



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

January 18, 2014

Blue Jackets-Sabres Preview

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Associated Press

January 18, 2014

Cam Atkinson and Sergei Bobrovsky are big reasons why the Columbus Blue Jackets are on the cusp of matching the longest winning streak in franchise history. Only one of them, however, may be on the ice to try helping the team re-write the record book.

While Bobrovsky's status is unknown, Atkinson will look to continue his scoring barrage when the visiting Blue Jackets go for a sixth straight win Saturday night against the Buffalo Sabres.

Columbus (23-20-4) has won five in a row after beating Washington 5-1 on Friday. The team's only six-game winning streak was from March 24-April 3, 2006.

"When we're at our best, all four lines are definitely buzzing and creating some chances," said Atkinson, who scored twice.

Atkinson has made the most of his recent chances, scoring five goals in five games to equal his total from the previous 25. The right wing, whose 15 goals are a career high, tallied once and added an assist in a 4-1 win at Buffalo on Oct. 10.

Bobrovsky has won six straight starts with a 1.38 goals-against average and .955 save percentage. That stretch does include a 12-game absence due to a groin injury, but he's picked up where he left off.

The reigning Vezina Trophy winner has won four straight with a 1.48 GAA since his return after a 26-save performance Friday. However, it's unclear if he'll get the nod in back-to-back games as it's happened only twice this season, most recently Nov. 19-20.

Backup Curtis McElhinney has a 3.83 GAA while losing three of his last five. He owns a 4.30 GAA while dropping both of his career appearances at Buffalo (13-27-6).

Bobrovsky, who had 26 saves in Buffalo on Oct. 10, is competing with Colorado's Semyon Varlamov to become Russia's No. 1 goaltender at next month's Sochi Olympics.

Buffalo's Ryan Miller is making a solid push to be the top man for the United States, going 7-2-2 with a 1.75 GAA since Dec. 10. That stretch includes a 1.29 GAA while matching his career high with six straight wins at First Niagara Center.

Miller's recent success is an adequate reason for him to continue starting, but Jhonas Enroth's 1-9-4 record and 2.57 GAA may only cement it. Enroth, expected to back up Henrik Lundqvist with Sweden, hasn't won since Oct. 25 at Florida.

Miller, though, is coming off Wednesday's 4-3 shootout loss to Toronto. He was beaten on all three attempts in the tiebreaker after making 36 saves through overtime.

He has a 2.36 GAA and one shutout while splitting four home meetings with Columbus. He was charged with a 4-1 loss in the most recent matchup there, making 29 saves Oct. 10.

Cody Hodgson leads Buffalo with 23 points, getting four in three games after missing eight with an upper-body injury. The center has a goal in each of the last two, scoring early in the third period Wednesday to help the Sabres gain a point in the standings.

Buffalo has totaled six goals in two games - both losses - as defensive issues continue to plague the team. It's surrendered at least three tallies in four games - all losses - during a 2-3-2 stretch.

"We still need to clean up a couple of things," right wing Drew Stafford said. "At the same time, I think we're playing solid enough where we're generating turnovers where we can go on the offensive. We've translated that into goals. On the flip side of that, we are still making a couple of mistakes that end up in the back of our net."

Ellis making an impact for Sabres

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

January 17, 2014

In December, Matt Ellis was both captain and hero for the Rochester Americans. The 32-year-old forward had led the team through the first part of the season, then scored the deciding goal in the Amerks' dramatic shootout victory over Lake Erie in the signature Frozen Frontier event.

The next day, Ellis found himself recalled to the Buffalo Sabres for yet another partial stint in the NHL.

The captain in Rochester became a fourth-line role player in Buffalo. It's a common road in professional hockey and one that no longer fazes Ellis.

"Throughout my 12 years of pro hockey I've ridden this road before," he said. "You're up. You're down. You're up. You're down. I've learned a lot along the way and one of the things is you focus on the now. You don't worry about tomorrow. You don't worry about yesterday. You focus on the now. You bring it every day. You lay it on the line. That's kind of the attitude you have to take."

Assuming Ellis is in the lineup tonight when the Sabres host the Columbus Blue Jackets, it will be his 15th game with the big club this season. He has spent parts of seven seasons in the NHL, including playing 72 games for the Sabres in 2009-10.

It's Ellis' attitude that has caught the attention of coach Ted Nolan, who believes heavily in earning opportunities and rewarding hard work.

"Matty has that certain intangible that you look for in all athletes," Nolan said. "It's the compete level. He works. He may not be the fastest guy in the world or the best stick-handler or the best hitter or the biggest guy, but the one thing he does do is he works and he competes and he pays attention to details. I think that's why he lasted so long in this profession."

