



Buffalo Sabres

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Sharks-Sabres Preview

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Associated Press

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The San Jose Sharks picked up where they left off before the Olympic break.

Joe Pavelski is glad he didn't.

Pavelski looks to build on a hat trick, as the Sharks attempt to beat the last-place Buffalo Sabres for the first time in four years Friday night.

San Jose (38-16-6) has won four of five after routing Philadelphia 7-3 on Thursday in its first game in 20 days. The Sharks were outshot 10-5 and trailed 2-1 after one period before outscoring the Flyers 5-0 in the second.

"We didn't have a lot of purpose in our game in the first period, especially in their zone," coach Todd McLellan said. "Kind of skating around waiting for something to happen. We got our forecheck going in the second (and) a lot more pucks to the goaltender, which created second and third chances."

Pavelski made his chances count Thursday, scoring on all three of his shots in the second period for his second hat trick of the season. The outburst also came after he had one goal in eight games prior to joining the United States in Sochi.

"They were just going in," said Pavelski, who is tied with Toronto's Phil Kessel for second in the league with 32 goals. "Life is good. Hopefully they keep coming."

That hasn't been the case against the Sabres (17-34-8), as Pavelski has three goals in seven career meetings and none in the past four. He came up empty on three shots while getting an assist in a 5-4 shootout loss Nov. 5, as the Sharks' losing streak in the series reached five games.

San Jose hasn't defeated the Sabres since Jan. 23, 2010, and its last win in Buffalo came on Dec. 2, 2005, losing the three subsequent visits.

Logan Couture is looking to build on his two goals - one short-handed - from Thursday after missing 16 games due to hand surgery.

The Sabres have returned from the Olympic break to win back-to-back games for just the third time this season, beating Boston 5-4 behind Matt D'Agostini's goal 22 seconds into overtime Wednesday.

They haven't won three in a row since April 13-17.

Ryan Miller will likely get the call in net since he has a 1.57 goals-against average in winning his last five starts against the Sharks. He was terrific in the latest

matchup, making 47 saves through overtime before turning aside three of four shootout attempts.

He was rested in favor of backup Jhonas Enroth on Wednesday, a day after he had 36 saves in a 3-2 win over Carolina. Despite being considered among the elite goaltenders in the league, Miller is being shopped around ahead of Wednesday's trade deadline.

Buffalo may be without Tyler Ennis for a second straight games due to general body soreness. The center's 30 points are one back of Cody Hodgson for the Sabres lead, while they're tied with a team-high 14 goals.

"(He's) still a little sore. But hopefully, knock on wood, he'll be ready to go," interim coach Ted Nolan told the team's official website.

If Ennis is unable to go, then Nolan will likely have Ville Leino center the Sabres' top line with Matt Moulson and Drew Stafford. Leino had two assists in that role Wednesday, getting one on Moulson's game-tying tally with 53 seconds left in regulation.

"In many ways, I'm more of a playmaker so that's my first thought," said Leino, whose 12 points are all assists. "Matty and Stafford are goal scorers, so it's my job to get them the puck and try to make good chances."

Sabres keep their focus on games as clock ticks

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

February 28, 2014

Matt Moulson pulled on his baseball cap and prepared to address the small gathering of cameras and reporters.

“Same questions, ninth day in a row,” he quipped.

Same questions. Same answers.

Only this time could be the last time for those questions and answers in Buffalo.

Tonight’s game against the San Jose Sharks in First Niagara Center may be the last one in Buffalo for any number of Sabres. The team will be on the road after that, including in Florida next Wednesday at the NHL trade deadline.

Among the names prominent in trade rumors are Moulson, Steve Ott and Ryan Miller.

“Like I’ve said before, I just go out and play hockey,” Moulson said. “That’s what I’m paid to do so that’s what I’ll be doing. ... It comes with the territory. You’re in the last year of your contract, like I am, obviously this team isn’t going to make the playoffs and they have to get assets. It’s business decisions. I understand that. Myself and my family, we’re prepared if something like that happens but we just take it day by day.”

Ott, who has been vocal in his desire to stay in Buffalo, was a bit more exasperated when questioned about the possibility that this could be his last game as a Sabre.

For the captain, the talk about the trade deadline is passé, and he feels it does an injustice to his teammates.

“You know what, I’m here to control what I can control. I’ve answered enough questions. Nothing’s going to change,” Ott said. “It’s taking justice away from my teammates that are trying to have a strong campaign the rest of the way. My focus is going to be on my own hockey, my own game and leading this team. That’s what I’m here to do and that’s what I’m going to do the rest of the way here.”

Over the next six days, the future of the Sabres roster will begin to take shape.

But Ott, Moulson and the rest of the team are focused on the situation in front of them. That means trying to put together a three-game winning streak as they host the Sharks. So bring on your trade rumors on social media or the traditional media. The Sabres feel they have a more important job to do.

“That’s the beauty of our team. We have some pretty good leadership in that room,” coach Ted Nolan said. “And they are the guys who are probably on the front pages about those rumors. Matty Moulson, he’s a quiet leader on our team and he’s doing a great job. Steve Ott is doing a great job for us. You see the way Ryan Miller came back from the Olympics and what he did the first game.

“All these guys maybe have excuses or reasons to say, ‘Hey it’s only a matter of time before we leave.’ No, they’re not doing that.”

The focus now for Miller is his start tonight in what is likely his last game in Buffalo as a Sabre.

Nolan said the decision on which goaltender to start was his and that it would be “probably Miller. Miller will go.”

He started on Tuesday and stole the win for the Sabres, a 3-2 victory over Carolina in which Miller made 36 saves.

Miller tried to stay away from being too reflective after practice on Thursday, but it was inevitable. The expectation that this will be his last start in Buffalo gave him the opportunity to show his first NHL city a healthy dose of Buffalo love.

“I don’t want to close off any avenues ... but with the little bit of uncertainty you don’t want to miss an opportunity to say thank you,” Miller said.

“I’d just like to reiterate I appreciate everyone here who has been a friend or a fan. You don’t do things on your own. The collective energy from the city, people have to realize how that makes a difference to us and to the players. It’s a great place to play hockey. You feel a part of something. You feel appreciated. When you give an honest effort, there’s positive feedback from everyone. That’s more than you can ask for. There are cities out there where you’re invisible and you don’t have that same support.”

Miller's career growth came in fits and starts

By Bucky Gleason

Buffalo News

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Ryan Miller forced a smile when talking Wednesday about the game, but at the time he was none too thrilled. He was being hailed as the Sabres' future franchise goalie and was desperate to prove the praise was warranted. He had waited three months in Rochester before getting the chance of a lifetime.

Miller could see his dream dying in a hail of bullets in the third period, six goals on eight shots over the final 20 minutes in an embarrassing 7-2 loss to Detroit. The Red Wings were the team he adored as an emerging prodigy in Michigan, a team that included his cousin, Kevin, an NHL veteran 15 years older and one of his boyhood heroes.

And he was inconsolable.

