



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*January 12, 2014*

## **Sabres-Capitals Preview**

By Jeff Mezydlo

Associated Press

January 11, 2014

Though the result of their first game under new general manager Tim Murray was like many others during this disappointing season, the Buffalo Sabres must forge ahead amid their latest organizational move.

Considering their recent struggles in Washington, things might not get any easier Sunday when the Sabres try to avoid matching the longest road losing streak in franchise history and prevent the Capitals from a third consecutive win.

Hours after team president Pat LaFontaine announced the hiring of Murray, Buffalo (12-26-5) saw its five-game home winning streak end with a 2-1 shootout loss to Florida on Thursday.

The 50-year-old Murray is the nephew of Ottawa general manager Bryan Murray. He's spent much of his 20 years in the NHL being mentored by his uncle, including the past seven as the Senators assistant GM. LaFontaine also said Hall of Fame executive Craig Patrick will be a special adviser to assist in turning the NHL's worst team into a contender.

"I'm on a mission to bring the right people here," said LaFontaine, hired in November when GM Darcy Regier and coach Ron Rolston were fired.

"I'm still not done. We still have a lot of work."

Murray didn't waste time making his presence felt Friday when it was reported he will soon lift the interim tag from coach Ted Nolan.

"It's a clean slate here," Murray said Thursday. "There's no preconceived notions. He's the coach of the hockey team, and I'm looking forward to getting to know him."

The Sabres are 8-11-4 under Nolan and in the midst of a 6-0-2 stretch at home. However, they still have the fewest wins and points in the league, and are an NHL-worst 3-14-2 away from home.

Buffalo's 0-9-2 road slide is the second-longest in club history behind a 12-game skid Dec. 17, 2011-Jan. 21, 2012. The longest the Sabres have gone without a road victory is 23 games during the 1971-72 season, and they head to Washington having lost seven of their last eight visits.

Buffalo has totaled 13 goals in the last 11 road games and its 70 non-shootout goals overall are by far the fewest in the NHL, including four over the last four games.

However, the offense could be helped by the return of Cody Hodgson, who was activated from injured reserve Saturday. He leads the team with 19 points despite being sidelined since Dec. 19.

Buffalo was coming off a four-day break when it played Thursday but again provided little support for backup Jhonas Enroth, who made 34 saves but fell to 1-8-4. The Sabres have scored 17 goals with him in net.

"You shouldn't be tired," Nolan told the Sabres' official website. "I don't know. (Thursday) was just one of those games you just want to forget about."

Ryan Miller could be back in net looking to stymie the Capitals (22-16-6) for the second time in two weeks. In the teams' lone matchup this season, Miller made a season-high 49 saves before stopping all six shootout attempts in Buffalo's 2-1 home victory Dec. 29. Miller, however, has a 3.19 goals-against average while losing six of seven at Washington.

Alex Ovechkin's three-game goal streak in this series ended last month after he scored in all three meetings last season - all Capitals wins. He has 13 goals in 16 home contests versus Buffalo.

Ovechkin recorded his league-leading 32nd goal before assisting on Joel Ward's go-ahead score in the third period of Friday's 3-2 home win over Toronto. The Capitals have won two in a row following an 0-2-2 stretch.

"We've been waiting for wins for a bit now," Washington's Nicklas Backstrom told the NHL's official website. "That's what we're hoping. We got to play the same way."

Backstrom has five goals and eight assists in 11 home games against the Sabres.

## **Sabres prospect won't report to major junior team**

Associated Press

January 11, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Buffalo Sabres prospect Mikhail Grigorenko won't report to the Quebec Remparts after Buffalo assigned its former first round pick to the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League club on Saturday.

Grigorenko's agent, Jay Grossman, confirmed that the center won't report, but didn't provide additional details in a text message to The Associated Press.

Grigorenko posted a statement to his Facebook page, explaining his refusal to accept the demotion.

"I just want to apologize (sic) for the situation going on right now," Grigorenko wrote. "We just need to find a place for me where I can develop and be the best hockey player I can be."

The Sabres would likely prefer the 19-year-old Grigorenko play for its Rochester AHL affiliate, but an agreement between the NHL and the Canadian Hockey League doesn't allow teenagers to play in the AHL.

Buffalo tried to send Grigorenko to Rochester on a conditioning assignment in November, but the NHL denied the request.

Grigorenko has dominated in juniors, posting 139 points in two seasons with Quebec, including 30 goals in 33 games last season.

His statement expressed gratitude for the opportunity in North America. Grigorenko thanked the organizations in Quebec and Buffalo and said he loves being a member of the Sabres.

"Now I would just ask all of you guys to respect me and the time I'm taking to think about my career," Grigorenko said. "It might be hard to understand but it is even harder for a teenager."

Grigorenko recently returned from the World Junior Ice Hockey Championships in Malmo, Sweden, where he led Russia to the bronze medal with eight points in seven games.

"He was a little bit upset I imagine, but this is non-negotiable," said interim head coach Ted Nolan. "It's one of those things that has to be done."

But Grigorenko has struggled to adapt to the NHL in parts of two seasons, with just eight points in 43 career games since Buffalo selected him with 12th pick of the 2012 draft.

"You look at this draft year, there are only two in the year who are playing and one's having a little trouble," Nolan said, adding, "Development is crucial."

"If he wants it enough and he wants to be here, then he'll work at it."

The Sabres also announced that leading scorer Cody Hodgson has been activated from the injured reserve, giving the improving team another boost in its quest to escape the bottom of the league's standings.

New Buffalo general manager Tim Murray has also recalled defenseman Brayden McNabb from Buffalo's AHL affiliate in Rochester and sent defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen and left wing Johan Larsson down to Rochester.

Buffalo is 6-4-3 since Dec. 10 as Nolan has started to turn around a team that opened the year with the worst start in franchise history.

Hodgson is tied for the team lead with 8 goals and is first on the Sabres with 11 assists and 19 points, but has missed 10 of Buffalo's last 13 games.

Both Hodgson (hand) and center Ville Leino (lower body) are expected to return for Sunday's game in Washington. Leino has just six points in 26 games this season.

Ristolainen also starred in the World Junior tournament, scoring the overtime game-winning goal for Finland in the Final against Sweden. The eighth overall pick of the 2013 draft has one goal in 19 games for Buffalo and has not played poorly.

The Sabres started the year 4-15-1, prompting the firing of general manager Darcy Regier and head coach Ron Rolston on Nov. 13. The same day, Buffalo owner Terry Pegula hired Pat LaFontaine as team president, who installed Nolan as interim head coach and began a search for the team's new general manager.

Murray was hired Thursday as the seventh general manager in franchise history, and LaFontaine also tabbed Hockey Hall of Fame member Craig Patrick as a special adviser.

Nolan was asked about rumors that Murray was prepared to remove the interim tag from his head coaching job.

"I hope he does, but it's not one of my things I'm thinking about," Nolan said. "It's trying to get this team better right now and coaching this team to the best of my ability. Whatever happens down the road will happen. I feel confident in my ability but we'll see."

"We had brief discussions about it but not necessarily directly at it."

## **Sabres execs must be on same page**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 11, 2014

The Ottawa Senators are hardly a mom-and-pop store (or, more accurately with Bryan and Tim Murray, an uncle-and-nephew shop). They're a multimillion-dollar business with long list of employees.

That said, the Senators seem small compared to Tim Murray's new team.

The Sabres' general manager has joined an organization that is keeping the payroll department busy. Owner Terry Pegula said on his opening day there was no salary cap on scouting or player-development budgets. That obviously goes for advisers, executives and assistants, too.

