



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Penguins Preview

By Alan Ferguson

Associated Press

January 26, 2014

The Pittsburgh Penguins are still well in command in the Eastern Conference but didn't help themselves with a pair of recent lackluster efforts against clubs that are currently out of playoff contention.

The Penguins will try to avoid another such performance Monday night when they face a cellar-dwelling Buffalo Sabres team that cooled off a red-hot opponent in its most recent game.

Pittsburgh (36-14-2) is seven points ahead of Boston and Tampa Bay in the East, and it has a 15-point advantage on the New York Rangers in the Metropolitan Division. The Penguins padded their lead over the Rangers by scoring a combined 11 goals in wins over Montreal and the New York Islanders this past week but couldn't keep that momentum going Saturday.

Pittsburgh fell 3-0 in Dallas and allowed two power-play goals in three short-handed situations. The Penguins had killed off 44 of 48 penalties in their prior 15 contests.

They also went 0 for 4 with a man advantage after converting 3-of-7 chances in their back-to-back wins.

"I thought we came out focused and skating hard, but we shot ourselves in the foot with a couple of plays," forward Craig Adams said. "We needed a couple big kills and we didn't get them. It was hard to come back after that.

"Whether it's a combination of desperation and focus, it hasn't been there often enough every night."

The Penguins - who have won 14 of 15 at home - also failed to score on the power play or generate much offense in a 5-1 home loss to Florida last Monday. The Panthers are currently 15th in the East with only Buffalo (14-29-7) trailing them.

The Sabres are also 5-14-3 on the road but took a 5-2 victory in Columbus on Saturday. They stopped the Blue Jackets' franchise-record, eight-game win streak while ending a 0-3-2 skid.

"It's pretty cool. They're one of the hottest teams in the NHL this month," said center Cody Hodgson, who had a goal and an assist in the third period. "It feels nice to win, it doesn't matter who it's against. But it's a little extra sweeter (against a good team)."

The Sabres have scored a league-low 91 goals but have tallied at least three in six consecutive games and 20 total. They allowed a combined 19 in their previous five contests, but U.S. Olympic goaltender Ryan Miller helped Buffalo prevail Saturday despite getting outshot 38-22.

Hodgson has a team-best four goals and three assists in the last six games, but the Sabres narrowly averted a shutout in their only matchup with Pittsburgh this season, scoring with 4:54 left in a 4-1 road loss Oct. 5.

Crosby registered the opening goal of that game, and Matt Niskanen assisted on both of his team's two first-period scores. Chris Kunitz helped seal the win by converting a penalty shot in the third period.

The Penguins faced Sabres backup goaltender Jhonas Enroth in that game. Miller has allowed a combined three goals on 62 shots in back-to-back wins against Pittsburgh.

If Miller starts this game, he'll try to end Crosby's 15-game point streak against Buffalo. The Penguins star has nine goals and 15 assists during that run, including three goals and five assists in the past three matchups.

Hodgson has two goals and three assists during a more modest four-game point streak against Pittsburgh while Steve Ott has four goals and three assists in his last eight matchups.

Sabres end Blue Jackets' 8-game streak, win 5-2

By Rusty Miller
Associated Press
January 25, 2014

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) -- After a horrendous 5-20-1 start, the Buffalo Sabres have to be happy spoiling things for others.

On Saturday night, they ruined a good run by the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Christian Ehrhoff and Marcus Foligno scored short-handed goals and Ryan Miller was almost flawless in goal as the Sabres ended a five-game skid with a 5-2 victory that snuffed out the Blue Jackets' franchise-record winning streak at eight.

"It feels good. It feels good to be a spoiler," Foligno said. "The odds were against us, they were on a roll and have been playing pretty well. Their power play's been good - and we got two goals off of it, which is great."

Matt Ellis, Steve Ott and Cody Hodgson also scored for the Sabres, who snapped an 0-3-2 stretch.

"It's pretty cool. They're one of the hottest teams in the NHL this month," said Hodgson, who also had an assist. "It feels nice to win, it doesn't matter who it's against. But it's a little extra sweeter (against a good team)."

It was a stunning reversal of fortune for both teams. Ehrhoff added two assists, tying a career high with three points as the Sabres won by three goals and scored five times in regulation for the first times all season.

"It is disappointing," said Derek MacKenzie, who had a goal and an assist for the Blue Jackets, who blew a chance to take over second place in their division. "You win eight, you want to keep winning."

Miller, who was stellar in the first period when the Blue Jackets peppered him with shots, made 38 saves and stood particularly tall on Columbus' four fruitless power plays. He benefited from two fluky goals that benched his Columbus counterpart - reigning Vezina Trophy winner Sergei Bobrovsky.

"A couple of those goals, they didn't see. I'm not too sure how they got in," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "But the whole game was Ryan Miller. I thought he was sensational again."

Bobrovsky, who came in 9-0-0 with a 1.80 goals-against average and .940 save percentage in his past nine starts, had a forgettable game.

The Sabres got on the board first at the 2:21 mark of the opening period when Ellis backhanded the puck - perhaps just trying to keep it in play off the back boards - and it eluded a surprised Bobrovsky.

After MacKenzie tied it, Columbus went on a power play. But a miscommunication in the defensive zone resulted in the puck bouncing to near the end of the left blue line, where Ehrhoff wandered up and unloaded a hard slap shot. Bobrovsky appeared to see it all the way but missed it with his glove, the puck nestling inside the far top corner.

"I was about at the red line," Ehrhoff said after collecting his 300th career point. "They had some problems communicating with their goalie and he made the pass up and I jumped on it and tried to get it on net as hard as I could. It changed directions a few times."

The puck seldom left Columbus' offensive zone for more than 3 minutes at the outset of the second period. After Buffalo's Mike Weber went off for elbowing, another bit of shoddy stickwork resulted in Foligno carrying the puck down the right wing, scissoring to the middle and wristing a shot that Bobrovsky caught but then allowed to trickle into the net. It was the sixth of the season for Foligno - the younger brother of the Blue Jackets' Nick Foligno.

Bobrovsky was replaced by Curtis McElhinney, but Miller never let the Blue Jackets back in it - thoroughly deflating a crowd of 16,272.

"I thought we competed hard, but we were sloppy at times," Columbus coach Todd Richards said. "Our power play is minus-2. We were a second slow in our decisions and our playmaking."

Notes: Columbus recalled D Cody Goloubef from AHL Springfield to replace David Savard (undisclosed illness) - but Goloubef had travel difficulties and didn't make it to the game. The Blue Jackets were forced to go with five defensemen. ... Sabres LW Ville Leino sustained an upper-body injury and did not come out for the third period.

Penalty killers looking sharp for Sabres

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 26, 2014

PITTSBURGH — The penalty killers were a major reason the Buffalo Sabres pulled off a surprising victory Saturday night in Columbus. They're going to provide much more of the same spark tonight in Consol Energy Center if the Sabres have any chance against the top team in the Eastern Conference.

A big reason the Pittsburgh Penguins are the highest-scoring team in the East is because their power play is No. 1 in the NHL at 24.4 percent. But the Pens figure to be surly tonight after suffering a 3-0 loss Saturday in Dallas — and they're on a 3-for-20 slump with the man advantage the last six games.

Buffalo's PK unit, however, has been up to challenges of late. The Sabres killed off all four penalties they took in Saturday's 5-2 win, allowed Columbus just one shot on goal combined on them and scored two short-handed goals in a game for the first time since 2007.

The Sabres are 12th in the NHL for the season at 82.9 percent and have gone 11 for 12 the last five games.

Goaltender Ryan Miller was huge Saturday with 36 saves but was duly impressed with the patience his team showed in front of him. That was especially true on the PK units.

"There were good reads and I thought we did a pretty good job on faceoffs," Miller said after Saturday's win. "Either the faceoffs were scrambled, where they're not getting quite the jump they want out of it and spreading the puck too early, or we were able to get out there and push and pressure.

"Our penalty kill has been really organized and really smart. It's been steadily improving all year and it's done a nice job."

The Sabres were particularly impressive on a third-period power play with Tyler Myers in the box, holding the Blue Jackets without a shot. And they were creating confusion in the Columbus zone during a first-period opportunity, with Christian Ehrhoff finally jumping on a loose puck for a short-handed goal in the final minute that gave the Sabres the lead for good.

"The coaching staff does a good job in letting these guys know what to expect," coach Ted Nolan said of his assistants. "We had just played them less than 10 days ago so we kind of knew what they were going to do. We had a little lady luck on our side and you have to have strong goaltending and tonight was a combination of that."

Miller was much sharper than the previous three games, when he had given up 10 goals, and credited some extra work with goaltending coach Jim Corsi as a reason why.

“I felt like I was inside the play a little bit more and reading off some of those plays they were trying to make with high tips or shots from the point,” Miller said. “The guys picked up coverage where I could sit back and wait on things, so it was a little bit better for me.”

“He was definitely on his game,” Ehrhoff said. “He made some good plays, even with the stick getting pucks out of there. It was the difference.”

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Saturday’s shutout loss marked the third time in six games Penguins center Sidney Crosby has been held pointless. Crosby, however, continues to lead the league in scoring with 72 points (27 goals, 45 assists) and his team is 34-5-2 this year when he gets at least a point. When he’s blanked, the Pens are just 2-9.

Crosby has some crazy numbers against the Sabres. He has six goals and eight assists in the last seven games he’s played against Buffalo and Pittsburgh has won all seven. He also has a 15-game point streak against the Sabres (9-15-24) that dates to Dec. 29, 2007, and has a point in 21 of 23 career games against them.