Miller attempted to carry himself like a professional and show a brave face, but he failed miserably after the game. He was practically in tears. He made a terse statement, fielded no questions, grabbed a ball of tape, threw a 90 mph heater across the dressing room and stormed off. He was petrified that his career was over.

It would have been a shame.

"I probably handled it poorly," Miller said. "It was a situation where you feel like this might be your only opportunity. It's your dream, and you come up short. ... Anyone who makes it here, you don't have too many tastes of failure. My career has had some smaller road blocks. I guess I didn't realize they were road blocks."

Ten-plus years and 540 NHL games later, with a few speed bumps along the way, Miller's career with the Sabres is all but over. He's almost certain to land elsewhere before the NHL trade deadline next week, which means his start tonight against the Sharks will likely be his final game for the Sabres in First Niagara Center.

No matter how much you prepare, the end always seems abrupt. Miller's future has been a source of discussion all season. He's 33 years old and set to become an unrestricted free agent. He had a terrific year on a terrible team. His career and the Sabres' rebuilding plans have veered in different directions.

It's time to say goodbye.

Miller never won a Stanley Cup, but he became one of the better goaltenders in the NHL and backstopped the Sabres through some of the best days in franchise history. He helped the Sabres reach the conference finals in back-to-back years.

He won the Vezina Trophy after carrying them to the playoffs in 2009-10 – before it all came apart.

He left his mark on Buffalo, and Buffalo left an impression on him. Strange, but he lived in our city longer than anywhere else. He became part of the community. He recalled Wednesday how elderly women felt compelled to hug him, and men felt the need to give him goaltending advice, when he was grocery shopping.

That's so Buffalo.

“It's one of the good things about Buffalo,” he said. “It never left me that this is a place that appreciates hard work and appreciates people who care. You get the energy back from the people.

“You need that. You need support, and you need friends.

“I always felt like there was a good connection between me and the city, the people here and the way we carry ourselves. It really was a goal of mine. I needed to fit in here. You don't find too many teams that are ingrained in the community as you do here. Part of being a Sabre is being part of Buffalo. It was always important to me.”

One of the best parts of my job is having a front-row seat when athletes evolve on personal and professional levels. You see them arrive as nervous rookies and watch them leave as established veterans. You catch them at their best and their worst as players and come to appreciate them as men.

Ryan Miller is a good man.

I had my doubts about him early in his career. He had the talent needed to succeed, but he was his own worst enemy. His father once stopped playing golf with him because he couldn't deal with him becoming so upset after a bad shot. At times in his hockey career, Miller looked like he wanted to shoot himself.

He had trouble grasping the fact that Patrick Roy, who won 551 games during his career, lost 315 times. Miller was so accustomed to winning at Michigan State that he couldn't handle losing. Dominik Hasek was the best practice player I've been around, but Miller was the most introspective. It helped drive him to succeed, but it threatened to drive him mad.

“I needed to make this goal of mine happen,” he said. “As you get older, you reflect and see how you made too much of something. It's not the end of the world. You're not the center of the universe. Not everybody was looking at that moment like you were when it felt big to you.”

It took him years to understand as much. The best thing that happened to his career after the meltdown against Detroit was the 2004-05 lockout. If you

remember, Miller spent the season in Rochester with other prospects that included Thomas Vanek, Jason Pominville, Derek Roy and Paul Gaustad.

They matured into a good nucleus that complemented a veteran core and helped the Sabres reach the conference finals a year later. They were together in 2009-10, when Miller carried the U.S. in the Olympics and the Sabres to the postseason en route to the Vezina Trophy. One by one, each was traded away. Now, it's Miller's turn.

All season, through all the losing and uncertainty about his future, the same man who was devastated by one loss 10 years ago has remained a calm voice of reason. He's had plenty of practice explaining away failure. Buffalo can no longer give him the opportunities he needs. Separately, they'll plow forward.

"Nostalgia makes you feel good, but nothing ever happens unless the world turns and things move forward," Miller said. "I'm trying to grasp onto the fact that you can't always be comfortable. Life is full of different twists and turns. It's always an adventure. With all the change, people will live their lives."

Sabres notebook: Flynn comes through against Bruins again

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

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There's a little something special about playing the Boston Bruins for Brian Flynn.

The native of Lynnfield, Mass. grew up a Bruins fan. His family roots for the Bruins. His friends are Bruin fans.

And Flynn, well, he seems to have some pretty good games against Boston.

Wednesday he had a goal and assist in the Sabres' 5-4 overtime win at First Niagara Center.

It was the second two-point night of his career. The first came against the Bruins on Dec. 19 when he scored a short-handed goal with an assist.

"It's fun for me," Flynn said. "I grew up outside of Boston and was a big Bruins fan. I'd watch every game growing up. Now playing against them, I don't know, I've got a lot of friends and family back home who are Bruins fans, hopefully they're rooting for us now."

In 57 games for the Sabres this season he has five goals and five assists.

"I think for me, I just play a pretty smart game," Flynn said. "I try not to give up too many opportunities and do a good job on the penalty kill and hopefully I can start contributing a little more offense."

"He's quietly had some really good games for us," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "He's just one of those types of guys, you don't hear him too much. I don't hear him in the dressing room to tell you the truth. He doesn't speak too much. But he's just one of those really unassuming guys. He goes about his work very efficiently. He's got great hockey sense. He's a tremendous skater."

...

Tyler Ennis may return to the lineup tonight. He missed Wednesday's game with general body soreness and did not practice on Thursday.

"He's still a little sore but hopefully knock on wood he'll be ready to go tomorrow," Nolan said. "It's still one of those day-to-day things. He was a lot better today and hopefully we'll have a good chance to see him at morning skate and go from there."

Ville Leino filled in for Ennis on the top line, centering Matt Moulson and Drew Stafford. He picked up two assists but Nolan wasn't gushing praise.

"Ville played OK," Nolan said. "Tyler Ennis had that line really going. It's tough to jump in but he was OK."

...

The Sabres will look to put together their first three-game win streak since they defeated Philadelphia, Tampa and Boston April 13-17 last year. ... The Sabres won the last meeting with San Jose, 5-4, in a shootout on Nov. 5. The Sabres were outshot, 51-36, with Miller making 47 saves. ... Members of the Sabres skated with 150 athletes from the Skating Association for the Blind and Handicapped (SABAH) on Thursday afternoon. Marcus Foligno, Zemgus Girgensons, Zenon Konopka and Matt D'Agostini were scheduled to take part in the session at First Niagara Center.

Sabres go for season sweep of Sharks

By Mike Battaglino

NHL.com

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SHARKS (38-16-6) at SABRES (17-34-8)

TV: NHLN-CA, CSN-CA, MSG-B, BELL TV

Last 10: San Jose 6-4-0; Buffalo 4-5-1

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres defeated the San Jose Sharks 5-4 in a shootout Nov. 5. At the time, the Sabres were 2-13-1 and the Sharks were 10-1-3.

Big story: This is the final home game for the Sabres prior to the NHL Trade Deadline on March 5. Goaltender Ryan Miller will start in what could be his farewell to Buffalo fans.