Buffalo boasts 57 people with ties to the hockey department, which includes everyone from Pat LaFontaine, the president of hockey operations, to Tim Macre, the athletic trainer, to Barbara Meyer, the mental skills coach. Just five years ago, the Sabres had 28 such people on the payroll. The scouting department is included in those numbers. It has expanded from 11 to 25.

Ottawa, meanwhile, lists 33 hockey people in its media guide. That includes 13 scouts. It will take Murray time to learn how to deal with the increase and manage the burgeoning staff. "It's good to have a lot of good people around," he said. "I've come from the background of a small staff, a small quality staff that crosses over, that sees everybody and everybody is involved in the decision.

"I'm walking into a situation that's different. That doesn't mean it's bad. I just have to get my head wrapped around that, and I haven't been able to do that yet."

The numbers in Buffalo could get even larger. Murray has made plenty of connections during his 21 years in the NHL, and he'll want to bring aboard some allies. It remains to be seen whether there will be turnover or if the newcomers merely join the present staff. Either way, it will be interesting to see how the Sabres' hockey department interacts and matures. There's nothing wrong with hiring as many quality people as you can, but there has to be a defined hierarchy.

"We're growing, and we want to be the best hockey department and best hockey team, best coaching staff and try to be the best in all areas," LaFontaine said. "If you bring somebody in here with an agenda and an ego, they don't work together. Craig Patrick took the job and couldn't have been more excited. Tim Murray took the job, he couldn't have been more excited. We'll all work together as a team."

It's easy to say, hard to do. It can be tough for a group to come to a consensus. The News has four people who write about the Sabres. If you asked us to rank the five most valuable players on the team, you'd probably get four different lists.

Hopefully for the Sabres and their fans, the team's brain trust continually shares the same vision. It would be tricky if LaFontaine has one idea, Patrick and the pro scouts desire something else and Murray doesn't like any of it. But that's why the Sabres took two months to make the hires, so they could find people with similar philosophies about building a team.

"It's kind of the Office of the General Manager, but Tim's going to wear the hat," LaFontaine said.

### More on Murray

There are plenty of leftovers from Thursday's introduction of Murray and Patrick. Here are a few:

- The original plan was for separate news conferences. The Sabres were set to introduce Murray as the GM on Tuesday and Patrick as a special assistant Friday. The blizzard pushed Murray's day back, so LaFontaine moved Patrick's day up.
- Murray was eager to see what teams had offered Buffalo for its players, specifically Ryan Miller, Steve Ott and Matt Moulson.

"I know teams have called the organization," Murray said. "I have to get those files and I have to see what the interest was. If it was a light interest, if they're phoning offering a third-round pick or something, then there's not going to be a trade."

- Murray, a scout at heart, appeared more interested in the future Sabres than the current ones. The main reason he's looking forward to the Olympic break is so he can go watch draft-eligible players.

It sounds like he'll also tweak the farm team. Rochester has had an overflow of veterans this season, which probably won't be repeated. (I think the main reason the Sabres went out of their way to stock the Amerks is so they'd perform well and allow the organization to say, "Hey, look at our prospects," which would be a distraction from the last-place NHL club.)

"You have to have the atmosphere and the opportunity for your kids to play important minutes," Murray said. "Going forward here, I would like to put kids in prime positions, the positions that you feel down the road they're going to be in up here. I don't want to see a first-line center or a second-line center playing a fourth-line center role down there."

- The GM confirmed the reports that he doesn't smile much and can be gruff, but below the harsh exterior is an optimist.

“Sometimes the bright side isn't real bright, but there's always a bright side to every situation,” he said.

## **Sabres notebook: Miller taking wait-and-see approach**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 11, 2014

Ryan Miller knew what was coming when he gathered with reporters Saturday at Bud Bakewell Arena. So has he met with new general manager Tim Murray?

Miller smirked and said, “Nope. Next question.”

Joke was on the media. Miller continued. Between the team’s game Thursday, today’s game in Washington, Friday’s off day, Saturday’s practice and Murray’s schedule, the pair hasn’t connected yet. But they obviously will soon.

“I’m not sure it’s something that’s going to come up for a little while. We’ll see what happens,” Miller said. “It seems like he’s put in a lot of time evaluating talent and that’s a good place to start. He’s been around some good organizations so let’s see what direction he wants to take it and go from there.”

Miller, of course, is a pending unrestricted free agent and a likely target for many teams at the March 5 trade deadline unless the Sabres sign him to a long-term extension before then. Pat LaFontaine, the team’s president of hockey operations, made it clear Thursday that is the team’s current preference.

“It’s nice of him but I still need to kind of see what’s going on in the bigger picture,” said Miller, who said he did not talk contract with LaFontaine when the former Sabre arrived Nov. 13. “He was just getting his bearings and getting a look around so I guess it’s time to talk to him again and see what’s going on with his side of things.”

Miller said he expects the process to move on the Sabres’ timeline and not to wait until after the Olympics, since the trade deadline is just a week after the Sochi Games end.

“It’s up to them how they want to handle it. Either way I’m fine, professional, go and do my job,” he said. “Olympics, I can definitely make that something that’s separate. Just trying to use the next few weeks to see where we’re at for things and also play some hockey.”

Because of Tuesday’s postponement, Miller will have gone eight days without doing that. He’ll start today in Verizon Center against the Capitals, a team he stoned for 56 saves on 56 shots – including all six shootout attempts – in the Sabres’ 2-1 win here Dec. 29.

“We have to be disciplined. It’s up to the boys in front of me to do their job and I’ll worry about mine,” Miller said. “I’ll clean up anything I can and try to be there for them. Hopefully as a group we’re all doing what we’re supposed to do.”

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Interim coach Ted Nolan on Murray: "I really like him. He's direct. He knows people. He knows hockey players. As a coach, you want a person who's going to load your arsenal up with some good talent."

Nolan said he has had no discussions about removing the interim tag from his job status, in the wake of Murray telling a Toronto radio station Friday that could happen soon.

"I hope it does," Nolan said. "But it's not one of my things I'm thinking about. It's trying to get this team better right now, coaching this team to the best of my ability."

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Cody Hodgson (wrist) and Ville Leino (lower body) both practiced fully and Nolan said both will play today. Hodgson, who has eight goals and 19 points, has missed eight games and Leino has been out for four.

"Cody is one of our better players, a dynamic player," Nolan said. "We're expecting some big things from him to move the puck and play the way he's capable of playing. The rest may have done him good. He looks fresh."

Hodgson said he tried to keep a positive perspective on watching at home or in the press box.

"It's good to watch and learn some things about the team, how I can fit in a little better," he said. "At night, you don't do much besides watch hockey."

Hodgson was centering Matt D'Agostini and Steve Ott in practice Saturday. Leino was playing with Brian Flynn and Linus Omark. John Scott is likely to be a healthy scratch today.

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The Sabres sent Brayden McNabb to play with the short-handed Rochester Amerks Friday night and recalled him Saturday. Center Johan Larsson was returned to Rochester. Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen was officially returned to the Amerks from his loan to Team Finland for the World Junior Championships, where he scored the Golden Goal in overtime against Sweden.

## **Changes in Sabreland were long overdue**

By Jerry Sullivan

Buffalo News

January 11, 2014

On the day Terry Pegula took over the Sabres, I gave him a free bit of advice: If he insisted on keeping Darcy Regier as general manager, he should at least bring in an outside hockey man, a fresh set of eyes to oversee the operation and lead it to a brighter future.