Hard work helped Ellis score his second goal of the season Wednesday night in Toronto. Playing on the fourth line with Zenon Konopka and John Scott, Ellis scored the Sabres' first goal early in the second period. The line cycled the puck, kept it in the zone and with Konopka and Scott in front of the net, Ellis took a pass from Tyler Myers and fired the puck in the short side.

"In terms of my line, we did what we do. We keep things simple," Ellis said. "The recipe is pretty simple for guys who play on the third and fourth line – get pucks out of your end, get pucks into their zone and try to create some zone time and momentum."

“The three of us with Zenon and Johnny, we understand what type of players we are, what we need to do to be successful and help the team. I thought we did a good job with that against Toronto, just being heavy on pucks and controlling the O-zone when we were out there.”

Keeping things simple has been the key to the Buffalo offensive game plan.

The team is averaging a league-worst 1.67 goals a game but busted out for three goals in its last two outings.

“We’re scoring by committee now,” Ellis said. “We’re doing the right things. It’s been a focus in practice. It’s been a focus in all our meetings – getting pucks and bodies to the net. We understand in this locker room sometimes you’ve got to score by committee. ... There’s no secret to scoring. When you’re getting pucks to the net and doing things the right way, good things tend to happen. We’re starting to get rewarded for that.”

Ellis is part of the scoring by committee, part of the balanced scoring when third and fourth lines are contributing goals. But his primary role is one of leadership. And while his position on the depth chart may shift depending upon which team he’s playing for, his approach remains consistent and he’s happy to play a supporting role to captain Steve Ott and alternate captain Christian Ehrhoff.

“Obviously some things are a little bit different. In Rochester I was counted upon as the captain, the leader for those guys. It’s something that I was honored to do and I took a lot of pride in that position,” Ellis said.

“Things change but they don’t. I come up here again, it’s a younger team but we have strong leadership with Otter and Christian and some of the guys who have been around. One of the things that’s nice for me is I am one of the older players here and I’ve been around a long time.

“So it’s been easy to come in and carry on and be part of the supporting cast to Steve and some of the other leaders on this team by helping some of the guys along the way and being able to be a little more vocal in the locker room. Just kind of fill that position of one of the elder statesmen around here.”

Sabres' Nolan has a chat with Ehrhoff and Flynn

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

January 17, 2014

Practice for the Buffalo Sabres usually lasts about an hour, but afterwards there's the time on the ice when interim coach Ted Nolan often chats with players.

He spoke with defenseman Christian Ehrhoff and forward Brian Flynn on Friday. The talk with Flynn was to help boost his confidence while with Ehrhoff it was to reiterate expectations.

Ehrhoff is averaging the most ice time of any Sabre, logging 24:08 a game. He has two goals and 16 assists but is a minus-11 as the team's defense has perhaps been too eager to jump into the offensive zone lately.

"We need good leadership from him. We need good, steady play. When you go into games, you know exactly what you're going to get," Nolan said. "Sometimes I think Chris presses too much, wants to help out too much, he wants to do a little too much versus just doing what he can do and being patient within his abilities. We had a nice conversation about that today."

Flynn, meanwhile, has three goals and three assists but Nolan sees more offensive talent than the numbers would indicate.

"I think watching the number of games I've been watching now and seeing his ability, I think he's a real good player. I think he's a little bit more offensively gifted than what we saw," Nolan said. "I think just having confidence and knowing that the coaching staff and the organization believes in him. We just really want to show him some confidence that we think he's a really good player."

...

Marcus Foligno is set to return to the lineup tonight after missing the game in Toronto with an undisclosed injury.

But expect the rest of the injury brigade to be out for at least another week.

Henrik Tallinder (upper body) practiced with the Sabres on Friday while Cody McCormick (upper body) and Kevin Porter (lower body) practiced with the red non-contact jerseys. Matt D'Agostini did not practice.

"They're getting better but I think to play a game, they're all a minimum of a week away," Nolan said.

...

The inaugural “Sabres Unpucked” was announced for March 1 at First Niagara Center. Billed as a night of music with the Sabres, all proceeds go to the Sabres Foundation. The event begins with a writer’s roundtable led by songwriters David Lee Murphy, Doug Johnson, Tony Arata and Jim Peterik.

Murphy has written multiple top 40 hits for artists including Kenny Chesney, Jason Aldean and Jake Owen. Johnson wrote “Love Like Crazy” for Lee Brice; Arata wrote “The Dance” for Garth Brooks; and Peterik wrote “Eye of the Tiger” for Survivor.