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Both teams took Sunday off rather than skate in the Penguins’ suburban practice facility because the Consol Center was being used for a professional wrestling card.

That means there will be no updates on the injuries suffered Saturday by Ville Leino and Drew Stafford until today’s morning skate. John Scott and Linus Omark was healthy scratches Saturday and could play tonight if either Stafford or Leino can’t go.

In goal, there’s a good chance Jhonas Enroth starts tonight because Miller has his worst career numbers against any opponent against Pittsburgh (7-11-3, 3.26 goals-against average and .888 save percentage). Enroth, meanwhile, is 1-3, 2.58 and .914 against Pittsburgh.

Enroth, however, is struggling mightily of late. He’s given up four goals in each of his last two starts to fall to 1-10-4 on the season. The Penguins are 21-4 at home this year and have won 14 of their last 15. They beat Enroth, 4-1, on Oct. 5.

Another reason to rest Miller is because the Sabres play again Tuesday when they host Washington in First Niagara Center. Miller certainly isn’t going to play three games in four days and he’s been lights out in two shootout wins against the Caps – stopping 77 of 79 shots, plus all nine shootout attempts against him.

Tim Murray wants rewards from any trades

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 26, 2014

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Since he was introduced as the Sabres' general manager 17 days ago, Tim Murray has been a man on the move. There have been scouting trips to far-off locales like Calgary. His official move to a downtown Buffalo condominium came Tuesday. He's put a new scouting rating system into place organization-wide. And Saturday night in Nationwide Arena, he attended his first road game with the team.

Speaking with The Buffalo News prior to Saturday's 5-2 win over the hottest team in the NHL, the Columbus Blue Jackets, Murray didn't offer any new specifics on what might happen with the team's key pending unrestricted free agents. But he did say he's now casually chatted with Ryan Miller, Matt Moulson and Steve Ott — the trio of players widely believed to be available prior to the March 5 trade deadline.

And Murray made sure to emphasize this point: None of them are getting traded unless the Sabres reap significant rewards.

"I've told them all the same thing really and it was like, 'It's unfortunate you're going to see your name in the paper. That's just the nature of the game,'" Murray said. "They're not young players. They've been around. They know the game. They know that this is part of it.

"I told them not to believe everything they read or everything they've heard on the sports channels. But certainly their names are in play and we'll see what happens but it doesn't guarantee they'll be moved at all. For me, it's all about return. These are good players. So if the return was up to a certain point and not great and we then decide we want to talk to them about staying, then that's an option too."

There will be an NHL roster freeze on Feb. 7 prior to the Olympics and there's plenty of speculation that's going to create an artificial first trade "deadline" prior to the official deadline on March 5.

Murray said many teams have reached out to him to discuss the Sabres' plans.

"There's been lots of interaction, a lot of early talking," he said. "There's been no real specifics. I think teams are just trying to feel us out, feel me out on what we want to do. There's certainly been discussions. I'm not sure there's any artificial deadline. I think people are in a wait-and-see mode, to tell you the truth.

"People are concerned about injuries this far out. If a contending team makes their one big move and that guy is not available when he needs to be, there's

concern there from those teams. I'm really not sure a lot of teams want to pull off the big trade this far out. It could happen, but it doesn't seem to me there's any urgency right now."

Similarly, Murray said he's not feeling any urgency to make any moves involving the Sabres prior to the Olympics either.

"I can certainly wait for injuries to happen in other places," Murray said. "We have an Olympics coming up and then a short-term push prior to the deadline. I think a lot of things can happen. So if we're going to do something, it's going to be something I'm really forced to do as far as return. That would be fine but I'm not sure it's going to happen."

Murray said he's pretty much said hello to every player on the Sabres' roster, with this trip finishing up that task.

"Sitting on the bus, there were a couple guys I hadn't talked to yet and we shook hands and they introduced themselves," he said. "I sat around today after the pregame skate and hovered around the trainers room, had a coffee and made myself available too."

"Just a different thing there. Different personalities take advantage of that. Some don't. I talked to a couple players one on one and really about anything but hockey. Just looking to get a feel for them and I think we have some good people here."

As for the team's play, Murray knows the Sabres pretty much are where they are in the standings. But he's not discouraged by the five-game losing streak they took into Saturday's game.

"For sure, I think the effort's there," Murray said. "I said today to somebody that you interact with the players, especially now on the road, and you see they have a smile on their face. They're happier with the way it's going. Obviously, they want to win but they're happy to come to the rink as far as effort and a team game and having some structure. They're enjoying getting ready to play."

Murray said there's been no discussions about removing the interim tag from the status of coach Ted Nolan.

"We judge every day and it's not just an end-of-the-year thing," he said. "Maybe it happens before that. It looks like our players are happy coming to the rink and you judge that every day. You try to feel the pulse of the team. And so far even without a lot of wins, the pulse is pretty positive."

Murray said he will stay with the team until the Olympic break and then resume his scouting. And he's going to make sure to get several first-hand looks at the players who could be picked in the top three of the June draft.

“I could take off again for a day or two but the Olympic break will be a good time to get back into the Ontario League and college and see as many guys that way as I can,” he said, “Then after the break, the trade deadline will be the focus again.

“But I know where we are. I definitely have to go see the very top amateur guys. There’s no question about that. There’s lots of time to do it.”

Surprise, Sabres snap Blue Jackets' winning streak

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

January 25, 2014

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Surprise, surprise. The NHL's worst team met the league's hottest team Saturday night in Nationwide Arena with very unexpected results.

Riding more white-hot goaltending from Ryan Miller and getting short-handed goals from Christian Ehrhoff and Marcus Foligno, the Buffalo Sabres stunned the Columbus Blue Jackets, 5-2, before a crowd of 16,272.

The Blue Jackets entered the contest on a franchise-record, eight-game winning streak. The Sabres, meanwhile, had dropped five straight, going 0-3-2 in that span, and had won just one of their previous 13 road games. In the end, they produced perhaps their signature win of the season.

"It's pretty cool," said center Cody Hodgson, who assisted on Steve Ott's third-period goal and then added an empty netter with 1:51 left. "They've been one of the hottest teams in the NHL this month. It feels nice to win. It doesn't matter who it's against. But it feels extra sweeter being a little bit of a spoiler."

The victory marked the first time all season the Sabres have scored five goals in regulation. It was just their second road regulation win.

Goaltending was the difference as Buffalo survived despite being outshot, 38-22.

Miller was often brilliant in making 36 saves while Columbus starter Sergei Bobrovsky was brutal. Bobrovsky allowed three goals on 10 shots and the last two, the short-handed goals by Ehrhoff and Foligno, were out-and-out whiffs with his glove hand. It marked the first time since 2007 the Sabres had two shorties in a game.

"I thought he was sensational again and we had some luck on our side," interim coach Ted Nolan said of Miller. "When he's on, you don't see too much better goaltending anywhere."

Bobrovsky was 9-0 in his last nine starts with a 1.80 goals-against average and .940 save percentage. But he missed Ehrhoff's drive from the blue line with 29.5 seconds left in the first that snapped a 1-1 tie, and was pulled after he flubbed Foligno's shot at 3:28 of the second period.

The Ehrhoff goal was a killer as Columbus fumbled the puck in its end and Bobrovsky sent a clearing pass near the blue line that Ehrhoff one-timed back into the net.

"They had some problems communicating with the goalie," said Ehrhoff, who added two assists for his first three-point night of the season. "He made the pass up and I jumped on it, just tried to get it on net as hard as I could. It changed direction a few

times I think. It went straight in. It was a 'knucklepuck' and I don't think he knew where it was going."

Buffalo's first goal was also a softie, as Matt Ellis' 30-foot backhander eluded Bobrovsky at 2:21 of the first period. Right after that goal, Miller made two in-tight stops to keep the Sabres in front and set a tone for his night.

"You want to keep that lead," Miller said. "You want to keep the guys feeling good. You don't want it to turn into a situation where they feel they've done something good and it gets negated too quickly."

In addition to the short-handed goals, the Sabres did an excellent job on the penalty kill overall. They stopped Columbus on all four penalties – allowing just one shot on goal.

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The Sabres lost two forwards in the game with upper-body injuries. Ville Leino left in the second period after a hard hit by Jack Johnson, took one more shift and was then gone for the night.

Drew Stafford, meanwhile, left in the third period and did not return.

Nolan had no updates on either player but did acknowledge it might be a longshot they would be available to play Monday night in Pittsburgh.

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As is customary, the Foligno brothers got together the night before a meeting. But Friday night's gathering in the home of Columbus winger Nick Foligno was a special one for Marcus Foligno because it was the first time he has met his niece.

Milana Foligno, the daughter of Nick and his wife Janelle, was diagnosed with a rare heart condition after she was born in October but is on the road to recovery after major surgery in Boston in November.

"It was really good. I got to see my niece finally," Marcus Foligno said prior to the game. "It was a lot of smiles all around. She's a beautiful little girl and it was good to finally meet her. She's still tiny but it's going well."

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Defenseman Chad Ruhwedel played 16:09 and had a team-high five blocked shots in his season debut after getting recalled from Rochester. He replaced Alexander Sulzer in the lineup. Linus Omark and John Scott were also healthy scratches.

Sabres' Zemgus Girgensons emerges as a force

By Kevin Oklobzija

Democrat and Chronicle

January 26, 2014

The first time Zemgus Girgensons spent time far away from his home and family in Latvia, let's just say it didn't go all that well.

Traumatic might best describe the getaway.

Just 12 years old, he departed from the Girgensons' apartment in Riga to spend two weeks with family friends in Germany — three countries, one time zone and one language barrier away.