Pegula didn't listen. He dug in his heels, swore his allegiance to Regier and Lindy Ruff, and let his team continue on its inexorable downward spiral.

The new owner predicted it would take three years to win a Stanley Cup. Instead, as we approach the three-year anniversary of Pegula's arrival, the Sabres are the worst team in the NHL.

Pegula was too slow to act, too stubborn to realize that things move more swiftly in pro sports than in the business world. Like his former GM, he mistook foot-dragging for virtue, and it cost him dearly.

But finally, and grudgingly, Pegula got around to transforming the stale culture of his organization. He got rid of Regier and stumbled upon Pat LaFontaine as the man to turn around the franchise.

Even then, there was dumb luck involved. Pegula wanted to make LaFontaine the GM, perpetuating a monolithic management structure. Patty knew he wasn't qualified to be a GM. And he realized that the Sabres needed a more modern, expanded NHL management model.

And so it was on Thursday that LaFontaine, the team president, sat with two respected new management figures on his flanks: Tim Murray, his new general manager; and Craig Patrick, a Hall of Famer and long-time NHL personnel man who will serve as a special assistant and advisor.

That's TWO sets of eyes to watch over the GM, a radical departure from the Regier era and an overdue concession to the move toward broadened upper management in today's NHL.

"It's divided now," LaFontaine said. "The traditional general manager that did everything, that's not the case today. If you look at other organizations – general manager, two assistants; or president, general manager, assistant. They're really a team. They make team decisions."

LaFontaine called it a culture change. It's clear that he felt the old GM model held the Sabres back. Pegula deserves credit for expanding the scouting staff and the

organization as a whole. But it doesn't matter if you don't have bold, creative leadership at the top.

There's a division of power now. This also diminishes the power of what LaFontaine called "the general manager's office." He made it clear that Murray will answer to him. There will be times when LaFontaine and Patrick overrule their GM. So be it. In any competitive organization, creative tension can be a good thing.

Murray is 50; he has been around the NHL and is considered one of the top talent evaluators in the sport. Still, this is his first GM job. It will be good to have an experienced hockey man like Patrick to lean on for advice. Murray seems to have an edge. He says he's not afraid to take chances and make mistakes. Sounds like the anti-Darcy.

Strong leaders aren't afraid to be challenged. That's what makes for great organizations. Murray has an intimate knowledge of today's NHL. Ultimately, it's his vision that needs to drive things. He has to identify the players who can give the Sabres the tough competitive edge they've sorely lacked.

They cannot be ruled by sentiment, which is one of the reasons they got into this mess. It's great to have an owner who is a fan. But Pegula's fondness for Ruff and Regier got in the way.

Pegula's intransigence on Regier forced him to search for a new GM in the middle of a season, an Olympic season, no less. Murray looks like a solid hire. Still, they would have had a deeper pool of candidates if the search had been conducted in the offseason.

Murray also inherits a touchy situation with his coach, Ted Nolan. Nolan is an immensely popular and politically charged figure in this town. It was short-term genius to make Nolan the interim coach, which helped to mollify an angry, disaffected fan base. But that makes it difficult for the new GM. Murray has the same dilemma as Regier when he took over in 1997. If he doesn't retain Nolan, he's a villain. If he keeps him, people will wonder if he was instructed to do so as a condition of getting the job.

"Ted was brought in, obviously, before Tim came in," Pegula said Thursday. "But Ted and Pat have a strong relationship, so ..."

Murray said there were no preconditions. He said Nolan is "his guy" for now. Nolan has gotten an honest effort from the Sabres since taking over. He might be just the guy to lead a young, evolving team in a difficult transition. He certainly deserves a chance.

But Murray can't bow to sentiment. He needs to take a hard, objective look at Nolan and decide if he's the right guy to entrust with all these kids. Most new

GMs want to hire their own coach. If Murray knows of a future coaching star in need of a chance, he should push for him.

It comes down to players, however. The Sabres have a bushel of high draft picks and millions to spend. Murray's main task is finding gems in the draft, free agency, and on other NHL rosters.

The word is, Murray knows the league; he has an opinion on every significant player in the sport. If so, he'll have a chance to prove it. Can he identify the uncovered gems in the NHL? Can he find the next Michael Peca or Daniel Briere, a star just waiting to emerge?

There's plenty of work ahead for the new management team. There's a lot of hockey knowledge in that front office now, a lot of bold, creative minds. No doubt, they'll fight and argue and disagree at times. But they won't be afraid to act, to make the big moves.

"You don't get to 30th place overnight. We're not going to get to first overnight," LaFontaine said. "We're going to slowly work our way. But you've got to build it right. When you pour a foundation ... "

The foundation is vital. But an NHL organization also needs to be strong at the top. No, it won't happen overnight. But they're finally emerging from the darkness.

## **Sabres' Grigorenko balking at junior move**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 11, 2014

The on-again, off-again development of Mikhail Grigorenko turned into a bizarre saga Saturday as the Buffalo Sabres returned the center to his junior hockey team – only to learn that Grigorenko was refusing the assignment.

Grigorenko's agent, Jay Grossman, confirmed to The News via email that Grigorenko would not be reporting to the Quebec Remparts but did not answer inquiries as to what could be next for the Russian who was Buffalo's top draft choice in 2012.

Grigorenko was on loan to the Russian team that won the bronze medal Sunday in the World Junior Championships in Malmo, Sweden, and returned to the Sabres for Thursday's morning skate. He didn't play in the shootout loss that night to Florida and was not at practice Saturday at Riverside's Bud Bakewell Arena.

After practice, interim coach Ted Nolan confirmed Grigorenko had been sent back to junior.

The Sabres, who flew to Washington for today's game against the Capitals, had no official comment on Grigorenko Saturday night. An NHL source said Pat LaFontaine, the Sabres' president of hockey operations, met with Grigorenko for about a half-hour Saturday and that the 19-year-old was upset with the team's decision.

Nolan said he was in the meeting with LaFontaine and new general manager Tim Murray, and backed that account when asked about the decision after practice Saturday.

"He was a little bit upset I imagine but this is non-negotiable," Nolan said. "It's one of those things that has to be done. There's only a certain amount you can direct and put people in position. It comes down to whether they want it or not. If he wants it, he wants to be here, he'll work at it."

Grigorenko had reportedly cooled off by the end of the meeting and understood the Sabres' stance that he should return to junior to play 20-25 minutes a game on a top line and try to push his team toward the Memorial Cup.

Grossman, however, is believed to be pushing for Grigorenko to stay in the NHL. Late Saturday afternoon, Grigorenko issued a statement on his Facebook page where he apologized for the situation.

“We just need to find a place for me where I can develop and be the best hockey player I can be,” the statement said in part. “I came to North America 3 years ago coming from a home in Russia where I never had a bed, a shower or heat. ... I work everyday to be the best hockey player I can be so I can provide for my family, have a better life. ... Because hockey is all I have, my passion, who I am.

“I am so grateful I played in Quebec. ... I’m also so proud I was drafted in the NHL by the Buffalo Sabres organization. I love the city and people there. I love my neighborhood and I love the guys. They also have owners who want everyone to be happy and love their team so much.

“Now I would just ask all of you guys to respect me and the time I’m taking to think about my career. It might be hard to understand but it is even harder for a teenager.”

The NHL source said the Sabres would love to send Grigorenko to Rochester so he can develop physically and improve his two-way play but that is not an option for a player with junior eligibility remaining. Sabres officials, the source said, did not learn of the apparent change of heart about Quebec until they landed in Washington and are pondering their next move.

