



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 7, 2014

Sabres-Panthers Preview

By Jordan Garretson

Associated Press

March 7, 2014

The Buffalo Sabres and Florida Panthers - two of the NHL's worst teams - were also two of the league's most active clubs at this year's trade deadline as they attempted to construct foundations for rebuilding.

Though both franchises have long roads ahead of them, Buffalo's recent stretch of play is providing at least a little encouragement.

The Sabres seek their fifth win in six games Friday night when they visit the Florida Panthers, who are expected to have Roberto Luongo in net.

Buffalo (19-35-8) is last in the league, with Florida (23-32-7) only seven points ahead. Sabres general manager Tim Murray had a busy week, completing three trades involving 10 players and four draft picks while also claiming left wing Cory Conacher off waivers.

The barrage of deals started last Friday when Murray sent goaltender Ryan Miller and captain Steve Ott to St. Louis in exchange for Jaroslav Halak, Chris Stewart, William Carrier and two draft picks. Halak was dealt to Washington on Wednesday along with a 2015 third-round pick in exchange for fellow goalie Michal Neuvirth and defenseman Rostislav Klesla.

"The start of the building for me was on Friday," said Murray, who was hired as general manager in January, then took over for Pat LaFontaine as the team's director of hockey operations after he resigned Saturday. " ... There's still a lot of building to do."

Buffalo has won four of five following Thursday's 3-1 victory at Tampa Bay. Tyler Myers had a goal and an assist and has six points during the club's recent surge. Meanwhile, Jhonas Enroth's 43-save performance helped the Sabres overcome a 44-21 disadvantage in shots.

"When we get good goaltending, we have a chance to win," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "We were very opportunistic on our chances. Jhonas was the backbone, for sure."

The Sabres didn't emerge entirely unscathed, however, with Nolan classifying Stewart as "very doubtful" for Friday's contest after leaving with an unspecified injury.

Florida has dropped five of six during a hectic week of transactions. The Panthers traded goaltender Tim Thomas to Dallas on Wednesday in exchange for Dan Ellis, a day after reaching a deal to bring Luongo back to the franchise.

Thomas eventually agreed to waive his no-trade clause after a conversation with general manager Dale Tallon, while Luongo was thought by most to be virtually "untradeable," considering his \$64 million contract doesn't expire until after the 2021-22 season.

Luongo, who posted a 2.68 goals-against average and went 108-154-9 with 32 saves over 317 games for Florida from 2000-06, is likely to be in goal Friday.

"This is the beginning of something special for this Florida Panthers organization, having Roberto back in the fold here in Florida where he belongs," Tallon said.

Thomas' defense let him down Tuesday when he made 35 saves in Tuesday's 4-1 loss at Boston. Florida's only goal came from Brian Campbell with 7:13 left, and the club is allowing an average of 35.2 shots on goal during its 1-5-0 stretch.

The Panthers won two of three meetings earlier in the season, most recently a 4-3 victory in Buffalo on Jan. 21. Drew Stafford had two goals and a season-high three points for the Sabres while Thomas stopped 32 shots.

Sabres spoil Stamkos' return with 3-1 win

By Mark Dittler

Associated Press

March 7, 2014

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) -- Jhonas Enroth stole the spotlight from Tampa Bay star Steven Stamkos.

Enroth made 43 saves to spoil the return of Stamkos and the Buffalo Sabres beat the Lightning 3-1 on Thursday night.

Stamkos had been sidelined since breaking his right shin Nov. 11 at Boston, causing him to miss 45 games. The center received a partial standing ovation during pregame introductions, when it was announced that he is the new team captain.

"For the most part I felt good," said Stamkos, who played 21:03. "It's a step in the right direction. You can feel it a little out there as the play progresses, but I felt like I played a lot tonight and felt pretty good. As the game went on, my timing felt great with the puck."

Right wing Ryan Callahan, acquired Wednesday from the New York Rangers for former Tampa Bay captain Martin St. Louis, made his Lightning debut.

"As the game went on, I got more and more comfortable with who I was playing with," Callahan said. "More comfortable on the ice."

Tyler Myers, Marcus Foligno and Cody Hodgson scored for the Sabres. Enroth stopped a combined nine shots by Stamkos (five) and Callahan (four).

"When we get good goaltending, we have a chance to win," Buffalo interim coach Ted Nolan said. "We were very opportunistic on our chances. Jhonas was the backbone, for sure."

Tyler Johnson ended Enroth's shutout bid with a short-handed goal at 17:31 of the third.

"I'm pretty (upset) that I didn't get the shutout, but that's hockey, I guess," Enroth said.

The Lightning have dropped four of five since the end of the Olympic break.

Myers put Buffalo up 1-0 when he beat Anders Lindback from the right circle 15:56 into the game. Lindback had been out since hurting his ankle on Jan. 30.

Foligno made it 2-0 with his first goal in 11 games at 9:25 of the second.

Tampa Bay's Ondrej Palat hit the post during a power play with 8 minutes left in the second. Five minutes later, Teddy Purcell missed the net with a shot during a 2-on-1 off a pass from Stamkos, who then had his in-close shot go over the net in the final minute of the period.

"I thought he was probably the most dangerous player on the ice," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said of Stamkos.

It was just the eighth time this season that Buffalo has taken a lead into the third period.

The Sabres went up 3-0 on Hodgson's goal with 6:16 to go in the third.

