



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Predators-Sabres Preview

By Noey Kupchan

Associated Press

March 11, 2014

No team in the NHL has fewer points than the Buffalo Sabres, who have all but been eliminated from contention.

While the Nashville Predators sit at the bottom of the Central Division, they're still holding out hope of making a run.

It's been over two years since the Sabres last faced the Predators, who are looking to build on a rare win when they visit Buffalo on Tuesday night.

The Sabres (19-37-8) are on the verge of a third straight defeat after falling 2-0 at Florida on Friday and 2-1 to Chicago on Sunday. Drew Stafford tied the game midway through the first period against the defending Stanley Cup champs, but Jhonas Enroth allowed the go-ahead goal early in the third.

"It's not a sometime thing, winning. It's an all-the-time thing. If you let off the gas pedal, if you have bad shift or two, it's going to come and bite you pretty good," interim coach Ted Nolan, who is reportedly close to accepting the full-time job, told the team's official website. "(Chicago is) one of the premier teams in the league and it shows you how far we have to go."

Enroth had won three of four starts before making 29 saves against the Blackhawks. His winning percentage of .283 (4-14-5) is the worst in the league among the 56 goalies with at least 15 starts.

The Sabres are 0 for their last 10 on the power play following Sunday's 0-for-5 display.

"What do we take out of that one?" center Tyler Ennis said. "One: Jhony's playing great. Two: We've got to stay out of the box. And, three: Our power play's got to be better."

With 46 points, Buffalo is still two away from matching its total from last year's lockout-shortened season.

"Right now that's the main goal - is to just earn the respect from other teams," winger Cory Conacher said. "Obviously we might not make the playoffs, but we want to win as many games as we can going into the summer and just to gain the respect from only the league."

The Predators (27-28-10) had scored three goals while losing four straight in regulation before pulling out a wild 4-3 overtime win at Ottawa on Monday. Nashville, which scored three goals in the second period before allowing three in

the third, walked away with two points after Seth Jones tallied the game winner with just over a minute left in OT.

"It was a tough one to slip away and we almost gave it away," said Jones, whose team is eight points behind Dallas for the Western Conference's second wild-card spot. "We need all the points we can get right now so it was nice to pull away with two."

Pekka Rinne made 34 saves to earn his first win in four games since returning from a hip injury that kept him out for over four months.

"It was a big win, but there's no denying that going into the third with a three-goal lead you have to be able to maintain it and come out with a regulation time win," Rinne told the NHL's official website."

Despite Rinne's performance, the Predators will go with Carter Hutton in this game. Hutton, 1-2-2 with a 2.99 goals-against average since the start of February, has never faced the Sabres.

Nashville hasn't played Buffalo since a 3-2 loss on Dec. 3, 2011.

Sabres' Deslauriers enjoys debut and fresh start

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

March 10, 2014

This is the kind of fresh start Nicolas Deslauriers was looking for. The 23-year old had been in the Los Angeles Kings' organization waiting, and waiting, and waiting for his chance to make his NHL debut, for an opportunity to even play in an exhibition game.

But it just wasn't happening.

Then on Wednesday he was traded to Buffalo and was ready to continue his American Hockey League season in Rochester when the Sabres started getting hit with the injury bug.

So before he could play for the Amerks, he flew to Florida and within three days he went from L.A. Kings prospect to making his NHL debut with the Sabres.

And the whole experience has been amazing for Deslauriers, who will again return to the Sabres lineup tonight against the Nashville Predators in First Niagara Center.

"In L.A., I was there for two years and never got a chance, not even a sniff of having an exhibition game almost," he said. "I'm here just after being traded and have played two games. It's just unbelievable. I think the team is young but they work hard. I'm a hard-working guy just trying to finish my hits and take some shots and I think I fit pretty good here."

The Buffalo Sabres are out of the playoff hunt. The tradeline has passed. The roster is hampered with four injured players who are expected to be out for anywhere from one to two weeks.

For players like Deslauriers, this opens doors.

"You talk about a perfect storm for a young kid," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "He was slated to play in Rochester. He probably wouldn't have maybe got too many games here but because of the trade deadline, the injuries he got put into a position. Some people take advantage of the opportunity. He certainly has. He's a big, physical guy. Playing that way, he can skate for a big man. That's what this organization needs. We'll monitor his progress."