Grigorenko has two goals – both in the Nov. 8 loss at Anaheim – and one assist in 18 games this year, after posting one goal and four assists in 25 games last season. When he played his 10th game last year, the Sabres burned the first year of his entry-level contract. This is year two and the deal expires after next season.

Tabbed as a potential top-three draft choice heading into the 2012 draft, Grigorenko’s stock fell amid questions about his attitude and work ethic. His junior coach at the time, Hall of Fame goalie and current Colorado Avalanche coach Patrick Roy, pegged Grigorenko’s subpar play in the 2012 Quebec League playoffs as a product of a bout with mononucleosis and insisted NHL teams would not be disappointed if they drafted him.

Roy, in fact, had a chance meeting with then Sabres-coach Lindy Ruff during draft weekend in Pittsburgh where he extolled the virtue of his player on a Buffalo coach long believed to be hesitant to draft Russians.

The Sabres picked him but didn’t get a good gauge on Grigorenko because the lockout wiped out training camp and the exhibition schedule in 2012. They were criticized when they burned the first year on the deal for a player who did not show much passion on the ice and was accused by some teammates of a poor work ethic off it.

Last summer, General Manager Darcy Regier said Grigorenko would have a roster spot. Coach Ron Rolston, however, wouldn’t guarantee that during training camp and made Grigorenko a healthy scratch five times this season. Grigorenko

played three games for Nolan and did not get a point. He has not played for the Sabres since Nov. 27.

“He’s a young player. There’s not too many 19-year-olds outside of the Crosbys and Malkins that play,” Nolan said, referring to Pittsburgh stars Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. “We’re not looking at what he can do now. We’re looking at what he can do down the road when he develops.”

## **Sabres' Weber has new role**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

January 10, 2014

First it was Henrik Tallinder who went down with an injury. Then Tyler Myers was suspended.

The Buffalo Sabres defensive unit was down two big, experienced defensemen. Which meant it was time for Mike Weber to step up.

He's made a positive impression on interim coach Ted Nolan, who made him an assistant captain on Thursday in place of the injured Tallinder.

"This guy, he competes all the time," Nolan said.

"It's an honor to get an extra letter stitched on your jersey especially in the National Hockey League," Weber said after learning he was named assistant captain. "I've tried to be a leader without it for a long time. I've always tried to play the same way, play a hard game and be hard to play against and the most important thing is to be a good teammate in the locker room."

Weber had eight hits in Thursday night's 2-1 shootout loss to the Florida Panthers, playing over 22 minutes.

It was just a few seconds shy of his season high in minutes which came Oct. 23 against Boston (22:14) and was the fifth time this season he's played 20 or more minutes in a game.

But it hasn't necessarily been a pretty season for the 26-year-old defender in his sixth season with the Sabres. At least in the plus/minus category.

Through the first five games he was a minus-eight, including a minus-four against Columbus on Oct. 10.

He ranks third last in the NHL in plus/minus rating for the season at a minus-20, which is also the worst among all defensemen in the league.

"The beginning of the season was just so rough for everyone. I took the brunt of that," Weber said. "It was one of those things where I was always raised to play the game one way. I just kept with it, stuck with it, battled through it. Find your own game. Don't try to do too much."

"When it was really bad, I maybe got caught trying to help out too much and that's not my game. I'm just trying to slowly get back into my game and into my role and what I need to do. We've been having some decent success so far."

Weber's game has improved lately. He attributes the evolution during the season to simplicity – getting back to his game and not trying to be anyone else.

“I think my whole career I've tried to be a hard-to-play-against player,” Weber said. “If I'm not hard to play against, I'm pretty useless. I wouldn't be here. So that's my job. That's what I'm trying to bring to the team. Ted talks about it a lot. You've got to bring one little thing to the game to help your teammates win and I'm just trying to help us win.”

The win did not come Thursday and the overall effort in front of goaltender Jhonas Enroth was disappointing. The Sabres took a 1-0 lead in the second period and killed a number of power plays, including 31 seconds of 5-on-3 time, but failed to find a way to close out the win.

“I thought we got off to a sluggish start,” Weber said. “We picked it up through the first. The second period we had a couple of back-to-back kills and the 5-on-3 gave us a little boost. We had a strong second.

“Again, it's going to come back down to we've got to find a way to score goals. We've got to find ways defensively in the third period when we're up goals to really step on guys' throats and then end it.”

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New general manager Tim Murray made the media rounds on Friday, going on a variety of sports talk radio and TV shows.

In his interview with SN 590 The Fan in Toronto, Murray indicated that the “interim” label in front of head coach Ted Nolan's title may be removed in the near future.

When asked if the interim tag was still on Nolan, Murray said, “Today it is. Right now it is, yes. I talked to Pat” LaFontaine “like twice for 15 minutes yesterday and today. I went into his office today just to finalize my contract. So yes, the interim tag is still on but I could see where we probably will do something for him there where it won't be going on too long.”

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A pair of goals were disallowed for the Florida Panthers on Thursday night. Turns out neither were deemed reviewable.

In the third period, the Panthers scored the go-ahead goal but the referee stopped play due to an injured Florida player at the other end of the ice, making the play unreviewable. In the shootout, the referee determined that Florida's Jonathan Huberdeau used his stick to push Jhonas Enroth's pad and the puck across the goal line.

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The Sabres had Friday off as mandated in the collective bargaining agreement. ... The team returns to practice today before traveling to Washington for a 3 p.m. game Sunday against the Capitals.

## **Murray: Drafting well is the key to winning in the NHL**

By Kevin Oklobzija  
Democrat and Chronicle  
January 10, 2014

New Buffalo Sabres general manager Tim Murray has been employed by NHL teams since 1993-94, when the Detroit Red Wings added him to their scouting staff.

He knows hockey talent. He knows how to evaluate his own players and those who play for other teams. And he also believes prospect development is the one true way to build a winning franchise.

"You build a team through the draft," Murray said at today's news conference. "Good drafting allows you to trade well and you use free agency to put you over the top."

Murray, 50, has been with the Ottawa Senators as assistant general manager, a post he held since the 2007-08 season. He was hired by his uncle, Senators GM Bryan Murray.

And while he has tagged along with Bryan for much of his two decades in NHL hockey operations, -- starting with his initial hire, and going to the Florida Panthers in 1994-95, and to the Anaheim Ducks in 2002-03, and finally to Ottawa -- he was there on merit, not because of nepotism. His only hire not associated to Bryan was in 2005, when he joined the New York Rangers as assistant director of player personnel.

He knows hockey talent; his own and that on other teams. Others around hockey say he has a scouting report on everyone.

But he not only knows what players have done and can do today, he's praised for his ability to project what the player will eventually be able (or not able) to do. That's perhaps the most important quality. It's a whole lot more important to know where a player will fit into the future as you build stability and seek consistency.

The Rochester Americans will be a very important part of the Sabres reclamation effort. Very few draft picks can step right into the NHL. Many need to mature, to grow, to learn, or to transform their game.

Ottawa has relied on the Binghamton Senators for preparing draft picks for the NHL. Countless draft picks selected during Murray's time with the Senators organization -- Mika Zibanejad, Colin Greening, Patrick Wiercioch, Zack Smith, Erik Condra, Eric Gryba and Robin Lehner -- spent considerable time in Binghamton.

"We've had a lot of young players, but good ones," said Tom Mitchell, part owner and executive vice president of the Binghamton franchise. "Their eye for talent has been exceptionally good."