NOTES: Buffalo RW Chris Stewart and C Zemgus Girgensons left with injuries and Nolan said both are very doubtful for Friday's game at Florida. ... The Lightning went 22-18-5 while Stamkos was out. ... C Torrey Mitchell, obtained in a trade Wednesday with Minnesota, played his first game with the Sabres. Michal Neuvirth, acquired from Washington, was Buffalo's backup goalie. ... The Sabres announced that G Dominik Hasek will be inducted into the team's Hall of Fame during a pregame ceremony on March 29. ... Lightning LW Ryan Malone, who has gone pointless in 12 consecutive games, was scratched.

Enroth's 43 saves help Sabres tame Lightning

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 6, 2014

TAMPA, Fla. — With the NHL trade deadline over, the Buffalo Sabres were finally able to embark on some distraction-free hockey here Thursday night.

Buffalo's 3-1 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning at Tampa Bay Times Forum was No. 62 on the 82-game NHL schedule, and the Sabres say they're turning the final 21 games into a mini-postseason.

It was a terrific game for goaltender Jhonas Enroth, who came within 2½ minutes of his first shutout of the season and was the unquestioned first star as Buffalo was outshot, 44-21.

The Sabres are obviously not getting a real postseason, but coach Ted Nolan expects players like Enroth to push hard and leave good impressions with the organization, notably new General Manager Tim Murray.

"A lot of guys' contracts are up, there are jobs to be won," Nolan said. "There's no such thing as there's nothing to play for. There's a lot to play for. They're playing for livelihoods, so we've got to unite, find some new leaders on this team."

"After the changes of the last week, it's important for us to really focus on competing," said defenseman Tyler Myers, who scored in the first period and assisted on Marcus Foligno's goal in the second. "That's something we've done a good job with."

The Sabres suffered two key injuries, however, when center Zemgus Girgensons left with a lower body injury after one shift in the second period and burly winger Chris Stewart left in the third after Tampa goalie Anders Lindback crushed him chasing a runaway puck in the Tampa zone. Nolan said both players are very doubtful for tonight's game against the Florida Panthers.

Enroth has won three of four starts since returning from the Olympics and posted a .931 save percentage in that span. He stopped a combined nine shots Thursday from Tampa Bay star Steven Stamkos, back from a 45-game absence after a broken leg, and newly acquired Ryan Callahan.

"I do believe in being in a zone, but I also believe in good habits," Enroth said. "I'm just trying to create good habits all year. I guess it's starting to pay off a little bit now."

The Sabres are 4-1 since the Olympic break and have showed plenty of fortitude when you consider all that's happened in the last week.

“If you look at the majority of the teams, they’ve got one guy they’re thinking about moving,” Nolan said. “We had almost half our team in the trade mill, and we didn’t really know until yesterday. There were a lot of anxious moments.

“One of the guys was telling me one of the other guys’ hands were shaking at lunch time. They are human too. It’s not just about going to a different team. It’s moving their families, unaware where they’re going. To be totally focused on the game of hockey is tough.”

Nolan said he ran into a group of his players near their Harbour Island hotel here Wednesday night, and was relieved to see them happy and laughing. There hasn’t been much of that lately, with all the questions about the deadline and the bizarre departure of Pat LaFontaine, the team’s president of hockey operations.

“You know that this is our team now,” said Foligno, whose head-long dive for the puck set up Cody Hodgson for the third goal. “It was a tough week there for a bit mentally ... but there’s a lot of character in this room.”

Foligno was sensational on Hodgson’s insurance goal that made the score 3-0 with 6:16 to play. He blocked a shot in the Sabres’ zone, hustled after the puck and eventually dove to poke it away from a defenseman and set Hodgson off on a breakaway.

“It was the whole play starting from the D zone,” Hodgson said. “Battle in our zone, block the shot himself, hustles up to it and chips it to me for a breakaway. That’s a great play.”

Myers jumped a Mark Barberio cross-ice pass and opened the scoring with a shot to the top corner at 15:56 of the first period.

“I just made a read,” Myers said. “A little risky, but you try and get close enough to have a good enough gap. If you do step up and it’s not there, you’re still there to recover.”

The Sabres debuted one trade acquisition, as 29-year-old Torrey Mitchell played on the fourth line with Matt Ellis and John Scott and was also a prominent penalty killer. Mitchell arrived just after the morning skate ended.

“It’s a quick turnaround and you get to jump into a game right away,” he said.

Sabres' Hall of Fame will induct Hasek

By Mike Harrington

BuffaloNews

March 6, 2014

TAMPA, Fla. – Legendary goaltender Dominik Hasek will be inducted into the Buffalo Sabres Hall of Fame in a ceremony prior to the March 29 game against Tampa Bay in First Niagara Center, the team announced Thursday.

Hasek will become the Hall's 42nd member, but the ceremony will not include a retirement of his No. 39 jersey. Most observers feel that honor will be bestowed upon Hasek at some time in the future, but the Sabres Hall is a separate honor from joining the franchise's Rafters Club. Hasek is eligible for the Hockey Hall of Fame this year and is expected to be a first-ballot inductee.

New Sabres goaltender Michal Neuvirth told reporters here Thursday that Hasek was his idol growing up in the Czech Republic and that made his trade from Washington on Wednesday an attractive point.

"The first thing that came in my mind was Dominik Hasek was here and I was a big fan of him when I was a kid," Neuvirth said. "I was a big fan of Buffalo.

"He was a hero for me. Same country. All the games I watched were the Buffalo games because of him. He's a legend back home."