His NHL debut came Friday in Florida against the Panthers where he recorded four shots with four hits in 15 minutes of ice time.

Sunday he recorded only one shot in 12:13, but shared the team-lead with three hits.

Dishing out hard hits, that's the key part of the game for the 6-foot-1, 209-pound converted defenseman.

See, it's been a year of change for Deslauriers, not only with the change of organization but a change in position.

A defenseman by trade, he converted to forward this season and had 39 points (18 goals, 21 assists) in 60 AHL games with Manchester at the time of his call-up.

"It's a big change. Especially since I was on D and it's my first year up front," Deslauriers said. "I can't ask for more. I think I had a good start in the A, just scoring goals and helping the team. This is probably the best time of my life right now."

The best time in his life continues to be one of transition. The biggest difference in playing forward has been skating and making sure he's constantly moving his feet.

But Deslauriers remembers life as a defenseman.

What did he hate about forwards when he was at the blue line? That's the type of forward he tries to be.

"It's probably an advantage I played on D," he explained. "I know that when you go get the puck and somebody comes to hit you, you don't like it.

"And if you do this all game, in the third, the D doesn't want to go get it. I was like that. I think everybody's like that, so my thing is to just finish my hits every time, to be that guy that bothers you every time the puck is dumped in."

Nolan appears to be closing in on deal

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

March 10, 2014

It looks as if the Buffalo Sabres are a step closer to removing the “interim” tag from Ted Nolan’s title. At least that’s what can be inferred from his comments after the team practice on Monday morning.

When asked for an update on his contract, Nolan said it was being worked on between his representative and Sabres general manager Tim Murray.

“I’ve put it into my representative’s hands and I guess him and Tim will be talking soon if not have talked already,” Nolan said. “Just formalities and getting a couple things ironed out and doing all the legal stuff. We’ll leave it in their hands.”

Nolan was hired Nov. 13 for his second stint as the Sabres head coach. He compiled a 73-72-19 record in two seasons with the Sabres after he was first hired in 1995.

The popular coach returned with the interim tag and after Tim Murray was hired as the team’s general manager in early January there has been speculation about if he would keep Nolan as coach.

There reportedly was a contract ready to be announced but it was delayed by the sudden resignation of Pat LaFontaine as president of hockey operations and with the trade of Ryan Miller and Steve Ott to the St. Louis Blues coupled with the NHL trade deadline frenzy.

“We did talk about contract,” Nolan said last week. “Right now is not about my contract. It’s about the situation that just happened. It’s about what transpired in this organization, what happened to a very dear friend.

“I have to put my personal situation behind right now and really concentrate on those 22 guys here. That was the main reason I got here was to try and turn things around and coach the Buffalo Sabres.”

And from public comments, Murray wants Nolan as head coach.

“If he wants to be here, I want him to be our coach,” Murray said at a news conference last week. “I can’t speculate whether he does or not, and I’m not going to beg anybody to come and work here. I want people that want to be here. I want players that want to be here. We want Teddy to be our coach going forward.”

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Tyler Myers woke up Monday morning with his leg feeling much better. And the Sabres breathed a sigh of relief. They already have four players injured, They really couldn't afford another one.

Myers got his leg tangled late in the first period of Sunday's 2-1 loss to Chicago at First Niagara Center. He limped off to the dressing room, returned to the game, but appeared to be hurting.

He missed practice on Monday, but Nolan said that it was a rest day.

"We were hoping it wasn't as serious as it looked but you never know overnight," Nolan said. "So it had a good night's rest and it feels pretty good so it's just more of a maintenance day for him."

Also still out with injuries suffered in Florida were Zemgus Girgensons (undisclosed), Chris Stewart (lower body), Torrey Mitchell (lower body) and Alexander Sulzer (undisclosed).

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Tonight's game will mark the first game in Buffalo for Paul Gaustad since he was traded to the Nashville Predators at the 2012 trade deadline. The 32-year-old center has 14 points (eight goals, six assists) in 64 games with Nashville this year.

Gaustad played seven seasons in Buffalo starting in the 2005-06 season scoring 71 goals with 181 points.

The Predators were headed to Buffalo after playing in Ottawa on Monday, where they were looking to end their four-game losing skid.