A good deal of that was Murray. "He's had the final decision" on the AHL roster, including veteran free agents.

For proof of what Murray said about strong drafting providing a position of strength when it comes to making a trade, see the deal between Ottawa and Anaheim. Sens draft pick Jakob Silfverberg to the Ducks in the deal that brought Bobby Ryan to the Senators.

Murray said he will begin evaluating all departments and all aspects of the hockey operations. He wants to know what he has, on the ice and in the hockey department.

"There are some good pieces here," he said. "(I will) put an emphasis on the development on the people that are already here."

He said he has not made any decision on whether the "interim" tag will be removed from coach Ted Nolan's title. While he said he "I know Ted from arenas; from arenas watching games. I've known him a long time on a casual basis," he has never worked with him. Thus, he needs time to get a feel for his coaching staff.

"Whatever happens going forward," Murray said, "will determine everything else. There are no preconceived notions."

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Pat LaFontaine, the Sabres president of hockey operations, also hired former Pittsburgh Penguins GM Craig Patrick as a special assistant and advisor to the hockey department.

Patrick brings a world of experience to the team. As the Penguins general manager from 1989 to 2006, he was primary architect for Stanley Cup championships teams in '91 and '92 and his draft picks were key components in Pittsburgh's Cup win in 2009.

Patrick, of course, also was Herb Brooks' assistant coach and the assistant GM for the Miracle On Ice Olympic team in 1980.

Strangely, LaFontaine didn't really expound on Patrick's hiring. When asked by a reporter during the news conference about Patrick's specific role, LaFontaine said: "He's going to be a special assistant and advsior. He's going to be around."

So, essentially, LaFontaine played Ned Braden from Slap Shot: "That's what it says in the yearbook, Jim."

Patrick was working for the Columbus Blue Jackets as the senior advisor of hockey operations.

\* \* \* \* \*

From the Amerks today:

Jamie Tardif (concussion) skated with the team but wore the red "no-contact" sweater. He won't play this weekend and the new projected date for a possible return is Jan. 17 in Oklahoma City.

"We plan on taking him on the trip and maybe he will be ready next weekend."

No decision has been made on whether Mike Zigomanis will make the Texas/OKC trip in order to have a supervised skate with the team, but he definitely won't play next week.

\* \* \* \* \*

Actions speak so much more loudly than words. Thus, here's what the Sabres hockey department is telling us:

If you played in the World Junior Championships, are on an NHL roster and didn't win gold, you **MUST** be back with your team.

Mikhail Grigorenko played in the third-place game on Sunday in Malmo, Sweden, and was back in practice with the Sabres today.

If, however, you won gold and are on the Amerks roster, feel free to do whatever you'd like, and come back at your leisure.

Which appears to be what defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen is doing. He won gold at the WJC with Finland but is still in Helsinki or some Finnish city. He's apparently returning Friday but, since he hasn't been skating in any real practice since Sunday, he may not even play in Saturday's Amerks game at Hamilton.

Yes, maybe LaFontaine was a little busy hiring the new GM and advisor. But you'd think one of the other three or four dozen folks in the hockey department may have wanted to know where their prized future All-Star defenseman is, and perhaps they'd also want to get him back onto the ice to help their nose-diving, hurting-for-talent AHL affiliate.

Oh, and what have other organizations done: Filip Forsberg of Sweden, who lost the gold-medal game, is back with the Nashville Predators.

## **Sabres' top scorer returns vs. Capitals**

By Mike Battaglino

NHL.com

January 11, 2014

SABRES (12-26-5) at CAPITALS (22-16-6)

TV: NHL-CA, MSG-B, BELL TV, CSN-DC

Last 10: Buffalo 5-3-2, Washington 4-3-3

Season series: This is the second of three games. The Buffalo Sabres defeated the Washington Capitals 2-1 in a shootout on Dec. 29.

Big story: Sabres top scorer Cody Hodgson and forward Ville Leino returned from injury to practice Saturday and are expected to play.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Hodgson (upper body) has not played since Dec. 19 (eight games) but leads the team with 19 points and is tied for the lead with eight goals.

"I'm really excited. It's great," Hodgson told the Sabres website Saturday. "The team's been getting a lot of points, especially at home, so it's good to watch and learn some things about the team and how I can fit in a little better."

Leino missed three games with a lower-body injury.

"You don't want players to get hurt, but once in a while when they do and they have to rest their bodies, they come back with some renewed energy," Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said. "They seem both ready to go today."

Hodgson centered a line with Steve Ott and Matt D'Agostini. Leino played with Brian Flynn and Linus Omark.

The Sabres announced that center Mikhail Grigorenko would be loaned to the Quebec Remparts of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, but his agent told The Associated Press the 19-year-old would not report.

Goalie Ryan Miller will start. Defenseman Tyler Myers will serve the second of a three-game suspension for an illegal check to the head of New Jersey Devils forward Dainius Zubrus on Jan. 4.

Capitals: Washington has 50 points in 44 games. Last season, the Capitals had 50 points in 44 games, but needed an eight-game winning streak to get there.

"We've touched on it a little bit," defenseman John Carlson told Monumental Network. "For a team like us that is so talented and has all the guns that we need, we've got goaltending and defense, we just need to put it together.

"And that's our thing, it's about us, it's not about the other team. I think we did it last year, too, when we went through a little bit of a slump and then we came out of that and we kept rising. That's our goal here, and I think everyone knows that we're capable of it, and it's time to do it."

The Capitals were 0-5 in one-goal games decided in regulation before defeating the Tampa Bay Lightning 4-3 Thursday and the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-2 Friday.

"Obviously you'd like to have games in the bank in the second or third period and not have to worry about battling games to the end," Carlson said. "But maybe that's what we need right now is just a little character check, and I think we've shown that the past two games."

Philipp Grubauer likely will be back in goal after Braden Holtby and Michal Neuvirth started the past two.

Who's hot: Ott has an assist in each of his past two games. D'Agostini has a goal and an assist in his past two games. ... Capitals forward Alex Ovechkin has five points in a four-game point streak. Center Nicklas Backstrom has four points in a four-game streak.

Injury report: Sabres forward Cody McCormick (upper body) practiced for the first time since sustaining the injury Dec. 17. Forward Drew Stafford (upper body), forward Kevin Porter (undisclosed) and defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body) skated before practice. ... Capitals defenseman Jack Hillen (tibia surgery) is out.

## **Blue Jackets notebook: Craig Patrick leaves front office for similar job with Sabres**

By Shawn Mitchell  
Columbus Dispatch  
January 10, 2014

Blue Jackets senior adviser Craig Patrick has left the team to take a similar position with the Buffalo Sabres.

Patrick, a former general manager of the Pittsburgh Penguins and New York Rangers, was hired by former Blue Jackets general manager Scott Howson to an advisory role in December 2011. Patrick's input had decreased since Howson was fired last February.

"Craig is a consummate professional and gentleman who brought valuable experience and insight to the club, and for that we are grateful," Blue Jackets president of hockey operations John Davidson said in a statement. "He was presented with a terrific opportunity in Buffalo, and we wish him all the best."

Patrick, 67, is also known for his involvement with USA Hockey. He was an assistant coach and assistant general manager of the U.S. team that won gold at the 1980 Olympics and was the general manager at the 2002 games.

Patrick, inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2001, will be a special assistant and adviser to the hockey department of the rebuilding Sabres. Buffalo also formally announced the hiring of first-time general manager Tim Murray yesterday.