Hasek for Stephane Beauregard, a trade with Chicago on Aug. 7, 1992, remains one of the most lopsided in NHL history. When his Buffalo career ended in 2001, Hasek owned team records for most games played (491), wins (234), shutouts (55) and lowest career goals-against average (2.22).

Hasek appeared in a career-high 72 games in the 1997-98 season, setting a team record with 13 shutouts. In the 1998-99 Stanley Cup final season, Hasek had a career-best 1.87 GAA and .937 save percentage.

Hasek won Stanley Cups with Detroit in 2002 and 2008. When he retired from the NHL in 2008, he had 389 career wins and had highest career save percentage (.922), most games played by a European-born goaltender (735), most career shutouts (81) and lowest career goals-against average (2.13).

As part of his Hall induction, Hasek will be the guest speaker March 28 at noon during the team's final Power Play Luncheon of the season in the Lexus Club. Tickets are \$40 for individuals and \$350 for tables of 10. They can be purchased at Sabres.com.

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Neuvirth said he was surprised to be traded because he wasn't told until about 3:30 p.m., a half-hour after Wednesday's deadline. He said he felt the Sabres gave him a better chance to compete in goal than Washington, which is pushing for the playoffs and has been disappointed in his performances this year.

"There were great years in Washington and great times," said Neuvirth, who briefly worked out following the pregame skate and makes his Buffalo debut tonight at Florida. "This is a new opportunity. My goal is to be a No. 1 goalie in the NHL, and I feel like I can get the opportunity here. I'm going to give all my best and work hard every day."

Neuvirth chose to wear No. 34 after wearing 30 in Washington. The Sabres tweeted Wednesday night he would wear 30 here, prompting a spirited discussion and backlash on Twitter from fans disappointed the organization would issue Ryan Miller's number less than a week after he was traded.

A Sabres spokesman said the tweet was an error made because the player's number on his previous team is auto-generated if it is available. Neuvirth was listed as No. 30 on the official media notes for the game, but the team and player consulted on his new number.

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Just before the opening faceoff, the Lightning made a much-rumored announcement that Steven Stamkos has been named the 10th captain in franchise history. Stamkos drew a huge ovation when announced in the starting lineup after missing 45 games with a broken leg, and the fans erupted when the captaincy was revealed.

The building swarmed with media for the return of Stamkos and the debut of former New York Rangers captain Ryan Callahan, acquired Wednesday for Tampa captain Martin St. Louis.

"Now that all this is over, we can kind of breathe a sigh of relief," Stamkos said. "Marty's gone, the trade deadline is over, I'm coming back. This is our group. That was the message today."

Callahan said he was surprised he couldn't get a deal done with the Rangers.

"I thought at the end of the day both parties couldn't agree on something that worked for both of us," Callahan said. "That's part of the business. They felt they needed to move on so it's time for me to move on and start a new chapter."

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Former Canisius College star Cory Conacher, claimed on waivers Wednesday from Ottawa, will join the team today and make his Buffalo debut tonight. He was flying from Edmonton and had to settle immigration issues in Ottawa. ... The Sabres led after the first period for just the 10th time in 62 games. They were 3-5-1 in the first nine. ... The Sabres have dressed five different backup goaltenders in the last five games – Jhonas Enroth, Ryan Miller, HarborCenter employee Ryan Vinz, Jaroslav Halak and Neuvirth.

Luongo expected to start for Panthers vs. Sabres

By Mike Battaglino

NHL.com

March 7, 2014

SABRES (19-35-8) at PANTHERS (23-32-7)

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

Last 10: Buffalo 5-5-0; Florida 2-8-0

Season series: The Florida Panthers have won the past two games, one in a shootout, against the Buffalo Sabres after losing the first. Panthers forward Sean Bergenheim has a goal and two assists, and defenseman Tom Gilbert has three assists in the three games.

Big story: Roberto Luongo is likely to play his first game in goal for the Panthers since April 18, 2006. After seven-plus seasons with the Vancouver Canucks, Luongo was traded to the Panthers on Tuesday for forward Shawn Matthias and goalie Jacob Markstrom.

"It's going to be fun," Luongo told the Panthers website Thursday. "It's been a long time since I've played as a Panther here, so I'm excited to play in front of the crowd, and hopefully there'll be lot of them, and we get a win."

Team Scope:

Sabres: Buffalo defeated the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-1 on Thursday for its fourth win in five games since the Olympic break. It was the Sabres' seventh road win in regulation; they're the only NHL team still in single digits (7-18-3).

"Going into the last stretch of games here, our playoffs basically start today," coach Ted Nolan told the Buffalo News. "A lot of guys' contracts are up, there are jobs to be won. There's no such thing as there's nothing to play for. There's a lot to play for. They're playing for livelihood, so we've got to unite, find some new leaders on this team."

Buffalo parted with goalie Ryan Miller and forwards Cody McCormick, Matt Moulson and Steve Ott, who was captain, heading into the NHL Trade Deadline.

"It's a whirlwind week for sure," defenseman Tyler Myers told MSG Network. "It hasn't really sunk in yet, especially with major changes being made yesterday as well. I think for our group it's important to keep moving in the direction that we are."

Forward Torrey Mitchell, who came from the Minnesota Wild, made his Sabres debut Thursday, playing on the fourth line and penalty kill.

"It's a quick turnaround, and you get to jump into a game right away," Mitchell told the newspaper. "Guys who get traded say that's the best thing."