Predators visit Sabres, go for two in a row

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

March 11, 2014

PREDATORS (27-28-10) at SABRES (19-37-8)

TV: FS-TN, MSG-B, BELL TV

Last 10: Nashville 3-5-2; Buffalo 4-6-0

Season series: This is the first of two games between the Nashville Predators and Buffalo Sabres. They haven't faced each other since Dec. 3, 2011, when Buffalo forward Tyler Ennis scored the decisive goal in a 3-2 win in Nashville.

Big story: With time running out and points at a premium, the Nashville Predators go for their second win in as many nights and try to inch a little closer to a wild-card berth into the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Team Scope:

Predators: The youngest player on the Nashville roster came through with the biggest goal of the season Monday, as defenseman Seth Jones scored in overtime to lift the Predators to a 4-3 win against the Ottawa Senators. Not only did the win snap a four-game losing streak, it came after the Predators blew a three-goal lead in the third period.

"We've been on a pretty dry spell lately and we've hit a ton of posts and we hit a few more tonight, but it was really nice to get on the board," Jones said.

Even with the victory, Nashville still trails the Dallas Stars by eight points for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference. That likely means a steady dose of Pekka Rinne down the stretch now that the Predators' No. 1 goalie is healthy. Rinne won Monday for the first time in four starts since returning, but he's stopped 89 of 95 shots over his past three (.937 save percentage).

Sabres: Even though Buffalo has dropped three of its past four games since coming out of the Olympic break with a three-game winning streak, the Sabres continue to play competitive hockey. Jhonas Enroth made 29 saves as they gave the defending Stanley Cup champion Chicago Blackhawks all they could handle in a 2-1 loss Sunday.

Drew Stafford, who scored their lone goal, is wearing the "A" on his jersey again following a flurry of moves at the NHL Trade Deadline. With reports surfacing that interim coach Ted Nolan is close to signing a contract to return, the eight-year veteran spoke about how the team has gradually turned around its fortunes with Nolan behind the bench.

"We've been able to play with a little bit more freedom," Stafford said. "We were given a bigger role and then treated with some respect. Confidence can build off that. I think all the external things aside, basically our heads kind of cleared up and we were able to play."

Who's hot: Predators forward Nick Spaling has goals in two of the past three games. ... Sabres forward Cory Conacher, who played four seasons at Canisius College in Buffalo, had an assist and three shots in his debut with the team after being claimed off waivers from the Ottawa Senators.

Injury report: Buffalo defenseman Tyler Myers (leg) missed practice Monday but is expected to be available. Forwards Zemgus Girgensons (lower body) and Torrey Mitchell (foot) are likely out another week. Defenseman Alexander Sulzer (lower body) could miss up to two weeks. Forward Chris Stewart (knee) is out indefinitely.

Sabres ready to see what new roster and youngsters can do down the stretch

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 11, 2014

BUFFALO – About 15 Sabres gathered at a Tampa Bay restaurant Wednesday and nervously watched TSN's coverage of the NHL trade deadline, unsure what their futures held.

“It was definitely a little stressful, a little anxiety involved,” said Sabres winger Drew Stafford, one veteran rumored to be on the block.

Stomachs churned and filled with butterflies staring at the screen. Everything can change in an instant.

“You're watching and you're seeing these guys on this panel that are basically announcing a tremendous change in your life,” Stafford said Monday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight's game against the Nashville Predators.

The rebuilding Sabres, of course, made three trades that day. Respected veterans Cody McCormick and Matt Moulson found out they had been dealt while sitting next to Stafford.

Naturally, Stafford, who's quietly morphed into perhaps the Sabres' best forward, felt relieved after the deadline passed. The Sabres had their team for the homestretch.

“Let's just go to work,” Stafford thought.

The roster has been changing throughout the trying season. Only nine players from the opening-night lineup played in Sunday's 2-1 loss to Chicago.

“It's a little bit crazy,” Sabres defenseman Henrik Tallinder said about the recent changeover. “But you know what? Everyone is on the same page in here. They knew what it was all about. Everyone knew that anyone could be traded. ...

“In the long run, the future, it's going to look pretty bright here.”

Five new Sabres have debuted in the last week, meaning everyone must acquaint themselves with each other.

“It almost reminded me of when I first got here, learning the guys on the team and knowing who the leadership was on the team,” interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. “All of sudden, you just start getting a grasp of that and handle on it,

and all of a sudden there's a new group. Not too often do you run through situations like this."

Nolan said players were shaking hands before a power-play meeting Sunday.

"You don't see that too often," he said.

The Sabres' rebuild has created plenty of opportunities for the team's youngsters.

Winger Cory Conacher skated on the top line beside Stafford and center Tyler Ennis in his Sabres debut Sunday. In addition to another regular shift, winger Nick Deslauriers manned a point on the power play during his second NHL game.

Nolan wants these players "making the next stride in your career."

"I think the leadership has really changed," he said. "The dynamic of the team has really changed, and through change you see some rising to new challenges and some that don't. Right now, it's a great opportunity for some of these younger guys."

With 18 games left, Tallinder wants to see "these guys take the next step."

"They get the taste of it now, maybe a little bit more playing time in different situations and take advantage of it because you don't know if you're going to get it next year," he said. "This is a chance for everyone to show what they can bring."

Some veterans have also been given opportunities. With captain Steve Ott gone, Nolan awarded Stafford an alternate captaincy. Stafford wore an 'A' for two years before former coach Ron Rolston stripped it before the season.

"Maybe ... he didn't start the year the way he wanted to," Nolan said. "But ... he just persevered and he worked through it. To me, that showed good leadership on his side."

Is Stafford happy to have the prestigious letter back?

"Yes," a relieved-sounding Stafford said. "It was one of those things with the changes in management and coaching, you get it taken away in the beginning of the year, and then kind of coming full circle, it definitely does mean a lot.

"With or without a letter, I was still trying to make sure I was playing a certain way, taking care of the off-ice habits as well. It doesn't matter if I was wearing a letter or I wasn't. But it does feel good to kind of get that kind of acknowledgement, respect from management and the coaching staff."

Sabres and Ted Nolan working out new contract

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 11, 2014

BUFFALO – Ted Nolan should be returning to the Sabres next season.

The interim coach said Monday his representative is handling a new contract with Sabres general manager Tim Murray.

“I guess he and Tim will be talking soon if (they haven’t) talked already,” Nolan said inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight’s game against the Nashville Predators. “It’s formalities and getting things ironed out and doing all the legal stuff. ... We’ll leave it in their hands for now.”

Pat LaFontaine, who brought Nolan back to the Sabres in November, resigned as president of hockey operations March 1, igniting speculation Nolan might leave.

An emotional Nolan didn’t want to discuss his future the next day. But Nolan had been talking in recent days like he would be staying put.

Nolan is 15-22-7 since beginning his second stint with the Sabres.

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Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers, who left Sunday’s 2-1 loss to Chicago briefly, sat out Monday’s practice. Nolan said Myers is fine after his right leg got tangled with Brandon Bollig.

“Actually, it was a real good sign,” Nolan said. “We were hoping it wasn’t as serious as it looked last night. But you never know overnight. He had a good night’s rest and it feels pretty good.”

Nolan thought Myers re-injured what shelved him two games last month.

“Lucky stars were on our side,” he said.

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Nolan said goalie Jhonas Enroth will likely start tonight.

Preview: Nashville Predators at Buffalo Sabres

By John Glennon
Nashville Tennessean
March 11, 2014

PREDATORS at SABRES

- When: 6 p.m. today

Where: First Niagara Center (Buffalo, N.Y.)

TV/radio: Fox TN / 102.5-FM

Predators keys: 1) Strong between the pipes: This will be goalie Carter Hutton's first start since March 1, but the way the Predators had been scoring going into Monday's game in Ottawa, they can't afford to allow many goals. 2) Battling through: This game will conclude the first back-to-back for the Predators since Jan. 11-12. They have four more before the end of the season. 3) Silence Ennis: Sabres forward Tyler Ennis has scored three goals in his past five games. He is tied for the team lead with 16 goals.

Injuries: Predators F Patric Hornqvist (lower body) is probable. Sabres F Kevin Porter (lower body), F Chris Stewart (knee) and D Alexander Sulzer (lower body) are out; F Torrey Mitchell (foot) and F Zemgus Girgensons (lower body) are questionable.

Next for Predators: 7 p.m. Friday at Chicago.

Sabres' prospects improving in Rochester

By Matthew Collier

WGR 550

March 10, 2014

The Rochester Americans have worked their way into sixth place in the Western Conference and are coming off a three-in-three weekend in which they posted five out of a possible six points. Rochester's rise has come on the back of several highly-regarded prospects, including several former first-round draft picks that are likely to factor into the future.

Under head coach Chadd Cassidy, who has a background in player development, many of the team's young players have taken big steps forward.

Here is a look at how the Buffalo Sabres' prospects have come along this season.

Prospect: Forward - Johan Larsson

Stats: 38 games, 14 goals, 22 assists, plus-14

Area of improvement: Goal scoring

When the Amerks' versatile forward arrived in Rochester via trade last season, it appeared he would be relegated to a defensive role. That thought was affirmed when he only managed one point in 21 NHL games. However, since coming back to the AHL, Larsson's offensive game has taken off. He has been far more aggressive, going to the net and getting shots through traffic. Last season, the 5-foot-11 forward got 99 shots on goal in 69 AHL games. This year he has 92 in 38 games. Larsson is learning how to score by playing huge minutes on the power play and on the top line with Kevin Porter

Money quote:

"He creates a lot of offense at this level, for sure. He is playing a position that isn't really natural to him at wing. He seems to be in on most of our scoring and seems to create the bulk of our 5-on-5 chances." – Cassidy

Prospect: Forward - Luke Adam

Stats: 44 games, 26 goals, 18 assists, plus-11

Area of improvement: Defense

Since being sent to Rochester at the end of the 2012 season, the biggest criticism of the former second-round pick has been his defensive effort. This season there has been a noticeable difference in his own-zone efforts. Adam has gone from hanging around at the blue line waiting for an outlet pass to battling in the corners and in front of the net. Is his defensive game perfect? No. But Cassidy has used his scoring forward on the penalty kill and in late-game situations. You would not have seen that two years ago.

Money quote:

“He's become a 200-foot player. It is what we have tried to emphasize to him since we have been working with him. He has the gift to score goals, but if the coach doesn't feel he can put you out there and play in situations in your own zone or difficult situations, you are not going to get those offensive opportunities.” – Cassidy

Prospect: Forward - Joel Armia

Stats: 42 games, 6 goals, 15 assists, minus-5

Area of improvement: Physical play

When Armia first arrived in Rochester, he struggled to adjust to the North American game. He was trying too hard to take defenders one-on-one rather than working hard away from the puck to get his chances. He also was regularly losing wall battles and giving up when he faced hard checks from the other team. Since his hand injury has fully healed, his all-around game has improved significantly. The former 12th overall pick is drawing penalties by working hard, winning wall battles and getting to the front of the net more often.

Money quote:

“It took him a little bit to get used to the North American style. There is not much time out there. He has great hands. His skill is unbelievable. It is just a matter of getting to know your linemates and making sure he has his space to do his thing and get open. He has improved with not as many turnover, making sure he is hard on the puck and he has improved his forecheck,” – linemate Colton Gillies.

Prospect: Defenseman - Rasmus Ristolainen

Stats: 29 games, 5 goals, 12 assists, minus-5

Area of improvement: Decision making

Early in his demotion, Ristolainen was trying to carry the puck through center ice too much and it opened him up to taking big hits and forced him to shorten his shifts. He also pinched too often and was overly aggressive with hits. His game has calmed down and he has begun picking his spots smartly. Ristolainen is producing points and playing power play and penalty kill – largely because he has worked hard to eliminate mistakes. While his play has not been perfect, the rate in which he has improved has given fans and the organization reason to be high on their 2013 eighth overall pick.

Money quote:

“He is such a big body guy and has the ability to out-muscle players out there. 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.” – Captain Drew Bagnall

Prospect: Defenseman - Mark Pysyk

Stats: 23 games, 1 goal, 8 assists, minus-1

Area of improvement: Offense, one-on-one battles

By no means has Pysyk turned into Erik Karlsson, but the former first-round pick has become more aggressive offensively. While in the NHL, he was asked to play a “safe” game because he was paired with step-up-in-the-play master Christian Ehrhoff. Now that he is the No. 1 D-man in Rochester, he is asked to carry the puck deep and create offensively in more ways than just making solid zone exit passes. Pysyk is also receiving power play time, where he may eventually play in the NHL.

Money quote:

“For me, he is an elite talent. Let’s see what’s there offensively.” – Cassidy

Prospect: Goalie - Nathan Lieuwen

Stats: 17-9-4, 2.37 GAA, .920 save %

Area of improvement: Confidence

There was some question whether Lieuwen would even make the team out of training camp with several other prospects in the pipeline. After making the team, he was the clear No.2 netminder to Matt Hackett. Over the past two months he has forced his way to getting the majority of the ice time. Lieuwen is huge at 6-foot-6 and has gotten quite good at positioning. His top attribute is his competitiveness – he stays calm in net, but battles with the best goalies in the AHL.

Money quote:

“He doesn't let a whole lot bother him. There have been very few incidents this year where he's had a meltdown in net. He's a competitor, too. I remember talking to him after he had a rough night and I explained why I didn't pull him. He said 'I don't ever want you to pull me.' That tells you a lot about him.” – Cassidy

MYERS MISSES PRACTICE, EXPECTED TO PLAY TUESDAY

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 10, 2014

The last thing the Buffalo Sabres need to deal with right now is another injury.

Just before the first period ended in Buffalo's home game Sunday night against the Chicago Blackhawks, Tyler Myers fell awkwardly in the corner behind his own net. He skated off under some duress, putting little pressure on his right leg.

He returned to start the period on the power play and ended up finishing the game, logging 24:08 of ice time.

Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said afterward that they would re-evaluate him in the morning. Come Monday, Myers was not on the ice with the team at practice at First Niagara Center as he was given an extra day to recover.

Nolan expects him to play Tuesday night when the Sabres host the Nashville Predators at 7 p.m.

"Actually, it was a really good sign that it wasn't as serious as it looked last night, but you never know overnight," Nolan said. "He had a good night's rest and he feels pretty good so it was just more of a maintenance day for him. ...Lucky stars were on our side, so he's good to go."

Buffalo is already without Zemgus Girgensons, Chris Stewart, Torrey Mitchell and Alexander Sulzer due to various injuries.

Once the NHL Trade Deadline passed at the end of last week, the Sabres had a hole to fill at alternate captain. Nolan decided to give the extra "A" to Sabres forward Drew Stafford, who is now in his eighth season with the team. He had served as an alternate captain prior to the start of this season.

Stafford is one of several players including Cody Hodgson, Marcus Foligno, Tyler Ennis and Tyler Myers that Nolan is looking to step up into more prominent leadership roles. Stafford and Nolan had a long chat on the ice after practice about where the team is at both mentally and physically.

"The leadership has really changed. The dynamic of the team has really changed and through change, you see some rise to new challenges and some that don't," Nolan said. "Right now, it's a great opportunity for some of these younger guys. You can see it in several of them. They really took it upon themselves."

Stafford has 11 goals and 26 points on the season and has, along with his center Ennis, really picked up the pace as of late. Stafford has 13 points (7g+6) in his last 14 games while Ennis has 10 points (4+6) in his last 11 games and 18 points (8+10) in his last 21 games.

The ability to cancel out any outside distractions and focus on hockey again, particularly after Nolan was brought in to coach in November, is one reason Stafford believes that he and Ennis have been maintain their recent high level of play.

“We’ve been able to play with a little bit more freedom,” Stafford said. “We were given a bigger role and then treated with some respect. Confidence can build off that. I think all the external things aside, basically our heads kind of cleared up and we were able to play.”

The beginning of the 2013-14 season didn’t start well for Stafford. He had only three points in October, but since the start of the new calendar year, he’s picked up 13 points (7+6) in 16 games and his averaging .813 points per game in that span.

Nolan has said that, particularly since the team traded away many of its veteran players over the past two weeks, Stafford has really taken on a bigger leadership role.

“Maybe at the start of the season, he didn’t start the year he wanted to but the way he’s stuck through it and they way he’s battled through it, some people question his work ethic once in awhile and he just persevered,” Nolan said. “That, to me, showed real good leadership on his side.”

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32 John Scott – 24 Zenon Konopka – 37 Matt Ellis

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 5 Chad Ruhwedel
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SABRES PROSPECTS REPORT

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

March 10, 2014

QMJHL

Mikhail Grigorenko (2012, first round) had a goal and three assists Friday to lead Quebec to a 7-2 shellacking of Shawinigan. Grigorenko, who on Sunday posted two assists as the Remparts cruised to a 6-1 victory over Sherbrooke, has recorded 12 points in four March tilts to elevate his season line to 14-21-35 through 20 games. Winners of seven of their last 10 games, the Remparts currently sit sixth overall in the league standings with three regular season dates remaining.

William Carrier (2013, second round-STL) struck twice Friday to guide Drummondville to a 2-1 victory over Sherbrooke. On Sunday, Carrier finished with six shots on goals and his first fighting major of the year in the Voltigeurs 3-2 win triumph over Victoriaville. Carrier has amassed 20 goals, including six game winners, and 61 points with just two games left on the schedule. The Voltigeurs are currently in seventh place in the QMJHL standings, one point behind Grigorenko's Remparts.

OHL

Nick Baptiste (2013, third round) scored on the power play Sunday as Sudbury was defeated by North Bay 4-1 in a key divisional contest. The marker, Baptiste's 43rd goal in his 63rd game, rivals previous 43-goal outputs by Tyler Ennis (61 games, 2008-09) and Derek Roy (62 games, 2001-02). The Battalion victory vaults them past Baptiste's Wolves into first place in the Central Division standings, with the two clubs set to play a rematch Friday in Sudbury as the Wolves begin a three-game weekend to close out the regular season schedule.

Eric Locke (2013, seventh round) scored two goals Thursday in Saginaw's 8-3 thrashing of Windsor. Locke's first goal came while shorthanded, giving him a league-leading six tallies while down a man. The Spirit captain has totaled 24 goals and 56 points through 45 games.

Saginaw centerman Justin Kea (2012, third round) notched three helpers Thursday for his third three-point night of the year in the Spirit victory over Windsor. Kea enters the final week of play with 19 goals and 45 points. With a playoff spot already reserved, the Spirit currently occupy sixth place in the Western Conference standings with three games left to play.

In Saturday action, Nikita Zadorov (2013, first round) notched an assist to snap his four-game point drought as London skated to a 5-1 victory at Owen Sound. Named OHL Defenseman of the Month for February, Zadorov has 29 points

(11+18) in 34 games this season for the Knights, who currently sit in fourth place in the Western Conference.

London defenseman Brady Austin (2012, seventh round) notched a pair of assists as the Knights earned a 4-0 shutout win over Sault Ste. Marie on Thursday. Austin's helpers up his career-high point total to 33 (9+24), while his plus-48 rating is currently tied for second-best in the league with three games left to play.

Kitchener forward Justin Bailey (2013, second round) remained out of action for the 10th game in a row. With a Plymouth win on Thursday, the Rangers were officially knocked out of playoff contention.

WHL

Logan Nelson (2012, fifth round) picked up an assist Saturday as Victoria held on for a 3-2 win over Kamloops. The energetic forward has 51 points with four games remaining on the regular season schedule. The Royals are locked in as the No. 3 seed when the Western Conference playoffs begin.

NCAA

Sean Malone (2013, sixth round) earned a power-play assist Saturday as Harvard's season came to an end with a 2-1 loss at No. 15 Yale. Malone, who logged a season-low minus-three rating in Friday's 4-0 loss to the Bulldogs, finishes his freshman campaign with six goals and 20 points in 31 contests, earning All-Ivy Co-Rookie of the Year honors along the way.

J.T. Compher (2013, second round) notched an assist Friday as No. 11 Michigan smoked rival Michigan State 7-1. The following night, Compher recorded four shots on goal as the Wolverines edged the Spartans 4-3. Compher has gone seven games without scoring a goal, but remains the Wolverines' leading point-getter with 29 (11+18) through 32 appearances.

Hudson Fasching (2013, fourth round-LA) contributed two shots on goal over the weekend as No. 1 Minnesota earned a victory and a shootout loss at Ohio State. The freshman winger, who for the first time since December has gone three games without getting on the score sheet, ranks fourth on the Gophers in team scoring with 12 goals and 27 points.

Junior forward Christian Isackson (2010, seventh round) made his first appearance for Minnesota after a five-game absence, notching one shot on goal in the Saturday shootout loss to the Buckeyes. The Gophers visit Michigan next weekend for a key, two-game series to end the regular season.

Jake McCabe (2012, second round) collected an assist Friday as No. 5 Wisconsin doubled Penn State 4-2. McCabe, who produced one shot on goal in a 3-2 overtime victory on Saturday, leads all Badgers defenders with career highs of seven goals and 23 points.

Brad Navin (2011, seventh round) produced three shots on goal over the weekend in Wisconsin's sweep of the Nittany Lions. The junior winger has four goals and nine points in 31 outings. Winners of five straight, the Badgers close the regular season next weekend at Michigan State.

USHL

Connor Hurley (2013, second round) scored a power play goal and added an assist as Green Bay lost 6-4 to Fargo. Hurley's 10th multi-point effort of the season, and fourth in his last seven games, boosts his season totals to 12 goals and 42 points through 47 games.

Cal Petersen (2013, second round) stopped 27 of 29 shots in Waterloo's 3-2 win at Des Moines. The victory, Petersen's second in his last three starts after a four-game stretch of losses, moves the Notre Dame commit to 25-5-3 on the year with a 2.49 GAA and .916 save%.

Cedar Rapids forward Judd Peterson (2012, seventh round) remained out of action last week as the Roughriders lost both of their contests. The St. Cloud State commit hasn't played since Feb. 9, but remains the team's second-leading producer with 15 goals and 29 points in 40 games.

SHL

MODO goaltender Linus Ullmark (2012, sixth round) made three starts last week, earning two victories and one defeat. Ullmark made 28 saves Tuesday and stopped both shootout attempts as MODO got past Lulea HF 4-3. Two days later, the 6-foot-3 netminder stopped 23 of 25 shots as MODO doubled SHL top dog Skelleftea AIK 4-2. Ullmark returned to the crease Saturday, making 35 saves as MODO ended the regular season with a 5-3 loss to HV 71. The 20-year old completed the schedule with a 17-16 record, backed by a 2.08 GAA and league-best .931 save%. MODO finished in eighth place in the SHL standings, setting up a best-of-three play-in series with Linkopings HC beginning Monday.

For more on all the youngsters in the Sabres pipeline, check out Kris Baker's web site - sabresprospects.com. You can also follow him on Twitter @sabresprospects for in-game updates throughout the week on any Buffalo prospects that are in action.

SUNDAY NOTEBOOK: SCHAUS RETURNS TO BUFFALO

By Joe Ray

Sabres.com

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While the Buffalo Sabres and Chicago Blackhawks competed in a matchup of two great American hockey cities, one of America's hockey heroes watched on from the crowd.

Goaltender Molly Schaus helped the U.S. women's ice hockey team win a silver medal in Sochi during the 2014 Winter Olympics. On Sunday, Schaus joined her family in Buffalo to take in the action at the First Niagara Center.

Schaus, whose parents grew up in Western New York, also has two older brothers who were born in Buffalo. While she never lived in the city, Schaus had nothing but good things to say about the Queen City.

"Any time you get to come back to Buffalo, it's awesome," she said. "So many friends and family, and it's just a great city."

The trip to this year's Winter Olympics was the second of her career for Schaus, who also made the team for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. Schaus has also played on four World Championship women's hockey teams, winning gold with USA in 2008, 2009, and 2011 and silver in 2012.

In Sochi, Schaus backstopped the American team to a victory in her lone start of the tournament, making 10 saves in a 9-0 victory over Switzerland.

The chance to play on the world's biggest stage and take part in the Olympics quickly became a fantastic memory for Schaus.

"Sochi was an unbelievable experience," she said. "Beautiful venues, the village, the weather. As an athlete, it doesn't get much better than that. Obviously we were hoping to win gold, and that was our plan. But what you've got to love about sports is anything can happen.

"We came up a little bit short, but we're really proud of our efforts."

Schaus has spent the majority of her playing career in Boston, Massachusetts, one of the largest American hockey hotbeds. After playing in high school at Deerfield Academy and Assabet Valley, Schaus was recruited to play at the collegiate level with Boston College. Now, Schaus competes in the Canadian Women's Hockey League as a member of the Boston Blades.

While the spotlight doesn't shine as brightly on women's hockey outside of the Olympics, Schaus relishes the opportunity to play against some great North American talent outside the international stage.

“The CWHL is awesome. It provides a great opportunity for players to continue to play post-college,” Schaus said. “To be honest, some of those games are like USA-Canada when you match up against Montreal or Brampton. It’s a great opportunity to keep playing and hopefully it keeps growing.”

Whether on the ice at home or abroad, the experience of playing in front of enthusiastic fans continues to amaze Schaus.

“Any time you get the chance to play in front of this many people, you feel the adrenaline, it’s exciting.”