"I'm really looking forward to being part of it," Patrick said at an introductory news conference in Buffalo. "I've had many rebuilds in my career. I was a GM for 23 years and rebuilt a lot of teams. This is going to be fun."

## **Prospect Mikhail Grigorenko won't report to junior, future with Sabres unclear**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 12, 2014

BUFFALO – Interim coach Ted Nolan said Mikhail Grigorenko “was a little bit upset” when the Sabres told the 19-year-old prospect he was going back to the QMJHL’s Quebec Remparts.

“But this is non-negotiable,” Nolan said Saturday inside the Riverside Ice Rink. “It’s one of those things that has to be done.”

The Sabres didn’t understand just how much the demotion irked the Russian center.

Grigorenko won’t be reporting to the junior club, his agent, Jay Grossman, told the Times Herald hours later. He declined further comment until they discussed the matter with the Sabres.

On his Facebook page, Grigorenko, who could get suspended, apologized for the “situation going on right now.”

“We just need to find a place for me where I can develop and be the best hockey player I can be,” he wrote.

Grigorenko wrote about his childhood, providing for his family and his gratefulness toward the Remparts, Sabres and Buffalo.

“Now I would just ask all of you guys to respect me and the time I’m taking to think about my career,” he wrote. “It might be hard to understand but it is even harder for a teenager.”

Remparts general manager Philippe Boucher, a former Sabres defenseman, told the Times Herald the youngster’s “just thinking right now.”

“It’s hard to take,” Boucher said. “I was in the exact same spot at 19 years old when I was sent down. It’s a tough spot to be put in.”

He added: “The Sabres sent him here. They feel like it’s the best option. We’re going to see what happens.”

The move was hardly surprising. Nolan hinted at it earlier this week when the world junior championship, where the Sabres sent Grigorenko for a month, ended.

Grigorenko's been a frequent healthy scratch and has seen some fourth-line duty throughout his short career. He has three goals and eight points in 43 NHL games, including two goals and three points in 18 appearances this season.

Nolan said he met with new GM Tim Murray and president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine about the move.

"That's another managerial decision (for) what's best for Grigorenko for the long-term being a Buffalo Sabre," said Nolan, whose club plays this afternoon in Washington against the Capitals.

When Grigorenko, the 12th overall pick in 2012, returned Thursday, he said he wanted to stay in the NHL.

"Everybody wants to play in the National Hockey League," Nolan said. "But this is the best league in the world."

He added: "Development is crucial, and talking with Tim and with Pat, that's what we really want to do is develop."

After burning a year of his entry-level contract, the Sabres' old regime also returned Grigorenko to junior in March before recalling him a month later. Former GM Darcy Regier then guaranteed Grigorenko an NHL roster spot during the summer.

The new regime has been trying to find a place for Grigorenko to play for months.

The NHL rejected his conditioning assignment to Rochester in November, days after LaFontaine and Nolan took over. As teenager with Canadian Hockey League eligibility, Grigorenko can't play in AHL.

Grigorenko convinced LaFontaine and Nolan to let him play, and he made three appearances before the Sabres sent him to his third world junior tournament, an assignment Grigorenko wanted.

"There's not too many 19-year-olds outside of maybe the (Sidney) Crosbys and the (Evgeni) Malkins that play," Nolan said. "If you look at his draft year, I think there's only two that are playing, and one's having a little trouble. So we're not looking at what he can do now; we're looking at what he can do down the road. He's only 19."

Nolan said he was "hoping" Grigorenko would seize the assignment to Quebec.

"There's only a certain amount you can direct and put people in position," he said. "But it comes down to whether they want it or not, and if he wants it enough, he wants to be here, he'll work out."

There is, of course, the lure of the KHL, a Russian league generally regarded as the world's second-best. Many NHL players have returned home, including former New Jersey star, Ilya Kovalchuk, a Grossman client who left the Devils in the summer.

But Grigorenko has spoken about his strong desire to play in the NHL. He left home with his mother at 17 to play for the Remparts and learn English.

While Grigorenko has struggled in the NHL, he's dominated junior hockey, compiling 70 goals and 139 points in 92 games with the Remparts.

Still, Boucher believes he can learn plenty in a third season.

"You can learn every day wherever you are," he said. "Go through the roster of the Canadian and U.S. team and see how many guys played college or junior at 19. A lot of the superstars in the NHL did. There's a lot to learn at the junior level."

## **Goalie Ryan Miller still waiting to discuss future with Sabres' new regime**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 12, 2014

BUFFALO – Ryan Miller appreciates Pat LaFontaine's kind words. The hockey icon lauded his franchise goalie last week, telling reporters the Sabres would do their best to accommodate the former Vezina Trophy winner if he wants to stay here.

"It's nice of him," Miller, an unrestricted free agent following the season, said Saturday inside the Riverside Ice Rink. "I still need to kind of see what's going on in the bigger picture."

Miller said he still hasn't spoken to new general manager Tim Murray, who took over Thursday. He last chatted with LaFontaine shortly after he became president of hockey operations in mid-November.

"He was just getting his bearing and getting a look around," Miller said after the Sabres prepared for this afternoon's tilt in Washington. "So I guess it's time to talk to him again, see what's going on his side of things. I'm going to wait to have any conversations with those guys before I start getting too far along."

The clock could be ticking on Miller's Sabres career. The NHL trade deadline hits March 5.

The 33-year-old, one of league's best netminders, is enjoying a terrific season despite the Sabres' struggles. Teams surely covet him.

Miller only knows about Murray from "media reports."

"I haven't had a chance to meet him," he said. "It seems like he's put in a lot of time just evaluating talent. It's a good place to start. He's been around some good organizations. Let's see what direction he wants to take it and go from there."

Miller has said he wants actions, not words, from the Sabres. He doesn't have a timeline to speak with the new regime. He begins a two-week Olympic assignment as one of Team USA's goalie for the Sochi Games early next month.

"It's on the team's timeline, I guess, because we only have a week after that until the trade deadline (following the Olympics)," Miller said. "It's up to them how they want to handle it. Either way, I'm fine. (I'm) professional. I'll go out and do my job. Olympics, I can definitely make that something separate.

"(I'm) just trying to use these next few weeks to kind of see where we're at with things but also play some hockey. I need to keep myself in a good place and

probably have some games ahead of me where I got to work in and push to have a starting job over in Sochi.”

Miller hasn't played since last Sunday. Snow forced a postponement Tuesday and backup Jhonas Enroth started Thursday.

“Kind of an odd week for me,” Miller said.

With the Sabres off Friday and the First Niagara Center booked, Miller tried looking for ice at local rinks but couldn't find any.

It'll be hard for Miller to replicate his dynamic Dec. 29 outing against the Capitals, when he made 49 saves and stopped all six shooters in a 2-1 shootout win, this afternoon in Washington. Superstar Alex Ovechkin pumped 12 shots on Miller last meeting.

That performance might've been the best of Miller's 530-game career.

“Just have to be disciplined,” Miller said about what the Sabres must do today. “It's up to the boys in front of me to do their job. I'll worry about mine. I'll clean up everything I can and try to be there for them.”

In other news, Nolan said he hasn't had any lengthy discussions with Murray about his future. Murray told a Canadian radio station Friday that Nolan probably wouldn't have the interim tag much longer.

“I mentioned before, one of these days I hope it does,” Nolan said about the tag getting removed. “But it's not one of my things I'm thinking about. I'm trying to get this team better right now.”

He added: “We had brief discussions about it but not necessarily at it.”

