



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*January 15, 2014*

## **Sabres-Maple Leafs Preview**

By Jon Palmieri  
Associated Press  
January 15, 2014

It's been nearly two months since the Toronto Maple Leafs won back-to-back games in regulation.

Their next opponent would appear to give them an excellent chance at ending that drought.

The Maple Leafs seek to match a season high with their third straight victory Wednesday night when the league-worst Buffalo Sabres visit.

After needing another shootout to beat New Jersey on Sunday and end a four-game losing streak, Toronto (23-20-5) held on for a 4-3 victory in Boston on Tuesday. The top line of Tyler Bozak, Phil Kessel and James van Riemsdyk combined for three goals and five assists to lift the Maple Leafs to only their third regulation win in 27 games.

"I think both teams played hard, and lots of hitting in that game," goalie Jonathan Bernier said. "When we get skating and we hit a lot, I think we get a lot of energy from our bench and we play very well."

Toronto, which had recorded four of its previous five victories in shootouts, last won consecutive games in regulation Nov. 16-19.

The four goals marked the Maple Leafs' best output in seven games, but it was also the seventh time in eight contests they were outshot. They rank last in the league in shots allowed, yielding 36.5 per game.

That porous defense usually means a busy night for either Bernier, who made 38 saves Tuesday, or James Reimer. Bernier has seen most of the playing time lately but coach Randy Carlyle could give Reimer just his second start this month in the second of this back-to-back.

Reimer allowed six goals on 36 shots in his lone January start, a 6-1 loss at Carolina on Thursday. He is 6-2-2 lifetime against the Sabres despite a 3.27 goals-against average, while Bernier is 1-3-0 with a 3.22 GAA.

Whichever goalie is between the pipes, he will be facing the league's worst offense (1.7 goals per game) and one of the NHL's worst teams in shots per contest (26.1).

Buffalo (13-27-5) managed only 19 shots in Tuesday's 4-3 loss to Philadelphia, allowing the winning goal with 15 seconds left. Cody Hodgson and Matt D'Agostini each had a goal and assist for the Sabres, who entered with points in three straight.

"Missed assignments, not determined enough to battle for the puck, spinning and turning off hits, not getting an inch in the lanes, all of the above," interim coach Ted Nolan said, assessing what went wrong. "We just didn't do what we were supposed to do at the end."

Although the trip to Toronto is a very short one, playing in opposing arenas has been a major problem for the Sabres. They avoided a team record-tying 12th straight road loss with a 2-1 shootout victory at Washington on Sunday, and have just one regulation win away from home all season.

Playing at Air Canada Centre isn't likely to help, either. The Sabres are 1-7-1 in their last nine visits after losing both meetings there this season.

They figure to have red-hot Ryan Miller back in net, though, after he received a rare night off Tuesday. Miller is 7-2-1 with a 1.64 GAA in his last 10 starts. He stopped 39 shots in a 4-3 shootout loss at Toronto on Dec. 27.

Buffalo defenseman Tyler Myers is eligible to return Wednesday after sitting out the third and final game of his suspension for an illegal check to the head of New Jersey forward Dainius Zubrus.

## **Lecavalier lifts Flyers to 4-3 win over Sabres**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

January 15, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Vincent Lecavalier's sore back is getting better. So is his self-confidence.

Lecavalier capped a topsy-turvy finish by scoring with 15 seconds left, sending the Philadelphia Flyers to a 4-3 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday night. It was his first goal since Nov. 27, a 22-game span that included nine games he missed with a back injury.

"It felt good. They've been hard to come by since I got back from my injury," Lecavalier said. "Sometimes a goal like that will kind of, I don't want to say jumpstart, but get more confidence and keep going."

The goal came during a scramble in the Sabres end and after Lecavalier missed on two other chances in the final 2-plus minutes. After his initial shot just missed the net, teammate Matt Read dug out a loose puck to the left of the Buffalo net and fed Lecavalier, who one-timed a shot from the left circle.

The goal capped a furious finish in which the teams traded leads twice by combining to score four times in the final 6:32.

Scott Hartnell had a goal and two assists, while Brayden Schenn and Jakub Voracek also scored in helping Philadelphia snap a two-game skid. Wayne Simmonds had two assists for the Flyers (24-19-4), who improved to 8-3 in their past 11 games.

It was a game in which the Flyers twice rallied from one-goal deficits, and won for the eighth time this season when trailing in the third period.

"Never give up, that's probably the biggest thing," said Hartnell, who has five goals and eight assists in his past 13 games. "We showed a lot of character, especially late there coming back."

The Sabres, by comparison, wilted in what proved to be yet another reflection of why the young and patchwork team's NHL-worst record dropped to 13-27-5.

Cody Hodgson and Matt D'Agostini each had a goal and assist for Buffalo, which had an eight-game home point streak snapped at 6-0-2. Tyler Ennis also scored and Steve Ott set up two for the Sabres.

"Missed assignments, not determined enough to battle for the puck, spinning and turning off hits, not getting an inch in the lanes, all of the above," interim coach

Ted Nolan said, assessing what went wrong. "We just didn't do what we were supposed to do at the end."

Nolan could add undisciplined penalties to the list. The Flyers converted two of six power-play chances, including Hartnell's goal that put Philadelphia ahead 3-2 with Buffalo's Zenon Konopka off for goalie interference.

The Sabres squandered a rare offensive outburst, and blew a chance to win consecutive games for only the third time this season. Buffalo managed three goals in regulation for the first time in 10 games and only the ninth time this season.

Buffalo also wasted what was a solid outing by backup goalie Jhonas Enroth, who stopped 29 shots but got little help in front on all four Flyers goals. That included Lecavalier's goal, during which a Sabres defender pushed a Flyers player into Enroth.

Enroth did make a highlight-reel save on Claude Giroux 12 minutes into the first period, when he dived to his right and punched his glove out to stop the shot.

The goalie also robbed Lecavalier with 2:23 left, when the forward's centering pass from a bad angle struck Sabres defenseman Mike Weber in front. The puck fluttered toward the net before Enroth dropped his stick and managed to smother it in the crease.

NOTES: Sabres D Tyler Myers is eligible to return at Toronto on Wednesday after sitting out the third and final game of his suspension for an illegal check to the head of New Jersey forward Dainius Zubrus. ... Read returned after missing six games with concussion-like symptoms. ... Sabres President Pat LaFontaine said he thinks the team and rookie center Mikhail Grigorenko are "on the same page" regarding the 2012 first-round pick's development after the player initially balked at reporting to his Canadian junior team in Quebec City last weekend. LaFontaine said Grigorenko needs to develop by continuing to play, which would not have happened if he stayed in Buffalo with the 17-day Olympic break approaching next month. "We're doing what we think is best to develop our players," LaFontaine said. "I really believe under all the circumstances, that (Quebec City) is the best place for him." ... D'Agostini earned his 100th career point with an assist on Hodgson's game-opening goal.

## **Tough-luck Enroth still stuck on one win for Sabres**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 14, 2014

It was an old-fashioned shootout, not the breakaway challenge that goes by the same name. Pucks were flying over, under and past goaltenders at a rapid pace, five in all during the final 13:33 of play.

It's the kind of game that's fun to win, crushing to lose. The Sabres were the ones who felt pistol-whipped when the shooting stopped.

Buffalo's recent run of winning low-scoring affairs failed to carry over when the red light got cranking Tuesday. Philadelphia struck the fatal blow with just 14.8 seconds left to earn a 4-3 victory, stunning the Sabres in First Niagara Center.

"To let it in with 14 seconds left is a stinger," Sabres center Tyler Ennis said. "It's a killer. We talked about it in the room. We can't let that kill us for the next game."

The next game is tonight. Buffalo visits the archrival Maple Leafs in Toronto. The Leafs feel good after Tuesday's 4-3 win in Boston, while the Sabres have a lot of hard feelings to shrug off.

"The way you lose is tough sometimes, but we haven't got too much time to mope about it," coach Ted Nolan said.

The Sabres and Flyers split the opening two periods – Buffalo scored the only goal of the first while Philly answered in the second – but all that mattered was the final 13:33.

Matt D'Agostini gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead, diving to knock home Steve Ott's pass during a rare rush by the home team. It got most of the 18,667 fans out of their seats. The rest, wearing black and orange, responded with roars twice in a row.

Philadelphia's Brayden Schenn tied the game with 6:32 to play. Scott Hartnell put Philly ahead with 4:07 left, scoring on the power play. It was the second power-play goal against a Buffalo team that was 18 of 19 on the penalty kill in the previous seven games.

Zenon Konopka trudged out of the penalty box after both goals, which likely will him earn a seat in the press box tonight. His second infraction was goaltender interference with 4:54 left.

"You don't take foolish penalties when the score's tied, 2-2, and give them the go-ahead goal," Nolan said.

It wasn't the winning goal, though, because Ennis struck less than a minute later. He put a one-timer under the pads of goaltender Steve Mason, a goal with 3:13 left that the Sabres hoped would earn them a point for the fourth straight game.

Vincent Lecavalier had other plans. He went top shelf with goalie Jhonas Enroth stuck on the ice after getting tangled with defenseman Mike Weber. Lecavalier's shot zipped through four Buffalo players on the way to the net.

Enroth stayed down in disbelief as he fell to 1-9-4 this season. He described his frustration level as "10 out of 10."

So how does a team that had played three straight 2-1 games suddenly get caught in a fire fight?

"Missed assignments, not determined enough to battle for the puck and put yourself in a good position to block shots, spinning and turning off hits, not getting in shooting lanes. All of the above," Nolan said. "We just didn't do what we were supposed to do at the end."

Their start was fine. For just the fifth time in 45 games, Buffalo led after 20 minutes. Cody Hodgson gave them the early 1-0 lead with help from D'Agostini and Ott.

Jakub Voracek scored 1:40 into the middle period, the first goal for a Philly power-play unit that went 2 for 6.

The second goal was a setback, but Lecavalier's tally was shot to the psyche.

"You want to be on the winning end of that," Hodgson said. "It's tough right now to think to about how we lost that one, but we've got another game tomorrow. We can't dwell on it."

## **Sabres decide to do what's best for Grigorenko, finally**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 15, 2014

Mikhail Grigorenko will be on the ice today in Quebec City for his first practice with his new team. Or his old one, depending on your perspective.

He's finally in the right spot. It's about time.

Last year, when the Sabres had a decision to make about keeping him in the NHL before his entry-level contract kicked in, I was on the side of the NHL over juniors. Darcy Regier & Co. agreed with me. Fools, all of us.

Grigorenko is an NHL player only in billing. As a first-round pick, taken No. 12 overall in 2013. Then you put your eyes on him and you realize why he dropped in the draft from what many thought would be a top-3 selection.

His skating isn't good enough. His desire and passion isn't close to what it needs to be. And his numbers aren't either. Three goals and eight points in 43 games? That should make the decision easy.

But here was Grigorenko acting like nothing more than a spoiled brat over the weekend, refusing to go back to the Quebec Remparts after he returned from the World Junior Championships. There was no excuse for it. Not when the president of hockey operations is a Hall of Famer in Pat LaFontaine. Not when Ted Nolan is the coach. And not when a reputed keen eye for young talent in Tim Murray is the new general manager.

Among many things, the Sabres didn't want Grigorenko sitting around for 20 days during the Olympics if he was still in the NHL. It's clear thinking, the kind we're not used to seeing around here. But there were plenty of deeper thoughts going on too.

"The old-school part of it is you really have to earn it," LaFontaine said Tuesday. "There has to be a standard. And when you get to the NHL, you have to be a consistent pro. Becoming a consistent, major-league NHL level player on a consistent level every night, that's hard."

There's been so much wrong with this tale right from the beginning. The one stroke of bad luck is the fact there was no training camp and no exhibition schedule last season due to the lockout.

Had there been those chances for evaluation, you would think it would have become obvious to the Sabres that Grigorenko was not ready. That didn't happen, so the Sabres, desperate at center, decided to start the shortened season with Grigorenko in the lineup.

Grigorenko did nothing, other than help Lindy Ruff get kicked out the door. Then came development camp last July and Regier's bizarre proclamation that Grigorenko would be on the team this year. Handed a spot without earning it again. Even Ron Rolston found that one impossible to stomach.

Grigorenko again did nothing. Other than contribute to the merciful sackings of Regier and Rolston.