Panthers: Luongo was 19-16-6 with a 2.38 goals-against average and .917 save percentage for the Canucks this season. He was 10-6-2 with a 2.39 GAA and .914 save percentage against the Eastern Conference.

"I still know a lot of the players [in the East], even though I don't play them as much," Luongo said. "I've been around. There's always adjustment periods, of course, but that's the good part of having these last 20 games; you get to get that out of the way right away. Once we start next year, we won't have to worry about that."

Luongo takes over as Florida's No. 1 from Tim Thomas, who was traded to the Dallas Stars for goalie Dan Ellis on Wednesday.

"When there's change ... it feels like a breath of fresh air," Luongo said. "I think the guys in this locker room are working hard and a lot of them are playing to be here next year. So when that's the case, usually guys lay it all on the line, and that's a good mentality to have."

Florida called up 20-year-old forward Vincent Trochek, one of its top prospects who would be making his NHL debut. He had 16 goals and 25 assists in 54 games for San Antonio of the American Hockey League.

"In practice today, I really liked the way he was practicing," coach Peter Horachek said. "He moves the puck real well, he passes the puck very well, and he has a very accurate shot."

Who's hot: Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth has won three of four after having one win prior to that. Myers has six points in his past four games. Forward Cody Hodgson has four points in his past four games. ... Bergenheim has four points in his past four games. Panthers defenseman Brian Campbell has three points in his past four.

Injury report: Sabres forwards Zemgus Girgensons (lower body) and Chris Stewart (lower body) left the game Thursday after being injured. ... Panthers forwards Tomas Kopecky (concussion) and Aleksander Barkov (knee) are on injured reserve.

Enroth, Sabres handle Lightning in Stamkos' return

By Lonnie Herman

NHL.com

March 7, 2014

TAMPA -- Emotions were high when the Tampa Bay Lightning took the ice against the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday.

It was the first game for the Lightning without captain Martin St. Louis, who was traded Wednesday to the New York Rangers. Forward Ryan Callahan, obtained in the trade, made his Lightning debut, and center Steven Stamkos returned after missing 45 games with a broken right tibia.

Stamkos, appointed captain earlier in the day, will have to wait a bit longer for his first "W" wearing the "C."

Buffalo Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth stopped 43 shots for his fourth win of the season, a 3-1 decision at Tampa Bay Times Forum.

"It's tough, you've got a team in here who is not necessarily going to be in the [Stanley Cup Playoffs], and they battle hard and their goalie plays well," Stamkos said. "We can't afford to let teams come in here and beat us down the stretch."

Stamkos played 21:03; he finished with four shots on goal, was credited with two hits and engaged in a prolonged shoving match with Buffalo's Mike Weber in front of the net.

Stamkos showed some rust; he was alone with the puck in front of Enroth with 20 seconds remaining in the second period, deked twice, but couldn't get the puck past him.

"I thought [Stamkos] was outstanding," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "If that's the worst game he plays for us, then things are going to look good, because I thought he was the most dangerous player on the ice."

Callahan had four shots and four hits in 16:33 of ice time.

"I thought Callahan was good," Cooper said. "He was good on the penalty kill, he hit guys, and he was in front of the net all the time when we needed him."

Tyler Myers, Cody Hodgson and Marcus Foligno each contributed a goal and an assist for the Sabres, who are 4-1-0 since the Olympic break. Enroth won for the third time in four consecutive starts taking over for Ryan Miller, who was traded to the St. Louis Blues last Friday.

"Goaltending is 90 percent of this game, and when you get good goaltending you have a chance to win," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "We were very opportunistic

with our chances. I thought Marcus Foligno played a great game for us, but Jhonas was the backbone for sure."

Myers opened the scoring when he skated the puck into the Lightning end, faked a pass and sent a shot past Lightning goalie Anders Lindback from the left circle. The unassisted goal came at 15:56 of the first period.

Buffalo (19-35-8) upped its advantage to 2-0 on Foligno's seventh goal of the season at 9:25 of the second period. As a loose puck slid across the goal crease, Foligno came from behind the net to score.

Hodgson made it 3-0 with 6:16 left in regulation when Foligno set him up alone in front of the net with a cross-ice pass for his 16th goal of the season

"Marcus really made the play," Hodgson said. "All I had to do was score on a breakaway."

Tyler Johnson scored shorthanded for Tampa Bay, his 19th goal of the season, with 2:29 left to spoil Enroth's shutout.

Tampa Bay outshot the Sabres 44-21, but Enroth was on his game, stopping Ondrej Palat from in front of the net in the first period and poke-checking the puck off Nikita Kucherov's stick as he broke in alone early in the third.

"They had [23] shots more than we had, so I'd say we were outplayed, but it was a pretty solid road game," Enroth said. "We got the shots from the outside and got a couple of key blocks when we needed them."

The Sabres dominated in blocked shots, 21-6.

It was Buffalo's first win in three tries against Tampa Bay this season. It was the first of a six-game homestand for the Lightning (34-24-5), who are 1-4-0 in their past five.

"Here's the deal," Cooper said. "This is obviously the biggest rut we have been in all year. We've hit a rut. At some point most teams go through these. Sometimes you play pretty well and maybe deserve a different fate, but if you continue to play well you'll come out of the rut.

"I liked the way we played. I didn't like the result. Unfortunately the clock is ticking down on the season and we have to get points."