Nolan said he “really” likes Murray.

“He's direct,” Nolan said. “He knows people. He knows hockey players. As a coach, you want a person that's going to load your arsenal up with some good talent. The only thing we have to do down the road is open up the gateway to development.”

Sabres defenseman Mike Weber called Nolan “an extremely passionate coach” and was happy to hear he should be sticking around.

“The results might not be there every night, but true hockey fans and true hockey people can see how far we're coming and how hard we're battling now,” said Weber, who was recently awarded a temporary assistant captaincy by Nolan.

With centers Cody Hodgson and Ville Leino healthy, the Sabres sent Johan Larsson to Rochester on Saturday. Both will play this afternoon, Nolan said.

“We just need him on a consistent basis to get those 22, 24 minutes a game,” Nolan said about Larsson.

Hodgson, out the last eight games, was injured blocking a shot Dec. 21.

“I don’t really know how to explain it, just unlucky, I guess,” Hodgson said.

Hodgson centered Steve Ott and Matt D’Agostini on Saturday.

Leino (lower body) missed three games.

“You don’t want players to get hurt,” Nolan said about Leino. “But once in a while when they do they rest their bodies and they come back with some renewed energy.”

The Sabres also recalled defenseman Brayden McNabb on Saturday following a one-game assignment.

## **Poor goal support frustrating Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 11, 2014

BUFFALO – Jhonas Enroth walked over to a hoard of cameras and reporters looking sullen following the Sabres' 2-1 shootout loss to Florida.

The backup goalie stopped 34 shots Thursday, keeping his teammates in a contest they deserved to lose in regulation.

But the Sabres only mustered a single goal for Enroth again, the seventh time they've scored one goal or been blanked in front of the 25-year-old.

"I don't know," Enroth said when asked about the lack of support. "I'm running out of answers on those questions."

In 804 minutes over 14 appearances this season, the bottom-feeding Sabres have scored just 18 goals for the Swede, who's been sharp from the get-go. They've scored 17 times in his 13 starts.

Despite an awful 1-8-4 record, by far the NHL's worst mark for a No. 2 netminder, Enroth has a strong 2.46 goals-against average and .916 save percentage.

He has a 1.97 goals-against average and .935 save percentage in his last four starts.

"It's tough to win with this team," Enroth said in response to a question about generating momentum from a penalty kill.

Teammates want to win badly for Enroth, who earned his lone triumph while making a season-high 44 saves Oct. 25 in Florida.

"He deserved to win tonight," center Tyler Ennis said Thursday. "He played really well. Tough loss."

Center Johan Larsson added: "I understand he's frustrated."

Every other regular NHL backup has at least four wins.

"He was sensational," interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said following the defeat. "If there was any game your goaltender could probably steal the game, (Thursday) was probably one of those nights."

It was a night Enroth, one of three goalies named to the Swedish Olympic team Tuesday, wanted to prove himself.

“I wanted to go out there and show everybody that I earned it,” he said.

xxx

The Sabres, who had Friday off, sent defenseman Brayden McNabb to Rochester. McNabb played in the Americans’ 2-1 loss to Hamilton before apparently getting recall again, according to the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle.

The 22-year-old, an AHL All-Star, has zero points in six NHL games.

## **Sabres Grigorenko refuses to report to junior. Puts out a statement**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 11, 2014

Washington, DC (WGR 550) -- Sabres center Mikhail Grigorenko has refused the Sabres assignment to go to junior. He hasn't mentioned where he might be going and posted this on his Facebook page:

Hi everyone,

I just want to apologize for the situation going on right now.

We just need to find a place for me where i can develop and be the best hockey player I can be.

I came to North America 3 years ago coming from a home in Russia where I never had a bed, a shower or heat...I work everyday to be the best hockey player I can be so I can provide for my family, have a better life... Because hockey is all I have, my passion, who I am.

I am so grateful I played in Québec with one of the best coach in the world, amazing fans, people and city. I got to play against great players who are now doing amazing in the NHL. I'm also so proud I was drafted in the NHL by the Buffalo Sabres organization. I love the city and people there. I love my neighborhood and I love the guys. They also have owners who want everyone to be happy and love their team so much.

Now I would just ask all of you guys to respect me and the time I'm taking to think about my career. It might be hard to understand but it is even harder for a teenager.

Grigo

## **Sabres Nolan said nothing new in contract talks**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 11, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Tim Murray said in Toronto on Friday that the interim tag may come off Ted Nolan very soon. Nolan said talks so far have been short, "We've had brief discussions about it, but not necessarily directly at it.

The Sabres are starting to get some bodies back as they head to Washington for a game Sunday afternoon.

Cody Hodgson and Ville Leino are ready to return.

Mikhail Grigorenko has been sent back to junior while Johan Larsson goes back to Rochester. Brayden McNabb is back from Rochester after going down for one day to play a game for the Amerks on Friday.

Hodgson missed two games in December then he played two, then he missed eight games with a broken thumb. Ted Nolan said, "Cody's ready to go, he was probably ready to go last game, but we wanted to make sure he was ready, ready."

Hodgson should help offensively, but the defensive part of his game still needs a lot of work. Hodgson hasn't been a plus player since November 12th covering 13 games. He's only been a plus player once since October 28th. Nolan said, "We need a guy that can help and come down low and be in good position defensively, but don't give up your offensive attack."

I asked Nolan if he's seen improvement in Hodgson's defense and he didn't really answer the question, "He's really working on it. The real good players, they want to work on all facets of the game. It can't be one dimensional, especially this time of year, you have to be good at both ends."

As far as Leino goes Nolan said, "He looked pretty good in practice today also. You don't want players to get hurt, but once in a while when they do, they come back with rested bodies and they come back with renewed energy."

It's very obvious to anybody that knows hockey the Grigorenko doesn't belong in the National Hockey League at this point of his career. Chances are good he could be at least two years away with a year in Rochester next year. Nolan said, "That's another managerial decision to look at what's the best for Grigorenko for the long term being a Buffalo Sabre. He's a young player and there's not too many 19 year olds outside of the Crosby's and the Malkin's that play. You look at his draft year I think there's only two in the league that are playing and one's having a little bit of trouble, so we're not looking at what he can do for us now, we're looking at what he can do down the road when he develops."

Of course Grigorenko was mad he's going down, "Of course he was a little upset I'd imagine, but this was non-negotiable, it's one of those things that has to be done."

Grigorenko definitely has not impressed Nolan yet with his work ethic. He's hoping he'll move forward down in junior, "I'm hoping, there's only a certain amount you can direct and put people in position, then it comes down to if they want it or not and if he wants it enough and wants to be here, then he'll work at it."

## **Sabres had keen eye on top prospects at World Juniors**

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

January 10, 2014

Kevin Devine was a busy man at the recently completed World Junior Championships.

The Sabres Assistant General Manager was watching not only the Sabres three prospects in the tournament, but also the top prospects for the 2014 draft, since the Sabres should be picking at or near the top. But Devine was also scouting some of the top talent that will be available in the 2015 draft since the Sabres might still be near the top of the draft list depending on how quickly the rebuilding efforts pan out.

The Sabres might have five picks in the first two rounds of this year's draft. They currently have their own first round pick and three second round selections but they might have another first rounder from the New York Islanders as part of the Thomas Vanek deal. The Islanders have the right to defer that pick until 2015.

Devine made sure to watch Team Canada at the World Juniors since they boasted, perhaps, the top two picks in this year's draft, center Sam Reinhart and defenseman Aaron Ekblad.