The narrative of the Twitter gotcha mob is that the Sabres spent the last two years playing Grigorenko mostly with John Scott and Cody McCormick. It's plain not true. Analytics websites show his most prominent linemates were Brian Flynn, Drew Stafford, Steve Ott, Jochen Hecht and Zemgus Girgensons.

You could say Grigorenko never got a chance with good linemates. I can say he never made anyone around him better, either. He should have been gone a long time ago.

"It's unfortunate that maybe it hasn't been the right program or protocol that should have occurred," LaFontaine said. "I don't think it was. But it happened. But that's behind us now. What we need to do is what's best for Mikhail going forward."

For his part, Grigorenko is lucky the Sabres took a compassionate approach here. Refusing to report, even for just a day, was an absurd stance for the kid and agent Jay Grossman to take. So was his Facebook apology. Plain weak.

Murray's first big act as GM could have easily been to simply suspend him without pay or even dump him somewhere else for a bag of pucks. Murray could have said to himself, "Hey, it's not my first-round pick."

The Sabres took Girgensons at No. 14, two spots after Grigorenko, and he's definitely building a career. One reason is his work ethic. The coaches routinely kick the 20-year-old off the ice at the end of practices and gameday skates. Don't have that problem with Grigorenko.

Another factor is Girgensons got to play last year in the AHL. By all accounts, Grigorenko is best suited for Rochester but he can't go there as a 19-year-old with Canadian junior eligibility remaining (Girgensons was a United States Hockey League player, so there's no such rules for them).

LaFontaine is like many executives who feel it's a terrible rule and that teams should be allowed one 19-year-old exception. For now, it's Quebec City for Grigorenko. Next year it will likely be Rochester. The fact that it's the final year of his deal means nothing. He has no leverage. He'll take the Sabres' next offer or simply go to the KHL. Whatever.

LaFontaine has an 18-year-old son, so he knows what it's like dealing with older teenagers. Communication has to be kept open and sometimes more detailed explanations of what's going on have to be provided.

But even then, there are limits.

“It's not kid gloves either,” LaFontaine said. “This is the big leagues. There are certain decisions that have to be made. The decisions that Timmy, myself and Teddy talk about are in the best interest of the long-term vision of the team and that player.”

This one definitely was. About time.

## **Sabres notebook: All-Americans Prospects Game returning to Buffalo**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

January 15, 2014

The Sabres' organization wants to make Buffalo and HarborCenter a destination and focal point of hockey development.

USA Hockey wants to grow the game and celebrate the accomplishments of American-born players.

So the two came together Tuesday morning to announce a two-year partnership to bring the All-Americans Prospects Game to Buffalo in 2014 and 2015.

"The goal is we want the path to the NHL to go straight through Buffalo whether you're an official or part of the game or a player, to make it to the NHL you're going to make a stop in Buffalo," Sabres president Ted Black said. "And that day's in our sights. ... We want to change the perception of Buffalo and the trajectory of Buffalo and we're going to do it through hockey and through our vast community involvement as well."

The inaugural All-American Prospects Game was played in Buffalo in 2012 and featured Seth Jones, currently in his rookie season with the Nashville Predators. Other first-round NHL picks in that game were Michael McCarron and Ryan Hartman.

"When we started the prospects game, the concept was really simple. It was about celebrating the American player," said Jim Johansson, assistant executive director for USA Hockey. "We really didn't have something that celebrated the growth and development of the American player, and we felt we were at the stage where we needed an event to showcase those players."

The event will feature 40 of the top American-born prospects eligible for the upcoming NHL Entry Draft. While NHL Central Scouting has not yet rated the players who would play in the 2014 event (scheduled for Sept. 25), Johansson said the class projects to have several first-round draft picks including Jack Eichel, who starred for the U.S. at the World Junior Championships.

And speaking of those World Junior Championships, the United States is next slated to host the international event in 2018. Buffalo hosted the event in 2011. Could it come back to Buffalo and HarborCenter?

"The Sabres are interested in bringing that event to Buffalo. Absolutely," Black said. "I think all the advantages are obvious. ... We will go after the World Juniors very aggressively, and it's right in the wheelhouse of what we want to do. We want to bring the world's best to Buffalo for hockey and the World Juniors really is a defining moment for that."

USA Hockey loved its experiences in Buffalo and would welcome a bid from the Sabres to host the 2018 World Juniors.

“Buffalo stacks up very well because of the facilities, because of the fans, because of the people who run this team and run this building,” said Dave Ogreaan, executive director of USA Hockey. “Our experience here has been terrific. It was a big success, I think, for the city, for the Sabres, for USA Hockey a few years ago.

“I guess the good thing from our standpoint is that when we have had events like the World Juniors in Buffalo when we launched the prospects game in Buffalo, there are other American NHL clubs that have seen that success and have inquired how do we get on the bus? We welcome those expressions of interest, but Buffalo set a very high bar.”

...

The line of Steve Ott, Cody Hodgson and Matt D’Agostini had an impressive showing for the Sabres in their 4-3 loss to the Philadelphia Flyers on Tuesday night at First Niagara Center.

Hodgson scored the game’s first goal on a pass from Ott while D’Agostini scored in the third period. The two-point night for D’Agostini, who assisted on Hodgson’s goal, gave him 101 career points.

“I thought we did a good job of getting some turnovers on the forecheck,” D’Agostini said of his line. “That’s mainly what we try to do, get our game established by our forecheck. I thought we did a pretty good job of that tonight, we had the rush going there. It was a great pass by Otter on both goals. It was good to get a couple. We just didn’t get the important one.”

For D’Agostini it also was his first multi-point game since March 19, 2013. He has four points (two goals, two assists) in his last four games, his best four-game stretch since April 2011.

Hodgson had a goal and an assist to collect three points in two games since returning from an upper-body injury which had him on injured reserve for eight games.

...

The buzz of the first period was a save by Jhonas Enroth on Claude Giroux. The Sabres’ goalkeeper was out of position, slid across the crease and knocked away the shot with his blocker.

“I thought I could make it,” Enroth said. “I just never gave up on the play. I was a little lucky there that he kept it on the ice and didn’t go upstairs.”

...

The Sabres' loss to the Flyers on Tuesday was their first home loss in regulation since they lost to the New York Rangers on Dec. 5. The unbeaten streak at home ended at 6-0-2. ... It was the eighth time this season the Flyers have won after trailing in the third period. The franchise record is nine set in 1996-97. ... Tyler Myers returns to the Sabres tonight when they play at Toronto. He was suspended for three games for a hit to the head against New Jersey on Jan. 4. ... John Scott was the other scratch for Buffalo.

## **Philadelphia Flyers edge Buffalo Sabres**

By Kevin Oklobzija  
Democrat and Chornicle  
January 14, 2014

BUFFALO – And the frustration continues to mount for Jhonas Enroth.

Only this time, the Buffalo Sabres gave their No. 2 goaltender enough goals. He just didn't make enough saves, or get enough help in the defensive zone.

So he — and the Sabres — lost again, falling 4-3 to the Philadelphia Flyers on Tuesday night at the First Niagara Center.

Vinny Lecavalier drove a shot from above the left circle through a forest of players and into the top of the net to break a 3-3 tie with just 14.8 seconds remaining.

Enroth had stopped a shot by Lecavalier just seconds earlier, but as the Flyers moved the puck back up the left wing boards, the goaltender was unable to get back to his feet. He was still on his butt when the puck ricocheted in and out off the twine.

When asked where his frustration level stood, Enroth said, "Ten out of 10."

If not 11 out of 10.

Enroth simply can't win a game. His record dropped to 1-9-4. That one victory seems like a season ago; it came on Oct. 25 in a 3-1 victory over the Florida Panthers.

Since then, he is 0-7-3. But it's hardly because of what he has done. The Sabres have scored just 20 goals in his 14 starts, and his goals-against average of 2.57 is just a tick better than that of Ryan Miller, his counterpart in goal.

"At the end of the day all I can try to do is my job and try to stop the next puck," he said.

Enroth did that earlier in the game, especially in the second period when the Sabres played a lot like they did in October and November — without desperation and without attention to detail.

The Flyers fired 12 shots on goal but scored just once, with Jakub Voracek connecting on a power play with Zenon Konopka in the penalty box for holding. The goal tied the score 1-1.

Then, after a scoreless six minutes of the third period, it became last team with the puck wins. The teams combined for five goals in the 13:18.

Matt D'Agostini gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead at 6:27 and Brayden Schenn tied it at 13:28. Scott Hartnell then gave the Flyers their first lead with a power-play goal at 15:53 — again with Konopka in the penalty box, this time for goaltender interference.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan said guys on the “so-called” fourth line can’t take foolish penalties. They must give the team quality, reliable minutes. Konopka twice cost the Sabres goals, and it “will likely mean” he’ll be watching Wednesday’s game against the Maple Leafs from the press box of the Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

The Sabres retaliated almost instantly following the Hartnell goal as Tyler Ennis connected 54 seconds later and the score was 3-3. But the Sabres fell asleep defensively in the final minute, allowed the Flyers to carry the puck deep, and Lecavalier made them pay by scoring his 10th goal. Matt Read set him up.

Nolan had a laundry list of complaints with his team’s play.

“Missed assignments, not determined enough to battle for the puck, not putting ourselves in position to block shots, spinning and turning off hits, not getting in shooting lanes,” he said. “We got outbattled and outworked.”

The Sabres had been on a pretty good roll at home, too. They hadn’t lost in regulation at the FNC since Dec. 5 (6-0-2 in that span).

“It’s tough right now to think about how we lost this one,” said center Cody Hodgson.

## **Maple Leafs aim to keep rolling vs. Sabres**

By John Kreiser

NHL.com

January 14, 2014

SABRES (13-27-5) at MAPLE LEAFS (23-20-5)

TV: TSN; MSG-B

Last 10: Buffalo 4-4-2; Toronto 5-4-1

Season series: The Toronto Maple Leafs and Buffalo Sabres play for the fifth and final time. They've split the first four games; each team has won twice at home, once in regulation.

Big story: Things are looking brighter for Toronto, which will be trying for its third consecutive victory after a 4-3 road win against the Boston Bruins on Tuesday. The Sabres, by far the NHL's lowest-scoring team, had a rare three-goal night but lost 4-3 at home to the Philadelphia Flyers.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Giving up the winning goal with 14.8 seconds remaining is never fun. But to interim coach Ted Nolan, allowing Philadelphia's Vincent Lecavalier to score in the final seconds is another part of the learning process.

"It's not a wasted opportunity," Nolan said. "I think it's just one of those things, the last goal, one of our defenseman knocks a guy, knocks down our goaltender, they get a shot and it goes through four guys to find the net. It's just one of those things, it just wasn't meant to be. We didn't play well enough to win and we have to learn to play a certain way."

Buffalo defenseman Tyler Myers is eligible to return at Toronto on Wednesday after sitting out his three-game suspension for an illegal check to the head of New Jersey forward Dainius Zubrus on Jan. 4.

Maple Leafs: Toronto did something Tuesday that it was unable to do last spring: Hold on to a late lead against the Boston Bruins. The Bruins rallied in the third period of Game 7 to beat Toronto in overtime in their first-round playoff series, but the Maple Leafs held on for a 4-3 victory that gave Toronto back-to-back wins after a four-game losing streak.

Coach Randy Carlyle feels his team is starting to play the way he wants it to.

"They're better efforts. That's for sure," he said. "We've raised our compete level, and we're going to have to continue to do that to get points. That's the most frustrating part for our hockey club has been that we haven't been able to achieve

that with any consistency for [48] games. And that's frustrating for the coaching staff, that's for sure."

Who's hot: Goaltender Ryan Miller, who's likely to get the start Wednesday, is 3-1-0 in his past four starts and has allowed six goals in that span. ... Toronto center Tyler Bozak had two goals and an assist in the win against the Bruins, giving him five goals and 11 points in seven games since his return from an oblique injury.

Injury report: Buffalo is missing forwards Drew Stafford and Cody McCormick (upper body) as well as defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body). ... Toronto center Dave Bolland (ankle) has missed more than two months; forward Trevor Smith (broken hand) has been out for nearly a month.

## **Lecavalier's late goal lifts Flyers past Sabres**

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

January 14, 2014

BUFFALO - Vincent Lecavalier picked the right time to end a seven-week scoring drought.

Lecavalier scored with 14.8 seconds left in regulation to give the Philadelphia Flyers a 4-3 victory against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center on Tuesday night. Matt Read dug the puck out behind the net and fed Lecavalier, whose one-timer from the top of the left circle beat sprawled goalie Jhonas Enroth after a flurry of chances in the Sabres' end.