His father believed it would be good for his only son — and youngest of two children — to experience another culture and learn to cope.

This would, after all, be happening again in the not-too-distant future if Zemgus was going to chase his on-ice dream. In order to advance in hockey, to perhaps follow in the path his father carved onto the ice rinks of Russia two decades earlier, he was going to need to leave Latvia and take advantage of greater opportunities elsewhere in Europe.

Trip 1 away from home didn't go so well, however. Shy and unable to communicate, Zemgus wanted out.

"I survived one week," Girgensons said. "I called home and said, 'I'm coming back.' "

Fast-forward two years and Girgensons himself was planning another live-on-his-own excursion — to the United States. He sent an email to Selects Hockey, a U.S.-based organization that works to maximize potential through elite teams and programs, asking "How do I get on the team?"

"My dad (Aldis) and I went to a tournament in Sweden and we saw one of their teams there," Girgensons said.

"I had no clue what American hockey was, junior A, junior whatever," Girgensons said. He just knew he wanted to be here. Needed to be here, really.

That summer he was in Rochester, playing with a Selects Hockey team in a tournament at the rink at Monroe Community College. "I was with the lowest team that summer," he said. "The next year I was with the best team on the west coast."

Know this about Girgensons, a 6-foot-1, 190-pound power forward: When he sets his mind to do something, he gets it done.

"He's a special player," Buffalo Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "He's not a half-in type of guy. He's an all-in type of guy."

Which is precisely how a player from a country whose hockey program is only now starting to grow significant roots, a player who has lived an ocean away from home for the past five years, was playing in the American Hockey League at 18 and skating full-time in the NHL a year later.

In 17 days he will be wearing Latvia's colors in Sochi, Russia, during the Winter Olympics.

"I have so much respect for guys who really put their whole life on the line and move over here at 14 or 15," Sabres center Cody Hodgson said.

Girgensons, who turned 20 earlier this month, simply says this has been what he has wanted to do since he was tiny. He wanted to emulate his father, whose career was cut short by a knee injury and the complications that followed after surgery. But he also wanted to compete for hockey's ultimate prize, the Stanley Cup.

So he came to America to get better and to take advantage of every opportunity. He skated for a youth program in Vermont, the Green Mountain Glades, for the 2009-10 season and was a point-a-game player.

At age 16 he moved on to the country's top Junior A league, the United States Hockey League, playing two seasons with the Dubuque (Iowa) Fighting Saints. He helped Dubuque win the Clark Cup in 2010-11 and was the team captain the next year.

Scouts raved about what they saw. His drive. His passion to win. The manner in which he conducted himself on and off the ice. His relentless work ethic, on the ice and in the weight room.

"If there's something that's not quite there, he keeps working on it day after day after day," Sabres winger Marcus Foligno said.

And while he is driven to succeed, he maintains his wry sense of humor.

Two nights after he suffered a concussion in January 2013 from a blindside hit from Richard Panik of the Syracuse Crunch, he was asked how he was doing.

"I'm OK," he said, "except for the dent in my head."

"He's pretty goofy and pretty intense at the same time," said Sabres winger Drew Stafford, whose sits directly to the right of Girgensons in the Sabres dressing room.

The Sabres had two first-round selections in the 2012 NHL draft. They used the 12th overall pick to select Russian-born center Mikhail Grigorenko. Then they traded up from No. 21 to snatch Girgensons at No. 14.

He had planned to play at the University of Vermont, but the Sabres knew he was ready for pro hockey and wanted him to start his apprenticeship with the American Hockey League's Rochester Americans.

"I can't think of anyone that's taken the path he has," Stafford said. "Maybe Thomas Vanek (the former Sabres winger from Austria), but even Thomas played in college."

Though Girgensons would be the youngest player in the AHL last season, the Sabres were confident he could cope, that his upbringing had prepared him.

He grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in Riga and was one of six family members in their apartment: His father, mother Ina, sister Annija, grandfather Janis and grandmother Mara (she passed away just before his draft day). He shared a room with his sister.

"He's a very humble, blue-collar type of kid," Stafford said.

His school was just down the street. "So I could wake up late and walk to school," he said.

His father operates his own business renovating old buildings. Through the years Aldis Girgensons set aside money to build a home, where they now live.

"It took my dad 15 years to build the house," Girgensons said.

That's called determination; he never let go of the dream. Obviously the hammer didn't fall far from the workbench.

"You can understand why he's gotten to where he's at," Nolan said. "He comes from a hard-working family, from a hard-working country."

When he joined the Amerks, he never looked intimidated. He never asked: Am I ready? Are the other players going to be considerably better?

"I never really thought about that," he said. "Even now, here (with the Sabres), I don't. If you don't think you belong here, you're probably not going to be here."

He produced 6 goals, 11 assists and 17 points in 61 games with the Amerks.

Girgensons' "arrival" really came during the Calder Cup playoffs last spring. He was by far the Amerks' best player during the three-game sweep by the Toronto

Marlies. The team scored five goals in the series; Girgensons scored three of them.

"I know how they look at playoffs here," Girgensons said. "I just wish I could have helped the team go farther. That would have been more fun."

And he has transitioned very well to the NHL. He has 4 goals, 10 assists and 14 points in 48 games. In a Jan. 15 game at Toronto, he was credited with 13 hits.

The Sabres still have the NHL's worst record, but they are showing signs of progress under Nolan. Recent draft picks such as Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov, plus a stockpile of picks in upcoming drafts, may enable new general manager Tim Murray to fast-forward the rebuilding project.

"Even the fans should be excited to see the improvement and the growth of the organization," Girgensons said. "I hope I can be part of it for a long time."

So do fans. Girgensons memorabilia is popular in western New York. He's also the favorite son for a whole lot of Latvian hockey fans. Which isn't easy for them, since a 7 p.m. start of a Sabres game in the Eastern time zone means folks in Riga see puck drop at 2 a.m.

"I've been told there are a lot of people that watch our games at night," Girgensons said. "They're crazy, but you have to give them credit."

That's why the Olympic experience will be so special.

"Imagine what happens," he said with anticipation, "when you play for the country."

Penguins return home to face Sabres

By Jon Lane

NHL.com

January 26, 2014

SABRES (14-29-7) at PENGUINS (36-14-2)

TV: TSN2, RDS2, NBCSN, ROOT

Last 10: Buffalo 3-4-3, Pittsburgh 7-2-1

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres and Pittsburgh Penguins play the second of three games this season. Sidney Crosby and Chuck Kobasew each scored, and Marc-Andre Fleury made 20 saves, in the Penguins' 4-1 win on Oct. 5.

Big story: Although the Penguins remain the class of the Metropolitan Division and the Eastern Conference and are 7-2-1 in their past 10 games, those two losses against the Dallas Stars and Florida Panthers were by a combined score of 8-1. After going 1-1 on a two-game road trip, Pittsburgh returns to Consol Energy Center, where it's an Eastern Conference best 21-4-0.

However, the Penguins cannot overlook the Sabres, who snapped an 0-3-2 slide Saturday with a surprising win against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Sitting in last place in the Atlantic Division, Buffalo enjoyed the spoiler's role by earning a victory against the Blue Jackets that impacted a tight race in the Metropolitan Division. Shorthanded goals from Christian Ehrhoff and Marcus Foligno gave the Sabres a 5-2 victory that ended Columbus' eight-game winning streak while snapping Buffalo's five-game skid.

"It feels good. It feels good to be a spoiler," Foligno said. "The odds were against us, they were on a roll and have been playing pretty well. Their power play's been good and we got two goals off of it, which is great."

Penguins: Pittsburgh could solve neither Stars goalie Kari Lehtonen nor Dallas' power play in a 3-0 loss Saturday at American Airlines Center. The Penguins' top-ranked penalty-killing unit allowed two goals that ended a streak of 11 straight successful kills.

"They capitalized on their power plays. We didn't," Crosby said. "We didn't execute when we got chances. They carried the play for the first two periods."

Who's hot: Sabres goalie Ryan Miller made 36 saves Saturday to earn the win despite his team being outshot 38-22. Center Cody Hodgson has eight points

(four goals, four assists) in seven games since returning from a hand injury ... Penguins defenseman Matt Niskanen's career-high six-game point streak (two goals, seven assists) ended Saturday. Center Evgeni Malkin has five points (2-3-5) in his past five games. Defenseman Kris Letang is 2-2-4 in his past five. Sidney Crosby is 2-3-5 in his past five.

Injury report: Sabres forwards Ville Leino (upper body) and Drew Stafford (upper body) were injured Saturday. Coach Ted Nolan said Leino will be reevaluated and Stafford will likely miss the game Monday. Right wing Matt D'Agostini (upper body) and center Cody McCormick (upper body) are on injured reserve ... Penguins forwards Beau Bennett (wrist surgery), Chris Conner (hand surgery), Pascal Dupuis (knee surgery), Brian Gibbons (lower body) and Joe Vitale (sprained right wrist), and goalie Tomas Vokoun (blood clot, hip) are on IR.

Sabres solve Bobrovsky, end Blue Jackets' streak at 8

By Craig Merz

NHL.com

January 26, 2014

COLUMBUS -- After enduring a five-game winless streak, the Buffalo Sabres seemed an unlikely candidate to stop the hottest team in the NHL. But outstanding goaltending by Ryan Miller, two shorthanded goals and some fortunate bounces resulted in a 5-2 victory against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday.

The Blue Jackets (26-21-4) had their team-record eight-game winning streak snapped and failed to score at least three goals for the first time in nine games.

