioretty said. "Certain guys are stepping up, like Carey tonight."

Who's hot: For the Sabres, Moulson has two goals in his past four games and Zemgus Girgensons has two points in his past three games. ... With nine goals in his nine games, Pacioretty has been among the League's hottest scorers. Linemate David Desharnais has nine points in his last nine games.

Injury report: Cody McCormick (upper body) returned to Buffalo's lineup Thursday after missing four games, but Alexander Sulzer (undisclosed) is expected to be placed on injured reserve. ... Rene Bourque (lower body) is questionable for Montreal.

Franchise goalie Ryan Miller will judge Sabres on actions, not words: 'I'm not going to sit around and let promises get thrown around'

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

December 7, 2013

MONTREAL – Buffalo Sabres goalie Ryan Miller said he's heard lots of talk about the franchise's future before.

In less than a year, Miller has gone from backstopping a veteran team built to contend for the Stanley Cup to being the lone bright spot on a rebuilding club already regarded as one of the worst in NHL history.

So the 33-year-old, an unrestricted free agent following the season, wants more than words from the Sabres as he decides his future.

"It's about action at this point," Miller said Friday in Buffalo after the Sabres prepared for tonight's game against the Canadiens inside the Bell Centre. "I'm not going to sit around and let promises get thrown around."

Many had Miller pegged as a goner during the summer. If the former Vezina Trophy winner's traded now, he would probably bring the Sabres a nice haul, even on the limited goalie market.

But there's a new regime in Buffalo. Interim coach Ted Nolan just said he'd like to keep the franchise goalie and build around him.

Now, it's not such a crazy idea to think Miller, who's been performing dynamically despite the team's struggles, could re-up with the Sabres.

"My thinking has just always been wait to see what plan presents itself," Miller said. "It feels like I've been saying that for a while, but things have shifted so much. I just feel like going back to last year I said the same thing but nothing happened in regards to my situation."

Miller said he's had some talks with Pat LaFontaine, the president of hockey operations – "Just exploratory, just get to know each other," he called them – about his future.

LaFontaine, of course, still must hire a general manager. Miller also knows LaFontaine and company are still trying to get up to speed with the organization.

"You have to pause for a minute and evaluate where you're at, because you can't just keep shedding everything, I guess," Miller said. "I think they're trying to figure out the guys they want to hang onto and build a core around."

Nolan's words won't sway Miller.

"It's nice to hear," Miller said. "I appreciate the gesture from somebody that's been around hockey a long time. Again, I'm just trying to see what the plan is around here. His opinion goes a long way, but it's going to be up to Patty LaFontaine and whoever he brings in as GM to make that ultimate player personnel decision."

Miller has seen the hapless Sabres, an NHL-worst 6-21-2, “improving in small areas” in their nine games under Nolan.

“They’re becoming hockey games now instead of lopsided kind of events,” he said. “We’re in games, and we got to find ways to win.”

He added: “But there’s a long way to go.”

Miller, like any player, probably wants a long contract. This next deal will almost certainly be his last big one.

He said he still enjoys the challenge of tending goal and could play until he’s in his late 30s or even 40.

“It’s not far away, so I like to think I could play,” joked Miller, who’s 5-16 with a 3.05 goals-against average and a .917 save percentage.

He doesn’t want to stop playing “until they tell me to,” he said.

“As long as there’s a spot in the NHL I think I’ll be competing,” Miller said.

Miller said the seven-year, \$59.5 million extension New York Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist signed Wednesday set “the standard” for the goalie market.

“I thought it was actually kind of lower than he was going for,” Miller said. “I think he got good term, good money.”

Like Miller, the 31-year-old Lundqvist, who beat the Sabres on Thursday, is regarded as an elite goalie despite having never won a Cup.

With the salary cap going up thanks to the NHL’s new huge Canadian TV deal, “Maybe it’ll seem like a pretty average price down the line,” Miller said about Lundqvist’s contract.

Miller, who’s making \$6.25 million this season, could command a similar deal on the open market. But even if the Sabres want him back, would they want to give him more than four or five years?

Whenever Miller departs, he wants to leave the Sabres in good hands.

“This is the organization and city I’ve grown to love,” he said. “I need to do what I can to set a foundation here, whether it’s the next four or five months, five weeks, four or five days or it’s years in the future, I have to set the foundation, be a positive influence.

“No matter if I’m staying or going, I want the foundation to be set so that this team has success.”