"I'm trying not to be too sentimental," Miller said Thursday. "I think everyone in Buffalo kind of knows how I feel about the city. [I've] always enjoyed the people, I've always enjoyed the city. There's a deep love for the city in my heart, and I don't think right now is the time to reflect and take that time. It's still time to focus and play hockey and give all I can give. ...

"I'm just trying to enjoy this last stretch, if it is my last stretch."

Team Scope:

Sharks: San Jose showed what it's capable of with a healthy lineup in a 7-3 win at the Philadelphia Flyers on Thursday. Forwards Logan Couture and Raffi Torres each scored twice returning from injury.

Torres scored on his second shift in his first game since May 14, 2013, following a preseason knee injury. He played 8:26, mostly with Andrew Desjardins and Mike Brown.

"That's what happens when you're a family or you're on a team, you get excited for those kind of guys," coach Todd McLellan told CSN Bay Area of Torres. "He's had 5 1/2 months of coming in and seeing the trainers, and the doctors, and the therapy. To go out and get rewarded like that was a boost not only for our team but for him.

"He had a little sparkle in his eye, and then to get the second one, I think he tired himself out a little bit celebrating. We're happy for him."

Goalie Antti Niemi, who did not see game action for Finland at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, will start after Alex Stalock made 27 saves Thursday.

Sabres: In addition to Miller, forwards Matt Moulson and Steve Ott, and defenseman Henrik Tallinder have been subjects of trade speculation. Despite that, Buffalo has won two in a row coming out of the Olympic break, with wins over the playoff-contending Carolina Hurricanes and Atlantic Division-leading Boston Bruins.

"All these guys maybe have excuses or reasons to say, 'Hey, it's a matter of time before we leave.' No, they're not doing that," coach Ted Nolan said. "They're paying attention to what they have to do here right now."

Forward Tyler Ennis, the Sabres' second-leading scorer, did not play in the 5-4 overtime win against the Bruins on Wednesday because of soreness. Nolan said he could be back Friday.

"[He's] still a little sore. But hopefully, knock on wood, he'll be ready to go tomorrow," Nolan said. "[It's] still one of those day-to-day things. He was a lot better today, so hopefully you'll have a good chance at seeing him at morning skate and we'll go from there."

Nolan said he feels John Scott is more comfortable as a defenseman rather than at forward, and he will continue to use him there.

Who's hot: Center Joe Pavelski had a hat trick Thursday and has a career-high 32 goals. Couture has a six-game point streak dating to Dec. 29. Forward Tommy Wingels has a four-game streak. ... Sabres defenseman Christian Ehrhoff has four points in his past three games, including two goals in the 3-2 victory against the Hurricanes on Tuesday. Moulson has a goal and four assists in a four-game point streak.

Injury report: Sharks forward Matt Nieto (foot) played Thursday. Forward Tyler Kennedy (lower body) and defenseman Brad Stuart (upper body) did not. Forward Tomas Hertl (knee) resumed skating this week. ... Sabres center Zenon Konopka (finger) has not played in the two games since the break.

Ryan Miller believes he'll be traded before deadline

NHL.com

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Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller said Thursday he believes he's likely to be dealt before the NHL Trade Deadline on March 5.

Miller has been the subject of trade rumors since prior to the season because he can become an unrestricted free agent this offseason.

"I'm answering these questions because it seems likely, given my status at the end of the year, they're likely to trade me," Miller said. "And that's where we're at."

If Miller is not traded, he could re-sign with Buffalo; however, if he goes elsewhere the Sabres would get nothing in return.

"If we had more time to see what moves they made before the trade deadline, what's a logical business move, I could take all summer and we could see where everything shakes out, but it seems like it's a risky proposal for both sides," he said. "So right now, it's a business decision, it's not really a personal thing, see where it goes."

Miller has played all 540 of his NHL games for the Sabres, who selected him in the fifth round (No. 138) of the 1999 NHL Draft. He made his debut on Nov. 19, 2002.

The 33-year-old is 15-22-3 with a 2.72 goals-against average and .923 save percentage this season for the last-place team in the NHL standings. He could be making his final home start Friday against the San Jose Sharks.

"We'll see how everything plays out, I'm not going to close off any avenues," Miller said. "... With a little bit of uncertainty, you don't want to miss an opportunity to say thank you."

Big names appear poised to move

By Scott Burnside

ESPN.com

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We're jumping out of the Olympic furnace and into the trade deadline fire.

Nary a beat has been missed since the end of the Sochi Games and the real start of the trade deadline frenzy. In the days leading up to Wednesday's deadline, names will be thrown about like so much confetti. Often it's much ado about nothing, and the trades that do get made don't guarantee success of any kind.

That said, here's a look at the 10 most intriguing names you'd better get used to hearing in the coming days.

Martin St. Louis, Tampa Bay Lightning

The Bolts' captain was miffed at not being selected to the original Canadian Olympic roster, and was likely still a little sore at being passed over four years ago. Many think St. Louis might have told GM Steve Yzerman (also executive director of Team Canada for the past two Olympics) that he'd rather not finish out his contract in Tampa. The two-time scoring champ has a no-move clause that complicates things. He has one year left on a deal that pays him \$5 million in real dollars in 2014-15, down from \$6.5 million this season. His cap hit is a manageable \$5.625 million. If, as some reports suggest, St. Louis is interested in going only to the New York Rangers (he has a home in Connecticut), it's hard to imagine a deal gets done by the deadline, if at all. But if St. Louis is really tired of his time in Tampa, a bevy of teams would be interested in the services of a proven leader and playoff performer. The cost would be enormous, though, because the Lightning are a playoff team and would need to replace a top-line forward. If this happens, it'll be one of the few deals that actually deserves the term "blockbuster."

Our guess: St. Louis remains a Bolt until at least the draft.

Ryan Kesler, Vancouver Canucks

This is a similar story to the St. Louis situation, with former Frank J. Selke Trophy winner Kesler seemingly ready to move on but the Canucks likely asking for maximum return value for a top asset, given that they're in the middle of the playoff picture. Still, as our good friend Pierre LeBrun reported some time ago, the Canucks are considering remaking themselves on the fly, so moving a core player in favor of younger assets fits the long-term plan. Kesler would be a Grade A acquisition for any team looking to make a long run, especially in the tough-as-nails Western Conference. The center has an injured hand that kept him out of Wednesday's win over the Blues, so that's an issue. He has two years left on a deal that pays him \$5 million (same cap hit), and that number makes him more attractive to many teams, as opposed to being a straight rental player. He also has a no-trade clause, and a deal might be easier to do at the draft.

Our guess: Kesler stays in Vancouver, for the time being.

Ryan Miller, Buffalo Sabres

Unlike a year ago, when there was all kinds of discussion about potential landing spots for Canucks goalie Roberto Luongo -- who ended up staying put -- there are actually teams looking to bolster their goaltending situations this season. It's fair to say the St. Louis Blues' chances of winning a Cup go up exponentially if Miller is between their pipes. And if you're Chuck Fletcher in Minnesota and are looking at a playoff tandem of Darcy Kuemper and Niklas Backstrom, given the uncertainty over Josh Harding's health, well, that's a bit scary for a team with high expectations. As long as new Buffalo GM Tim Murray plays his cards right -- for example, rather than asking for the entire moon, maybe asking for only three-quarters of it -- there's no reason he can't accomplish what the Canucks were unable to do and move an elite netminder at the deadline.