Miller came up with several tough stops after the Sabres went ahead on a fluky goal, then withstood a constant barrage to finish with 36 saves. The Sabres blocked a season-high 30 shots among the 92 attempted by Columbus.

"You have to have a little Lady Luck on your side and you have to have strong goaltending," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "Tonight was a combination of that."

Columbus hit the post twice, including with a little more than two minutes left and the score 4-2. A James Wisniewski shot bounced off several bodies in front, then was put off the pipe by Blue Jackets forward Matt Calvert.

Cody Hodgson then scored into an empty net from the boards in front of the Blue Jackets bench with 51 seconds remaining for his 12th goal.

"It's disappointing. You win eight but you want to keep going," Columbus center Derek MacKenzie said. "We carried the play for the most part. We talked about getting some breaks on the other side during this eight-game winning streak. Tonight we got some bad breaks. As a result we lost."

Bobrovsky, a winner in his prior nine starts with a 1.80 goals-against average and .940 save percentage, allowed three soft goals to his glove side, two of them with Columbus on the power play, before being pulled.

"We're so used to seeing him play at a high level," Columbus coach Todd Richards said. "He really has just about this whole month in the games he's been a part of. You don't expect those pucks to go in."

The second of the man-down goals came off an odd-man rush and was scored by Marcus Foligno at 3:28 of the second period for his fifth goal of the season and a 3-1 lead. Foligno's shot went off Bobrovsky's glove before trickling past him.

Bobrovsky, the 2013 Vezina Trophy winner, made seven saves before being replaced by Curtis McElhinney, who made 10.

"The feeling on the bench was that we were going to go win one for [Bobrovsky]," forward Mark Letestu said. "He's been there for us all year through thick and thin, wins and losses; he's kept us in a lot of hockey games."

Christian Ehrhoff had a goal and two assists, and Matt Ellis and Steve Ott scored for the Sabres (14-29-7), who scored at least three goals for the sixth straight game.

MacKenzie and Letestu scored for the Blue Jackets.

An Ellis goal and a late shorthanded goal by Ehrhoff gave Buffalo a 2-1 lead after one period.

Ehrhoff scored with 29.5 seconds left after miscommunication between Bobrovsky and his defensemen. Ehrhoff circled back to pick up the loose puck and fired a slap shot from the left point that hit the right post on the way in for his third goal of the season.

Ellis scored on the game's first shot at 2:21, an innocent-looking backhand from about 40 feet that eluded Bobrovsky through traffic and smacked the post before going across the line for his third goal.

"A couple of those goals had seeing eyes," Nolan said. "I'm not too sure how they got in. You get them in once in a while like that, but the whole game here tonight was Ryan Miller. He was sensational again.

"We had the No. 1 guy that we needed to play and that was Ryan Miller. When he's on, you don't see too much better goaltending anywhere."

After Ellis scored, Miller denied Cam Atkinson on a breakaway and made a pad save on the rebound try by Jack Johnson.

Miller was finally beaten at 12:53 when MacKenzie scored his fourth goal (second in as many games).

Columbus pressured in the second period but luck wasn't on its side. Hoping to cut the two-goal deficit in half, the Blue Jackets went on the power play in the final two minutes and set up Johnson for a shot from the blue line. It clanged the base of the right post and skimmed underneath Miller at the top of the crease.

Columbus used five defensemen because David Savard was ill and emergency call-up Cody Goloubef did not arrive from the Springfield Falcons of the American Hockey League in time.

Instead, forward Cody Bass made his Blue Jackets season debut. He was reassigned to Springfield after the game.

Wisniewski played a game-high 27 minutes, 29 seconds, and teammate Jack Johnson played 27:07.

The Sabres also had personnel issues after left wing Ville Leino missed the third period with an injury; right wing Drew Stafford was injured and played two minutes in the third. Nolan said their status for a game Monday at the Pittsburgh Penguins is uncertain.

But that didn't stop the Sabres from their second road win in regulation this season. It was the first time they scored five times in regulation and was their largest margin of victory.

"It feels nice to win," Hodgson said. "It doesn't matter who it's against, but it is a little sweeter obviously being a little bit of a spoiler."

Ottawa Sens could be looking to make a deal for Sabres' forward Matt Moulson

By Bruce Garrioch

Ottawa Sun

January 26, 2014

If the Senators are to make a deadline move, their No. 1 target could be Buffalo Sabres' winger Matt Moulson.

Afterall, it only makes sense.

The ties between Buffalo GM Tim Murray and Senators GM Bryan Murray have people thinking that if the Sabres decide to move Moulson then perhaps Ottawa would be at the top of the list.

Moulson would be a nice fit playing along side captain Jason Spezza and offer consistency offensively from its top two lines because that hasn't happened every night.

But it sure sounds like Tim Murray will have a steep asking price if he's going to move his unrestricted free agents. He told the Buffalo News Saturday night if he's to move Moulson, Ryan Miller or Steve Ott he wants lots of assets in return.

"Certainly their names are in play and we'll see what happens but it doesn't guarantee they'll be moved at all. For me, it's all about return," Murray told the paper in an interview. "These are good players. So if the return was up to a certain point and not great and we then decide we want to talk to them about staying, then that's an option too."

The Senators have the assets to make a deal but they don't want to do something just for the sake of making a move. You have to think Bryan Murray has already made a call on Moulson but if the asking price is high, it won't happen here.

The other issue is the Senators won't be the only team involved. Several teams are looking for help up front and will take a run at Moulson. You have to think Buffalo will have lots of options.

"There's been lots of interaction, a lot of early talking," said Tim Murray. "There's been no real specifics. I think teams are just trying to feel us out, feel me out on what we want to do. There's certainly been discussions. I'm not sure there's any artificial deadline. I think people are in a wait-and-see mode, to tell you the truth."

It's looking more and more like the Sabres will trade star goalie Ryan Miller

By Bruce Garrioch

Ottawa Sun

January 25, 2014

RALEIGH - Ryan Miller's days in Buffalo are likely numbered.

While Sabres general manager Tim Murray is still trying to get the lay of land after taking over the post earlier this month, the whispers are getting louder that Miller won't be sticking around after the trade deadline and there's a school of thought he could be gone before the Olympic break.

The number of teams in the market for a goalie is limited though, which means Murray may not have many options. The St. Louis Blues have been mentioned, but GM Doug Armstrong has emphatically backed goalie Jaroslav Halak.

One possible landing spot is the Minnesota Wild and there may be interest there from general manager Chuck Fletcher. Goaltender Josh Harding is sidelined indefinitely because of complications with his MS and the Wild are in a race for the playoffs.

If the asking price is reasonable, they might be willing pay what it takes to get Miller if he wants to go there. They would probably want the chance to negotiate with him, though, because the asking price will likely be a player, prospect and pick. While Murray may still try to sign Miller a trade seems more likely.

THIS 'N' THAT

George McPhee might finally be feeling the heat. After 17 years on the job and being virtually untouchable, the blame for this season's struggles may land firmly on the shoulders of the Washington Capitals GM. While many will believe a McPhee firing only when they see it — because everyone has heard this before — league sources say he has been frantically calling rival GMs to see if he can make a deal to get his club back on track quickly. McPhee's contract is up at the end of the year, if the Caps don't make the playoffs or have a good showing, you have to wonder if he's going to be back because not many GMs have lame-duck status. Now, Martin Erat has asked for a trade, and he's not the only Caps' player who wants out: Goalie Michal Neuvirth also wants to be dealt ... Coyotes GM Don Maloney has been getting calls on leading scorer Radim Vrbata. A decision on the winger won't be made until Phoenix has a better idea if he wants to re-sign or the club is legitimately out of the playoff race by the next month's Olympic break ... Keep hearing the Montreal Canadiens have been floating captain Brian Gionta's name. That won't go away.

OFF THE GLASS

The Flames have held talks with centre Mike Cammalleri to see he wants to follow in the footsteps of Matt Stajan, who signed a four-year, \$14.5 million extension with Calgary last week. Cammalleri will have to decide how much he wants to stay with the Flames because he would stand to make a lot on the open market and would be forced to take less with Calgary ... With the Olympic roster freeze set to go into effect Feb. 7 at 11:59 p.m., several league executives believe there may be a flurry of activity. "A lot of teams are nervous," a league executive told Insider Trading. "I really think there are some teams that are in playoff races that want to make changes. You have to think there's going to be some trades before players going to the Olympics because teams aren't going to want to wait until March 5 to position themselves." A lot of the teams at the top of the standings — Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and San Jose — want to be active, but thus far the movement has been limited. "There's lots of talk," said the executive ... The Isles would like to keep left winger Thomas Vanek but if he doesn't re-sign before March 5 at 3 p.m. then he'll be moved. Several teams have contacted GM Garth Snow and he has dismissed all offers.

RUMOURS DU JOUR

Keep an eye on the Winnipeg Jets because we've been told by league sources that GM Kevin Cheveldayoff has been actively working the phones. Yes, the Jets are on the road to respectability under coach Paul Maurice, but that doesn't mean Winnipeg doesn't want to change its roster. Cheveldayoff hasn't been pleased with how the club has performed and has spoken to several teams about a possible deal. The three trade targets on the Jets are: wingers Andrew Ladd and Evander Kane, and defenceman Dustin Byfuglien. Have been led to believe that not all three of those guys will be dealt and that the Jets will only play the trade chip with one of those three guys. This should be interesting to watch ... Dallas general manager Jim Nill will have to decide what direction he wants to take at the deadline. Several teams have called to express interest in centre Ray Whitney — including Phoenix, Los Angeles and Vancouver — while centre Vernon Fiddler is another guy who could be on move ... After dealing defenceman Michael Del Zotto, the next Ranger out the door could be blueliner Dan Girardi. He isn't close to signing ... The name of Toronto centre Nazem Kadri remains on the trade market because of the emergence of Peter Holland. That would be a big deal for the Leafs to make.