"It was kind of loose between [Sean] Couturier's skates and I pulled it out and I was just looking for an open guy and Vinny kind of popped out and it worked out well." Read said. "We'll take the two points."

It was Lecavalier's 10th goal of the season but his first since Nov. 27.

"It felt good," Lecavalier said. "They've been hard to come by since I got back from my injury. Hopefully sometimes they'll go like that. We'll kind of, I don't want to say jumpstart, just get more confidence and keep going, but it was huge for the team. It probably wasn't our best game, but we came back again. We showed a lot of will and a lot of confidence in our play in the third period."

Lecavalier's goal capped a wild third period in which the teams combined to score five goals after playing to a 1-1 tie through 40 minutes.

"It's not a wasted opportunity," Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said. "I think it's just one of those things, the last goal, one of our defenseman knocks a guy, knocks down our goaltender, they get a shot and it goes through four guys to find the net. It's just one of those things, it just wasn't meant to be. We didn't play well enough to win and we have to learn to play a certain way."

The victory ended a two-game losing streak for the Flyers (24-19-4), who were coming off weekend losses to the Tampa Bay Lightning and New York Rangers, and moved them into third place in the Metropolitan Division.

"Our team doesn't quit," Flyers coach Craig Berube said. "I know over the weekend with Tampa and the Rangers we had good third periods. They tried, it didn't happen, but the effort is always there. As long as the effort is there and the competitiveness is there, they'll give it their best to try and come back."

The Sabres (13-27-5), who lost in regulation at home for the in nine games, took at 2-1 lead at 6:27 of the third when Matt D'Agostini scored his second goal of the

season. D'Agostini dove for a centering pass by Steve Ott and poked the puck past Flyers goaltender Steve Mason.

Philadelphia tied it with 6:32 left when Brayden Schenn fired a loose puck past Enroth. Schenn had the puck come to him after it took a funny hop off the glass and slid through the crease. Schenn collected the puck, spun, and hit the half-empty net for his 12th goal of the season.

"Your first instinct is to spin and shoot and when I saw he was down and out, you just try to get it up as much as possible," Schenn said. "Luckily it went in and I'll definitely take that goal."

A goaltender interference penalty to Buffalo's Zenon Konopka put the Flyers on the power play and they took advantage of it with 4:07 left when Scott Hartnell scored his 11th goal of the season. Hartnell skated into the slot, took a feed from Wayne Simmonds and beat Enroth with a high wrist shot.

"He does hard work and gets to the net," Berube said of Hartnell. "It's not much more simple than that. That's what his game is. Both him and [Simmonds] get hard work in the corners and they get to the net and they get goals. They're very good at it."

Konopka's penalty was his second of the game. The Flyers scored on both.

"The so-called fourth line is supposed to be reliable and get you some quality minutes and wear the opposition down," Nolan said. "You don't take foolish penalties when the score's tied 2-2 and give away a goal."

Tyler Ennis tied it with 3:13 remaining when his slap shot from the right circle got through Mason and went over the goal line for his 10th goal of the season.

"It was a tough game from my standpoint to play, not very busy," Mason said. "There was a lot of standing around, so those are the games that when they're over with and you come away with two points, you're happy about that."

Mason made 16 saves; Enroth stopped 29 shots. It was the first time since Dec. 7 the Sabres scored more than one goal in support of Enroth.

"Obviously, 10 out of 10," Enroth said about his frustration level. "The only thing I can do is just do my job and try to save the next puck all the time."

Cody Hodgson put the Sabres ahead at 6:59 of the first period when he deked and beat Mason after he received a pass in front of the net from Ott. It was Hodgson's ninth goal of the season and first since coming off injured reserve with an upper-body injury on Sunday.

Flyers captain Claude Giroux had a chance to tie the game but was robbed by Enroth at 12:03. Giroux fired a backhander at what appeared to be an open net, but Enroth dove across the crease and stopped the puck with his blocker hand.

"I thought I could make it," Enroth said. "I just never gave up on the play. I was a little bit lucky there. Actually, it hit on the ice and it didn't go upstairs."

But the Flyers tied the game when forward Jakub Voracek scored on the power play at 1:40 of the second period. With Konopka in the box for holding, Voracek took a pass from Simmonds and beat Enroth for his 13th goal of the season. Voracek was all alone in the right circle and had time to place his shot as Enroth tried to get back in position.

## **Sabres to host 2014, '15 All-American Prospect Games**

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

January 14, 2014

USA Hockey and the Buffalo Sabres announced a partnership Tuesday that will see the team and First Niagara Center host the 2014 and 2015 CCM/USA Hockey All-American Prospect Games.

"We're extremely pleased to be returning to Buffalo, the site of the inaugural CCM/USA Hockey All-American Prospects game in 2012," executive director of USA Hockey Dave Ogrean said. "The enthusiasm and support for hockey in Western New York will provide a great environment for the future stars of the NHL who will play in this game. It's terrific to be working with the Sabres organization and we appreciate their continued commitment and support of hockey at all levels."

The event, started in 2012, brings together 40 of the best American-born prospects eligible for that season's NHL draft. In the past, players in the game have come from the United States Hockey League, the Canadian Hockey League, the NCAA, and high school and prep school teams.

The inaugural game was played in Buffalo in September 2012 and featured defenseman Seth Jones, who went on to be taken by the Nashville Predators with the fourth pick of 2013 NHL Draft. The 2013 game was held at Consol Energy Center in Pittsburgh and among those taking part was Boston College freshman goaltender Thatcher Demko, who is No. 1 on NHL Central Scouting's midterm ranking of North American goaltenders for the 2014 NHL Draft.

Part of USA Hockey's interest in returning to Buffalo is the strong relationship the organization has had with the Sabres, owner Terry Pegula and the Western New York region. Another reason is the construction of the Harbor Center, a \$172 million project that will house two NHL-size ice rinks, a hotel, a restaurant, street-level retail outlets and a parking garage that currently is under construction adjacent to First Niagara Center and is expected to open in October.

"We're really glad to be coming back here," Ogrean said. "And with the Harbor Center development, this is a place we'll be coming back to a lot."

That's just what the Sabres want, as team president Ted Black said his goal is to have "the path to the NHL go straight through Buffalo. To make it to the NHL you're going to make a stop in Buffalo. That day is in our sights.

"Hosting the CCM/USA Hockey All-American Prospects Game two years ago and now bringing it back to our city is central to our continuing strategy to transform Buffalo into an international hockey destination. We are thrilled to again partner

with USA Hockey to provide our terrific fan base with a glimpse at the future stars of the NHL."

Among those expected to take part in the 2014 game is center Jack Eichel, a native of North Chelmsford, Mass., who is expected to be among the top players picked at the 2015 NHL Draft. Eichel, 17, has 21 goals and 40 points in 24 games this season with the United States National Team Development Program under-18 team. He also centered the second line for the U.S. at the 2014 IIHF World Junior Championship, finishing with one goal and four assists in five games as the U.S. finished fifth.

Eichel, a 6-foot-2, 193-pound forward, is committed to Boston University starting with the 2014-15 season.

"Jack will probably be the premier kid as far as draft status," USA Hockey assistant executive director of hockey operations Jim Johansson said. "We're hopeful for him to be next great No. 1 pick in the NHL draft."

In addition, a number of the players that won the championship at the 2014 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge in Nova Scotia earlier this month will be part of the 2014 All-American Prospects game. That includes Colin White, who led the tournament in scoring with 18 points in six games; Noah Hanifan, a 6-2, 200-pound defenseman; forward Jeremy Bracco, who had three goals and 11 points in six games and was born in Freeport, N.Y.; and 6-4, 214-pound forward Jordan Greenway from Potsdam, N.Y.

"I can tell you it's going to be a fantastic [2015 draft] class," Johansson said. "They're not projected by Central Scouting yet, but there's going to be a lot of first-round picks at that game." Buffalo president Ted Black said his goal is to have "the path to the NHL go straight through Buffalo. To make it to the NHL you're going to make a stop in Buffalo. That day is in our sights."

## **Matt Moulson may cost Ottawa Senators too much in trade**

By Don Brennan

Ottawa Sun

January 14, 2014

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- On the surface, a deal between the Senators and Sabres involving Matt Moulson would "make sense," as one NHL executive put it Tuesday.

But the asking price for John Tavares' former winger could also be too rich for Bryan Murray's blood.

"Lots," another NHL exec figured when asked what it would cost a team to get Moulson, a 30-year old who has 14 goals and 17 assists in 42 games split between Long Island and Buffalo this season. "A minimum of a first (round pick) and a top young player. And I'm not even sure they even want a first in this draft."

Moulson, who's eligible to become an unrestricted free agent in July, is expected to be looking for long term deal at double his current \$3.13 million salary, which also would likely scare Ottawa off.

So where do the Senators turn in search of a forward who could either help them score more or add to their physicality, preferably before the Olympic break? Owner Eugene Melnyk says Murray has his approval to get the player he needs, and the management team is planning to put together its target list in upcoming meetings, but they may have to wait until the other side of Sochi to get something done.

"There is not a lot on the market," said one of the above executives. "Everyone is looking for the same thing. It could open up once we get closer to the deadline."

One player rumoured to be available and having the Senators eye is Edmonton's Ales Hemsky, a 30-year old who the Oilers put on the market last summer. Hemsky, who will be a UFA in the summer, has seven goals and 17 assists in 47 games.

Dismiss speculation that Calgary's Mike Cammalleri could be on Ottawa's radar. While the Senators were interested in Jason Spezza's pal when he last became a free agent -- and while Cammalleri has 13 goals in 37 games for the Flames this season, Murray is likely interested in a bigger body-type guy -- and not someone who will be commanding a raise on his current \$6 million salary in the summer.

It's not out of the question the Senators could focus on a rental, or even trade for and attempt to re-sign an upcoming UFA like Lee Stepniak or Devin Setoguchi.

If they really want to make an impact and get a guy who is on a decent ticket, they could always put together a package for David Perron that would interest the Edmonton Oilers.

Just 25, the Sherbrooke, Que. produced winger has two more years on a deal that has a cap hit of \$3.812 million. In 44 games, Perron has 17 goals and 17 assists this season. He'd cost them more, but he's also younger and better than Hensky.

## **Buffalo Sabres at Toronto Maple Leafs: Wednesday NHL game preview**

By Mark Zwolinski

Toronto Star

January 14, 2014

Five things to know about the Buffalo Sabres, who face the Toronto Maple Leafs Wednesday night at the Air Canada Centre (7 p.m., TSN/Sportsnet 590 The FAN, live blog at [thestar.com](http://thestar.com)):

1. U.S. Olympic goalie Ryan Miller has 31 career wins vs. the Leafs, the most against any team in his splendid career. More bad news for the Leafs: Miller is very hot and has been for a month. There remains speculation that Miller — at the end of a five-year, \$31.2 million deal — might be traded with the Sabres dead last overall (13-27-5). Miller was spectacular in a road win in Washington over the weekend, the club's first since Nov. 5. Miller dived across his crease to rob ex-Leaf Mikhail Grabovski in that one, a candidate for save of the year.
2. Buffalo, which lost 4-3 at home to Philadelphia on Tuesday night, could get top-six forward Drew Stafford back this week after missing three games with an upper-body injury. Tyler Myers also returns from a three-game suspension. Injured Cody McCormick, Kevin Porter and Henrik Tallinder remain out.
3. Steve Ott has set a positive example as captain and is having an all-star level campaign. He didn't practice Monday after taking a shot off the hand in Washington, but took a regular shift against the Flyers on Tuesday, picking up a pair of assists. "(Ott) is just one of those guys who competes hard all the time," coach Ted Nolan told the Buffalo News. "(Missing practice was) just to give him rest. He played big minutes for us (against the Capitals). He blocks shots all the time. He takes hits. He's not the biggest guy in the league, but he plays very big."
4. Linus Omark, acquired recently from Edmonton, has been manning the point on the second power-play unit. Omark filled that role periodically with the Oilers. The Sabres rank 28th with the man advantage, and last on offence with just 80 goals in their first 45 games.
5. Buffalo's John Scott — the man in the middle of on-ice shenanigans with Phil Kessel in the pre-season, an incident that led to David Clarkson's 10-game suspension — was scratched for Tuesday night's game.

## **Buffalo to host USA Hockey Prospects Game**

By James Fink

Business First

January 14, 2014

Landing a pair of USA Hockey prospects games in each of the two next two years could add more to the Buffalo Sabres' arsenal in its quest to secure the 2018 World Junior Championships.