Our guess: Miller in a Bluenote jersey strikes the right chord for us.

Thomas Vanek, New York Islanders

You don't think of Vanek as having all that much playoff experience, but he actually performed quite well in the postseason with the Sabres, delivering 15 goals in 36 games. And we know that hockey folk in general are dismissive of Vanek's party Olympics in Sochi, when he and the rest of the Austrians whooped it up the day/night before their embarrassing qualifying-round loss to Slovenia. That bugs me if I'm a GM thinking of handing over a first-round pick and a top prospect for Vanek, but he is the top true rental player on the market this season. It took a while, but Vanek eventually meshed nicely with John Tavares (OK, who wouldn't mesh with Tavares?) and Kyle Okposo in New York. Islanders GM Garth Snow has once again made hash of his team and is (or should be) desperate to unload Vanek, who will go to market in July as a free agent. The obvious destination is Los Angeles, where scoring is scarce and the Kings have a bevy of nearly NHL-ready young forwards who could be attractive to Snow. Don't snooze on the Penguins, though, because GM Ray Shero has never been shy about getting in on the big guns at the deadline.

Our guess: Vanek is a King by week's end.

Ryan Callahan, New York Rangers

We all know that the Rangers would like to keep their captain and two-time U.S. Olympian. But we also know GM Glen Sather is opposed to letting Callahan walk for nothing in July and the team isn't interested in the contract length/dollars Callahan is reportedly seeking. Some have scoffed at the idea of a one-for-one, Callahan-for-Martin St. Louis deal, but if neither player is going to be with his current team long-term, why not? The Rangers would certainly miss Callahan's toughness and his play on the penalty kill, but St. Louis is best buds with Brad Richards, dating back to their time in Tampa, where they won a Cup in '04. For us, Callahan fits nicely with a Bolts team that has lots of interesting moving parts. If Steven Stamkos returns to form and Valtteri Filppula is also healthy after the Olympic break, Callahan adds a different component to their forward contingent.

Our guess: Yes, he stands as a straight rental and there are suggestions the Buffalo Sabres will push hard to sign Callahan come July (he's from nearby Rochester), but a long run in the sun this spring could change all that, no?

Matt Moulson, Buffalo Sabres

Poor Moulson. He started the season playing with Tavares, was dealt to lowly Buffalo and now is looking at having to pack his bags yet again. The good thing is he'll end up somewhere with playoff dates in mind come mid-April. His production has tailed off since going to the Sabres (go figure), but he's a proven goal scorer, and for teams looking to bolster their top six and add some weaponry for the power play, Moulson will be an attractive alternative to Vanek. We think of him as a younger version of Bill Guerin when Guerin arrived in Pittsburgh, which makes us think the Pens might be a good fit. Ottawa would like to bolster its offense, too, and we already know about the Kings' similar needs. Depending on what the Lightning do, Moulson might also be a nice short-term fix if GM Steve Yzerman moves Martin St. Louis. Lots of moving pieces but Moulson is headed somewhere.

Our guess: Moulson joins the Penguins' mighty arsenal.

Mike Cammalleri, Calgary Flames

In a two-year period in 2010 and 2011, Cammalleri played in 26 postseason games for the Montreal Canadiens and collected 16 goals and 29 points. He hasn't played in the postseason since and there have been concussion issues, but if a team is looking at a straight rental and a pure scorer, Cammalleri fits that bill. For a Flames team trying to reseed the farm, the price tag is likely to be more moderate than for Thomas Vanek or even Matt Moulson. If, as suggested, the Blues are looking to move Chris Stewart, does a guy like Cammalleri fill a hole for a team that has Cup aspirations? Cammalleri will make \$7 million this season, although his cap hit is \$6 million, so that will be a factor in finding him a new home, although the Flames would certainly be in a position to retain some salary to make it happen.

Our guess: If the Bolts move Martin St. Louis, would Cammalleri be a nice fit with Steven Stamkos? Yes.

Ales Hemsky, Edmonton Oilers

Hemsky is an interesting figure in the marketplace. He twice scored 20 goals for the Oilers and looked like he'd be part of the team's offensive machinery for a long time. But injuries and other issues have kept him from realizing that potential. He hasn't scored 20 since 2008-09 and hasn't played in a postseason game since the Oilers' run in '06. Edmonton GM Craig MacTavish has to turn Hemsky into some sort of asset, and for a team not looking to give up much in terms of young assets or picks, Hemsky might be an interesting add. He makes \$5.5 million in real money, with a \$5 million cap hit, which might be a problem given that Hemsky has only seven goals this season and has fallen down the depth chart in top-heavy Edmonton. Ottawa might make sense, or perhaps Detroit, where injuries cloud the issue for a Wings team that is still very much in the playoff hunt but won't want to mortgage much in the way of futures.

Our guess: Hemsky had a nice Olympic tournament with three goals and an assist in five games, and a change of scenery could make him a nice deadline steal, assuming the Oilers don't price themselves out of the marketplace.

David Legwand, Nashville Predators

Given how few centers appear to be available, Legwand might fetch a reasonable return, if that's the direction that GM David Poile decides to go. The Preds are on the edge of the playoff discussion in the West, but given the team's history of losing players such as Ryan Suter and Dan Hamhuis to free agency and the young assets the Preds have sent away in bolstering for playoff runs the past few years, our guess is that Poile will see if there is a fit to move Legwand, who has a no-trade clause but would no doubt enjoy a shot at a Cup somewhere. An original Predator, Legwand is from the Detroit area and would be a nice fit for a Wings team that missed the boat with the Stephen Weiss signing and could use help down the middle. Legwand has had a nice campaign for the Preds with 10 goals and 40 points. His cap hit is a manageable \$4.5 million.

Our guess: Detroit. And there would also be a chance for the Wings to keep Legwand beyond this season at a modest salary given his connection to the community.

Martin Brodeur, New Jersey Devils

Not sure what kind of impact Brodeur might have on a playoff-bound team, but it is interesting to consider the possibilities now that the torch clearly has been passed to Cory Schneider in Jersey. The Devils' playoff chase will come down to the wire, and after allowing Zach Parise to walk for nothing in 2012 and losing Ilya Kovalchuk to the KHL last summer, GM Lou Lamoriello should make it a priority to get assets in return for a player who isn't going to be around long-term. Even if that means trading the franchise's Hall of Fame netminder. Brodeur appears to be open to such a move and there are a couple of teams looking to shore up goaltending. We mentioned the Wild and maybe a Kuemper-Brodeur tandem wouldn't be the worst thing in the world. And what of the Pittsburgh Penguins? Tomas Vokoun has been given permission to practice, but he's missed three-quarters of the season and to expect him to be in playoff shape in seven weeks is a bit much, no? Marc-Andre Fleury has been terrific for the Pens, but he's also coming off multiple subpar playoff years. Would Brodeur be a nice safety net or a constant distraction? The Pens could also play the Devils in the first round if New Jersey sneaks in. Hmmm.