Have a nice Sunday.

Would trade for Miller help Blues?

By Dan O'Neill

St. Louis Post Dispatch

January 27, 2014

Ryan Miller is one of the most talked-about athletes in St. Louis these days, and he wasn't even at the Winter Warm-Up.

For the uninformed, he is an NHL goaltender, currently playing for the Buffalo Sabres, soon to play for the U.S. Olympic hockey team and a team to be named later. He has won a Vezina Trophy (2009-10) and played in an All-Star Game (2009-10).

He is in the final year of a contract that pays him \$6.25 million this season and can become an unrestricted free agent. New Sabres general manager Tim Murray has said his preference would be to re-sign Miller.

But the Sabres are looking to rebuild and this isn't the Food Network. Robert Irvine doesn't come in, gut the place and re-invent it in 48 hours. This is "Hockey Team Impossible," which means it will take several years.

Mr. Miller is 33. It seems questionable he would embrace such a journey at this stage of his career, unlikely his new contract would fit the budget. It seems more plausible Miller would like to play with immediate Stanley Cup aspirations.

"It's not the best scenario," Murray recently told ESPN. "But I think I can figure out what deep down Ryan really wants and what's fair to him. And maybe what's fair to him is a chance to win a Cup."

That's why you're seeing No. 30 jerseys in St. Louis with "Miller" on the back, in addition to "Fuhr," "Joseph" and "Wakely."

The Blues' goaltending situation is somewhat fluid. Jaroslav Halak and Brian Elliott can be unrestricted free agents at season's end. Halak is making \$3.75 million, Elliott \$1.8 million. The Blues also employ 23-year old Jake Allen, the best goaltender in the American Hockey League. Allen makes \$800,000 and he's ready for prime time. It seems likely at least one incumbent is playing out his string with the Blues.

NUMBERS GAME

Statistically, there is no crisis. Halak has a .912 save percentage and a 2.30 goals-against average. Elliott is at .917 and 2.06. But Halak can't seem to stay healthy or locked in and Elliott can't seem to claim the position outright. At times each has been terrific, at other times vulnerable.

If you check other NHL cities, you'll almost certainly find a similar profile, even similar conversations. In hockey, the goal crease is the Garden of Good and Evil.

Blues fans see Halak and Elliott play, they don't see Miller. They don't frustrate over whatever performance fluctuations he might experience. They see only that he has a .926 save percentage on 1,239 shots. They see he has a 9.4 point shares — a stat that estimates the number of points he has contributed with his play. Miller is second in the league only to Sidney Crosby (9.6).

RYAN MILLER'S CAREER STATS

The locals believe their Blues have a chance to crack the code this season and end 46 years of Stanley Cup abstinence. They look at Miller and they see David Backes circling the Scottrade Center, hoisting the chalice.

The business of sports has changed dramatically over the years, but trades still are discussed in the old-fashioned, player-for-player context. It's like people have rear-view cameras in their cars, but they still roll down the window and turn their heads to look.

CAP CONSIDERATIONS

The Blues are tight to the NHL salary cap. According to capgeek.com, they have just less than \$1.5 million of breathing room. In today's NHL there is no deferring when it comes to such things. Most of every dollar the Note might bring in at this point would have to go out in equal measure. The Blues simply can't shower Buffalo in draft picks for Miller.

So it's complex. If you can assume the Blues would send a goaltender to Buffalo in a deal for Miller, you have to realize the team would have to part with another player as well, one with a conforming cap hit.

Theoretically, with Dmitrij Jaskin and Chris Porter in the minors, you might build that package. But the reloading Sabres have to like it. To put it in the proper context, why would Murray want the overpaid, underachieving player you are willing to give up? Their trying to rebuild in Buffalo, not recycle.

Because both Blues goalies are pending unrestricted free agents, Murray would have to feel confident about re-signing his side of the goaltending exchange —to spend the next few years of his professional life in Buffalo. It seems likely the Sabres might insist the package includes draft picks.

In March, 1991, the Blues thought Garth Butcher might put them over the top. They traded Geoff Courtnall, Robert Dirk, Sergio Momesso, Cliff Ronning and a fifth-round pick to get him. In a way they were right, the trade did have Stanley Cup implications. It helped Vancouver get to the finals in 1994.

ALLEN EQUATION

And don't forget about Jake Allen in this equation. Rosters expand after the March 5 trade deadline, which means, if you're looking for help, he can be part of the mix. The Blues, if they choose, could bring him up for a test drive, see if there's traction.

If you consider Allen to be a No. 1 type, is it irrational to mortgage the rink for Miller? Maybe not, maybe you can secure Miller for two or three seasons, play Allen part-time and allow him to apprentice under a master craftsman. But keep in mind where you are.

In New York, they renovate Madison Square Garden with a billion dollars. In St. Louis, you dress things up with a vodka bar. The point is, money is an issue. Meeting Miller's contract demands while Allen is swinging a bat in the on-deck circle might be fiscally imprudent.

And if so, then you ponder if it makes sense to satisfy Buffalo and acquire Miller as a rental property. Maybe it does. Maybe he's a hedge fund against that 1-7 record you have against the Pac-3 (San Jose, Anaheim and Los Angeles). Maybe a Stanley Cup is worth it. If you could guarantee Miller would deliver, it probably is. But there are no guarantees.

Miller has at least one thing in common with the Blues' current netminder — he's never taken a team to the Stanley Cup finals. Since Halak played well in back-to-back wins in New York, the trade talk has simmered a bit.

And so begins another week in the Garden of Good and Evil.

Sabres' Matt Ellis scoring, earning Ted Nolan's respect and regular duty

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 27, 2014

PITTSBURGH – Matt Ellis had two Buffalo Sabres skating to the crease, so even a few steps inside the blue line, the winger figured lofting a backhander toward Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky was a smart move.

To Ellis, getting the puck on net – even the seemingly harmless shots – is one of the simplest ways to increase scoring.

“Coaches tell you from Day One when you pick up a hockey stick that things happen when you put the puck to the net,” Ellis, whose Sabres play the Penguins tonight, said Sunday.

Sure enough, Bobrovsky, the reigning Vezina Trophy winner, lost the puck in traffic. The Sabres led 1-0 just 2:21 into their 5-2 upset of the Blue Jackets on Saturday, which ended a five-game losing skid.

Ellis, meanwhile, scored his third goal in his 18th game since his Dec. 13 recall.

Besides his hardworking style, Ellis' supreme hockey sense is one reason the 32-year-old has likely secured a roster spot for the rest of the season.

Interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan loves relentless, smart players.

“I think the type of player that I am, the things I do have really kind of mesh with the message Ted's trying to bring to the hockey team, some of the foundation work that he's laid down here, and for me, it's been huge,” Ellis said.

Nolan said Ellis possesses “that certain intangible that you look for in all athletes.”

“It's the compete level. He works,” Nolan said earlier this month. “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 is he works and he competes and he pays attention to details. I think that's why he lasted so long in this profession.”

Three goals doesn't sound like much, but when you consider the Sabres have only 91 scores in 50 games and had received almost nothing from the fourth line before Ellis' arrival, the contributions are huge.

For Ellis, this is a bit of a hot streak. He had three goals in 72 games in 2009-10 and three in 60 contests in 2011-12, his only two full NHL seasons. He scored a career-high seven times in 45 appearances in 2008-09.

Shooting certainly helps. Ellis has 25 shots this season. For some perspective, forward Ville Leino, Ellis' linemate early Saturday, has 25 shots in 33 games. Leino has played 285 more minutes than Ellis this season.

Not coincidentally, Leino has zero goals.

Ellis said he's a little surprised he has a few goals already.

"I'm definitely excited about it and happy about it," he said. "It's just one of those things I try to compete and play the game the right way, create offense by being smart with the puck, being simple with the puck."

"It's always a good thing when you get contributions from your bottom line, your fourth line. It's a big part of becoming a good team. I think that's a big part of what we've been able to do here for the past month."

This recall, Ellis' first since the Sabres waived him in February before sending him to Rochester, has defied expectations.

"You get called up, you really don't know," said Ellis, who captained the Americans. "You don't know what the situation is. You don't know what the plan is. At that point, you take things one day at a time. It's the way my attitude and my mindset has been for a big part of my career."

"You live in the present. You live in the now. You can't worry about tomorrow. Leave yesterday in the past and focus on the present."

Right before Christmas, the Sabres considered sending Ellis back to the AHL. He even took his equipment with him to possibly join the Amerks at the Spengler Cup in Switzerland.

But at this point, it appears Ellis has earned a regular gig. The Sabres are 7-6-5 with him in the lineup.

Ellis will keep treating each day individually, however.

"I just go about my business," he said. "The other thing is when I'm a member of the Sabres, I'm a member of the Sabres until I'm told otherwise. That's my focus, and when I was with Rochester, it was the same deal."

He added: "You don't get comfortable, but you make sure you bring it every day and you understand what you need to do in order to stay and be a part of things."

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Leino (upper body) left Saturday's win and is sore, Nolan told reporters Saturday. He was to be evaluated Sunday. Meanwhile, winger Drew Stafford (upper body) also left the game and "doesn't look good," Nolan said.

The Sabres had Sunday off.

What's former Sabres coach Ron Rolston doing in Tampa Bay?

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 25, 2014

We haven't heard much from former coach Ron Rolston since the Buffalo Sabres fired him Nov. 13 amid one of the worst starts in NHL history.