The prospects games, coupled with the \$172 million HarborCenter project that is under construction, may be enough to convince the International Ice Hockey Federation to award the high-profile World Junior tournament back to Buffalo. The top-ranked, amateur international hockey championship series is due back in the United States in 2018. Buffalo and the Sabres' organization hosted the 2010 World Junior event, drawing heaps of praise for their handling of the competition and the ability to sell more than 330,000 tickets — the most ever for the event on U.S. soil.

The event had a local economic impact well north of \$5 million.

“The Sabres are interested in hosting the World Juniors. Absolutely,” said Ted Black, Sabres' president, during Tuesday's announcement about the return of the USA Hockey Prospect Game. “We will be going after the World Juniors very aggressively. This is right in the wheelhouse of what we want to do.”

It was the 2010 World Juniors that helped cement the strong relationship between USA Hockey and the Sabres. USA Hockey selected the Sabres to host its inaugural “All-American Prospects Game” in September 2012.

USA Hockey upped the ante by announcing, with the Sabres, that the this year's prospects game, as well as the 2015 contest, will again be held at First Niagara Center. Pittsburgh hosted last fall's prospects game.

The game features draft eligible players, virtually all of whom are top rated by the NHL Central Scouting department. The players, all teenagers, comes from Junior A level teams, NCAA Division I squads and other amateur organizations.

Black said tickets for the prospects games will be offered, for free, to Sabres' season ticket holders as part of their yearly package. The remaining tickets will be put on sale to the general public later this summer and the following summer.

“We want to fill the house,” Black said.

Black said the Sabres also want to use the prospects games to showcase the HarborCenter project, which is slated to debut this fall. The complex, funded by Sabres' owner Terry Pegula, features a pair of rinks, plus a state-of-the-art off-ice

training center. Other HarborCenter amenities include a 205-room Marriott hotel, sports bar and some retail space.

Dave Ogreaan, USA Hockey executive director, said his organization has a definite comfort level working with the Sabres and the local community including Visit Buffalo Niagara, the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission and venues like the Northtown Center at Amherst.

The Buffalo area has hosted a number of USA Hockey tournaments.

“There’s a lot of USA Hockey DNA in Western New York,” Ogreaan said. “This is a city we want to come back to more frequently.”

The HarborCenter will further Buffalo’s efforts to land other notable amateur hockey tournaments, Ogreaan said. Coming up in the next few years are chances to host the Women’s World Juniors Championship series in 2015 and the U-18 men’s international games in 2016.

Ogreaan did admit that when the 2018 World Juniors bids are released next year, Buffalo will not be alone in its quest to land the championship series. The success Buffalo recorded in 2010 caught the eye of many other NHL teams.

“Buffalo, obviously stacks up very, very well,” Ogreaan said. “But, there are other American NHL clubs that have seen that and want to know how they can get ‘on the bus.’ Buffalo has set the bar very high.”

## **Sabres blow late lead in front of goalie Jhonas Enroth, fall to Flyers**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 15, 2014

BUFFALO – The dressing room door swung open and sitting in the first stall, his pads and much of his equipment still attached to his sweat-drenched body, was Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth, the hard-luck loser again, staring straight ahead.

Finally, it appeared the Sabres might win a game for the backup, who earned his only victory this season Oct. 25.

The Sabres took an early 2-1 third-period lead against the Philadelphia Flyers on Tuesday. They fell behind 3-2 but tied 54 seconds later before the 18,667 fans.

Then, with 15 seconds left, Vincent Lecavlier scored, sending Enroth to his ninth straight defeat (0-7-2).

Where's Enroth's frustration level right now?

"Obviously, 10 out of 10," he said following the 4-3 loss inside the First Niagara Center, the Sabres' first regulation home setback since Dec. 5.

Teammates feel for Enroth, who's 1-9-4 this season despite a strong 2.57 goals-against average and .913 save percentage.

"Obviously, he's had a tough go," Sabres winger Matt D'Agostini said. "He's been our best player when he's played. It just hasn't gotten the results. We haven't gotten them the goals. Tonight we got a couple goals but we just left him hanging there at the end."

Sabres center Tyler Ennis, who tied the game at 3 with 3:13 left, added: "It's about time we won one for him."

Enroth made 29 saves, including a dazzling first-period stop on sniper Claude Giroux that will surely be replayed on highlight reels for years. After losing his stick, Enroth dove across the crease and got his blocker on Giroux's low shot.

"I thought I could make it," Enroth said. "I just never gave up on the play. I was a little bit lucky there. Actually, it hit on the ice and it didn't go upstairs."

Someone will go upstairs tonight in Toronto against the Maple Leafs. Interim coach Ted Nolan promised a change following the Sabres' late collapse.

"We didn't play well enough to win and we have to learn to play a certain way," Nolan said.

The game was a departure from the low-scoring, grind-it-out affairs the Sabres have played all season. The teams combined for five goals in the final 13:33.

“Games like this happens sometimes,” said Enroth, who’s received only 20 goals in his 14 starts.

Penalties killed the Sabres, both their own and the Flyers’. The power play went zero of four, generating little. Meanwhile, the Flyers scored twice on Zenon Konopka infractions.

“The timing of the penalties,” Nolan said. “The so-called fourth line is supposed to be reliable and get you some quality minutes and wear the opposition down. You don’t take foolish penalties when the score’s tied 2-2 and give away a goal.”

The Sabres’ Cody Hodgson opened the scoring at 6:59. With Konopka off for holding, Jakub Voracek tied it 1:40 into the second.

D’Agostini’s second goal in four games – he had zero in his first 15 with the Sabres – put the Sabres up 6:27 into the third period.

Brayden Schenn tied it at 13:28 before Scott Hartnell scored at 15:53 with Konopka off for hooking.

Lecavlier’s one-timer from the left circle following a mad scramble in front won it.

Following Thursday’s 2-1 shootout loss to Florida, Enroth said, “It’s tough to win with this team.”

No one argued with his stinging indictment. The Sabres lived up to Enroth’s words.

“The only thing I can do is just do my job and try to save the next puck all the time,” Enroth said.

The loss ended the Sabres’ eight-game home point streak (6-0-2).

## **Pat LaFontaine believes Sabres prospect Mikhail Grigorenko can thrive back in junior**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 15, 2014

BUFFALO – The old school part of hockey, Pat LaFontaine said, is earning your keep. There has to be a standard. Players must perform consistently once they crack the NHL.

LaFontaine, a Hockey Hall of Famer, skated on the fourth line as a teenage NHL phenom. Legendary New York Islanders coach Al Arbour wouldn't let him take a defensive-zone faceoff for years.

Former general manager Darcy Regier gave 19-year-old Sabres prospect Mikhail Grigorenko a roster spot during the summer. The team's new regime didn't believe Grigorenko was ready for the NHL yet, so the Sabres sent the Russian back to his junior club Saturday.

"We're doing what we think is best to develop our players and care for them and what they need," LaFontaine, the president of hockey operations, said Tuesday inside the First Niagara Center. "I really believe under the situation and all the circumstances it's the best place for him."

Grigorenko, a dominant center with the Quebec Remparts, initially refused the assignment before accepting it a day later.

LaFontaine said the move will help Grigorenko develop properly. He wants him to skate big minutes as a first-line star, experience winning, become a leader and learn how to play a complete game.

"Once the Olympics come around, if he's not in Rochester, he's sitting around for 20 days," LaFontaine said prior to the Sabres' 4-3 loss to the Philadelphia Flyers. "A player at 19 years of age needs to develop, needs to be playing. You also want to put a player in a position to succeed. Maybe he's played a few years already and done very well. But he hasn't won a Memorial Cup there yet, and I know it's a place where it's not going to be sitting around for 20 days."

Jay Grossman, Grigorenko's agent, has expressed concern Grigorenko will be playing for his seventh coach in a year.

"He's concerned and he should be. He's his agent," LaFontaine said. "He needs to know that we have a plan and we're doing our best to help develop and be in communication. And Jay has to take responsibility, too. He's also his agent that's put him in this position, too."

“It’s not just the organization; it’s a combination of things. It’s unfortunate that maybe it hasn’t been the right program or protocol that should’ve occurred. I don’t think it was. It happened. But that’s behind us now, and what we need to do is what’s best for Mikhail going forward.”

Grigorenko can’t play in the AHL since he has junior eligibility left. Ideally, LaFontaine said, he would like the Canadian Hockey League to allow teams one exemption for a 19-year-old.

“But it isn’t the rule,” he said.

So the Sabres had to send Grigorenko back to the QMJHL, where he had 30 goals and 54 points in 33 games last season.

LaFontaine said he had a good conversation with Grigorenko on Saturday. Still, the Sabres can’t use kid gloves, he said.

“I think he understands what we’re trying to communicate,” LaFontaine said. “He’s a 19-year-old kid. You have to remember, I have a son who’s 18. They’re still maturing. They’re still growing. They’re still learning. So you have to understand that aspect. They’re thrown into this big world at a young age. So you have to communicate.”

LaFontaine said removing the interim tag from coach Ted Nolan, something new GM Tim Murray told a Canadian radio station could happen soon, has been “mentioned.”

“But there hasn’t been serious conversations,” LaFontaine said.

He added: “I think Teddy’s doing a super job of it right now. We want to just keep the culture growing and keep doing what we’re doing. I think as time goes on Tim will get to know Teddy and get to know the players.”

Murray’s attending the CHL Prospects Game in Calgary.

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The Sabres began Tuesday’s tilt on a surprising 6-0-2 run at home. Why have they been so good recently?

“At home ice you get the last change,” Nolan said. “Your top guys don’t have to face the opposition’s top defense pair every game. In this league it’s tough to score when you got Tyler Ennis going against the top defensive pair every game. Matty Moulson getting against the top checking line every game on the road, it’s tough. So at home we have a little bit of leeway to play a little bit more.”

Is it really that simple?

“I think it is,” he said. “Plus the confines of home. You feel more comfortable here. Our fans have been great. It gives you a little bit more motivation to play in front of them.”

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The Sabres on Tuesday announced a two-year deal with USA Hockey to hold the All-American Prospects Game in Buffalo. The team will also aggressively pursue the 2018 world junior championship, president Ted Black said.

Notes: Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers has finished his three-game suspension for hitting New Jersey's Dainius Zubrus in the head and can return tonight in Toronto against the Maple Leafs. ... Sabres winger Drew Stafford (upper body) could play tonight following a four-game absence. ... The Sabres scratched tough guy John Scott (healthy).

## **Wild Finish Helps Flyers Beat Sabres 4-3**

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

January 14, 2014

Vincent Lecavalier scored with 14.8 seconds remaining in regulation, capping a wild third period and giving the Flyers a 4-3 win over the Sabres at First Niagara Center on Tuesday. Jhonas Enroth stopped 29 shots, including a remarkable blocker save in the first, but fell to 1-9-4 on the year. Head inside for more.

Buffalo grabbed the early lead on Cody Hodgson's ninth goal of the season and first since returning from injury. After taking a perfect pass from Steve Ott, Hodgson walked in alone on Mason and deked the Flyers goaltender stick-side. Jhonas Enroth preserved the lead moments later, diving across the crease and using his blocker to rob Claude Giroux of what looked to be a sure goal. Enroth's highlight-reel save came two days after Ryan Miller's incredible stick save against Washington.

Jakub Voracek finally solved Enroth with a power play goal early in the second period. With Zenon Konopka in the box for holding, Voracek's one-timer from Wayne Simmonds made it 1-1. It remained that way until Matt D'Agostini's second goal of the season -- and second in four games -- put the Sabres ahead 2-1 at 6:27 of the third. Hodgson and Ott got the play started with some pretty passing, including a nice feed from Ott that D'Agostini deflected past Steve Mason.

Brayden Schenn tied things up again about seven minutes later, tucking an odd bounce under Enroth's outstretched left arm. Meszaros' initial shot went way wide, but the puck made its way through the crease, onto Schenn's stick and into the net. Moments later, the Flyers took the lead for the first time on a Scott Hartnell power play goal. Dropping to one knee, Hartnell fired a Simmonds pass into the top corner of the Buffalo net, putting Philadelphia ahead 3-2.

Buffalo responded less than a minute later with Tyler Ennis' 10th of the year, a shot that snuck under Mason's pad, knotting the score at 3-3 with 3:13 left in regulation. With only 14.8 seconds to go, however, Lecavalier finished off a flurry in the Buffalo end, beating Enroth high, to put Philadelphia ahead for good 4-3.