Our guess: And what about Chicago, which rode Corey Crawford all the way to the Stanley Cup last spring but had Ray Emery as a Plan B? Not sure Antti Raanta is the same kind of safety net yet, so perhaps Brodeur would fit.

Gordon: Ryan Miller auction underway

By Jeff Gordon

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

February 27, 2014

Ryan Miller's future could be decided sooner rather than later.

Buffalo Sabres general manager Tim Murray announced that his clearance sale is underway. He is actively shopping Miller and forward Steve Ott, two players that could interest the Blues.

Miller wants to move on and Murray feels obligated to make that happen. Neither side will commit to a new long-term deal in Buffalo.

The Blues, Wild and Capitals scouted the Sabres on Tuesday.

“The route we’re looking at is to get value for him, to put him in a position to succeed,” Murray told the Buffalo News. “Players that treat you right and have played well and hard for you over the years, you try to do what’s best for them, too, as long as it fits into what you’re doing.

“By trading Ryan to a contender, a good team that is maybe lacking only his position, I think that we’ve certainly not done a disservice to him and we’ve helped the organization in our own right.”

How many teams are interested? Murray said the number was more than two but less than 10.

But how many of those teams are willing to meet Miller's long-term contract demands? At 33 years old, Miller is entering the twilight of his career as his current deal expires.

By contrast, Blues goaltender Jaroslav Halak is in his athletic prime. He shook off a rough Olympic showing with a stellar performance at Vancouver on Wednesday night.

As for Ott, Murray offered this endorsement: “Steve Ott is the type of player that I’ve looked for for 21 years in drafting . . . That’s not the type of player I want to trade away. That’s the type of player that I want to bring in. Unfortunately, when I got here, he’s at his age and he’s an unrestricted free agent. ... We’re not a playoff team, so that changes the dynamic, obviously.”

Murray will consider draft pick offers, but he prefers to add young players a couple of years into their careers.

Elsewhere on the trade front:

- Star Lightning winger Martin St. Louis asked the Lightning to trade him. He was none too pleased that Tampa Bay GM Steve Yzerman did not initially have a spot for him on Team Canada.

St. Louis later joined the team as an injury replacement, but hard feelings remain. When the Tampa Tribune pressed him about the trade request, St. Louis offered a non-denial.

“I’ve had talks with Steve about my future with the team and I’ll leave it at that,” St. Louis said.

With the Lightning aiming for a high Eastern Conference playoff seed, Yzerman seems likely to hang on to St. Louis unless another team makes a compelling offer.

Perhaps the Rangers will step up and bid, given St. Louis' interest in playing for that team. Neither Ryan Callahan nor Dan Girardi have signed extensions, so both could be on the move by next week.

- Another Olympic forward, Ryan Kesler, reportedly asked the Canucks to deal him back in the fall. This was big news, since Kesler is a cornerstone player in Vancouver.

Vancouver GM Mike Gillis offered a non-denial of that report from TVA Sports in Montreal.

"If we discussed every internal or personal issue we have as an organization, we wouldn't stay in business very long," Gillis told reporters before his Canucks played the Blues. "So I'm not going to comment on it."

Kesler is currently sidelined with a left hand injury suffered while blocking a shot at the Olympics. He played through that injury in Sochi.

“I watched him and all the rehab he was doing and he was a warrior to keep playing through the injury he had,” Blues captain David Backes told the Vancouver Sun. “Hopefully he is healed up and back in the lineup sooner rather than later.”

The Canucks are said to be listening to bids on Kesler, but Gillis isn't eager to move him. Given the advanced age and declining production of the Sedin Twins, that seems prudent.

Making the team better by trading Kesler would be not easy.

St. Louis and Kesler are two of the more valuable forwards in the league. When they ask for a fresh start, it is bigger news than, say, Martin Erat asking the Capitals to trade him.

- Blues winger Chris Stewart continues to generate interest. It appears Blues GM Doug Armstrong would have to move Stewart and his salary to add more grit at forward or to make a change in goal.

- Islanders defenseman Andrew McDonald may not be a true Top 4 defender, so he isn't generating the same trade buzz as winger Thomas Vanek. But McDonald is logging big minutes this season and he leads the NHL in blocked shots.

Word out of New York is that hapless Islanders GM Garth Snow will hang on to his players until deadline day, hoping to drive up their trade value.

- The Bruins are shopping for experienced defensive help, so McDonald and Buffalo's Henrik Tallinder are possibilities. The Penguins have taken a beating on defense, too, but does that team have the flexibility to add significant help?

- The Red Wings are shopping for defense, but GM Ken Holland won't overpay for a rental player. His battered team isn't a Cup contender this season, so he won't go "all in" for short-term help.

- The Kings came out of the Olympic break with a six-goal outburst at Colorado. So there was carryover from their players piling up points in Sochi.

Coach Darryl Sutter is turning up the heat on his young offensive-minded forwards while GM Dean Lombardi mulls trade possibilities. Either Vanek or Buffalo's Matt Moulson could help plenty.

AROUND THE RINKS: The highly skilled Oilers won't get near the playoffs this season, but they could play the spoiler role if they finally play to their ability . . . The Predators are thrilled to get cornerstone goaltender Pekka Rinne back in action. After recovering from his hip infection, he will scrape off his rust during a rehab assignment in the AHL . . . The Olympic injury list gets longer and longer. Canadiens goaltender Carey Price played in the gold medal game, but returned home with a lower-body ailment. He aggravated that problem in practice and will miss at least two games.

Sabres goalie Ryan Miller focusing on what could be last start in Buffalo, grateful to city for support

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 28, 2014

BUFFALO – Ryan Miller knows most NHL cities can't offer what this one has for 11 seasons. The Sabres goalie hasn't just played for a team; he's felt a part of something special in the community.

But right now isn't the time to reflect, Miller said Thursday. He's still with the Sabres. The former Vezina Trophy winner wants to focus on his 533rd start tonight against the San Jose Sharks.

Still, with the NHL trade deadline hitting Wednesday, Miller knows it could be his last game here. General manager Tim Murray has said the rebuilding Sabres are searching for a good place to deal their franchise netminder, an unrestricted free agent following the season.

So Miller, who's usually thoughtful, couldn't help himself. He got a little nostalgic Thursday during a nearly 10-minute chat with the media.

The 33-year-old didn't want to miss an opportunity to thank everyone in Buffalo "who's been a friend, been a supporter, been a fan."

"I think everyone in Buffalo kind of knows how I feel about the city," he said. "I've always enjoyed the people. I've always enjoyed the city. Big love for the city in my heart."

He talked about someone trying to teach him how to hold his hockey stick at Wegmans, fans concerned he should eat more and the "sweet old ladies" that would run up, hug him and "scare me half to death coming from the side."

"Real nice to have a sweet old lady give you a hug and say she likes to watch you play," Miller said.