Reinhart had 2 goals and 5 points for Canada in seven games played and Devine left Sweden impressed with his performances. "Sam's got a very subtle game" Devine said during an interview on WGR. "When you watch him just once or twice, you'd say 'what's the big deal?' but when you continue to watch him, you see how smart a player he is. He reads the play extremely well, he's always a step ahead. He's mostly a play making center but he's got a great shot and he's a real character kid."

Devine said the top three traits he looks for when scouting are: skating, compete level and hockey sense. While Reinhart doesn't have breakaway speed, Devine says he skates at the pro level. While Reinhart isn't big, he wins battles due to his compete level and his hockey smarts.

Ekblad is big. He is listed at 6'3" and 207 pounds and ended up with 1 goal and 2 points in seven games. "He was a stud over there. He's going to be a guy that's going to play probably 25-28 minutes a game at the NHL level" Devine said. "He might have been Canada's best defenseman as a 17 year old. He's got it all. He's like a man playing against kids right now. Very good defensively, very strong stick, tough in front of the net. He can move the puck, he's good on the power play. There's nothing this kid doesn't have right now."

Devine also kept a watchful eye on the two players who could be at the top of the 2015 draft. Canadian center Connor McDavid, who some are touting as the next Sidney Crosby, and U.S. forward Jack Eichel.

## **Sabres Nolan may have interim tag off soon**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 10, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- In just 24 hours, Sabres new GM Tim Murray is talking about Ted Nolan long term.

Murray was a guest on SN590 in Toronto and he said the interim tag could be off Nolan very soon. Murray told the station, "Today it is, right now it is, yes. I talked to Pat like twice for 15 minutes yesterday and today. I went into his office today just to finalize my contract. So yes, the interim tag is still on but I could see where we probably will do something for him there where it won't be going on too long."

That certainly is a big turn from Thursday when he said he needed to sit down with Nolan and the staff to get to know them and their ideas on hockey.

It seemed like they'd work together getting to know each other for the rest of this season and then evaluate, but today he told SN590, "He doesn't have to audition. He's our coach. I think that we in this game, we judge and get judged every day, but we may talk to him shortly about his future. Right now I'm happy with Teddy. I'm happy with the effort and we need some better players to carry it through."

With this all happening quickly you would think that part of Murray getting the job was having to keep Nolan. He was asked that directly Thursday and said, "I was never told if I take this job that I have to keep Ted Nolan as the head coach"

## **GRIGORENKO LOANED TO QUEBEC REMPARTS, HODGSON AND LEINO READY TO RETURN**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 11, 2014

Buffalo Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan broke the news after the team's practice Saturday morning at Riverside Ice Arena that the organization has loaned rookie center Mikhail Grigorenko back to the Quebec Remparts of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

Nolan said he was part of the discussions along with president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine and new general manager Tim Murray. He also said they believe the move is the best thing for Grigorenko's long-term success.

"We're not looking at what he can do for us now. We're looking at what he can do for us down the road and when he develops. He's only 19," Nolan said. "... Development is crucial. In talking with Tim and Pat, that's what we really want to do, is develop."

After speaking with Grigorenko, Nolan hopes the young center will see playing in the QMJHL as a good opportunity.

"He was a little bit upset, I would imagine, but this is non-negotiable," Nolan said. "It's one of those things that has to be done."

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Cody Hodgson and Ville Leino were full participants in the Buffalo Sabres' practice at Riverside Ice Arena on Saturday and are expected to play Sunday afternoon against the Washington Capitals at Verizon Center. Hodgson has missed the past eight games with an upper-body injury and was officially activated from injured reserve after practice.

"I'm really excited. It's great," Hodgson said. "The team's been getting a lot of points, especially at home, so it's good to watch and learn some things about the team and how I can fit in a little better."

Leino has been out for three games with a lower-lower body injury.

"You don't want players to get hurt, but once in awhile when they do and they have to rest their bodies, they come back with some renewed energy," Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said. "They seem both ready to go today."

With Hodgson and Leino ready to return, the Sabres returned center Johan Larsson to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League.

"He played really well for us," Nolan said. "He's going to be a good player for us but we just need him to get on a consistent basis."

Sporting a red non-contact jersey, center Cody McCormick practiced with the team for the first time since sustaining an upper-body injury on Dec. 17. He's currently on injured reserve and has missed the past 10 games.

Kevin Porter, Drew Stafford and Henrik Tallinder, the other players who are on injured reserve, skated on their own before the team hit the ice.

Defenseman Brayden McNabb was also back with the team after being sent down Friday to play a game with the Amerks.

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Ryan Miller is looking forward to getting back between the pipes for Buffalo. Jhonas Enroth was supposed to start Tuesday night against the Carolina Hurricanes, but when that game was postponed to Feb. 25 due to inclement weather, Enroth started the team's next game on Thursday against Florida.

Miller hasn't played since Jan. 4.

"That was a little strange. It's kind of why I wanted to get some work in today," Miller said. "I was actually trying to find some ice yesterday and couldn't find anything. A little too much time around the house, just trying to get everything going and get ready for an afternoon game.

[It was] kind of an odd week for me, but these are things you prepare for and you look ahead for and just be ready to go."

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Nolan said he has not yet had any direct conversations with Murray about removing the interim tag from his title. For now, he's focused on his day-to-day duties of coaching the team.

"Like I've mentioned before, one of these days, I hope it [is lifted], but it's not one of my things I'm thinking about," Nolan said. "It's trying to get this team better right now and coaching this team to the best of my ability. Whatever happens down the road will happen and I feel confident in my ability, but we'll see."

The Sabres announced Thursday morning that they had hired Murray and in the few days he's gotten to know him, Nolan said he's been impressed by the new boss.

"I really like him. He's direct. He knows people, he knows hockey players," Nolan said. "As a coach, you want a person who's going to load your arsenal up with some good talent. The only thing we have to do down the road is just open the gate and let them go."

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26 Matt Moulson – 63 Tyler Ennis – 28 Zemgus Girgensons  
9 Steve Ott - 19 Cody Hodgson – 27 Matt D’Agostini  
23 Ville Leino – 65 Brian Flynn – 17 Linus Omark  
82 Marcus Foligno – 24 Zenon Konopka – 37 Matt Ellis – 32 John Scott

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 3 Mark Pysyk  
6 Mike Weber – 52 Alexander Sulzer  
44 Brayden McNabb – 4 Jamie McBain  
57 Tyler Myers

30 Ryan Miller  
1 Jhonas Enroth

## **Caz Chiefs get gift from Sabres over holidays**

West Seneca Sun

January 10, 2014

In Canada and the UK, December 26th is traditionally known as “Boxing Day.” For members of the Cazenovia Chiefs Bantam Travel Hockey team, the day will simply will be remembered as “Hockey Day.”

The day after Christmas witnessed the teenage pucksters realizing the dream of skating at one of the National Hockey League’s premier facilities. The opportunity was provided courtesy of the Buffalo Sabres organization, and memories were made to last a lifetime. The team utilized the ice for a practice working on fundamental skills and then enjoyed a “Black and White” scrimmage that ended in a 5-5 tie.

Following the practice, family and friends were invited for an open skate followed by the team Christmas party at the First Niagara Center. The Cazenovia Bantam Chiefs include team members Harrison Rosen, Josh Kacaliski and Jonah Kozak from the Frontier Middle School, Ryan Galley (St. Peter & Paul’s), Jared Lux (Hamburg), and Brandon Schott of Lake Shore High School.