The regulation loss marked the Sabres' first at home since December 5th. Buffalo hits the road on Wednesday, facing the Toronto Maple Leafs at Air Canada Centre for a 7:30 p.m. faceoff. Hear the call on WGR 550 and the Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

6:59 - BUF - Cody Hodgson (9) (Steve Ott, Matt D'Agostini)

Penalties

3:19 - BUF - Mark Pysyk (2 min., tripping)  
8:28 - PHI - Andrej Meszaros (2 min., hooking)  
14:22 - BUF - Alexander Sulzer (2 min., cross checking)

## 2nd Period

### Goals

1:40 - PHI - Jakub Voracek (13) (PPG) (Wayne Simmonds, Scott Hartnell)

### Penalties

0:39 - BUF - Zenon Konopka (2 min., holding)  
3:12 - PHI - Jay Rosehill (2 min., interference)  
7:02 - PHI - Nicklas Grossmann (2 min., interference)  
11:47 - BUF - Brayden McNabb (2 min., roughing)  
14:01 - PHI - Adam Hall (2 min., hooking)

## 3rd Period

### Goals

6:27 - BUF - Matt D'Agostini (2) (Steve Ott, Cody Hodgson)  
13:28 - PHI - Brayden Schenn (12) (Scott Hartnell, Andrej Maszaros)  
15:53 - PHI - Scott Hartnell (11) (PPG) (Wayne Simmonds, Claude Giroux)  
16:47 - BUF - Tyler Ennis (10) (Matt Moulson, Christian Ehrhoff)  
19:45 - PHI - Vincent Lecavalier (10) (Matt Read, Sean Couturier)

### Penalties

2:31 - BUF - Brian Flynn (2 min., hooking)  
15:06 - BUF - Zenon Konopka (2 min., goalkeeper interference)

### Goaltending

PHI - Steve Mason (16 saves, 19 shots)  
BUF - Jhonas Enroth (29 saves, 33 shots)

### Power Plays

PHI - 2 of 6  
BUF - 0 of 4

### Three Stars

- 1.) PHI - Scott Hartnell (1 G, 2 A)
- 2.) BUF - Steve Ott (0 G, 2 A)
- 3.) BUF - Matt D'Agostini (1 G, 1 A)

## **HAMILTON: Sabres couldn't maintain early good play**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 14, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- It was a fast start for the Sabres and Jhonas Enroth in the first period. However, as the game wore on, the Flyers started taking it to Buffalo and controlling play, outshooting the Sabres 12-7 in the second period and 15-7 in the third.

Buffalo won quite a few battles along the wall early on and it resulted in the game's first goal.

Matt D'Agostini totally outhustled Kimmo Timonen and got the puck in the far corner to Steve Ott. He found a wide open Cody Hodgson down the slot who put a slick move on Steve Mason to score his 9th.

Buffalo didn't stop there. Mason had to be sharp on a power play tip by Matt Moulson and Zemgus Girgensons led a 2-on-1 and ripped a shot off the crossbar.

Enroth kept the lead as Claude Giroux came across the slot only to have Enroth dive across and get his blocker on what looked like a sure goal into an empty net.

I'm sure Ted Nolan enjoyed watching his team win many of the 50/50 battles and play with purpose only giving up six shots.

John Scott had been taking quite a few penalties and before he started sitting the past two games, Nolan mentioned that his fourth line can't be putting them shorthanded. Just 39 seconds in Zenon Konopka did just that and the Flyers tied it.

Wayne Simmonds outworked Alex Sulzer for a puck and went cross ice to a wide open Jakub Voracek who ripped home his 13th on the power play.

From that point forward it was Philadelphia winning all battles with most of the period played in Buffalo's end. Buffalo had three power plays which were actually so bad, they gave the Flyers even more momentum.

Ville Leino saved a goal that got behind Enroth. Leino got back and dug it out before it crossed the line.

With about two minutes left in the period, Matt Moulson had a great chance coming down the slot, but Mason made a good save. It pretty much was Buffalo's first real good chance of the second period. Right after that Hodgson got open, but his weak shot was stopped.

Just as Philadelphia was fortunate it wasn't down by two in the first period, Buffalo was lucky it wasn't down by one in the second.

The Sabres started to get their mojo back in the third as Hodgson caused a turnover right off the hop.

Hodgson almost gave them the lead coming through the left circle, but his shot hit iron. The line didn't give up on the play. Ott found D'Agostini flying down the shot he he beat Mason to give the Sabres the lead.

Enroth had to be estatic to finally have two goals to play with, however the lead didn't last. The Sabres goaltender made a great save in the slot, but a goofy bounce off the back wall came right to Brayden Schenn and he had an open net to tie it up 2-2.

Linus Omark and Brian Flynn messed up a 2-on-1 right after Schenn's goal with Omark's pass way behind Flynn.

Konopka then went barreling into Mason and picked up his second penalty of the game. Another two-penalty game for the fourth line. Sure enough, the Flyers took advantage with horrendous coverage of Scott Hartnell in front as he ripped a one-timer up high, putting Philadelphia ahead 3-2.

"The so-called fourth line is supposed to be reliable, get you some quality minutes and wear the opposition down," said Nolan. "You don't take foolish penalties when the score's tied 2-2 and give them the go-ahead goal."

Buffalo didn't pack its bags and go home. Just 54 seconds later, Moulson set up Tyler Ennis to the left of Mason and he snuck his 10th past him. The Flyers battled right back and Vincent Lecavalier sent a rocket past a screened Enroth with 14.8 seconds remaining to give Philadelphia the 4-3 win.

"We got away with our lapses early," said D'Agostini. "I think we got outplayed for all of the second period and then we survived and we were going into the third tied. It was a pretty wild third period. Tough one to swallow, obviously."

Enroth stopped 29 shots -- including the beautiful diving stop in the first period -- but was once again denied the win, falling to 1-9-4 on the season.

"All I can do is just try to do my job and try to save the next puck," Enroth said. "I'm not trying to think about too much about the end result. I'm just trying to stay focused, stay sharp and focus on the next shot, all the time."

Ryan Miller will be back in net when the Sabres visit the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday at Air Canada Centre.

## **Sabres LaFontaine says he told Grigorenko he must earn it**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 14, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- After Mikhail Grigorenko said he wouldn't report to Quebec, he sat down with Pat LaFontaine on Saturday for a long talk.

After the two men talked and Grigorenko sat down with his agent, he decided late Sunday to go. LaFontaine said. "We had a really good talk, I spoke to Timmy and the old school part of it is you really have to earn it, there has to be a standard, you can't hand things to anybody they've really got to earn it. It's not kid gloves either. This is the big leagues and certain decisions have to be made and what's in the best interest of the team and that player."

Grigorenko had no options. He's under contract to the Sabres so it was either go to junior hockey or be suspended. LaFontaine said, "One of the big parts of the decision is once the Olympics come around, if he's not playing in Rochester he's sitting around for 20 days. You also want to put a player in a position to succeed and maybe he's played a few years there and done very well, but he hasn't won a Memorial Cup there yet. I know it's a place where he's not going to be sitting around for 20 days, he's not going to be not in the lineup, he's not going to be on the third or fourth line, he's going to be on the first or second line, the power play, play 25 minutes per game, scoring and doing the things that he should be doing." LaFontaine added, "I said to him I want you to experience winning and maybe win a championship, be a leader, compete in all areas of the ice."

Grigorenko's agent Jay Grossman was a big part of what happened over the weekend. LaFontaine said, "Jay has to take responsibility too, he's also his agent that's put him in this position too. It's not just the player, it's not just the organization, it's a combination of things. Was it the right protocol that should've occurred, I don't think it was, but it happened."

The Sabres face a Flyer team that has shot up from the cellar of the Metropolitan Division to fourth place with 50 points. Philadelphia is one behind both Washington and the Rangers.

After a 1-7 start, the Flyers are 22-12-4. They were 10-2-1 in 13 games, but have lost their last two.

A big reason for the Philadelphia turnaround is Steve Mason. He's 16-4-4 in his last 24 games. He did give up five goals in 40 minutes of work in his last outing against Tampa Bay.

It wasn't too long ago that captain Claude Giroux went on a nine game point streak where he scored six goals and 11 assists for 17 points. Since then he has two

goals and two assists in seven games. In 19 games against Buffalo he has 21 points.

Ted Nolan will use the same lineup. He said Drew Stafford may be ready Wednesday in Toronto.

## **What do stats say the Sabres should do with... everyone? Pt. 1**

By Matthew Collier

WGR 550

January 13, 2014

The Buffalo Sabres have new life. With the firing of Darcy Regier and hiring of Tim Murray, every player is being evaluated. Murray says he already has an idea of what he thinks of each player. Do you know what you'd like to see the Sabres do with each guy?

Well, what do the stats say? In Part 1 of 3, we explore what the numbers (and skill sets, contracts and intangibles) hint about what the Sabres should and will do.

For Part 1....

### **FORWARDS**

Cody Hodgson

What the stats say:

In 101 games as a Buffalo Sabre, Hodgson has posted 61 points while consistently getting top line and power play minutes. He's been effective at times on the power play, finishing 2011-12 and currently putting up more than 5 points per 60 minutes (best in the NHL last season was 9.13, 8.02 the season before). But last year, in a larger sample, his PP scoring rate was under 2. So it's hard to project whether he'll be a highly effective PP player long term or just average.

At 5v5, Hodgson is not effective in his role as a top center. His offensive zone starts have been below 50% each of the last two seasons and he's faced above average competition. His Corsi % has been 46.5% and 42.5%. The league's best possession players are close to 60%.

His 5v5 scoring rates are unimpressive as well. This season, he's scoring 1.39 points per 60 minutes at even strength, which ranks him 213th in the NHL. Last season, spending almost the entire year with proven scorers Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek, he was a much better 73rd at 2.09 per 60.

While on-ice goal stats can be heavily influenced by goaltending and other players' mistakes, Hodgson's are eyebrow raising. He was on ice for the 15th most goals against per 60 minutes at 5v5 in the NHL last season. That number has improved this season, but that could be because of Ryan Miller's incredible year. Hodgson has been on ice for the second most shots against per 60 in the NHL.

On the ice:

No. 19 flashes brilliance with the puck. His ability to hang onto it in traffic, find teammates with passes and rip off wicked snap shots is enough to wow. But the best scorers in the NHL often combine top level offensive skills with competitiveness, the ability to win battles along the wall and skating skills to escape opponents. Hodgson is short in those areas.

Defensively, he has struggled for the same reasons and because of a lack of awareness in the defensive zone. He often loses track of opponents, skates after the puck instead of guarding his zone and he lacks physical play in front of the net.

Contract: \$4.25M hit through 2019

Verdict: Hodgson can be a solid offensive contributor, who may be able to handle sheltered minutes defensively. If he's a third line center and power play scorer down the road (after the Sabres pick 1st overall once or twice) he could be effective. But if he doesn't fit into Murry's idea of what a third line center should be, it might be hard to keep him. It wouldn't be ideal to use him in a role where he would have to face tough competition. In that case, he'll have value on the trade market with a favorable cap hit and good traditional statistics.

Drew Stafford

What the stats say:

For a two year stretch, you could have labeled Stafford as a pretty outstanding depth scorer. In 2010-11 he managed a a 2.20 points per 60 rate at even strength, only trailing Thomas Vanek and Derek Roy for the team lead and he was the team's top even strength goal scorer. The following season, he ended up with 2.16 points per 60 at 5v5 and was third on the club again.

His minutes were fairly sheltered, ranking eighth and seventh in Quality of Competition and getting over 50% offensive zone starts during those two years, but that's what you expect from a second or third line winger.

But over the last two seasons, Stafford's ability to score has vanished. In 2012-13, he faced the ninth hardest competition amongst forwards and a 53.6% offensive zone start, but scoring dropped to 1.52 points per 60. This year, he's faced the 7th hardest competition, but received 44.0% offensive zone starts and plummeted even farther south to 1.39 points per 60.

You would think his unbelievably low shooting percentages of 5.0 and 4.1 would come back to closer to his career mark of 10.7 eventually, but the longer he maintains low percentages, the longer it looks like that's where they should be.

In terms of puck possession, Stafford has a meek 43.5% Corsi % this season, which is 1.7% below the average Sabre.

On the ice:

Stafford is an above average skater, has hands good enough to score 20-plus goals, size that he can use to push opponents off the puck and battle in front of the net. Defensively, he's positionally sound and can skate well enough to steal pucks on the back check.