Current and former Sabres players and coaches will join as guest musical performers and celebrity bartenders.

General admission tickets are \$35 with VIP tickets (which include complimentary food and beverages and access to an exclusive lounge) are \$200. Tickets go on sale at noon on Monday with a 10 a.m. presale for season-ticket holders. Tickets are available at Sabres.com or by calling Lauren Yurko at (716) 855-4468.

Streaking Blue Jackets visit Sabres

By Mike Battaglino

NHL.com

January 18, 2014

BLUE JACKETS (23-20-4) at SABRES (13-27-6)

TV: FS-O, MSG-B

Last 10: Columbus 7-3-0; Buffalo 4-3-3

Season series: The Columbus Blue Jackets and Buffalo Sabres complete their three games with two within a week. Columbus won 4-1 on Oct. 10; Marian Gaborik had a goal and two assists.

Big story: Columbus certainly likes when the season hits 40 games. After a 5-1 home win against the Washington Capitals on Friday, the Blue Jackets have won five in a row and six of seven since that milestone.

Last season, they won seven of eight to close the season after the 40-game mark.

"I think we can compete with anybody in the League," forward Ryan Johansen told Fox Sports Ohio. "We've had a couple hiccups through the year so far, but every team goes through that. Right now we're just taking it one game at a time and our focus moves to Buffalo. We're playing great hockey, we just have to keep it up."

Team Scope:

Blue Jackets: Columbus' recent streak coincides with the debut of forward Nathan Horton, who played for the first time Jan. 2 after offseason shoulder surgery, and the return of goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky from a groin injury Jan. 6.

Less heralded was the return of forward Matt Calvert from an upper-body injury Jan. 10. Since he's been back, linemate Cam Atkinson has four goals in four games, and the Blue Jackets have 17.

"I think Matty's had a huge impact on Cam," coach Todd Richards said. "I think they're good friends, they get along. But I think just Matty, the way that he plays the game, it's lead by example, and that's what you want to see from really any of your players, doing the right things out on the ice. But we've talked about the value of Matty and what he does, he drags other guys into the fight and getting into games."

Sabres: Buffalo has scored three goals in back-to-back games but lost both (0-1-1), this after going six straight scoring two or fewer but winning three (3-2-1).

"It's kind of like one of those bopping things you'd see at the circle, one head keeps popping up, you pop that one down and another one pops up," coach Ted Nolan said Friday. "Sometimes we're really good defensively, then we forget about our defense and want to go offense."

"I think it's just finding that good mixture of when to go and when not to go. ... Finding that consistent play, game in, game out, whether it's offensively or defensively, putting them together, I think that's when you have a good team outing."

Forward Drew Stafford (upper body) returned to play Wednesday in the 4-3 shootout loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs after missing four games, but forward Matt D'Agostini (upper body) was injured in the first period.

"It was good to get back in. It was a little tough we lost a forward right away, so we were kind of double-shifting a couple times and we were rolling three lines," Stafford told the Sabres website Friday. "I was kind of thrown right into the fire. They're a pretty physical team so it was a pretty good test. I felt all right. Nice to have a day to recover and looking forward to having a good one tomorrow."

Who's hot: Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson has five assists in a three-game streak. Defenseman Ryan Murray has four assists in a four-game streak. Defenseman James Wisniewski and Atkinson each has six points in his past five games. Forward Mark Letestu has five points in his past four. Forward Ryan Johansen has four points in his past three. ... Sabres forward Cody Hodgson has two goals and two assists since returning from injury Sunday. Forward Tyler Ennis and defenseman Christian Ehrhoff each has a three-game point streak.

Injury report: Blue Jackets defenseman Fedor Tyutin (illness) did not play Friday and didn't make the trip to Buffalo. Forwards Blake Comeau (sprained knee), Jack Skille (upper body), Gaborik (broken collarbone) and Jared Boll (torn ankle tendon) are on injured reserve. ... Sabres forward Marcus Foligno (undisclosed) did not play Wednesday but is OK for Saturday. D'Agostini, defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body), forward Kevin Porter (lower body) and forward Cody McCormick (upper body) are each at least a week away. Tallinder, Porter and McCormick practiced Friday.