He added: "It's good that people care."

Tonight promises to be one of the most emotional games inside the First Niagara Center in recent memory.

"You don't do things on your own," he said. "That collective energy from the city, people have to realize how much that makes a difference to us, to the players. It's great place to play hockey. You feel a part of something. You feel appreciated."

Miller knows an honest effort in this town earns "positive feedback from everyone."

“That’s more than you can ask for,” he said. “There are cities out there when you’re invisible, you don’t have that same support. ...

“I feel like I’m fortunate. I met some great people, some great fans. But again, we’ll see how everything plays out. I’m not going to close off any avenues.”

But Miller acknowledged again Thursday he’s likely leaving.

“I’m answering these questions because it seems likely given my status at the end of the year they’re likely to trade me, and that’s where we’re at,” he said. “If we had more time to see what moves they made before the trade deadline when it’s a logical business move, I could take all summer and we could see where everything shakes out.

“But it seems like it’s a risky proposal for both sides. Right now, it’s a business decision. It’s not really a personal thing. See where it goes.”

Based on comments from Blues general manager Doug Armstrong to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Miller likely won’t be headed to a team many believe covet him. Armstrong, whose Blues are built to win the Stanley Cup now, appears content to stick with goalie Jaroslav Halak.

“St. Louis has historically been a graveyard for goaltenders,” Armstrong told the paper. “I’m not being critical of the fans, but it doesn’t seem like they’re with who’s in net. Jaro doesn’t deserve to have the past put on him.”

Injuries have limited Halak to only two playoff starts with St. Louis.

“He hasn’t failed,” Armstrong said. “He’s going to have the opportunity to show what he’s capable of. That’s how it is in sports. Until you win, you can’t win.”

Miller, of course, isn’t the only high-profile Sabre who could be playing his last game tonight. Captain Steve Ott and winger Matt Moulson are also unrestricted free agents.

Ott’s usually open and talkative with the media. But he’s “completely done” talking about his future for now.

“I can only control what I can control,” he said politely. “I have a bunch of teammates here. I don’t want any distractions here on myself, personally, or anything else. I’ve given all the answers I can possibly give.”

Interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said the three veterans have handled the uncertainty professionally.

“Matty Moulson, he’s a quiet leader on our team and he’s doing a great job,” he said. “Steve Ott’s doing a great job for us. You can see the way Ryan Miller came back from the Olympics and the performance he did the first game.

“So all these guys maybe have excuses or reasons to say, ‘Hey, it’s a matter of time before we leave.’ No, they’re not doing that. They’re paying attention to what they have to do right now.”

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Nolan said center Tyler Ennis, out Wednesday with “general body soreness,” could play tonight.

Ville Leino subbed for Ennis between Moulson and Drew Stafford in the 5-4 overtime win against Boston, the Sabres’ second straight triumph.

“Ville played OK,” Nolan said. “Tyler Ennis had that line really going. It’s tough to jump in.”

Nolan also said center Zenon Konopka (finger) should play.

NHL Trade Tracker: Myers' name floated

By Zac Hirschbeck

WGR 550

February 28, 2014

As we are now less than a week away from the trade deadline, the NHL rumor mill looks to be heating up. While Sabres fans continue to closely monitor the statuses of Ryan Miller, Steve Ott, and Matt Moulson, there are several other high-profile names that are surfacing within media speculation and trade talks. Here's the latest from around the league:

Interest in Myers

Last night, TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger reported that Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers is drawing "considerable interest" around the league. According to Dreger, GM Tim Murray is willing to move the 24-year-old former Calder Trophy winner. Dreger mentions Toronto, Anaheim, and Colorado as potential fits and suggests that whatever team is interested in acquiring Myers will have to "come ready to pay a premium."

Ehrhoff and Ott also Garnering Attention

In addition to Myers, Christian Ehrhoff has also generated interest from teams looking to bolster their defensive core. ESPN NHL writer Craig Custance said in a tweet last night, "Sabres also getting calls on defenseman Christian Ehrhoff. Like the other Sabres w/no-trades, he's submitted his list." The list that Custance is referring to is Ehrhoff's limited no trade clause. Meanwhile, Wayne Scanlon, who is a columnist for the Ottawa Citizen, cites a NHL GM who believes that there may already be a deal in place for the Sabres captain Steve Ott.

Kesler Denies Requesting a Trade

It has been an eventful week for Canucks forward Ryan Kesler. On February 24th, Canucks GM Mike Gillis expressed a desire to acquire a player to help Kesler. On Wednesday night, TVA Sports' Louis Jean reported that Kesler requested a trade "some time ago" and wanted out of Vancouver. After practice yesterday, Kesler spoke to Vancouver reporters and called Jean's report "completely false." Last night, Sportsnet's Nick Kypreos and Bruce Garrioch reported that while the asking price is believed to be steep, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Columbus, and the Rangers are all interested in acquiring the 29-year-old's services. Kesler carries a \$5 million cap hit through 2015-16 and currently is day-to-day with a hand injury that he suffered playing for the United States in Sochi.

St. Louis Wants a Move to Rangers

After hardly denying a report that he wanted a trade, longtime Lightning forward Martin St. Louis has also singled out his favored destination. According to

Dreger, St. Louis has his heart set on a move to the New York Rangers. In a Wednesday night tweet, Dreger said, "Teams may continue to call Tampa Bay on St. Louis, but, as of now, Lightning are telling teams St. Louis is locked on the New York Rangers." TSN reporter Scott Cullen cites the fact that St. Louis lives in nearby Connecticut as a possible reason why St. Louis likes the idea of a move to New York. St. Louis, who has 58 points in 59 games, carries a \$5.625 million cap hit and also possesses a no-movement clause.

Callahan Likely On His Way Out

Reports earlier this week said that there was a "99 percent chance" that Callahan would be moved prior to Wednesday's deadline. That belief was echoed by ESPN New York's Katie Strang. Strang spoke to Callahan's agent Steve Bartlett who said that he had no contact with the Rangers front office over the Olympic break. Callahan, the Rangers captain and a Rochester native, is believed to be seeking a seven-year deal, averaging somewhere between \$6.5 and \$7 million a year. Unlike Kesler and St. Louis, Callahan is an unrestricted free agent at the end of the year.

Other Names Making Headlines

Ryan Callahan's teammate Dan Girardi is reportedly still discussing a possible contract extension with the Rangers. Brian Burke has told reporters that he will not be Calgary's general manager next season. Nashville Predators center David Legwand discussed his contract talks with the Nashville Predators by simply saying, "We aren't anywhere." Lastly, the New York Islanders are reportedly seeking a first-round pick for defenseman Andrew MacDonald.

Raising Ristolainen: Sabres' first-round pick growing in Rochester

By Matthew Collier

WGR 550

February 27, 2014

The year: 2022.

The place: The Olympic games.

The event: Men's Hockey – Gold medal game

The tournament has come down to hockey's two world super powers: Finland and Canada. The lights go down for the national anthems. Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, with a “C” on his sweater, leads the Blue and White onto the ice. The 6-foot-4 star defenseman stares across the the center-ice logo at Canada's future Hall of Fame captain Steven Stamkos.