Sabres Miller not swayed by Nolan

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

December 6, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- On Wednesday Ted Nolan said he'd rather build around Ryan Miller than use him as a bargaining chip to make the team better.

Friday was the first time Miller was available to talk about it. He said, "It's nice to hear, I appreciate that kind of gesture from somebody that's been around hockey for a long time. Again, I've just got to see what the plan is around here. His opinion goes a long way, but it's going to be up to Patty LaFontaine and whoever he brings in to be GM, but there's still a lot more to see around here."

As things change it's always important to check in with Miller to see if it changes his thinking. The goaltender said, "No, my thinking has always been, wait to see what plan presents itself. It feels like I've been saying that awhile, but things have shifted so much, even going back to last year I said the same thing and nothing happened in regards to my situation and that wasn't in my control and it's still not completely under my control, so I have to wait and see what happens, see what the plan is."

One thing Miller doesn't want to hear is a bunch of words. He said, "I've heard a lot of talk during my time and it's about actions at this point. I'm not going to sit around and let promises get thrown around."

I've been asked a lot, what would it take to keep Miller in Buffalo. My thought is Buffalo is the only team that can give him an eight year deal and that's what he would want. That takes him to 41 years old. As far as how long he wants to play Miller said, "I'd like to think I could play. I feel good now, it's just trying to do some good things with this club, so I enjoy the challenge. I guess I really don't picture myself stopping until they tell me to. As long as there's a spot in the NHL, I think I'll be competing as best I can and I want to win a championship and feel that kind of team success, so I'll chase it as long as I can."

We haven't seen results under Ted Nolan, but we have seen improvement according to Miller, "There's improvement, but there's a long way to go so we have to stick with it. This is the team I'm with, it's the organization and the city I've grown to love and I need to do what I can to set a foundation whether it's the next four or five months, four or five days or if it's years in the future, I have to set the foundation, be a positive influence, no matter if I'm staying or going, it's so this team has success."

NOTEBOOK: McBAIN RETURNS WITH IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE

By Joe Ray

Sabres.com

December 6, 2013

Buffalo Sabres defenseman Jamie McBain made his return to the lineup after four games as a healthy scratch. With Alexander Sulzer out with an unspecified injury, McBain played opposite Christian Ehrhoff and provided plenty of offensive opportunities for the Sabres in their 3-1 loss to the New York Rangers on Thursday.

After seeing Sulzer and Brayden McNabb rotated into the defensive lineup for a sizable stretch, McBain was enthused to return to the ice.

“Obviously you want to get back in the lineup and earn your spot back,” McBain said. “Any time your name’s called, you’re excited to get back in there.”

McBain’s 23:50 of ice time was second on the Sabres in this game, trailing only his defensive partner Ehrhoff, and he also was out there on both of Buffalo’s power plays. While he was held off the scoresheet in this game, McBain generated three shots on goal and had a couple of solid scoring chances in the second period as the Sabres trailed by just one.

“That’s my game. That’s kind of the style that I want to play and I have to play. We have to get pucks up to the forwards, be the fourth man in the attack, and get shots through to the net, and also getting myself some opportunities to score.”

McBain was also trusted with significant ice time in the third period as Buffalo tried to get back in the game, as he led all Sabres defenseman in the final period with 8:24 of ice time. After a few periods of playing together, McBain and Ehrhoff really started developing some chemistry in both ends of the ice.

“[Christian’s] an elite hockey player so it was a privilege to play with him. We haven’t played together this year, so maybe it took a period just to get those tendencies down a little bit. I feel like overall it was a fun game to play with him,” McBain said.

After practice on Friday, interim coach Nolan said he was impressed with how McBain performed.

“I really liked his game,” Nolan said. “When I talked to him about coming into the lineup, he asked me why he was out. There was no specific reason why. I was trying to find out who’s who on this team and he was just one of those guys that had the least amount of problems at the beginning. We had to fix the other guys. He played very well for us.”

Sabres captain Steve Ott has been an extremely physical presence for the Sabres from the moment he joined the team, and this season has been no different. With three hits in tonight's game, Ott's season total for hits rose to 101, good for third in the league. Ott trails only Los Angeles' Dustin Brown (106) and the Islanders' Matt Martin (137) in total hits.