Sabres' Zemgus Girgensons and Chris Stewart out against Panthers

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 7, 2014

The Buffalo Sabres will be missing two forwards for tonight's game in Florida against the Panthers, interim coach Ted Nolan told reporters in Tampa Bay.

Center Zemgus Girgensons and winger Chris Stewart both left Thursday's 3-1 win against the Lightning with lower-body injuries.

Stewart appeared to injure his right leg when he collided with Lightning goalie Anders Lindback chasing down the puck for a breakaway late in the game.

The Sabres likely won't need to make a recall. Winger Cory Conacher is expected to meet the team today after getting claimed on waivers Wednesday, Nolan said. Center Zenon Konopka has been a spare.

Enroth Leads Sabres to 3-1 Win in Tampa Bay

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

March 6, 2014

Jhonas Enroth's 43-save effort lifted the Sabres to a 3-1 victory over the Lightning at the Tampa Bay Times Forum on Thursday. Tyler Myers and Marcus Foligno each recorded a goal and an assist for Buffalo.

Myers got the scoring started at 15:56 of the opening period, pouncing on a turnover and roofing a shot past Anders Lindback for the 1-0 Buffalo lead. Myers picked up an assist on the Sabres' second goal, a tap-in rebound for Foligno in the second period. A diving pass by Foligno triggered Hodgson's 16th of the season at 13:44 of the final period, putting Buffalo ahead 3-0 before Tyler Johnson's late shorthanded tally made it 3-1.

A lower body injury knocked Zemgus Girgensons out of Thursday's game early and Chris Stewart suffered an apparent lower body injury after he was wiped out by Lindback. Stewart, eyeing a possible breakaway, went charging after a loose puck in the third period but collided with Lindback and hobbled off the ice.

The Sabres remain in the state of Florida, taking on the Panthers for a 7:30 p.m. faceoff on Friday. Hear the call on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

15:56 - BUF - Tyler Myers (9) (Unassisted)

Penalties

0:51 - TB - Nikita Kucherov (2 min., high-sticking)

8:48 - BUF - Chris Stewart (2 min., roughing)

8:48 - BUF - Chris Stewart (2 min., roughing served by Ville Leino)

8:48 - TB - Sami Salo (2 min., roughing)

2nd Period

Goals

9:25 - BUF - Marcus Foligno (7) (Cody Hodgson, Tyler Myers)

Penalties

10:16 - BUF - Brian Flynn (2 min., delaying game - puck over glass)

3rd Period

Goals

13:44 - BUF - Cody Hodgson (16) (Marcus Foligno)

17:31 - TB - Tyler Johnson (19) (SHG) (Victor Hedman)

Penalties

16:21 - TB - Alex Killorn (2 min., interference)

18:20 - BUF - Torrey Mitchell (2 min., holding)

Goaltending

BUF - Jhonas Enroth (43 saves, 44 shots)

TB - Anders Lindback (18 saves, 21 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 0 of 3

TB - 0 of 2

Three Stars

1.) BUF - Jhonas Enroth (43 saves)

2.) BUF - Cody Hodgson (1 G, 1 A)

3.) BUF - Tyler Myers (1 G, 1 A)

Sabres new guys arrive for the game

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 6, 2014

Tampa, FL (WGR550) -- As the Sabres wrapped up their morning skate two of their new players arrived. Torrey Mitchell will be in the lineup as will Michal Neuvirth who will backup Jhonas Enroth. The former Capital gets the start Friday at Florida.

Cory Conacher is having immigration problems and also hopes to play Friday. Conacher has chosen to wear number 88 instead of 89. My guess is he didn't want the pressures of wearing Alexander Mogilny's number, but I'll wait to ask him.

The healthy scratch will be Zenon Konopka.

Now that the trading deadline is over, Ted Nolan seemed to be in a lot better spirits and the players now know the team for the rest of this season. Nolan said, "If you look at the majority of the teams, they got one guy maybe they're thinking about moving. We had almost half our team in the trade mill and we didn't really know until yesterday and there's a lot of anxious moments, one of the players was telling me that one of the guy's hands were shaking at lunchtime, so these guys are human too so to be totally focused on the game of hockey, it's tough."

In the past week many leaders walked out the door. This season Buffalo traded both of its captains. Ted Nolan feels now's the time for guys like Hodgson, Ennis and Myers, "All those guys have been around a little while so we'll see how Marcus Foligno responds, Cody Hodgson, Tyler Ennis and Tyler Myers, I saw all four of them eating ice cream last night together so that's the next generation, so they're quality kids and they're quality players so there's something to really look forward to."

Cody Hodgson realizes that the team is going to start looking to him. He said, "I just try to lead by what I do. If it's a good example, then I want people to follow, that's the most you can hope for is to be a positive influence on the team, I think that's what leadership is."

Buffalo comes in with three wins in four games.

Tyler Ennis has goals in three straight games Ennis has five goals and four assists for nine points in eight games.

Of course there have been big changes in Tampa and Marty St. Louis was traded for Ryan Callahan. Not only does that happen, but the Lightning get Steven Stamkos back after missing 45 games with a broken leg. Tampa Bay went 22-18-5 in his absence and are fourth in the Atlantic Division, one point behind Toronto. The Lightning do hold the number one wild card position.

SABRES YOUNG LEADERS STEP UP TO BEAT LIGHTNING

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 7, 2014

TAMPA – Buffalo Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan spoke Thursday afternoon about how he wanted to see how the young nucleus of players on his team would respond to all of the changes that have recently occurred within the organization.