Rolston never spoke to the media. He popped up at a Rochester Americans game in November, presumably to see his friend John Hynes, the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins coach.

We've only read a short statement Rolston texted to CBC's Elliotte Friedman shortly after his dismissal.

So why has Rolston been in Tampa Bay this week?

Rolston has been seen taking notes while watching Lightning practices and a game.

What's the connection?

Rolston's friends with Lightning coach Jon Cooper. Presumably, he's observing and lending some advice to Cooper.

It's easy to forget, but Rolston was a pretty respected coaching prospect less than a year ago. Yes, he's been tarred by the Sabres' wretched start. But he'll work in hockey again.

It's unlikely the 47-year-old will be an NHL head coach in the near future, but he could be an assistant somewhere. He was on that NHL path after a strong season and a half leading Rochester.

If Rolston had kept developing AHL players while winning games, it's very possible he would've earned a promotion somewhere. The Sabres elevated him too soon. Rolston's first game was his first day ever in the NHL.

Stay tuned. Rolston clearly has friends who value him as an asset.

Sabres Miller worked to get back to form

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 26, 2014

Pittsburgh, PA (WGR 550) -- With three games in four nights and no ice available except in the suburbs, Ted Nolan decided to cancel practice on Sunday.

Buffalo didn't play all that well in Columbus on Saturday, but poor goaltending by the Blue Jackets gave the Sabres their most lopsided victory of the season.

It was a 5-2 game, but Ryan Miller was totally back on his game after giving up 10 goals in three games.

Miller had said during those three games where he struggled, his positioning was off. Miller said in Columbus, "Yes, it was a little bit better. I felt like I was in the play a little bit more and reading off some of those plays they were trying to make with high tips or shots from the point. The guys picked up coverage where I could sit back and wait on things, so it was a little bit better for me in that regard."

Miller got the night off against Carolina. The only goalie I've ever seen work as hard at his craft was Dominik Hasek. Miller is always looking for ways to get better and the four days between games were used wisely, "We were able to get some work in. Jimmy and Jhonas and I and a couple of the boys over the course of two days got some good work in. I was able to tailor a few drills through that I think I needed, so it was nice when it translates, sometimes it doesn't."

As coach of the Sabres Nolan has had both Hasek and Miller as his goalies. The head coach knew why they won in Columbus, "The whole game tonight was Ryan Miller. I thought he was sensational again."

With his three points on Saturday Christian Ehrhoff has three goals and 19 assists for 22 points. That's a 37 point pace for the season which is below what the Sabres were expecting when they signed him. In his last 21 games, he has 13 points which translates to 51 points over 82 games. That's what the team had in mind.

Ehrhoff enjoyed his three point game, but he said he has to stay steady, "Well that is a nice night to get once in a while, but I'm not really focusing on getting points, it never works out. You've got to start in your own end, make good plays and sometimes they end up in the net."

Both Drew Stafford and Ville Leino were injured on Saturday and Nolan didn't sound hopeful that they'd play Monday. Nobody has been called up yet as Buffalo has three extra players in Linus Omark, Alex Sulzer and John Scott.

Sabres win 5-2 over Columbus

WGR 550

January 25, 2014

Columbus, OH (WGR550) -- The Buffalo Sabres snapped their five-game losing streak, and ended the Columbus Blue Jackets eight-game winning streak, with a 5-2 win over the Blue Jackets on Saturday night.

Matt Ellis scored first to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead just over two minutes into the game. Ellis' third goal of the season was assisted by Henrik Tallinder and Ville Leino. The Blue Jackets answered later in the period thanks to Derek MacKenzie. The puck deflected off MacKenzie's skate and past Ryan Miller to even up the score 1-1. Ryan Murray and Mark Letestu were credited with assists on the score.

Christian Ehrhoff gave Buffalo its second lead of the night with a short handed goal. The rear guard slapped a shot at the net from just inside of the blue line, and Sergei Bobrovsky misplayed the puck as it clanked off of the goal post and in. Ehrhoff's goal came as Tyler Ennis sat with an elbowing minor.

Marcus Foligno added a short handed goal early in the second period that propelled Buffalo to a 3-1 lead. Bobrovsky was pulled in favor of Curtis McElhinney giving up a shaky goal. Bobrovsky stopped just 7 of Buffalo's 10 shots on goal before being pulled.

The blue and gold took the only two penalties of the second period, as Mike Weber was called for minors at different times in the stanza. Weber was called for high sticking early in the frame, and then was in the box for hooking. Buffalo was able to kill off both minors without much issue.

Steve Ott notched his seventh goal of the season to up the Buffalo lead to 4-1 only a couple of minutes into the third. Cody Hodgson and Christian Ehrhoff were given the assists on the goal. Mark Letestu quickly scored to bring Columbus back within two goal. The centerman followed up a rebound chance and flipped the puck over Ryan Miller for the goal. Cody Hodgson took advantage of an empty net at the other end to put Buffalo back up by three goals. Hodgson's 12th goal of the season made the score 5-2.

Goal Summary

First Period

BUF: 2:21 - Matt Ellis (3) (Henrik Tallinder, Ville Leino). 19:30 - Christian Ehrhoff (3) SHG (unassisted)

CBJ: 12:53 - Derek MacKenzie (4) (Ryan Murray, Mark Letestu)

Second Period

BUF: 3:28 - Marcus Foligno (6) SHG (Jamie McBain, Christian Ehrhoff)
CBJ: none

Third Period

BUF: 3:51 - Steve Ott (7) (Cody Hodgson, Christian Ehrhoff). 18:09 - Cody Hodgson (12) ENG (unassisted)
CBJ: Mark Letestu (7) (Derek MacKenzie, Corey Tropp)

Penalty Summary

First Period

BUF: 17:20 - Zenon Konopka (5 min., fighting). 18:15 - Tyler Ennis (2 min., elbowing)
CBJ: 17:20 - Cody Bass (5 min., fighting)

Second Period

BUF: 2:30 - Mike Weber (2 min., high sticking). 17:17 - Mike Weber (2 min., hooking)
CBJ: none

Third Period

BUF: 11:35 - Tyler Myers (2 min., high sticking)
CBJ: 5:58 - Jack Johnson (2 min., roughing)

HAMILTON: Sabres looking to cool the red hot Jackets

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 25, 2014

Columbus, OH (WGR 550) -- The Sabres certainly weren't ready to play in the first 20 minutes, yet they persevered and came out to a 2-1 lead.

Buffalo turned the puck over for most of the period, but Ryan Miller was sharp to keep them in it.

Columbus wasn't bad with the puck, but two turnovers led to two goals.

Mark Letestu sent a puck up the wall that seemed to bounce off of Corey Tropp and hit Henrik Tallinder. Matt Ellis took an innocent backhand from just inside the blue line and it eluded what appeared to be a screened Sergei Bobrovsky.

On the very next shift Columbus took over and dominated the next 13 minutes. Miller had to stop Cam Atkinson coming in down the right wing followed by Brandon Dubinsky.

The Blue Jackets tied it one two long cross ice passes, which never should happen. Derek MacKenzie made the first one to Ryan Murray joining the rush. Murray came right back to him and Zenon Konopka just froze and lunged, the one-timer went in off of him.

With about five minutes left the Sabres seemed to wake up and get some pressure. Bobrovsky made two saves on Phil Varone, one coming down the slot alone after being set up by Marcus Foligno and one when he was right in front and scooped up a Christian Ehrhoff rebound.

Buffalo came into the game with one shorthanded goal scored by Brian Flynn. With just 30 seconds left in the period, Bobrovsky threw it to nobody. Ehrhoff kept it in at the left point and blasted one that eluded Bobrovsky far side off the post.

In the second period, Columbus again had the better of the play by far, but it was another shorthanded play that ended Bobrovsky's night. With Mike Weber in the box, Foligno led a 3-on-2. He had Ehrhoff wide, but instead cut to the middle and whipped one past Bobrovsky. It was Foligno's first goal in 13 games.

Bobrovsky, who was usually awful against Buffalo when he was in Philadelphia played 23:28 letting in three goals and making just seven saves. Head coach Ted Nolan admitted after the game that those fortunate bounces off of Bobrovsky helped in the win. "A couple of those goals...had seeing eyes, I'm not to sure how they got in but you get them in every once and a while like that" Nolan said,

adding "the whole game tonight was Ryan Miller. I thought he was sensational again tonight."

Late in the second, it looked like the Blue Jackets would cut it to 3-2, but Jack Johnson's screen shot from the point hit the post.

There were a few really nice defensive plays. Tyler Myers played a 2-on-1 perfectly by sprawling to break it up.

Foligno had a bad give away in the offensive zone and skated as hard as he could to get back and show desperation to break up the play.

Miller has been stellar through 40 minutes after two games he'd like to forget. He had 23 saves. "I felt like I was inside the play a little bit more, and leaning off some of those plays we try to make with high tips or shots from the point and the boys...picking up coverage when I can sit back and kind of wait on things," Miller said.

In the third, Steve Ott was battling Johnson in front. Cody Hodgson put a shot on Curtis McElhinney and Ott wanted the puck more to make it 4-1.

Just two minutes later, the Blue Jackets fourth line scored again. MacKenzie's first shot was stopped by Miller but Mark Letestu followed the play in and cut the lead to two.

Johnson then took a stupid retaliation penalty right after his team had grabbed back the momentum.

Buffalo didn't score on the power play, but at 11:35, Myers took a high sticking penalty and Buffalo did a superb job on their kill.