The Rangers held a 1-0 advantage after two periods of play, and that played to the Rangers' favor in this game. New York advanced to 11-1-0 when leading after two periods. Buffalo has yet to gain a point in a game that they trailed after two, falling to 0-18-0 in such games.

New York also scored the first goal of the game, meaning the Sabres have given up the first goal in 24 of 29 games this season. In those games, the Sabres have a 6-17-1 record. The struggles have been an overarching theme for the Sabres all throughout the season.

"We've got to search for the answers," Nolan said. "No one's going to ride in here and fix it for us. We have to fix it ourselves, and we have to look in the mirror at what we can do to correct this thing and try and make it better."

MILLER'S FOCUS REMAINS ON THE ICE

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

December 6, 2013

While many things have changed in the Buffalo Sabres front office, goaltender Ryan Miller says that for him, a lot of things are still the same.

He's still the Sabres' starting goaltender and, although he's been the subject of trade talks the past two seasons, his job is still to keep pucks out of the net and give Buffalo a chance to win every night.

Miller looks to rebound from his performance against the New York Rangers on Thursday. He made 28 saves, but in his postgame comments, he wasn't happy with any of the three goals he let in.

"My job remains the same. I have to respond with a better effort than I had against the Rangers and keep building my game, hopefully in anticipation of putting myself out there for USA Hockey and helping this team get on the right page here," he said after practice Friday at First Niagara Center. "We're improving in small areas and our games are becoming hockey games now instead of lopsided kind of events. We're in games and we gotta find ways to win. Hopefully that's coming."

Pat LaFontaine is the new face of the hockey department as he took over as president of hockey operations last month. He's currently in the process of finding a new general manager for the club and working to forging a new identity for the franchise. One of the decisions he will have to make concerns his goaltending situation. Miller is in the final year of his contract. Jhonas Enroth signed a two-year deal this summer.

Miller said he has had only "exploratory" talks with LaFontaine in terms in an effort to get to know him better.

"My thinking's always been, wait to see what plan presents itself and it feels like I've been saying that for awhile, but things have shifted so much," Miller said. "Even going back to last year, I said that was the same thing, but nothing happened in regards to my situation and that wasn't in my control. It's something where it's still not completely under my control so I have to kind of wait and see what happens, see what the plan is."

For the most part, the Sabres have adhered to the goaltending schedule that was in place before interim coach Ted Nolan was hired on Nov 13. Since then, Miller said that he, Nolan, Enroth and goaltender coach Jim Corsi have met to discuss how each goaltender's energy levels can be maximized through a condensed schedule.

“It’s not all about right here in the moment, it’s projecting forward. We have some busy months ahead of us and a tough finish to the season. You have to think ahead sometimes,” Miller said. “When Ted got in here, we had to sort things out and let him know what we thought as goaltenders and as a group, what Jim Corsi and Jhonas and I are shooting for. I support the schedule moving forward because it’s going to give me a chance to be at my best game in and game out.”

Ted Nolan said earlier this week that he believes that having a great goaltender is a foundation or success.

“You look at all the championship teams and it starts from the goaltending out,” Nolan said Wednesday. “...You build around him versus use him as a pawn to try to get something to make you better. You learn to deal with the now as a coach. We’ve got one of the better goaltenders in the world here. I’d prefer to build around him, myself.”

Miller said he appreciated Nolan’s comments.

“It’s nice to hear. I appreciate that kind of gesture from someone who’s been around hockey for a long time,” he said. “...It’s nice that your coach believes in you, so I’ll take it as a positive, but again, there’s still a lot more to see around here.”

Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist signed a new seven-year contract this week that will keep him in New York until he’s 38. Miller, 33, was asked if he thinks he might be able to keep playing that long.

“It’s not far away, so I’d like to think I can play,” he said. “I feel good now, it’s just trying to do some good things with this club and I still enjoy the challenge. I guess I don’t really picture myself stopping until they tell me to so as long as there’s a spot in the NHL, I think I’ll be competing and doing the best I can.

“Obviously I want to win a championship and feel that kind of team success and that would be something to shoot for. I’ll chase it as long as I can.”

The Sabres went 117:54 over two games before Tyler Ennis scored Thursday night with 2:06 remaining in the third period against New York. They’ve been getting opportunities, but have had trouble finishing their chances of late.

“We’re doing some things that we need to keep continuing to do,” Sabres center Cody Hodgson said. “That’s something that we can build off of and make sure we’re still doing that. That’s not something you get away from. You worry when you’re not getting chances, but it’s tough when you go two games without a goal. That’s tough.”