Finally, after a long road that saw the Fins beat Jack Eichel, John Gibson and the talented USA team, it is time for Finland to play for gold.

The puck drops. The five-time All-Star Ristolainen grabs the puck, blows through Canada's zone and sets up teammate Tuevo Teravainen for a one-timer goal. On the next shift, he lays a booming hit on speedster Connor McDavid in the corner. The 26-year-old defenseman breaks up a 2-on-1, then creates a rush of his own, ending in a 100 MPH slapshot.

After being named Tournament MVP, the Sabres' \$100 million defenseman returns to Buffalo to a screaming crowd at the airport – all on hand to celebrate his gold.

Meanwhile, AHL assistant coach Drew Bagnall is sitting in his office, watching proudly on TV. He listens to NBC and TSN rave about his former defense partner with the Rochester Americans. None of the analysts mention Bagnall's name. None of the writers call him for an interview about his ex-teammate.

Ristolainen remembers, though. So do the fans who watched him play in Rochester eight years before. They recall Bagnall communicating with the raw rookie on the ice. The Amerks' beat reporter talks with a life-time season ticket holder about the former captain teaching the Finnish star day after day, helping him understand a balance between carrying the puck and playing a sound defensive game.

The Amerks employees remember how Bagnall and Ristolainen dominated their way to a Calder Cup title.

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OK, that might be setting the bar a little high. But back in 2014, the Amerks have won 12 of their last 16 games and the Sabres' 18-year-old prospect is taking giant hops, skips and jumps forward in his game.

Prospects who become NHL players often have a moment – one that you can pinpoint – where their mental game and confidence starts to catch up with the raw talent that got them drafted high. For Zemgus Girgensons, it was against the Toronto Marlies in the AHL playoffs last season. All the sudden, the Sabres' first-rounder started carrying the puck, getting to the front of the net and becoming a force in both zones.

Ristolainen may still hit pot holes along the way, but his moment may very well have come in the Amerks' last home stand in which they went 3-0-1.

In the four-game stretch, he took registered three assists, was plus-3 and took 12 shots on goal. He was also on the ice in overtime against the AHL's best team the Texas Stars and with 48 seconds left in a 3-2 game against one of the league's hottest teams the San Antonio Rampage. You do not see that often from an 18-year-old.

Right next to him in those key situations? Bagnall. In the win over the Stars, Ristolainen set up his veteran D partner for a pass to Phil Varone for the game-winning goal.

After the game, head coach Chadd Cassidy called it the best of the season for his rookie defenseman.

“He was really solid defensively, didn't lose any battles, stayed in his battles, his shifts were shorter, good puck movement and he was patient with his offense,” Cassidy said. “And he made a great play on the game-winning goal with the pass to Bags. That is a big time play.”

When Ristolainen was first sent down to Rochester, he was trying too hard to make big time plays on every shift. He carried the puck too often, which resulted in him taking unnecessary punishment from opponents. You hear all the time that the answer is “simplifying the game.” Often that is nothing more than coach speak – but this time it is the truth.

“He is such a big body guy and has the ability to out-muscle players out there,” Bagnall said. “That is what we need him to do – to stop guys from getting to the front of the net. Just focusing on the defensive side of the game and knowing that is going to create offensive chances for our forwards.”

The Amerks' captain is one of the brightest players you will run across. Buffalo brought him into the organization for his intelligence, work ethic and leadership. What they may not have known is how willing he is to help prospects learn the game.

Even when he was injured for a short time, Bagnall, in suit and tie, hung around the locker room breaking down the game with young players.

“Drew is a good mentor and a good leader,” Cassidy said. “He is someone that Rasmus can trust. He is a guy that is going to talk the whole game. He never stops talking, which is great. It is by design. I think that is going to be a good partnership.”

“He helps me a lot,” Ristolainen said. “I try to help him. We think about the game the same way. It is easy to play with him. I like it very much.”

While Bagnall and Cassidy are doing all they can to raise Ristolainen right, his success is on his shoulders. And there are indicators that he understands that. When you talk about “makeup” and intangibles, one of the important factors for young players is whether they listen to instruction.

Some prospects think they have it all figured out and refuse to make changes required to take the next step. That is not the case with Ristolainen. He has made the changes required and seen the results.

“The last two weeks I have taken a steps forward,” he said. “But before that I had a couple tough weeks and didn't play that well. It's going well now and I'm trying to keep it going.”

Now, this is normally the point where we talk about how Ristolainen still has things he can improve. But there is not a whole lot he can change. It is really about playing games. Repeating situations over and over. Matching the work ethic of Bagnall off the ice to maintain his body through a full season.

When will we see him back in Buffalo? The Finnish D-man could be back next year. The Sabres might be wiser to keep him in Rochester for another half year in 2014-15. Being too ready is much better than not ready enough.

So it will be awhile before we find out whether Ristolainen can reach his full potential. But with his talent, the 2022 scenario is not that far-fetched.

Five fun trade ideas

By Mike Schopp

WGR 550

February 27, 2014

WARNING: THESE ARE NOT REAL TRADES. Yet.

Once everyone sees how amazing they are, it's just a matter of time before you get that bzzzzzz from 550550 telling you that they are real. That's my hope anyway. For at least one of these gems.

Disclaimer: I don't know very much about the young players on these other teams. I chose them based on their profile without any first-hand knowledge of their teams' opinions of them or them as people. My goal was to find young players that fit to make trades realistic and interesting.

OK.

In my perfect world, these five Sabres trades happen in the next six days:

1. Ryan Miller to St. Louis for a 2014 first-round pick, forward Ty Rattie and goalie Jaroslav Halak. The Sabres don't fill a hole in net by this trade, at least not beyond this season, as after the season ends so does Halak's contract. Halak is a placeholder.

In his first year of professional hockey, Rattie is leading the AHL's Chicago Wolves in goals (21) and points (36). He was the 32nd pick in the 2011 draft. Rattie is 6-foot-1 and turned 21 earlier this month.

I think this trade is balanced. The Blues get a goaltending upgrade for a team primed to take a step toward the Stanley Cup. The Sabres get a nice prospect and a sure-to-be low first-round pick.

2. Matt Moulson, Marcus Foligno and a 2014 2nd-round pick to Los Angeles for Valentin Zykov and a 2014 first-round pick. Moulson, Jonathan Quick's brother-in-law, gives some scoring punch to a team that seems to have lost its own. The inconsistent Foligno offers the Kings some youth and talent to bring up the Sabres' end of the deal.

Zykov, the 37th pick in the 2013 draft, has 56 points in 46 games for Baie-Comeau Drakkar of the QMJHL. He will be 19 in May. Zykov, 6 feet tall and 209 pounds, was last year's QMJHL Rookie of the Year.

I think the draft pick shift makes this trade balanced, although if I'd probably do a trade like this without that part.