But his makeup issues poison his skill set. From all accounts, he's a fine person, but makeup goes far beyond being a good guy. It's the intangibles. For Stafford, it's his struggles with confidence that bring him down.

His effort night-to-night is extremely inconsistent, especially when it comes to battling to get to the front of the net, where most of his goals are scored. When he's not "going" he takes low percentage shots from the circles instead of hustling to get down low. Same goes for the back checking and wall battles, which he has the strength to win, but often doesn't.

Contract: Cap hit of \$4.0 through 2015

Verdict: Stafford is a classic change-of-scenery guy. The fans have turned on him after two mediocre years and he needs a boost from going somewhere else. Unfortunately, the last two years have destroyed his trade value. You could argue it would be worth keeping him around to see if he comes back to life rather than trading him for nothing. But he's also taking up a roster (and top six) spot that you know won't be his long term.

Matt Moulson

What the stats say:

One of the most reliable goal scorers in the NHL, Moulson had seasons of 30, 31, 36 and 15 during the shortened season. This year is no different with 14 in 41 games. With a strong start in Buffalo, he's starting to shrug off the "he's only good because of John Tavares" reputation.

In the small 30 game sample in Buffalo, Moulson has been extremely effective on the power play, putting up an outstanding 7.26 points per 60 minutes. Over the past two years on the man advantage, he's had excellent scoring rates of 5.78 and 5.87.

At 5v5, he's been a quality scorer in the past with points/60 rates of 2.03 and 2.37 in 2011-12 and 12-13. This season he's only at 1.05, but that's likely to rise based on the past. Puck possession wise, he's been a positive possession player the last three years with Relative Corsi's (Corsi rating on ice vs. off ice) of +6.3, +7.4 and currently +3.7.

In terms of usage, the Islanders gave him fairly easy minutes especially last season with a 60.9% offensive zone start percentage and the 10th most difficult minutes amongst forwards.

On the ice:

Moulson does one thing extremely well: Gets to the front of the net. He has an amazing ability to tip pucks and work in small space near the blue paint, making him a major asset on the power play. He is by no means a tough guy, but has some edge to his game. The 30-year-old winger is a mediocre defensive player and not a possession-driver. He will never be a Zach Parise-type dominant force, but makes for a proven quality second-line winger and power play specialist.

Contract: UFA in 2014

Verdict: Moulson's future will be determined by whether he's interested in sticking around and if the Sabres feel they can build a winner in the next 2-3 years. If the answer is yes to both of those things, the Sabres could reasonably give him 4-5 year deal and feel OK with overpaying to keep him in Buffalo.

Steve Ott

What the stats say:

The Buffalo Sabres have misused Steve Ott (out of necessity) since he arrived in the Queen City. Last season, he was used as a shutdown winger. He faced the No. 1 Quality of Competition last season and most difficult zone starts at only 41.9 Ozone. As a result, he was also the Sabres' worst possession forward in 2012-13 at 40.1%.

This season, he's been asked to play a top six and power play role. One that he doesn't fit in either. While he's faced easier competition than last season (4th) he's managed just a 0.78 points per 60 at even strength. His scoring numbers were somewhat smoke and mirrors last season with a PDO (shooting percentage+opposing goalie save % normalized to 100) of 104.6. This season it's come back to 98.6. He has the same shot rate, but isn't scoring as much because of simple regression to the mean.

Statistically speaking, the last time he had a positive Corsi% was in 2008-09 when he was used as the energy provider to a line with Mike Ribero and Jere Lehtinen. But he was younger then and had fewer miles on his body. The statistics suggest he'd probably be most useful when used in more offensive zone faceoffs against average competition with a scorer or two on a third line.

Ott has eased back on running around to hit and get under players' skins, but in a good way. He's +1 on penalties draw/penalties taken as opposed to -11 last season.

On the ice:

The Sabres' captain brings effort, physical play and competitiveness to a team severely lacking it. He battles hard along the walls and is a guy you have to watch for because he'll even go out of position at times to use his body. He's very good in the faceoff circle and can play both center and wing. He can kill penalties and with a decent shot can play on a second unit power play. His foot speed isn't great, but he makes up for it with strong instincts at both ends.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

Ott will be a highly sought after player at the trade deadline. While he's a "Nolan type" player, it might be too attractive to Murray not to deal him to a high bidder. If he was four years younger, Ott would be the type of player you throw a long-term, medium money deal at. But a physical player at his age is likely to have had their best days behind.

Ville Leino

What the stats say:

Whatever way you cut it up, Leino has been disappointing since coming to Buffalo. He's only score 37 points since signing a long-term contract before the 2011-12 season. Even more amazing is his incredibly low shot rate. In 105 games he only has registered 110 shots.

During his first season, he ended up with the team's best puck possession stats at a +7.7 Relative Corsi. He was assisted by a 54.5% Offensive Zone Start % and the ninth hardest competition. Leino's scoring numbers were severely hindered by a lack of power play time. He was give 1:02 per game. Fourteen players on the Sabres averaged more.

The year before with Philadelphia, he averaged double the power play time and scored 3.54 points per 60 at shorthanded. Clearly power play time played a big role in his production drop off.

On the ice:

Leino is a puck possession player in the offensive zone. He works along the walls and perimeter looking for passing lanes to set up scorers. His skill set would fit well for a second power play unit halfwall man.

The issue with the Sabres' winger is that he's a one-dimensional setup man who won't provide much when he's not getting points. He doesn't bring toughness,

leadership, edge, intimidation, defensive lockdown skill, penalty killing or finishing ability. Leino can be magical with the puck occasionally, but has far too many lazy backchecks and lapses to justify the now-and-then brilliance.

Contract: \$4.5M through 2017

Verdict: Most fans would probably like to see Leino bought out, but that option may not be the best option for two reasons: 1) They will have to get to the cap floor next season 2) Leino has zero trade value right now. If he plays next season and starts scoring again, he would have trade value, especially at the deadline. If next year is going to be another rebuilding season, it's probably better to keep him around.

Tyler Ennis

In 2011-12, Ennis gave Sabres fans hope that they might have the next dynamic top line center. He led the team in even strength scoring at 2.66 points per 60 minutes. But some of his success was smoke and mirrors. His shooting percentage was an unsustainable 18.3% (compared to 10.9% career) and he was receiving 57.7% Offensive Zone Start percentage.

Ennis saw his even strength points halved the next season, in part because he was asked to face the 8% less offensive zone starts, face much harder competition (3rd hardest) and bad luck. His shooting percentage dropped from 18.3% to 8.7%. He finished last season with decent puck possession stats and a great power play scoring rate of 5.24.

This season he has faced the toughest competition amongst forwards and only managed a 1.03 points per 60 minutes scoring rate at 5v5 and 2.84 on the power play. It wouldn't be a surprise to see those numbers rise in the second half of the season. He has similar O-zone starts and competition faced as last season and has performed fairly well puck possession wise with a +5.5 Rel Corsi.

On the ice:

Ennis is a frustrating player to watch because his offensive tools – skating, puck handling/creativity, shooting – are top level. His competitiveness, focus and on-ice intelligence are below average. If he consistently worked hard on puck retrieval, back checking and forechecking, he would be an above average No. 2 center. Instead, he has stretches of phenomenal play and stretches where he disappears or makes unexplainably poor plays.

He has the skating ability to be a pesky defensive player – if he actually committed to it. But his future at center is questionable, in part because of a horrible faceoff percentage. 95% of centers land somewhere between 48-52% and it doesn't make much of a difference. But he's near 40%, which eventually hurts the team.

Contract: RFA 2014

Verdict: Trading Ennis at this year's deadline would be a mistake. His value is low at the moment and may bounce back if he continues to play with Girgensons and Moulson. The 24-year-old also might be the type of player who can flourish with strong leaders around him. He would be worth re-signing in the off-season if they believe he can mature or waiting until his production returns to move him

Marcus Foligno

After a hot start in 2011-12, scoring 13 points in 14 games, fans expected Foligno to become the next dominant top line power forward. The expectations were not met in the scoring category, but that doesn't mean Foligno didn't play well. He was the Sabres' best puck possession player with at 51.3% Corsi percentage and outstanding +18.5 Relative Corsi.

One of the reasons his Corsi% was so high was because he was given sheltered minutes, with a 56.1% Offensive Zone Start % and the easiest Quality of Competition amongst forwards.

This year has been different. Foligno has been used as a shutdown winger, getting the second most difficult Quality of Competition and the hardest O-zone starts at 42.8%. Under the influence of more difficult minutes, his possession numbers have fallen, but not off the map. He still has an above team average Relative Corsi at +1.8%.

What you'd like to see more of is shots on goal. Foligno has only 121 shots in 100 games, largely because he's a player that relies on set-up men to get him the puck down low rather than creating his own shots.

On the ice:

Foligno is a strong skater who can be a dominant physical player at times. When he's carrying the puck and driving toward the net, he's very difficult to stop. On the defensive side, when he's battling hard along the walls, he can be the type that opponents hate to face.

The Sabres' 6-foot-3 winger has below average hands, but can make up for his lack of dangling and toe dragging ability with his will to get to the front of the net and smack pucks in off rebounds.

Consistency in his physical play has been an issue, but you can chalk that up to being 22-years-old. Makeup wise, he wants to be great – a trait that, believe it or not, doesn't exist in everyone. He is a class person from a great family and is someone you want to represent your franchise.

Contract: RFA 2014

Verdict:

Foligno's name should be written in pen under "Sabre for life." There will be growing pains along the way because he's not an elitely talented player, but he's driven, can flex between center and wing, physical and should be able to add 30-40 points per season while facing difficult minutes.

Zemgus Girgensons

What stats say:

This one isn't that complicated. He's 19-years-old and leads the Sabres in puck possession with a +5.9 Relative Corsi and 5v5 scoring at 1.56 points per 60 minutes. He isn't facing the most difficult competition, but his zone starts have been average at 49.5%. With Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis, he's really taken off, posting a 49.1% Corsi% while with Moulson, which is about 7% higher than team average. Playing with Tyler Ennis, he has eight points in just over 200 minutes.

On the ice:

Girgensons has elite makeup. His drive, commitment to his body, attitude and hatred for losing are rare. It shows up on the ice every time he grinds out a tough back check at the end of a long shift or battles along the wall.

But make no mistake, he has hands, top notch skating ability and offensive instincts. He'll never be John Tavares, but he can handle the puck on zone entries, find passing lanes and rip off quick snap shots. His offense will take a few years to mature, but he can be a top six offensive producer and elite defensive forward.

Contract: RFA 2017

Verdict:

Girgensons is the type of player you never let leave. He's an "outwork your talent" type player who could project as a David Backes type defensive forward and leader. Center should be his position long term, but he'll impact the game nightly anywhere he plays.

Mikhail Grigorenko

What the stats say:

It's pretty clear statistically that the Sabres' organization is right to think he isn't ready for the NHL. First, let's clear up the myth that he doesn't get to play with

good players. He spent the most minutes last season with Jochen Hecht and Steve Ott and this year with Zemgus Girgensons and Brian Flynn.

He hasn't scored, we know that. But his possession statistics have been awful with a 39.4% Corsi% this year and 45.0% last season. Last year he was heavily protected with a 66.7% Offensive Zone Start %, this year he had fewer Ozone starts – an unexplainable 43.4%. Grigorenko was, however, rarely used against difficult competition.

On the ice:

It's obvious to even the casual observer that his competitiveness, consistency in effort and skating ability are well below average. His size, creativity with the puck, and shot are elite – though he often hesitated to shoot the puck in the NHL. The 19-year-old projects to be a top-level offensive talent who could dominate on the power play and score at a high rate at 5v5 if given protected minutes.

He will never be an above average defensive player. At best, he could improve skating enough to reach average, but effort wise and with a lack of commitment to physical play, it's hard to see him growing into even a reasonably good player at both ends.

Of course, the problem with Grigorenko is that effort doesn't just exist in the defensive zone in today's NHL. The league's best centers are plus skaters and battle like crazy for 50-50 pucks and along the walls. Unless he develops those skills, Grigorenko won't ever be able to reach his true potential.

There's more to the Grigorenko situation than just a player who struggled early in his career. He seems to believe he's a lot better than he is. The shenanigan involving being sent back to junior gives us a window into what he thinks of himself regardless of whether you feel he was misused.

Also, after seeing his lack of competitiveness in the AHL playoffs last year, you have to wonder if he has the same natural fire that exists in players like Crosby, Datsyuk, Ovechkin, Toews, Kopitar and other greats.