Hodgson also addressed the tripping penalty he took 7:11 into the third period. After being stopped on a partial breakaway by Lundqvist, he tripped Rangers forward Rick Nash in the corner while attempting to maintain possession of the puck. The Rangers scored on the ensuing power play to make it 2-0, making a Buffalo comeback extremely difficult.

“That was bad,” he said. “I have to hold on a little more. I thought I was going to lose it after getting hacked, but I just wanted to get away quick and I should’ve tried to hold on a little bit longer. Once the guy picked up the puck in the corner, I was actually just looking to slash the puck away and I took out his feet. That was a frustrating play and they score on it.”

Center Cody McCormick and defenseman Alexander Sulzer, who is on injured reserve, did not practice Friday. Nolan said that McCormick is “a little banged up” but expects him to be ready for the game Saturday in Montreal.

Rookie center Mikhail Grigorenko will travel to Russia this weekend to take part in the country’s selection camp in preparation of the IIHF World Junior Championship. Sabres management feels that participating in the tournament later this month will be extremely beneficial to his development.

“He has to go down there and be one of their best players. He can’t just go down and be a player. He has to be one of their best players,” Nolan said. “Once you dominate one level, it gets you ready for the next level. You go through the history of all those young stars, they all have to do it.”

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 – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 28 Zemgus
Girgensons
32 John Scott – 65 Brian Flynn – 82 Marcus Foligno

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 4 Jamie McBain
20 Henrik Tallinder – 57 Tyler Myers
6 Mike Weber – 3 Mark Pysyk
44 Brayden McNabb

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth

Did not skate: Cody McCormick, Alexander Sulzer (injured reserve)

Cranes have birds-eye view of progress

By Nalina Shapiro

WIVB

December 6, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - Tower cranes stand tall in downtown Buffalo. They are sky-high symbols of change and development finally coming to the waterfront. News 4 has been monitoring the progress for months, but wanted to see what HARBORcenter looked like from a different angle.

The tower crane operator has to climb up and down 20 stories every day. News 4 visited workers at the site. News 4's Nalina Shapiro and photographer Dan Summerville got suited up with construction hard hats, vests, gloves and glasses before it was time to make their way to the base of the tower crane.

Shapiro and Summerville walked by the where the hotel will be and through the restaurant area. Then the moment had arrived to climb up 20 stories to the top. In the middle of the crane's upright structure there's slanted metal ladders and platforms. Climbing up is the only way to get to the top and operate the crane.

Summerville had a small GoPro camera on his helmet as they carefully made their way up to each platform. The hundreds of workers appeared smaller and smaller, and the views below got better and better.

After about 30 minutes of climbing, Shapiro and Summerville reached the control cabin and met Paul Hopkins the crane's operator.

Before Shapiro and Summerville spoke to Paul, they walked out onto the back of the north tower crane. They were about 280 feet in the air and about 40 feet taller than another nearby crane.

They got a birds-eye view of progress at the multi-use complex.

In the included video, you will see that near the shiny plastic material is where the ice rinks will go, to the right of the building is where the hotel will be and the restaurant will be right underneath us where the crane is.

The two tower cranes are the heartbeat of the HARBORcenter, when the winds blow above 45 miles per hour they can't operate and construction nearly comes to a halt.

“The tower cranes on this project are critical to the performance to the pace of construction,” said Brian Nahas, Mortenson Construction Integrated Construction Coordinator.

Operating the crane takes a lot of skill, attention to detail, patience and you can't be afraid when the crane sways a little.

Hopkins explained, "It's very important that we have our crane to crane radio because we are in each others radius, so it could be a catastrophe if someone isn't paying attention."

Looking down 20 stories, it tough to tell how close objects and people are.

Hopkins said, "When I first started, you think you're going to hit someone in the head."

Paul walks up and down the crane almost every day. "I got into better shape, my wife was pretty happy."

Once Paul is up there, he doesn't climb down until his entire shift is over. He's got his music, and says he listens to anything from the Beatles to Tool. There is even a porter potty up there with plywood around it.

It's a two year job. But for this Buffalo native, its worth it. Hopkins said, "It's the best job I've ever had."

"My father, God rest his soul, said you leave something in this world, plant a tree or something, this is going to be a lot better than a tree," said Hopkins.

Just like a tree, this new project is expected to breath new life into the city.