Nolan singled out players like Marcus Foligno, Cody Hodgson, Tyler Myers and Tyler Ennis as players that will form the team's new leadership core moving forward this season.

Jhonas Enroth could be considered a part of that group as well and has been given the opportunity to earn the job of being a No. 1 goaltender in the NHL. Since the Sabres traded Ryan Miller on Friday, Enroth has been up to the challenge.

Foligno, Hodgson and Myers each recorded a goal and an assist while Enroth turned aside 43 shots Thursday night in Buffalo's 3-1 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning at Tampa Bay Times Forum.

"Goaltending's probably 90 percent of this game and if we get good goaltending, have a chance to win and we were opportunistic on our chances," Nolan said after the game. "I thought Marcus Foligno played a great game for us too, but Jhonas was the backbone for sure."

Buffalo was also able to spoil a big night for the Lightning. Steven Stamkos returned to the lineup after missing 45 games with a broken right leg and the team announced him as its new captain right before the game. It was also the Lightning debut for Ryan Callahan, whom was acquired on Wednesday from the New York Rangers for Martin St. Louis.

The Sabres had to deal with roster changes of their after the NHL Trade Deadline saw the departures of players like Miller, captain Steve Ott, leading scorer Matt Moulson and penalty killer Cody McCormick. Buffalo added forward Torrey Mitchell and goaltender Michal Neuvirth to their roster Thursday.

The game was the first for both teams since the NHL Trade Deadline passed Wednesday afternoon.

"It was emotional for both teams," Sabres forward Marcus Foligno said.

In the four consecutive games Enroth has started since the Olympic break, he's faced shot totals of 33, 38, 39 and 43 and is 3-1-0 in those games. When asked if he believes a player can get into a "zone," Enroth turned the focus to the things he can control.

“I do believe in that but I also believe in good habits,” he said. “I’ve just been trying to create good habits all year and it’s starting to pay off a little bit now. Things can turn around quick in hockey and I’m just going to try to get ready for tomorrow and do it all over again.

“...I’m not going to say it’s easier to play every game but it’s easier to get into the zone and get into a good rhythm.”

Enroth lost the shutout bid with 2:29 left in the third period when Tyler Johnson scored shorthanded.

“I felt pretty good. I’m pretty pissed off now that I didn’t get the shutout but that’s hockey,” Enroth said.

The Sabres will move forward for the rest of this season with the group that they have. No big changes are imminent and now that players are able to relax about that a little bit. Hodgson said the group was a bit more relaxed heading into the game against Tampa Bay.

“Once you settle down and know where you’re going to be, it’s a lot easier to play the game. When your life outside of hockey is kind of unsure, sometimes that shows up in hockey too,” he said. “It’s nice to get the win here tonight from the full team. Obviously we wanted Jhonas to get the shutout, but I thought he played good again.”

Myers finished the game with 20:37 of ice time and three shots. Looking around the room, he understands that now is the time for him and some of the other players to become leaders on the team both on and off the ice.

“I think we’re right there in the age group where we’re going to have to step up, especially the losing guys that we did this past week,” he said. “I think that those core guys – 23, 24, 25 years old – are going to have to definitely step up and take on a leadership role.”

Foligno and Hodgson started on a line with Chris Stewart, who was playing in his second game with the team after being acquired in the Miller/Ott trade last week. Stewart was a physical presence for much of the night and created a lot of space for players like Hodgson.

“I thought Stewart was really great in the first couple periods too. He was being very physical and that rubs off on people,” Nolan said. “Then all of a sudden Tyler Myers comes into the forefront and starts doing it. It’s contagious. When a couple of your guys start really putting the good efforts in and banging the bodies, it goes on. But Marcus, I thought it was one of his better games since I’ve been here. ”

Stewart, however, left the game after he collided with Lightning goaltender Anders Lindback with about 8:20 to play in the third period when chasing down a loose puck.

The Sabres also lost Zemgus Girgensons to a lower-body injury earlier in the game.

Nolan said that both Stewart and Girgensons would be doubtful to play in the team's next game on Friday against the Florida Panthers.

Cory Conacher is expected to join the team in Sunrise, Fla. on Friday and be able to play in the game. He was claimed off waivers on Wednesday from Ottawa.

The Sabres are 4-1-0 since coming back from the Olympic break and will look to carry some of that momentum into the game on Friday.

"We had a lot of guys that were on their A-game. I think just the compete level in here is still there and that's what you want see," Foligno said. "I think that's what fans will appreciate is they're going to know we're in a tight spot, but the compete level and the character in this room is great and it was good to see tonight."

MITCHELL WILL MAKE SABRE DEBUT IN TAMPA

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 6, 2014

TAMPA – Torrey Mitchell and Michal Neuvirth, two of the newest members of the Buffalo Sabres organization, had the chance to meet their new teammates after the team's morning skate at Tampa Bay Times Forum on Thursday.

The Sabres are set to take on the Lightning at 7:30 p.m. and Mitchell will be in the Sabres lineup wearing No. 17.

Mitchell arrived just as the Sabres were wrapping up their skate and was able to catch up with Zenon Konopka, his old teammate in Minnesota. Mitchell also played with defenseman Christian Ehrhoff when both were with the San Jose Sharks.

"I'm excited to see those guys again and meet all the new guys," Mitchell said. "As soon as the trade happened, Z was already calling me. He was one of my first phone calls so he was excited. It's good to know some guys and it's easier to settle in, but hockey guys are the same everywhere."