Contract: RFA 2016

Verdict:

Grigorenko's trade value is pretty darn low at the moment considering his production and issues with going back to juniors. The only option is for the Sabres to hang on, hope he accepts his assignment and plays well, then comes back next year and does well. Then they can move him if they still want to – now is a bad time.

Brian Flynn

The 25-year-old forward has played almost a full season of NHL hockey, scoring 17 points in 68 games. Flynn has been a decent puck possession player, ranking second to only Foligno last season in Relative Corsi. He's followed up last year's performance with another solid possession year, despite facing 44.0% Ozone start.

In terms of scoring, you can't expect much from the former U of Maine player. At 5v5 in 2012-13, he scored 1.64 points per 60 minutes. This season that number has dropped to 0.65.

One area where he has improved is penalty killing. Flynn is the Sabres' second most used penalty killer, only to Ott.

On the ice:

Flynn is a tremendous skater who has outstanding hockey smarts and gives an all-out effort every night. He's a put-your-head-down type guy, who won't be loud in the locker room, but puts in the work every day.

His smarts and skating make him a quality penalty killer and his effort allows him to be pesky to opponents at times and beat opponents to 50-50 pucks.

The problem with Flynn's game is that he simply does not have great offensive skill. He tries to get to the front of the net on occasion, but is light and gets shoved around. He isn't good enough at handling the puck or passing to play a perimeter game. And he does not have good hands. Flynn will get stuffed by goalies many, many more times than he will beat him with a wrister.

Contract: RFA 2016

Verdict:

Flynn is the next wave of fourth line players in the NHL. The guys who throw fists and hit are going away and fast, smart players who lack offensive skill are the future. While he may not have offensive value and probably doesn't quality as a "shutdown" winger, he adds value with penalty killing and generally being a good guy to have around.

Patrick Kaleta

There is a misconception that Kaleta is just a no-skill grinder who doesn't offer anything more than a few big checks per game. In the 2011-12 and 2012-13 seasons, he was used by Lindy Ruff as a shutdown winger, facing difficult competition and a great deal of defensive zone starts (41.9% and 47.6%).

His shot blocking skill shows up in the stats, ranking either first or second on the Sabres in three out of the last four years in fewest shots per 60 minutes of ice time.

Kaleta's incredible skill is penalty drawing. He does so WITHOUT taking penalties.

Year Penalties Drawn/60 Penalties Taken/60

07-08 5.0 1.2

08-09 4.9 1.4

09-10 4.1 0.9

10-11 2.1 1.5

11-12 1.5 1.3

12-13 3.5 0.8

The veteran winger is also one of the Sabres' top penalty killers

PK time per 60 minutes:

09-10: 0.54 (7)

10-11: 0.63 (8)

11-12: 1.91 (2)

12-13: 2.25 (1)

On the ice:

Kaleta is a plus-plus skater, with effort and willingness to sacrifice his body that is among the tops in the NHL. His instincts and intelligence are obvious during the penalty kill, when he frustrates opponents with his active stick and ability to read the next pass and break it up.

Offensively, he would put up more goals if he was used in a higher line role and with more offensive zone time. He would score "Foligno goals" down low. But that's not his role.

Of course, there's the issue of dirty hits. He's on thin ice with the league and must find a way to play physical while avoiding suspendable plays. With his defensive skill, he could play more like Flynn and be effective. Will he? Who knows.

Contract: \$1.25 cap hit through 2015

Verdict:

You want a Ted Nolan guy? This is a Ted Nolan guy. If he can change his game, he can be an important part of the team and can help make for an effective penalty kill and provide speed on the lower lines.

Johan Larsson

What the stats say:

Everything is small sample here, but Larsson's puck possession numbers are eye-popping. The Swedish prospect has a +15.4 Relative Corsi and has only had a 40.4% Offensive Zone Start %. His shooting percentage is a super low 3.3 and will probably rise with time.

On the ice:

While he doesn't have blazing speed or that "next level," Larsson is hard to knock off his skates or the puck. He's an outstandingly smart player who is always in the right spot defensively.

On offense, he has a good shot, but is rarely in a position to use it. Larsson too often enters the zone and spins back rather than driving toward the front of the net. His decision making with the puck is good, but passing from the perimeter isn't as effective at the NHL level as it is in the AHL.

Contract: RFA 2016

Verdict:

Larsson is a hard-working, tough puck possession player who will be no fun to play against for opponents. But his offensive ceiling doesn't project as much more than a third line center. He's a player you like to have around your team and locker room and should be part of the plan.

Kevin Porter

Last season, only Marcus Foligno and Brian Flynn were on the ice for fewer shots against than Porter. He was an average possession player while facing difficult competition and with a 48.8% O-Zone Start %. The former Hobey Baker winner didn't add a whole lot of points, with 1.07 points per 60.

This season he hasn't played many games, but was again an average possession player with difficult minutes and an even lower O-Zone Start % of 43.1%. Despite the Dzone starts, he was on the ice for only 25.8 shots against per 60, well below team average.

On the ice:

Porter is a mentally and physically tough player who is exceptional at forcing opponents to the outside on Dzone entries. He takes good angles to 50-50 pucks and battles hard along the wall to come away with the puck.

His offensive skill isn't exceptional, but he showed some ability to score while in Colorado when he was used in an offensive role, scoring 14 goals in 2010-11.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

Porter would make for an excellent depth option on any team...except this one. The Sabres' third and fourth lines are so stacked, it seems unlikely he'll be able to edge out players like Kaleta, Flynn, Larsson etc for third and fourth line roles. He might be the type of player that the Sabres could move at the deadline to a competitor in need of a hard-nosed defensive forward.

John Scott

What the stats say:

Two goals in 205 games.

On the ice:

Scott is a smart player, believe it or not. He tries exceptionally hard, but is simply not fast enough. And he's a victim of being way too good at fighting. No one will face him anymore.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

If there's no room for Kevin Porter on the fourth line, a guy with 29 goals in 200+ games, there's no room for Scott.

Cody McCormick

What the stats say:

McCormick added points here or there this season with a 1.73 points per 60 minutes in an extremely small sample. But his Relative Corsi was -15.2, the worst on the Sabres, despite facing the worst competition on the team. His low Ozone start % likely has been part of the reason for his poor possession stats.

On the ice:

McCormick is a class guy who is widely respected for his toughness and work ethic. He looked like he had a little more jump in his step this year than last, but

is not a quick player. The veteran forward has hands that allow him to smack a goal in here or there, but does not have the skill to step up on higher lines.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

McCormick is a great guy to have around, but, like several others does not fit in the long-term plan. His quality reputation may make him worth a late-round draft pick or low level prospect from a team in need of toughness at the deadline (if he is healthy).

Matt D'Agostini

What the stats say:

The Sabres' waiver-wire pickup has not offered much of the scoring touch he had back in 2010-11 when he scored 21 goals. In 18 games, he has three points – that's with power play time included.

Puck possession wise, he has a strong Relative Corsi at +10.2. He's also been given protected minutes at a 54.5% Offensive Zone Start %.

On the ice:

The veteran forward has played a "simple game," making smart plays in the neutral zone to move the puck and gain entry into the offensive zone. He's mostly been in position on defense and hasn't cost the Sabres, despite not being known as a dominating defender.

That said, he's a scorer who doesn't seem to be able to score. He doesn't fit a defensive role and isn't fit offensively for a Top 6 spot.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

If D'Agostini was interested in a contract that would allow him to play in Rochester, then he would be worth keeping around.

Matt Ellis

What the stats say:

While he isn't much of a scorer, Ellis' effort and intelligence shows up in the stats in terms of puck possession. This season he has a +4.8 Relative Corsi with only a 39.8% Offensive Zone Start percentage.

The small sample possession stats aren't a fluke based on his past. In both 2010-11 and 2011-12, he posted a +4.2, in 2009-10 it was +5.7.

On the ice:

You won't find many smarter, more hard working players in sports than Matt Ellis. Positionally he's near perfect and along the walls he comes out with the puck more often than not. He is an ideal representative of the team and leader in the locker room.

Contract: UFA 2016

Verdict:

Ellis is the type of player you want in your organization. He can be a classic fourth line player in the NHL or a leader and captain in the AHL.

Zenon Konopka

What the stats say:

His faceoff percentage is quite amazing, near 60%. Everything else is unimpressive. He's a -6.3% Relative Corsi this year. Last season it was no better, at -14.2, the year before -14.4. Part of that is because he's used predominantly in D-Zone faceoff situations.

Konopka has only 12 goals in 326 games.

On the ice:

He comes off as a good guy and wins faceoffs. The value of that is pretty limited unless you can do something with the puck after winning the faceoff.

Plus, he has a bunny. The bunny, named Hobby, is extremely cute.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

As great as it is to have Konopka here, a guy who seems to love Buffalo, it's hard to justify a roster spot for him going forward. Maybe as a leadership presence, but they are maxed out on depth players.

Linus Omark

What the stats say:

They really say barely anything. Omark has gotten so few opportunities to play in the NHL, all we really know is his AHL scoring, which does not always project to the NHL.

On the ice:

Omark can skate and has tremendous offensive instincts and puck handling ability. He could probably have many more assists in Buffalo if only the Sabres have a few finishers. However, his downs are way down and 5v5 and defensive skills are pretty well below average.

Contract: UFA 2014

Verdict:

It's all about whether the team believes it can be good next season and whether Omark gives them any reason to believe he can be a top six forward. So far, he hasn't shown enough, but there's a half season left for him to do so.

#### AMERKS ONE-LINERS

Luke Adam – It's puzzling why he hasn't gotten a bigger sample of games in a rebuild. He's had his ups and downs, but is good in front of the net. May become a Matt Moulson type

Joel Armia – Far away from being NHL ready. Has to adapt to smaller ice, learn to win battles and take smarter shots. Expect him midway through next season or beyond. He needs time.

Dan Catenacci – Another player who's slowly adapting to the pro game. Long shot to see NHL action in the next year. Maybe beyond if he learns a lower line game

Phil Varone – Quality AHL scorer who may not have the speed or size to get an NHL shot

Mike Zigomanis – Great AHL veteran who would be a more effective faceoff winner than Konopka. Probably won't see him in Buffalo, but great guy to have around the Amerks

Kevin Sundher – Has a long way to go to reach the NHL

Tim Schaller – Intriguing depth player. Smarts, effort, penalty killing type. Brian Flynn-esque

Freddie Roy - Character guy, hard worker. Might become Matt Ellis-like long term

## **Lecavalier's late goal lifts Flyers past Sabres**

By Sam Carchidi  
Philadelphia Inquirer  
January 15, 2014

BUFFALO - Vinny Lecavalier swatted the air triumphantly and launched a kick in jubilation.

Lecavalier ended a 13-game stretch without a goal, scoring on a one-timer from the left circle with 14.8 seconds remaining to give the Flyers a wild 4-3 win in Buffalo on Tuesday night.

"It felt good; they've been hard to come by since I came back from my injury. . . . It's a confidence-builder," said Lecavalier, whose game-winner past down-on-the-ice goalie Jhonas Enroth was set up by Matt Read.

The Flyers, who overcame another poor start, scored three goals in the final 6 minutes, 32 seconds and ended a two-game losing streak.

"It was probably not our best game, but we came back again and showed a lot of will," Lecavalier said after ending his longest streak without a goal since 1998-99, his rookie season.

It marked the seventh time the Flyers had won a game with a third-period rally since Dec. 4. Overall, they have eight wins when they have trailed in the third period - one shy of equaling the franchise record.

The Flyers got late goals from Scott Hartnell (power play) and Brayden Schenn 2 minutes, 25 seconds apart to take a 3-2 lead, only to watch Buffalo quickly tie the score at the First Niagara Center.

Tyler Ennis scored on a one-timer from the right circle, putting a shot between Steve Mason's legs with 3:13 left to knot the score. The goal came 54 seconds after Hartnell (three points) had given the Flyers the lead.

Lecavalier's goal was his first since Nov. 27 at Tampa Bay, and it helped moved the Flyers into a virtual tie for second place in the Metropolitan Division.

Matt D'Agostini got behind defenseman Mark Streit, and, while diving, redirected Steve Ott's pass past Mason, giving Buffalo a 2-1 lead with 13:33 left in regulation. Ott had leveled two Flyers earlier in the eventful shift.