I thought Ehrhoff summed the night up pretty well in the locker room, saying "we will definitely take it, you know. They got a lot of zone time and got quite a few chances, Millsy [Ryan Miller] was really good again. And we just, today we got the bounces, you know it is nice to get some short handed goals through."

Sabres Ruhwedel finally gets another chance

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 25, 2014

Columbus, OH (WGR 550) -- Last season the Sabres signed Chad Ruhwedel out of UMass Lowell. He played in the club's final seven games, but didn't impress enough to stick this season.

He had one call up in the middle of December, but didn't dress for the three games here. Now, he's going in for Alex Sulzer. Ted Nolan said, "I've seen him play a couple of times, I just mentioned to him we were going to call him up a week or two ago, but he got a little injury, but today's his day. The thing about him is he can skate. We need good puck moving defensemen so he'll get his opportunity."

The player you see tonight will probably not look like the guy you saw in April. Since then he's played 34 games in the American League scoring four goals and 13 assists. He said his game needed work, "It's been a great experience down there, I think I've really developed as a player. My first pass coming out of the zone is something I've really been trying to perfect, so I think that's probably the biggest bonus to my game compared to last time. I've just adapted to the pro life style, the pro style of hockey and hopefully it goes well."

Many players in their first season out of college get worn down in an 82 game schedule. Ruhwedel played 41 games at Lowell last year. He said, "I don't think it'll happen. With a college season you have a lot less games, but you also practice a lot more and you're practicing hard, you're working out with heavy weights all the time so that definitely a grind. Don't get me wrong, playing five games in 10 days can be pretty strenuous on the body, but the college season wasn't exactly a breeze either."

This is Ruhwedel's first chance to try to impress Pat LaFontaine, Tim Murray and Ted Nolan on the NHL level. He has to be careful not to try to do too much, "When you get called up you obviously want to impress them, you want to try to wow them with some kind of passes, shots, whatever it is, but I got some good advice right before I left to come up here from Drew Bagnall. He texted me, 'Be sure to dance with the girl that brought you to the dance, so just do what you did that got you here' and that's why I'm here."

Sabres' Myers getting his game back

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

January 25, 2014

Tyler Myers game isn't where it was four years ago when he skated away with the Calder Trophy as the NHL's best rookie but the big defenseman is seemingly headed in the right direction.

Myers spent the off season taking a more serious approach to his physical conditioning, an area that had been a problem in the past. But he also set about improving the mental side of his game. Myers' confidence took a major hit last season when one mistake seemed to shake him and lead to another. His average ice time sunk to the lowest total of his four year career.

Here in season number five, Myers looks more comfortable out there, especially since Ted Nolan took over. One of Nolan's strengths is instilling confidence in his players and Myers likely needed the pat on the back approach after struggling under Ron Rolston.

Over the first 20 games of the season with Rolston in charge, Myers had one goal and four points and was a minus nine. In 26 games with Nolan, Myers' offensive game has noticeably improved with five goals and 11 points. His plus minus is still pretty bad. In fact, he's minus nine under Nolan which makes for a minus 18 on the season.

Myers has been much more aggressive, joining the rush and going down low. During a recent game, just seconds after the opening faceoff, there was Myers standing in front of the opposition net.

Myers has made better decisions when it comes to pinching, and has been very effective with his stick handling and side step move at the point to get himself free for a shot or a pass to a teammate. Nolan has given Myers the green light to be more aggressive and it seems to have helped him play more relaxed and kept him from over thinking on the ice.

Myers has been more consistent with the all important play in his own end. He's been better at breaking up plays and not getting caught out of position. His breakout passes have improved too as opposed to last season when he was a turnover machine.

The improvements in his game have earned the trust of Nolan, which has led to an increase in ice time. Under Rolston, Myers topped 23 minutes of ice time in just three of 20 games. Under Nolan, he's gotten more than 23 minutes in 10 of the 26 games.

Nolan has said the sky is the limit for the big blue liner and one day it will just pop out and Myers will be good, consistently.

PENALTY KILLERS SHINE AS SABRES SNAP BLUE JACKETS STREAK

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 26, 2014

COLUMBUS – The Buffalo Sabres were severely out-chanced Saturday night, but they were able to hold off one of the hottest teams in the National Hockey League.

Christian Ehrhoff and Marcus Foligno each scored shorthanded goals as the Sabres snapped the Columbus Blue Jackets' eight-game winning streak, winning 5-2 at Nationwide Arena.

Matt Ellis, Steve Ott and Cody Hodgson also scored for Buffalo.

The Blue Jackets outshot the Sabres 38-22, but missed 24 other attempts and had another 30 shots blocked. Buffalo, meanwhile, attempted only 32 total shots.

Ehrhoff and Foligno's tallies came with the Sabres shorthanded.

Buffalo scored two short-handed goals in the same game for the first time since March 30, 2007 when Derek Roy and Chris Drury both scored while on the penalty kill against the New York Islanders.

"It feels good. It feels good to be the spoiler," Foligno said. "The odds were against us. They were on a roll and they're a team that was playing pretty well. Even their power play was playing pretty well too and that we got the two penalty-kill goals was great."

Ryan Miller made 36 saves, bouncing back from an 18-save performance in his last start that he wasn't pleased with. This season, Miller has posted a .926 save percentage and a 2.62 goals against average in 35 games.

"The whole game here tonight was Ryan Miller. I thought he was sensational again," Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said. "We had some luck on our side tonight. The puck went in enough to win."

With his goal, Ehrhoff became the 25th active defenseman with at least 300 career points. His three points on the night also tied a career-high.

The Sabres have now scored at least three goals in six straight games for the first time since March 19 to April 3, 2012, a stretch of eight games.

Derek MacKenzie and Mark Letestu were Columbus' goal scorers. Sergei Bobrovsky allowed three goals on 10 shots and was pulled in favor of Curtis McElhinney after Foligno's goal.

In addition to scoring twice, the penalty killers shut the Blue Jackets power play down. Columbus had only one shot on four power-play opportunities.

“Good reads and I thought we’ve done a pretty good job on faceoffs,” Miller said. “Either they’re scrambled, they’re not quite getting quite the jump they want off it and spreading the puck too early. We’re in position and we’re able to get out there and push and pressure.”

Ellis gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead 2:21 into the game with his third goal of the season. He lifted a backhand from inside the blue line that rang down off the crossbar and over the goal line.

The Blue Jackets tied it with 7:07 remaining in the first when MacKenzie accepted a cross-ice pass from Ryan Murray and beat Miller on his glove side.

The Sabres scored their first shorthanded goal of the night to take a 2-1 lead with 29.5 seconds left in the opening period. Ehrhoff ripped a slap shot from the left point that wound up in the top right corner of the net.

“It went straight in but it was a knuckle puck,” Ehrhoff said. “I don’t think he knew where it was going and it just changed direction before it got to him and luckily, it went in.”

Buffalo’s next shot also found the back of the net.

Foligno skated down the right wing boards and cut to the middle of the ice once he crossed the Columbus blue line. Then he let loose a low shot that found its way in just inside the right post to make it 3-1.

Bobrovsky was pulled after the goal.

Ott scored as a result of a good cycle by the Sabres in the offensive zone at the 3:51 mark of the third period. Chad Ruhwedel passed the puck to Ehrhoff at the left point, who swung it down to Hodgson on the halfwall. Hodgson threw it in front, where Ott was parked and was able to knock it in.

Columbus made it 4-2 soon after when Letestu scored 5:21 into the third.

Hodgson iced the game with an empty-netter with 1:51 remaining in regulation.

Buffalo lost two forwards over the course of the game. Drew Stafford did not return after sustaining an upper-body injury early in the third period. Ville Leino took a hard hit from Jack Johnson in the midway through the second period and left the game soon after.

Nolan said that they’ll see how Leino feels Sunday morning and that Stafford will likely miss the team’s game Monday night in Pittsburgh. The game can be seen on NBCSN at 7:30 p.m.

Three Takeaways from the Blue Jackets 5-2 loss to Buffalo

By Rick Gethin

Fox Sports Ohio

January 25, 2014

One: The first period started well, with sound passing and a good, aggressive fore-check. The fore-check would stay throughout the majority of the game, but the crisp, clean passing went by the wayside. They need to tighten things up if they want to keep advancing in the standings.

Two: Although they put 38 shots on goal, their attempts were almost triple that. Unfortunately, they weren't getting the majority of them on frame. That, coupled with the fact that the Sabres blocked 30 shots, spelled trouble for Columbus.

Three: The fourth line guys were, once again, contributing in a major way. Tonight, the only two goals for the Blue Jackets came from Derek MacKenzie (1-1-2, +1) and Mark Letestu (1-1-2, -1). The third member of that line, Corey Tropp, finished the night 0-1-1, +1. This line adds something every time they take the ice.

Post Game: Sabres 5, Blue Jackets 2

By Rob Mixer

BlueJackets.com

January 25, 2014

THE RUNDOWN

Knowing the Blue Jackets and the high expectations they have set for themselves, they will not be pleased with how their eight-game winning streak ended tonight at Nationwide Arena.

It was a muddy, plodding game right from the start, with the Buffalo Sabres content to drop back into a 1-2-2 or 1-3-1 forecheck and frustrate the Blue Jackets, which played a big role in getting them off their game.

Columbus' forecheck - usually its bread and butter - was a step behind all night and they were caught reaching for pucks rather than playing on their toes.

That played right into the Sabres' hands. Buffalo scored an early goal at 2:21 of the first period on a fluky backhand through traffic from the stick of Matt Ellis, and after Derek MacKenzie evened the score midway through the opening frame, the Sabres got the lead right back on yet another mysterious goal.