** LA may have to find cap room to make this trade, and I'm saying here that they do that through other moves.

3. Steve Ott and Brayden McNabb to Tampa Bay for Brett Connolly. Tampa is good, despite having been without Steven Stamkos most of the year. I see Ott as a good fit for them. Whether or not they like McNabb is a guess on my part. I would think McNabb, 23, has a skill set interesting to some teams. If I'm the Sabres I have enough depth on defense to move one or two men.

Connolly was the sixth overall pick in the 2010 draft. He has 32 points in 42 games for Syracuse of the AHL, a slightly slower scoring pace than he set last year for that team (63 points, 71 games). If Tampa Bay is ready to make a run, perhaps they would have to sacrifice Connolly.

Like LA, Tampa has limited cap space. Fans will be watching them to see if Martin St. Louis gets moved in light of recent reports.

4. Tyler Myers to Winnipeg for Evander Kane. Should I have led with this one? I think Myers is completely expendable. You see flashes of his talent but just enough to tease you.

The future of the Sabres on defense, if it were up to me, does not include him. Ristolainen, Zadorov, Pysyk ... you won't see those names in my trades. That's my defense. If I have a good team someday, at the deadline I'll supplement with a bearded veteran or two. I frankly don't care if Myers, whose dedication has been suspect in his still-young career, is on my team any more or not.

Kane, meanwhile, is an exciting idea. He's locked in at \$5.25M for the next four years. Kane has but 29 points in 42 games for Winnipeg, a team likely to miss the playoffs again.

This trade works if the Jets want to veer in another direction, and, of course, if they like Myers. The Sabres once dealt Phil Housley to the Jets for Dale Hawerchuk so I might be guilty of thinking somehow these teams are meant for something like Myers-Kane. Cap-wise, this move is no problem.

Remember, the word fun is in the headline.

5. Tyler Ennis to Philadelphia for Anthony Stolarz and a 2014 3rd-round pick. I'd love it if at the deadline were able to move either Ennis or Cody Hodgson. If it doesn't happen, it can wait a year. But Ennis is up for a new contract and I think all the Sabres should want to do is two years max. That second year would make it easier, potentially, to trade him next season.

Stolarz is the goaltender for the OHL's London Knights. He suffered an ugly skate-cut leg injury a month ago but is on the road to recovery. Stolarz, 6-foot-5, was the 2012 draft's 45th pick.

I don't love this one. My guess is the Sabres would like to find a top-flight goaltending prospect at the deadline -- Jake Allen of St. Louis, Martin Jones of LA, Malcolm Subban of Boston, like that -- and Stolarz does not appear to be quite that. But they can shoot for that next year too.

If LA wants Myers or Christian Ehrhoff and is willing to trade Jones, there might be blockbuster-deal potential there. But again, the Kings have cap issues to consider. Maybe they move Dustin Brown. I think after the Blues, the most interesting team for Sabres fans to keep track of this week is Los Angeles.

Now we wait for our phones to start buzzing.

ENNIS MISSES PRACTICE, MAY PLAY FRIDAY

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 27, 2014

Tyler Ennis did not practice with the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday as he recovers from, in the words of interim coach Ted Nolan, “general body soreness.”

Ennis was scratched for Buffalo’s game Wednesday night against the Boston Bruins but Nolan hopes that his top-line center will be ready for Friday when the San Jose Sharks come to town.

“[He’s] still a little sore. But hopefully, knock on wood, he’ll be ready to go tomorrow,” Nolan said after practice at First Niagara Center. “[It’s] still one of those day-to-day things. He was a lot better today, so hopefully you’ll have a good chance at seeing him at morning skate and we’ll go from there.”

With Ennis out, Ville Leino stepped up to fill his role on a line with Matt Moulson and Drew Stafford. Leino finished the game with two assists as Buffalo came out on top 5-4 in overtime.

“In many ways, I’m more of a playmaker so that’s my first thought,” Leino said. “...Matty and Stafford are goal scorers, so it’s my job to get them the puck and try to make good chances.”

Nolan said he plans to start Ryan Miller in goal Friday night.

John Scott has filled in as a defenseman in practice numerous times this season. However, since the team has come out of the Olympic break, Scott has been a fixture on the blue line both in practices and now in game situations.

Tuesday night, he played 11:01 on a pairing with Jamie McBain and logged 7:16 of ice time, rotating in as the seventh defenseman on Wednesday.

Scott played defense for most of his career before coming to Buffalo before the start of last season. At 6-foot-8, 259 pounds, he’ll look to use his size to his advantage on the blue line.

“I just try to use my reach. I obviously don’t have the quickest of feet so I just keep my distance,” he said. “I just use my stick and my length and make smart plays out there and not put myself in a bad position where I can get kind of victimized. It’s a fast game and I just try to maintain my position and do my best.”

There’s still, however, some rust to shake off as well. Scott finished the game against the Bruins with an even rating, but he committed a turnover behind his own net that directly led to a Boston goal.

“Obviously it has its ups and downs. I had a few downs last night, but it happens,” he said. “I haven’t played in two years but it’s been fun. I grew up playing D and I enjoy playing it so hopefully I can get a few more games out there and get a little better.”

Nolan acknowledged that the transition has been a little bumpy, but he likes what he sees out of Scott.

“I thought Johnny looked a lot more comfortable on defense outside of that one play last night,” Nolan said. “To be fair, to throw a guy like that after a number of games, back in his natural position, it’s going to take a little while to get adjusted but I like him on defense more so than forward.”

While Scott has been able to step up in various roles this season, he still sees himself as a player who can fill the enforcer role on the team.

“I still think I’m the enforcer. I still think I protect my team but I think I’ve just maybe evolved a little bit and gotten a more regular shift whether it’s on forward or D,” he said. “It’s nice. It’s good to contribute in other ways and put a little tick on my resume where I can play more than just fight.”

With the Sabres currently in 30th place and out of the playoff picture, some major changes could be made to the club’s makeup by the NHL Trade Deadline on March 5.

In spite of the swirling rumors and constant questions about their futures, players like Miller, Moulson and captain Steve Ott – all set to become unrestricted free agents on July 1 – have helped Buffalo to consecutive victories coming out of the Olympic break.

Nolan cited them as three important leaders that have been able to remain professional and help their current club be productive in any way they can.

“All these guys maybe have excuses or reasons to say, ‘Hey, it’s a matter of time before we leave.’ No, they’re not doing that,” he said. “They’re paying attention to what they have to do right here right now.”

But what will happen if some of those leaders aren’t around after 3 p.m. on Wednesday? Nolan is confident other players will fill the void.

“That’s the beauty of sports. Sometimes your leadership goes somewhere else and you have to create some new stuff within,” Nolan said. “There are some guys in that room that will have to [assume] those positions.”

26 Matt Moulson – 23 Ville Leino – 21 Drew Stafford
9 Steve Ott – 19 Cody Hodgson – 27 Matt D'Agostini
82 Marcus Foligno – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 65 Brian Flynn
37 Matt Ellis – 24 Zenon Konopka – 8 Cody McCormick

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 52 Alexander Sulzer
6 Mike Weber – 57 Tyler Myers
20 Henrik Tallinder – 4 Jamie McBain
32 John Scott

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth