



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Canadiens Preview

By Jordan Garretson

Associated Press

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One night after ending their archrival's longest winning streak in 43 years, the Montreal Canadiens have a shot to accomplish something they haven't in 35 years.

They can clinch their first season series sweep of the visiting Buffalo Sabres since 1978-79 on Tuesday night.

Montreal (40-26-7) has won five of six, with no victory bigger than Monday's 2-1 shootout victory in Boston to snap the Bruins' 12-game winning streak. After Alexei Emelin and Patric Bergeron traded power-play goals in regulation, Alex Galchenyuk was the only player to score in the four-round shootout - giving the Canadiens their sixth win in their last seven shootouts and pulling them even with Tampa Bay in the Atlantic, though the Lightning have a game in hand.

"That's kind of nice to be able to end their streak," defenseman Mike Weaver told the team's website after playing in his eighth game for Montreal since being acquired from Florida. "It would have been even better to end it in regulation but obviously coming in here, everybody was talking about their 12 wins. They're a really good team and they're on a high right now. These games are so important. Every point matters and it was a great team win."

Budaj, who got the nod after Carey Price had made three straight starts, stopped the first 26 Boston shots he saw and helped Montreal kill off 5 of 6 penalties against one of the league's top power-play units. The Canadiens improved to 31-0-3 when leading after two periods.

"We are very confident with him back there," said Brian Gionta, who assisted on Emelin's goal. "That first period he made some huge saves and even in the second he made some big saves where they could have been back in the game real quick."

Montreal has won four straight against Buffalo - including three meetings this season - and will look for a fifth consecutive victory over the Sabres for the first time since Dec. 20, 1979. The four wins prior to that one marked the Canadiens' last season series sweep of Buffalo.

The league-worst Sabres (20-43-8) have lost eight of nine while scoring one or no goals in six of those defeats. Four of their last six losses have also come despite taking a 1-0 lead, including Sunday's 4-2 loss at Vancouver.

Tyler Ennis and Jamie McBain gave them a 2-0 edge in the first 3:29, but the Canucks evened the score before the end of the period and added a goal in each of

the final two periods. Former Sabre Zack Kassian assisted on each of Vancouver's goals.

The Sabres, who were outshot 36-18, own an average shots-on-goal differential of minus-8.44, which ranks last in the NHL.

"In this league you can't play good sometimes," coach Ted Nolan said. "You've got to play good all the time. That's a lesson to learn and something we have to do to move forward."

Ennis has eight goals and seven assists over his last 18 games.

Sabres playing musical chairs in goal

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 24, 2014

VANCOUVER — There's never a shortage of candidates when you want to compile the toughest coaching jobs in hockey. But in the last month, you could easily add one non-head man to the list: goaltending coach for the Buffalo Sabres.

That's Jim Corsi. He's had it pretty good for many years. It was Ryan Miller and a slew of backups who played every once in a while as Miller toiled 60-70 games a season.

Oh, how things have changed. The Sabres had one stretch around the Feb. 28 trade of Miller where they had five different backups in five games because of trades, a revolving door of Jhonas Enroth, Miller, HarborCenter employee Ryan Vinz, Jaroslav Halak and Michal Neuvirth.

They nearly had a stretch last week of four starters in four games as injuries took down both Neuvirth and Enroth. That has forced the Sabres to go with the direct-from-Rochester tandem of Nathan Lieuwen and Matt Hackett on their longest road trip of the season.

The Sabres are 1-2 so far on the trip, which continues tonight in Montreal as Hackett gets his second start since getting the emergency recall from the Amerks. They were off Monday so they could make the long flight East.

"Goaltending is a nasty bit of business," Corsi joked here Sunday prior to the 4-2 loss to the Vancouver Canucks. "Part of it is you have to grow and almost expect failure at times. We've seen that over the years."

Miller was having one of his best seasons while playing for a last-place team but even without him, Buffalo's goaltending has certainly not taken a major nosedive. An anemic offense is largely responsible for the team's 3-9 record since the trade, as it has scored just 20 goals in the 12 games.

At the other end, the quartet of goalies has combined for a 2.46 goals against average and solid .934 save percentage — which is actually better than the .916 Miller has posted with the Blues. Miller has a 7-2-1 record for St. Louis with a 2.03 GAA.

Sunday's loss, where Lieuwen gave up a couple of soft goals, was really the only time play in the crease has been an issue.

"With goaltenders, you can't just play them 12 minutes," Corsi said. "They can't hide. You can't just say on the power play, 'Put the other guy in.' You don't have that luxury."

Corsi, 59, feels good about Lieuwen and Hackett as prospects. He likes how Lieuwen plays a "quiet" game in the crease despite being 6-foot-5 and how Hackett flushed

aside some of his struggles this year in Rochester to make 35 saves in his first Buffalo outing Thursday in Edmonton.

“There’s a little less structure in the American League and young kids want to be good in the worst way and in a hurry to be better,” Corsi said. “If you were to look at it strategically, goaltending is a job that you have to develop mental strength and technical skill — and marry it with tactical skill. It takes time.

“Struggles are part of growth. When you struggle, you have a choice: Run and hide or confront it.”

It’s been a wild year for Corsi. Just last month, he was listed at No. 95 on annual top-100 list of People of Power and Influence in the game by The Hockey News. That’s because he developed the “Corsi rating”, an analytic measuring shots on goal plus shot attempts that has become much more mainstream among hockey observers in recent years.

Miller was intrigued by Corsi’s thought processes and the two developed a close relationship. Corsi knew Miller’s time here was nearing an end but that didn’t soften the blow any when the deal was finally announced.

“We all know there’s a ‘Best Before’ date in this business for all of us. When he left, I was all at once thrilled and saddened,” Corsi said. “Maybe he was getting the chance to reach the dream that would have had a more difficult path here, but I was sad because he was a much closer relationship than the norm.”

On the night he was traded, Miller was understandably emotional about his sudden departure. He admitted he was struggling to find words to match his flood of thoughts. But Miller had no trouble remembering to thank one person.

It was Corsi, whom he called more than just a coach during his time in Buffalo.

“It was certainly a hard day and I was trying to stay away from all that and not see the good-byes,” Corsi said. “But a friend of mine told me to watch. He said, ‘No-no-no, you gotta see it. There’s a shout-out.’ So I found it and watched it.”

Between his playing career and coaching career, Corsi was a high school math and science teacher in Quebec. He said watching Miller’s emotional good-bye made him think of reunions with some former students. After all, the athlete-coach relationship can certainly be similar to teacher-student.

“I always believe there are moments in your life that will stand out,” Corsi said. “When I used to teach high school, you’d see a kid who’s now maybe 25 or 30 and they’d say, ‘You know Mr. Corsi, you made a difference in my life.’”

“I always knew Millsy was going to grow. But when they say something like that, I was grateful. I was humbled. I really hope he goes and gets more silverware.”

Canadiens continue playoff push against Sabres

By Sean McCullen

NHL.com

March 25, 2014

SABRES (20-43-8) at CANADIENS (40-26-7)

TV: RDS, MSG-B, BELL TV, TSN-HABS

Last 10: Buffalo 2-8-0; Montreal 6-4-0

Season series: This is the fourth and final game between the Buffalo Sabres and Montreal Canadiens. Montreal has won the first three games by a combined score of 8-3, including a 2-0 victory in Buffalo on March 16 in the most-recent game.

Big story: The Canadiens will look to move into second place in the Atlantic Division and grab the home-ice advantage it would give them against the Tampa Bay Lightning in a potential Eastern Conference Quarterfinal series in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

With 87 points apiece, the Canadiens and Lightning are seven points ahead of the fourth-place Detroit Red Wings in the Atlantic. The Lightning, who are off until they host the New York Islanders on Thursday, are in second entering Tuesday because they have a game in hand on the Canadiens.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Buffalo is 1-2-0 entering the fourth of a five-game road trip after its 4-2 loss to the Vancouver Canucks on Sunday.

Goalie Matt Hackett is expected to make his second start with the Sabres this season. He made 35 saves to earn the win in Buffalo's 3-1 victory against the Edmonton Oilers in the second game of the road trip.

Hackett appeared in 13 games with the Minnesota Wild the past two seasons. He has a career record of 4-7-0 with a 2.49 goals-against average and .920 save percentage.

Goalie Nathan Lieuwen, a Vancouver-area native, took the loss in his second NHL start Sunday night.

"For me, it's a dream come true to play here. I've got tons of family here," said Lieuwen, who stopped 32 of 36 shots he faced. "I was very nervous the first half of the game. After that I felt like I settled in and felt nice and comfortable."

Canadiens: Montreal ended the Boston Bruins' winning streak at 12 with a 2-1 shootout victory at TD Garden on Monday night. The Canadiens finished the season series at 3-1-0 against the NHL- and Atlantic Division-leading Bruins.

Backup goalie Peter Budaj made 28 saves in a surprise start, and the Canadiens got the victory when Alex Galchenyuk beat Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask for the shootout's lone goal in the fourth round.

Coach Michel Therrien praised the Canadiens' work on the penalty kill against Boston, which was 1-for-6 with the man advantage.

"We played for two points tonight, and I believe our guys did a fantastic job killing penalties. We gave them four power plays in the third period and only allowed six shots on net," Therrien said. "The guys on the penalty killing did a great job, especially after we lost two forwards early in the game. We only had 10 forwards available in the game, against the hottest team in the League."

Goalie Carey Price will get the start against Buffalo.

Who's hot: Buffalo center Tyler Ennis has a goal and an assist in the past two games. He has three goals in his past six. Center Cory Conacher has two goals and three assists in eight games since being claimed off waivers from the Ottawa Senators. ... Montreal defenseman Alexei Emelin has a goal and three assists in his past five games. He scored Montreal's only non-shootout goal Monday. Right wing Brian Gionta has a goal and two assists in the past two games.

Injury report: Sabres goalies Michal Neuvirth (lower body) and Jhonas Enroth (leg), defensemen Tyler Myers (arm) and Alexander Sulzer (upper body) and right wing Chris Stewart (ankle) are out. Stewart is done for the season. Center Zemgus Girgensons (lower body) is day-to-day. He has not played since March 6. ... Canadiens center Lars Eller (lower body) is day-to-day. Defenseman Josh Gorges (hand surgery) is out for several weeks, and left wing Brandon Prust (upper body) is out for at least the remainder of the regular season.

Sabres send rookie Rasmus Ristolainen to Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 24, 2014

BUFFALO – The Sabres today sent rookie defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen to Rochester following a five-game recall.

Defensemen Tyler Myers (arm) or Alexander Sulzer (upper body) could be ready to return Tuesday in Montreal.

The 19-year-old Ristolainen compiled zero points and a minus-5 rating during the recall. The Finn has one goal, one point and minus-9 rating in 24 NHL games this season.

Goalie Matt Hackett will start against the Canadiens, interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan told reporters Saturday.

Sabres Myers is back with the team. Ristolainen sent down

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 24, 2014

Montreal, QC (WGR 550) -- Both the Sabres and the Amerks are getting some help on defense.

Rasmus Ristolainen has been returned to Rochester because Tyler Myers is ready to play.

Myers is in Montreal and will play Tuesday. The big defenseman missed five games with an elbow injury.

The team did not practice on Monday as it flew from Vancouver to Montreal.

NCAA success means good things for HARBORCENTER

By Katie Morse

YNN

March 24, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Over the past weekend, thousands of basketball fans made their way to Buffalo for the NCAA tournament. Whether they'd been here before, or call Buffalo home, the cranes and construction in front of the First Niagara Center had people talking.

"It was at this venue last time - it seems like they've really expanded," said Ontario resident Jeff Attwood."

The HARBORCENTER being built here - this is exactly the type of thing they need to bring into downtown Buffalo," said Buffalo resident Nick Melligan.

The success of the tournament has created even more buzz over what's to come. "They're curious about the project. It stimulates more conversation about what we're doing, what will come out the other end," said HARBORCENTER president John Koelmel.

Koelmel says the ease of the tournament, from setup to breakdown, shows the talent of local staff and that's exactly what organizers want to see when they're scouting locations.

"Anybody who's looking to bring their events to town, one they want to know that you do it and do it well, and two that you'll have the kind of support," he explained. "The logistics are incredible and people want to have real confidence that there won't be hiccups, that there won't be snafus."

HARBORCENTER's feature rink will hold about 2,000 people, which is much smaller than the NCAA tournament but perfect for amateur youth hockey events.

"It's right in our wheelhouse. That type of activity will just create a steady flow of traffic and activity," said Koelmel.

HARBORCENTER is still looking at a fall 2014 opening, and aiming for October. It's already set to host 20 hockey tournaments for the 2014-2015 season.