Earlier, Jake Voracek's power-play goal - a one-timer from the right circle after he took a pass from Wayne Simmonds - tied the score at 1 early in the second period. It was Voracek's fourth goal in six games and 13th of the season.

Simmonds (two assists) pounced on a rebound of Hartnell's shot and fed Voracek.

"He was able to hit me backdoor," Voracek said. "I think I kind of fanned on the puck, but luckily it went in."

Read, who missed the previous six games because of a concussion, came within inches of giving the Flyers a 2-1 lead with 8:13 to play in the second period.

Enroth was out of position, and Read sent his shot toward an empty net, but former Flyer Ville Leino knocked the puck away with his stick before it crossed the goal line.

The Flyers allowed the first goal for the sixth time in the last seven games.

Cody Hodgson scored his first goal in the last 10 games to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead with 13:01 left in the first period. Center Claude Giroux was caught out of position, leaving Hodgson alone in the slot as he took a pass from Ott, who was near the side boards.

Five minutes later, Giroux nearly made amends. He fired a backhand at an empty net, but a diving Enroth swatted the puck away with his blocker.

The Flyers entered the night having lost two straight in regulation for the first time since Nov. 27.

Mason, who faced just 19 shots, was making his first start since allowing five goals and getting pulled after two periods against the Lightning on Saturday.

The Flyers had their share of defensive breakdowns Tuesday, but they were perfect (4 for 4) on the penalty kill, and they have killed 30 of the last 31 (96.8 percent) over the last nine games.

## **Lecavalier's late goal lifts Flyers over Sabres**

By Frank Seravalli

Philadelphia Daily News

January 14, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. - Jhonas Enroth stood in his crease in disbelief.

With his stick laying on the ice to his right, he stared intently at the First Niagara Center video board, trying to get some glimpse as to how the Flyers finally solved him.

Until that point, with 6:32 to play in the third period last night, he was single-handedly willing his team to two points.

That's when Brayden Schenn was the recipient of a fortunate bounce. Andrej Meszaros' point shot bounced off the boards to Enroth's right, took a strange angle and found Schenn at the far post with a wide-open net.

It was an especially auspicious angle for the Flyers, one that you would have tested out in geometry class using a mirror.

With that, the floodgates opened. A defensive struggle that produced a total of two goals through the first 40 minutes ended with five in the final frame, including three in the final 4:07.

Scott Hartnell scored 2 1/2 minutes after Schenn to give the Flyers their first lead of the game. Then, Vinny Lecavalier washed away an egregious breakdown that allowed the Sabres' Tyler Ennis to tie the game again, lifting the Flyers to a wild, 4-3 win in regulation.

Somehow, someway, Lecavalier's shot with 14.8 seconds left gave the Flyers their eighth win of the season when trailing at some point in the third period. According to Elias Sports Bureau, that is one short of the Flyers' franchise record of nine third-period comebacks, set in the 1996-97 season. And there are still 35 games to play.

With another seemingly routine reversal, the Flyers were able to enjoy their traditional postgame snack of buffalo wings after their first win at First Niagara Center since Dec. 7, 2011.

More importantly, Lecavalier broke a 13-game goal-less drought, dating to Nov. 27 in Tampa Bay before his back injury. It was the longest single-season scoring slump in Lecavalier's impressive career since his rookie season (1998-99).

"They have been hard to come by since I got back," said Lecavalier, who missed nine games with a non-displaced fracture in his lower back from Dec. 2-21. "Sometimes, a goal like that can jump-start you, give you a little more confidence. It was a huge goal for our team."

The Flyers snapped a two-game losing streak and headed back to Philadelphia with an important two points, which allowed them to climb back above the Rangers for third place in the Metropolitan Division.

The trip wrapped up an arduous stretch of 21 out of 31 games away from home. Now the Flyers will try to build a new winning streak of their own at home, when they face Nashville tomorrow night.

"This probably wasn't our best game," Lecavalier said, "but I think we showed a lot of will."

In the third period, the Flyers kept pushing until they finally solved Enroth with Schenn's fortuitous bounce. They scored three times on 15 shots alone in the third period, nearly matching Buffalo's total number of shots (19) for the entire game.

For the most part, it was a see-saw affair, with nearly a full third (17:48) of the game being played on special teams. For the Flyers, it was an important lesson in not taking teams below them in the standings for granted. Despite Buffalo's league-worst record, the Sabres had reeled off a run of eight straight games in which they had collected at least a point.

"Every point is important, but especially after two losses in a row," Lecavalier said. "I think no matter who you're playing against, you want to win. You can't think that the two points are automatic. Two points are hard to come by in this league - against any team."

Scott Hartnell led the Flyers with a three-point night. Two of them came on the power play, as he set up Jake Voracek's goal to open the scoring and tallied a go-ahead goal himself in the third. It was Hartnell's second three-point game of the season.

Ennis seemed to surprise Steve Mason, who had seen just four prior shots in the third period, when he knotted the game with 3:13 to play. On this night, with another confident comeback, Lecavalier's emotionally charged magic saved the goalie.

"It was just an ugly game overall," Mason said. "It was a tough game for me. I was real busy, lots of standing around. With one of those games, when you get the two points, you're just happy it's over."

### Slap shots

The Flyers scored at least one power-play goal (2-for-6) for the second straight game. They are 6-for-24 (25 percent) over the last six games . . . Meanwhile, the penalty kill has killed off 30 of 31 (96.1 percent) chances over the last nine games . . . Scott Hartnell has 14 points in his last 14 games.

## **Lecavalier, Hartnell help Flyers snap 2-game skid**

By Nick Mendola

CSN Philly

January 14, 2014

Scott Hartnell's gritty and productive effort paved the way for Vincent Lecavalier to break out of his slump, ending the Flyers' two-game losing spell with a 4-3 comeback win in Buffalo on Tuesday night (see Instant Replay).

Hours after calling his team's recent play "soft," Hartnell posted a goal and two assists, playing through a blocked shot that had him limping off the ice during the second period. He received X-rays on his left ankle after the game.

"Sometimes you've gotta get hurt or whatever, but we showed a lot of character, especially late there, coming back," Hartnell said.

The Flyers trailed 1-0 and 2-1, but scored three third-period goals to bury a bottom-dwelling Buffalo Sabres team that came into the game 6-0-2 in their last eight home games.

"Never give up," Hartnell said. "That's probably the biggest thing. You gotta believe. You've gotta play the system. You've gotta skate like we did in that third period and you win battles and you work hard, you're gonna get chances."

That's the ethos Lecavalier was forced to focus on during a recent slump that ended, hopefully, with Tuesday night's game-winner with 14.8 seconds left.

"It felt good," Lecavalier said. "They've been hard to come by since I got back from my injury. Sometimes a goal like that will kinda, I don't want to say jumpstart, but get more confidence and keep going."

Lecavalier had recorded just three assists in 11 games since coming back from a non-displaced fracture in his back that caused him to miss just under a month of hockey.

"The last four games I've been feeling really good, my legs," he said. "It's good for the confidence any time you get out of the slump and hopefully that'll get me going and create more with my linemates. Hopefully that starts a streak."

Both players and head coach Craig Berube hailed the team's comeback spirit, as they admitted frustration with a first period that saw them go down 1-0 on a Cody Hodgson tally.

The team equalized in the second on Jakub Voracek's power-play goal, one of two Flyers goals on six power-play opportunities, but Buffalo again took a lead 6:37 into the third when Matt D'Agostini flipped a shot past Steve Mason.

"Our team doesn't quit," Berube said. "I know over the weekend with Tampa and the Rangers we had good third periods. They tried, it didn't happen, but the

effort's always there. As long as the effort is there and the competitiveness is there, they'll give it their best to try and come back."

Mason wasn't in peak form, but the game was one of the inactive types that drive goalies nuts. He did enough to get the win despite facing just 19 shots to his team's 33 efforts on goal.

"Tough game from my standpoint to play," Mason said. "Not very busy, a lot of standing around and those are the games that when they're over with and you come away with the two points, you're happy about that."

The Flyers fought back with a Brayden Schenn goal with 13:28 gone and earned their first lead on Hartnell's hard power-play shot with 15:53 to go in regulation.

Tyler Ennis beat Mason from an odd angle on a goal that the goaltender would like back just 54 seconds later, but it was Matt Read's work down low in his first game back from a concussion that sealed the deal.

Lecavalier's initial shot was saved by Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth, and Sean Couturier jammed a loose puck off the side of the net. Read dug the puck out from between Couturier's skates and fed Lecavalier, who didn't need a third try.

"I've gotta say it was a long two weeks watching the boys battle out there and I couldn't be a part of it," Read said. "I felt good. (Berube) talked about just getting the first shift, getting the hit, finding your legs and having fun out there. It was a seesaw battle out there, but it's good to get the first two points."

The Flyers will be back in action on Thursday when they play the Nashville Predators at the Wells Fargo Center. They won the opening game of the season series with Nashville, 3-2, in a shootout on Nov. 30 in Tennessee.

## **WILL TO VIN**

By Anthony SanFilippo

Flyers.com

January 14, 2014

BUFFALO – Vinny Lecavalier hasn't gone through this long of a drought without finding the back of the net since he was a 19-year old rookie – back when it was still the 20th Century.

So when he scored the game-winning goal of the Flyers dramatic 4-3 win over the Sabres Tuesday in the final seconds, it was as if the weight of his entire career to that point had been lifted off his shoulders.

It didn't come easy, but then again, when you are trying to snap out of a prolonged slump, one you haven't experienced since Prince was partying like it was 1999, it never does.

A shot by Kimmo Timonen was partially blocked. Lecavalier saw the loose puck and shot it himself, only to have it deflected by Jhonas Enroth, in one of a bevy of saves made by the Sabres backup goalie that left the Flyers perplexed.

However, with Enroth down and out, Sean Couturier had a chance to flip it home from a tough angle, but hit the side of the net.

Matt Read, playing in his first game of the New Year after missing six straight with concussion-like symptoms had the

Vinny Lecavalier was all smiles after snapping a 13-game goalless drought and helping the Flyers to a win in Buffalo.

presence of mind to dig out the loose puck and find Lecavalier locked and loaded for another shot from his sweet spot on the ice – top of the circle.

With Enroth slow to recover, Lecavalier ticketed this shot top corner and didn't miss. As the clock froze with 14.8 seconds remaining and the scoreboard in the First Niagara Center was flipping over the score to 4-3, Lecavalier took a second to let out a celebratory yawp that has been building for weeks.

After all, his last goal came when he returned home to Tampa for the first time on the eve of Thanksgiving. He played the next two games before missing nine straight with a fracture in his lower back.

He returned earlier than expected, on December 21, but he wasn't yet 100 percent, and really, didn't start to feel himself again until the Flyers returned home from their post-Christmas trip on January 8.

And although he had three assists in the previous five games and started to look a little bit like himself again, scoring a goal was as elusive as it had ever been.

So to get this one, and have it be such a huge goal for the Flyers as well, was just that much more special.

“It felt good,” Lecavalier said. “Goals have been hard to come by. Sometimes a goal like that will give you more confidence and you keep going. It was huge for the team. It probably wasn’t our best game, but we came back again and we show a lot of will and confidence in our play in the third period.

“The last four games I’ve been feeling really good and had my legs. Hopefully this will get me going and I’ll get more opportunities with my line mates and we’ll start a better streak.”

It’s important for Lecavalier to get back in the swing of things, for when he does, the Flyers are three lines deep with offensive talent, which is why they never really seem to be out of a game.

“Skilled guys when they’re not scoring, they lose their confidence,” coach Craig Berube said. “They thrive on that stuff. Hopefully that’ll get him going. Nobody ever questioned his effort. He’s been working. Sometimes it doesn’t go in but you have to stick with it. He’s kept working and tonight he scored a big goal for us.”

At one time Lecavalier was the Flyers leading goal scorer, now, he’s seventh on the team in that category, but he’s also the seventh Flyer to reach double digits in goals this season, something only one other team has done – surprisingly it’s the Winnipeg Jets.

Thanks to Lecavalier’s last second heroics, the Flyers avoided losing three straight games for the first time since mid-October and also tied the Capitals for the second-most points in the Metropolitan Division (52) although the Caps technically still are ahead of them because of a game in hand. However, the Flyers did leapfrog the Rangers in a standings shuffle that is sure to have several permutations and combinations the rest of the season.

“Every point is important, but especially after two losses you want to get two points,” Lecavalier said. “You got to make sure you get those points no matter who you play or where they are in the standings. You can’t think the two points are automatic. It’s hard to get two points in this league against any team.”