Game Day Scorecard: Blue Jackets at Buffalo Sabres

Columbus Dispatch

January 18, 2014

Blue Jackets at a glance

- Past 10 games: 7-3-0
- Power play: 17.8 percent (19th in NHL)*
- Penalty kill: 79.5 percent (23rd)*
- Injury update: LW Blake Comeau (knee), RW Marian Gaborik (collarbone), LW Jack Skille (upper body), RW Jared Boll (left ankle) out; D Fedor Tyutin (illness) questionable

* — Does not include last night's game

Buffalo Sabres at a glance

- Past 10 games: 4-3-3
- Power play: 13.2 percent (28th in NHL)
- Penalty kill: 82.4 percent (13th)
- Injury update: D Henrik Tallinder (upper body), Kevin Porter (undisclosed), F Cody McCormick (upper body) out; Matt D'Agostini (upper body) questionable

Sabres captain Steve Ott wants to remain in Buffalo, believes rebuilding team not far away from contending

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 18, 2014

BUFFALO – The hospitality Steve Ott and his family have experienced from the community has been incredible, the captain said. Win or lose, the locals still love their Sabres.

Of course, the Sabres have done a lot of losing during Ott's first year here.

The warm welcome and the struggles have left Ott imagining the Sabres' resurgence. Right now, they're rebuilding, still the NHL's worst team.

But the 31-year-old, an unrestricted free agent following the season, wants to stick around.

"I can only imagine what it would be like to go from where we are now to have success, and that's something that I've always wanted that," Ott said Friday inside the First Niagara Center. "It's easy to go somewhere where you're already having success. But that's a different feeling when you start here and see the rise and see the change. I don't think we're that far away."

What makes Ott say that?

He's experienced both sides of ownership. In his Dallas days, the Stars went bankrupt, morphing from a perennial contender into an also-ran. He's confident Terry Pegula's ownership will "whatever it takes to put a product on the ice."

The rebuild, Ott said, "doesn't matter."

"I know the Pegula family," he said after the Sabres prepared for tonight's home tilt against the Columbus Blue Jackets. "You're always a few players away from being a significant team in the NHL. It's a small, finite number of depth guys that you bring in and everything changes. I think here you have building blocks with great young players coming."

Ott feels he has "a lot of years left in my career." He's excited about the Sabres' new regime, including interim coach Ted Nolan, who loves Ott's leadership. He hasn't had any contract talks yet, however.

"You throw that respectable group in and it's easy to come work every day and put the jersey on and play," Ott said.

That jersey has had a 'C' stitched on it since the Sabres traded Thomas Vanek, who briefly split the captaincy with Ott, on Oct. 27.

Being a first-time captain “has been a blast,” Ott said. The winger only wishes the Sabres were winning more.

“To be looked upon and try to gain respect from your teammates ... even through a difficult season, I’ve had a lot of fun,” said Ott, who’s usually smiling and cracking jokes with those teammates.

Ott’s having fun playing his usual rugged and tenacious style – “You never know when your last game is,” he said – something he hopes will rub off on the Sabres.

“That’s kind of how I approached the whole thing is I want to be somebody that somebody would grab something valuable from,” Ott said. “Hopefully, I’ve done that.”

Ott’s approach is wearing off. During a huge penalty kill in overtime of Wednesday’s 4-3 shootout loss in Toronto, Matt Ellis leaned over to new teammate Zenon Konopka.

“I said, ‘Steve’s one of those guys you don’t get a full appreciation for what he brings to the team and what he does on a night-to-night basis until you’re suiting up game after game with him,’” Ellis told Konopka. “He’s an absolute warrior. He’s a great leader. He’s done a great job keeping guys engaged in what’s going on here, keeping the room upbeat, keeping the accountability level high.”

Ellis added: “He’s the definition of what a captain should be.”

Nolan called Ott a “competitive son of a gun.”

“When there’s a puck out there, he wants it,” Nolan said. “If there’s any kind of competition for anything, he wants it. And above that, he’s a very caring individual. He cares about his team. He really cares about where he’s living in Buffalo. He really cares about this city.

“So I think you put all those things together that’s what makes him a great captain.”

FOLIGNO, TALLINDER, PORTER BACK AT PRACTICE

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 17, 2014

Marcus Foligno missed the Buffalo Sabres' last game against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday due to an injury, but was a full participant in practice Friday with at First Niagara Center.

He said he'll be ready to go Saturday night against the Columbus Blue Jackets when the two teams meet at 7 p.m.

"[It was] a reoccurring injury that just kind of got pinched in the game against Philly [on Tuesday] and it's all better now," he said. "The trainers looked after me and it's something where you just needed to rest it and I'm looking forward to getting back at it tomorrow."

Some other familiar faces rejoined the Buffalo Sabres for practice. Henrik Tallinder and Kevin Porter skated with the team.