With Matt Moulson and Cody McCormick now in Minnesota as part of the deal that brought Mitchell to Buffalo, there are some spots in the lineup that need to be filled.

Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said that Ville Leino will take Moulson's place on the top line with Tyler Ennis and Drew Stafford. Mitchell will likely start in the bottom six, but Nolan is open to moving him around in the lineup.

"I don't know Mitchell very well. I know he's an energy guy so energy guys are third, fourth-line guys, but we'll see," Nolan said. "I'm not going to pigeonhole him in that position yet. We'll see what he brings, how he fits in and we'll go from there."

With Cory Conacher not expected to join the team until Friday, the Sabres will have only have to scratch one player in Tampa. Nolan said he was leaning towards sitting Konopka, meaning the Sabres will likely go with seven defensemen against the Lightning.

Jhonas Enroth will start in goal Thursday night and Neuvirth will play Friday against the Florida Panthers.

Neuvirth had a 5:30 a.m. wake up call in Washington for his flight to Tampa and took the ice just as the skate was wrapping up. He's hoping he can make the most of his chances.

“My goal is to be a No. 1 goalie in the NHL and I feel like I can get the opportunity here,” he said. “I’m going give all my best, work hard every day and we’ll see what happens.”

Leadership roles will have to be filled as well in these final 20 games.

“Going into the last stretch of games here, our playoffs basically start today. A lot of guys’ contracts are up, positions to be won. There’s no such thing as ‘nothing to play for.’ There’s a lot to play for,” Nolan said. “They’re playing for the livelihood. So we’ve got to unite. We’ve got to find some new leaders on this team to take over.

“Steve Ott was the backbone here for awhile. He’s not here anymore so somebody else has to step up. [Ryan] Miller’s not here anymore so somebody else has to step up. We’ve got some room for people to take a leadership role and see how they respond going down the stretch run.”

Nolan has praised Drew Stafford for the way he’s approached the past week.

“I think it’s definitely a compliment,” Stafford said. “But at the same time, there are a lot of guys in here that are capable of steering the ship here in the last month or so because it’s definitely going to be challenging to try and stay on track with all the stuff that’s going on and the way this year’s gone. But we’ve been playing well as of late and making sure that the compete’s there.”

A few of those other players include veterans like Ehrhoff and Henrik Tallinder, but also the younger group of players.

Nolan is looking to see how Marcus Foligno, Cody Hodgson, Tyler Ennis and Tyler Myers in particular rise up to this new challenge.

“I saw all four of them having ice cream last night together so that’s the next generation. They’re quality kids and quality players so there’s something to really look forward to,” Nolan said.

On the other end of the rink, Steven Stamkos returns to action after missing 45 games with broken right shin. He has 14 goals and 23 points in 17 games this season and will look to make an impact right away.

Ryan Callahan will make his Lightning debut. He was acquired from the New York Rangers for Tampa Bay captain Martin St. Louis in one of the splashiest moves Wednesday.

The team announced after practice that Dominik Hasek will be inducted into the Sabres Hall of Fame in a pregame ceremony on March 29.

Before that news even broke, Neuvirth, a native of the Czech Republic, mentioned Hasek when describing what he knows of the Sabres organization. Hasek was the first thing he thought of when he heard he'd been traded to the Sabres.

“The first thing that came to my mind was Dominik Hasek was here. I was a big fan of him when I was a kid and a big fan of Buffalo,” he said. “He was a hero for me, from the same country. All games I watched were Buffalo games because of him. He’s a legend back home.”

23 Ville Leino – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford
82 Marcus Foligno – 19 Cody Hodgson – 80 Chris Stewart
65 Brian Flynn – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 27 Matt D’Agostini
37 Matt Ellis – 17 Torrey Mitchell

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

1 Jhonas Enroth
34 Michal Neuvirth

Lightning stumbles in Steven Stamkos' return

By Damian Cristodero

Tampa Bay Times

March 6, 2014

TAMPA — Steven Stamkos skated onto the Tampa Bay Times Forum ice Thursday night to an ovation from the sellout crowd of 19,204.

Back in the lineup after missing 45 games because of a broken shinbone in his right leg, the Lightning's star center was introduced last with the announcement he is the franchise's 10th captain.

"A no-brainer," coach Jon Cooper said.

"An honor," Stamkos said. "It's just unfortunate we didn't get the win."

The 3-1 loss to the Sabres, statistically the league's worst team, was Tampa Bay's eighth loss in 11 games, and dampened Stamkos' return and the debut of Ryan Callahan, acquired Wednesday from the Rangers in the Marty St. Louis trade.

The thing is, the Lightning (34-24-5) played pretty well, with a 44-21 shot advantage and a significant territorial edge.

But Buffalo goaltender Jonas Enroth was outstanding with a season-best 43 saves. Tyler Johnson's 19th goal, shorthanded, with 2:29 left in the third period was his only blip.

Callahan, on a line with center Valtteri Filppula and Nikita Kucherov, played 16:33 with four shots and four hits, and was a constant in front of the Buffalo net.

Stamkos, playing between Alex Killorn and Teddy Purcell, was the workhorse with five shots on goal in 21:03 of ice time. He even scrummed it up with Buffalo's Mike Weber.

He made a couple of passes that were picked off and missed the net with 21 seconds left in the second period with Enroth at his mercy. But he also won 17 of 24 faceoffs.

"He was outstanding," Cooper said. "If that's the worst game he plays for us, things are going to look pretty good. He was the most dangerous player on the ice."