With the Blue Jackets on a late-period power play, they got careless with the puck and threw it up ice but not out of their own zone. Sabres defenseman Christian Ehrhoff was waiting at the left point, and he ripped a knuckler from 60 feet that eluded Sergei Bobrovsky and gave Buffalo a 2-1 edge with under 30 seconds left in the period.

The Sabres stretched to a two-goal lead at 3:28 of the second - another shorthanded goal - on a harmless-looking wrister from Marcus Foligno. That was the end of the night for Bobrovsky, who wasn't as sharp as he's been of late but also didn't get a lot of help in front. The Blue Jackets were uncharacteristically messy with the puck and it did them no favors.

Columbus got as close as 4-2 early in the third period but the Sabres put the clamps on the rest of the way. Ryan Miller, making his third start of the season against the Jackets, made 36 saves to spearhead the Buffalo victory.

PIVOTAL MOMENT

Foligno's goal was large for the Sabres, who spent the first few shifts of the second period pinned in their own zone. The Blue Jackets, on the power play, had a chance to draw level but they instead yielded their second shorthanded goal.

THREE STARS

1. RYAN MILLER (BUF)

Very early on, this felt like a big night in the making for the Sabres' goaltender. He was excellent in the first, strong in the second and sturdy in the third as the Blue Jackets attempted 92 shots and got 38 through to Miller's net.

2. CHRISTIAN EHRHOFF (BUF)

The shorthanded goal late in the first was deflating for the Blue Jackets and Ehrhoff also set up the Sabres' third and fourth goals.

3. DEREK MACKENZIE (CBJ)

A goal and an assist tonight for MacKenzie as the fourth line drove the bus for the Blue Jackets. Solid performance.

UP NEXT

AT CAROLINA HURRICANES

MONDAY, 7 P.M.

PNC ARENA

By The Numbers: Blue Jackets vs. Sabres

By Kristyn Repke

BlueJackets.com

January 25, 2014

Welcome to By The Numbers. Here, we'll break down the most important facts, figures and statistics from that night's game. Despite the final score, there's more to the game's story than the numbers on the scoreboard.

Here's a look at some of the most notable statistics and numbers from the Blue Jackets' 5-2 loss to the Buffalo Sabres at Nationwide Arena:

0.947 - Save percentage by Buffalo Sabres and USA Olympic goaltender Ryan Miller tonight, who stopped 36 of 38 shots on net.

5 - Defensemen dressed for the Blue Jackets tonight, meaning that they averaged about 23:50 TOI apiece as David Savard and Dalton Prout were out of the lineup. James Wisniewski led all skaters with 27:29 total ice time.

9 - Of the last 11 Blue Jackets games have had assists by rookie Ryan Murray. He had the primary assist on Derek MacKenzie's first period goal, which extended Murray's point/assist streak to three games.

10 - Shot attempts by James Wisniewski and Ryan Johansen each tonight.

23:28 - Minutes played by Sergei Bobrovsky in tonight's game. He was pulled after allowing three goals on ten shots.

30 - Shots blocked by the Buffalo Sabres, which is a team season-high for them.

92 - Shot attempts by the Blue Jackets tonight.

2,927 - Days since the Blue Jackets last allowed two short-handed goals in a single game at Nationwide Arena, on Jan. 20, 2006.

16,272 - Tonight's attendance at Nationwide Arena.

Signs of economic revival finally appear

By David Robinson

Buffalo News

January 25, 2014

This time, it really does feel different.

The cranes – first along the waterfront and now on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus – are the most tangible signs of economic revival.

But what's behind the cranes is just as important: a plan; a community consensus that hasn't been swallowed up in parochial bickering; and lots of money – Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's Buffalo Billion.

But is it for real?

So far, it seems like it is. In a region that has heard more than its share of grand plans over the past quarter century that ended up going nowhere – from a factory outlet mega-mall in Niagara Falls to Bass Pro and the Pataki administration's plan to create a bioinformatics hub here – seeing is believing.

“I think the one big thing is being able to actually see the physical signs of these things happening,” said William Pottle, the national sales manager at Boston Valley Terra Cotta, who moved back to the Buffalo Niagara region five years ago after spending 17 years in Seattle.

“For so long, it was ‘see the dreams.’ Now you can actually see the cranes,” he said.

Says Richard Lipsitz, the president of the Western New York Area Labor Federation and a member of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency board of directors: “Things are taking place here that are astounding.”

Of course, nothing is guaranteed. This spark in the Buffalo Niagara region's economy faces threats - economic and political.

But challenges aside, the change is astounding by Buffalo standards, where for the past 60 years, economic growth has pretty much been something that happens someplace else.

A plan

For the first time, the region has a plan, a road map for the future that extends beyond the next silver bullet project. It's the fruit of what local developer Howard Zemsky describes as the most studied and prescribed economy in the nation. The

focus is on laying the groundwork for businesses in a handful of fast-growing industries, rather than relying on massive taxpayer handouts for a select few ventures that have failed to live up to their promises.

It started more than two years ago, with an economic development plan that put aside the region's long focus on silver bullet projects in favor of a longer-term approach for growth in industries where the Buffalo area has competitive advantages.

"Playing to our strengths" is how Zemsky likes to describe it.

"We finally have a plan that, I believe, all of us believe in and is a road map to the future," said Dottie Gallagher-Cohen, the president of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

More money

It also helps to have the money to put the plan into action – something that hasn't always been the case with past initiatives. This time the regional council's initiatives have received unprecedented backing from Cuomo.

Cuomo's approach aims for "shock and awe." He went far beyond the statewide regional council program in Buffalo when he pledged to commit an additional \$1 billion in state funds for local economic development projects over 10 years. He was looking to draw attention to his efforts to revive the Buffalo economy – and he got it.

Cuomo last week pledged to fund the \$680 million remaining on his Buffalo Billion commitment, but provided few details on when it would be allocated and how it would be spent.

"We have a governor who looks at things and says: 'Why do we do it like that? We can improve on that,'" said Zemsky, co-chairman of the local development council and point man for Cuomo's economic initiatives in the region. "He is relentlessly in pursuit of improving our economy and helping us build on our strengths."

Gallagher-Cohen said that backing from Albany is essential.

"For the first time in my professional life, we have a governor who actually cares about Western New York," she said. "That is the difference-maker."

A new way

Gallagher-Cohen said there's also something more behind the burst of major construction projects. She sees big changes taking place in the way the Buffalo Niagara business and development community operates.

"Now we argue about how we're going to do something, but we don't argue about what we should be doing," she said.

Select industries

The Buffalo Billion initiatives, which currently total more than \$380 million, mostly follow a similar strategy: Invest in facilities and programs that will help the Buffalo Niagara region stand out in a particular industry or provide long-term services and facilities that will help local businesses become more competitive and act as a magnet to lure firms to the region.

That strategy is behind the governor's signature development initiative for the region: the \$225 million state investment to create a hub for clean energy and high-tech businesses on the old Republic Steel site in South Buffalo.

The \$50 million local investment in medical genomics research that was announced earlier this month follows the same model, built around the University at Buffalo's supercomputer that state officials hope will become a magnet for life sciences firms that need heavyweight computing power to crunch vast amounts of complex data in their quest for breakthrough treatments.

"Under this model, the state builds and owns a research and development facility, which is a state-of-the-art facility," Cuomo explained during a stop in Buffalo late last year. "Companies that need research and development facilities come to Buffalo because of the facility."

"We improve the facility over time so we're always the state-of-the-art facility, bringing more and more companies to Buffalo," Cuomo said, comparing the strategy to the hugely successful state initiative that has created a strong nanotechnology industry in Albany since the 1980s. "That's what happened in Albany."

But it's also behind other lower-profile ventures that would create a worker training center for the region's manufacturers and a center with sought-after equipment and resources to help small to midsize firms develop new products that they otherwise might not be able to afford to do. It continued with this month's announcement of a \$50 million investment for the University at Buffalo to partner with a group of New York City medical researchers on genomic medical initiatives.

What could go wrong?

There's no guarantee that any of this will provide enough of a jolt to jump-start the local economy and turn it from a laggard to a leader. Dozens of things could go wrong. Medical genomics firms might decide they can do their research and crunch their numbers just as well elsewhere.

Clean energy companies might not think the hub the state plans to create here is all that special.

"The clean technology industry is relatively volatile, given the uncertainty of future regulation and the pace of technological development," said analyst David Strungis in a recent report from the Moody's credit rating agency. "Its ability to jump-start a struggling, post-industrial economy is untested."

If it was easy – or even close to a sure thing – for governments to target fast-growing industries and build them from scratch, every town and county and state in the nation would be doing it. Cuomo's Albany model worked once, when it was at the early stages of what turned out to be a booming industry. Can it work again?

Manufacturers may keep cutting jobs in the face of fierce global competition, despite all the efforts to focus on high-end factory work and train workers for those more sophisticated jobs locally.

Will the HarborCenter hockey rink and office complex, along with the emerging Canalside waterfront attractions, be enough of a catalyst to spur other developments and bring enough visitors to Buffalo to fill the hundreds of hotel rooms now being built downtown?

What if Cuomo were to leave office after 2016, either because of presidential ambitions or a post in a new Democratic administration in Washington, D.C.? Would the money he has promised still be there?

Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown said the massive state investment from the Cuomo administration is yielding benefits already, even with most of the initiatives still in the early stages of development. Buffalo is beginning to get noticed nationally, and not just because of a snowstorm.

"It shines the spotlight on what's happening in the community," he said. "I think the momentum and the progress we have made in Buffalo is unalterable."