Tallinder has missed six games with an upper-body injury. He sustained the injury on his first shift of the team's game against the Washington Capitals on Dec. 29. He ended up playing 21:05 in the game.

"Because you're so pumped with adrenaline, you don't really feel it when you're playing. It's more a couple hours after the game when everything's cooling down, that's when you feel the injury," he said.

Tallinder practiced with the team the morning they left for their next game in Winnipeg, but ended up not making the trip.

"We thought it was just a bone bruise and I couldn't even hold my stick," he said. "So we took a look at the x-ray again and they could spot a little crack in there."

Tallinder said he won't be ready for Buffalo's home game Saturday against the Columbus Blue Jackets but hopes to play next week.

Porter and Cody McCormick skated in red non-contact jerseys. Nolan said they're both still at least a week away from playing.

Porter has been out since Dec. 23 with a lower-body injury. McCormick last played 12 games ago, on Dec. 17.

Since Tallinder, Porter and McCormick are on injured reserve, the organization would need to make roster moves in order to activate them for game action with the Sabres.

Drew Stafford had missed four games with an upper-body injury, but played against Toronto. He was put on the top line with Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis to start the game.

Zemgus Girgensons, who had been playing on the right wing with Ennis and Moulson skated with Ville Leino and Brian Flynn on the third line.

“Whatever line Girgensons plays with, I think you’re going to get the same effort. Whether he’s with Ennis or with Flynn or whoever’s he with, he’s going to do the same thing,” Nolan said. “With Drew, we just need a little bit more from him.”

When Matt D’Agostini went down with an upper-body injury, the coaching staff was forced to juggle the lines a bit. Nolan said D’Agotini will miss about a week.

Stafford finished the game with 19:46 of ice time and two shots on goal.

“It was good to get back in. It was a little tough we lost a forward right away, double-shifting a couple times and we were rolling three lines,” Stafford said. “I was kind of thrown right into the fire. They’re a pretty physical team so it was a pretty good test. I felt all right. Nice to have a day to recover and looking forward having a good one tomorrow.”

26 Matt Moulson – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford
9 Steve Ott – 19 Cody Hodgson – 23 Ville Leino
82 Marcus Foligno – 65 Brian Flynn – 28 Zemgus Girgensons
32 John Scott / 17 Linus Omark – 24 Zenon Konopka – 37 Matt Ellis
Red Non-Contact: 8 Cody McCormick – 12 Kevin Porter

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

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth

Game Day Central: Blue Jackets at Sabres

BlueJackets.com

January 18, 2014

MORNING SKATE: The Blue Jackets arrived in Buffalo late last night/early this morning after a 5-1 win over the Washington Capitals. Due to the late arrival, they are NOT scheduled for a morning skate but we'll have game day coverage for you right here at Game Day Central. Also, look for lineup changes, thoughts on the match-up against the Sabres, storylines from the other side and an interview with coach Todd Richards. Stay tuned to this page for the latest!

ROSTER REPORT

The Blue Jackets have won five straight games - a season high - and they're expected to dress the same lineup as they did Friday night against the Capitals. Richards said the team planned to travel without Fedor Tyutin (illness), which means they'll use the same six defensemen tonight in Buffalo.

If there's a change to be made, it may come between the pipes but nothing is certain yet. On back-to-back nights, the Blue Jackets have options with no game until Tuesday at home; there's a chance they could go back to Bobrovsky but also a chance to see Curtis McElhinney. That's pretty vague, isn't it?

GAME PREVIEW

It's been a while since the Blue Jackets and Sabres have seen each other. Things were different for both clubs back on Oct. 10 when they met at First Niagara Center, in what was the third game of the season for Columbus. The Blue Jackets won that game by a 4-1 final due in large part to a three-goal second period and a solid effort in goal from Bobrovsky.

There have been sweeping changes in Buffalo in the months since that game. Gone are former GM Darcy Regier and former head coach Ron Rolston. Pat LaFontaine is the new president of hockey operations, and he recently named Tim Murray as the Sabres' new GM. Well-liked coach Ted Nolan currently serves as the interim coach for Buffalo, a young club that has gradually started to find its identity.

Where they have excelled is at home. The Sabres have played some of their best hockey at First Niagara Center and it's never an easy place for opponents to play. It's loud, sold out and the fans are passionate about their hockey in western New York; the Blue Jackets have won five straight games and played well for long stretches in that span, but they'll need a smart, committed road game to get the desired result tonight.

UP NEXT

VS. LOS ANGELES KINGS

TUESDAY, 7 P.M.

NATIONWIDE ARENA