"Thank God," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said, "he was a little bit rusty."

Buffalo's Tyler Myers scored in the first period with a high wrist shot past goalie Anders Lindback after a turnover by Mark Barberio. Marcus Foligno scored in the second after Myers bested Victor Hedman with a forecheck.

Even so, the Lightning played its best game in a while, though more traffic in front of Enroth would have helped.

"This is the biggest rut we've been in," Cooper said. "Sometimes you play pretty well and maybe you deserve a different fate, but if you continue to play well you'll come out of the rut."

With 19 games left and only four points from being out of the playoffs there is no time to waste.

Said Stamkos: "We can't afford to let teams come in here and beat us down the stretch."

First Period—1, Buffalo, Myers 9, 15:56. Penalties—Kucherov, TB (high-sticking), :51; Stewart, Buf, served by Leino, double minor (roughing), 8:48; Salo, TB (roughing), 8:48.

Second Period—2, Buffalo, Foligno 7 (Hodgson, Myers), 9:25. Penalties—Flynn, Buf (delay of game), 10:16.

Third Period—3, Buffalo, Hodgson 16 (Foligno), 13:44. 4, Tampa Bay, Johnson 19 (Hedman), 17:31 (sh). Penalties—Killorn, TB (interference), 16:21; Mitchell, Buf (holding), 18:20. Shots on Goal—Buffalo 10-6-5—21. Tampa Bay 15-16-13—44. Power-play opportunities—Buffalo 0 of 2; Tampa Bay 0 of 3. Goalies—Buffalo, Enroth 4-13-5 (44 shots-43 saves). Tampa Bay, Lindback 5-12-1 (21-18). A—19,204 (19,204). T—2:28.

Stamkos' return can't spark Bolts in loss to Sabres

By Erik Erlendsson

Tampa Tribune

March 6, 2014

TAMPA — Even good efforts result in bad losses.

With Tampa Bay welcoming back Steven Stamkos, who emerged as the last player from the tunnel during pregame introductions to a wild ovation as he was named the 10th captain in franchise history after missing four months with a broken leg, and the debut of Ryan Callahan, the Lightning still stumbled into a 3-1 loss despite a strong effort in front of an announced sell out crowd of 19,204 at The Forum.

Jhonas Enroth made 43 saves to steal the a victory for the Sabres, which had fewer shot attempts (38) than the Lightning had shots on goal (44).

Marcus Foligno, Cody Hodgson and Tyler Myers each had a goal and an assist for the Sabres, which picked up just their 10th regulation victory on the season.

Tyler Johnson scored his third shorthanded goal of the season late in the third to spoil the shutout while Anders Lindback, making his first start in goal since Jan. 13, finished with 18 saves to take the loss.

The loss was the eighth in the past 11 games for Tampa Bay, which still holds a wild card playoff spot four points ahead of Detroit and Columbus currently tied for ninth place in the Eastern Conference, despite the recent slide with 19 games remaining.

“This is the biggest rut we have been in this year, obviously we have hit a rut,” Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. “I liked the way we played. Clearly you don't like the result and sometimes you play well and deserve a little bit of a different fate, but if you continue to play well you will come out of the rut. You don't just come out of ruts not playing well and get lucky, you get out of ruts by playing like we did tonight and then continue to play like that and eventually the results will turn.

“Unfortunately the clock is ticking down on the season here and we can't let these go. We have to get points, and the urgency of timing has to be better. We need to be desperate.”

After all the drama of the previous day in which long time icon and team captain Marty St. Louis forced his way out of town with a trade request, the night got off to a dramatic start with the introduction of Stamkos as the new captain moments before the opening faceoff.

That created an energy boost in the building as a new era in Lightning history kicked off with the last remaining piece of the 2004 Stanley Cup championship team, St. Louis, no longer on the roster. But Tampa Bay failed to feed off the momentum and capitalize on the early chances despite peppering Enroth all night long.

"I thought we definitely outplayed them tonight," said Stamkos, who had five shots on goal in 21:03 of ice time, "It's not the result that we wanted but when you are not playing as well as a team, and then you find a way to play better and generate scoring chances, then their goalie plays well, you have to build on it. It's disappointing not to get points in the game but I thought this was a building block for how we've been playing lately."

Buffalo scored three consecutive goals, one in each of the three period before Johnson would pull Tampa Bay to within a goal with 2:29 left in the third period on his third shorthanded goal of the season, tied for second in the league.

Any any loss at this time of year, no matter how the result is formed, is costly, even with a renewed attitude following the dramatics in the previous two days.

"It's definitely tough, these games are huge if you look at the standings and how important these points are," said Callahan, who logged 16:33 of ice time in his debut and finished with four shots on goal and four hits. "I felt like we had enough chances to put more behind (Enroth) tonight and win the game. But some turnovers and not getting enough pucks deep cost us in the end."

Enroth, Sabres Spoil Return Of Stamkos, Callahan Debut

By Missy Zielinski

Lightning.com

March 6, 2014

TAMPA – With numerous Sabres auditioning to the Buffalo staff in the upcoming weeks, none shined more Thursday than netminder Jhonas Enroth in a near shutout of the Tampa Bay Lightning and 3-1 win at the Tampa Bay Times Forum.

Tampa Bay attempted 85 shots (44 shots on goal, 21 attempts blocked, 20 missed shots) in the loss. Enroth stopped all but one from the Lightning, including a handful of point blank shots from Steven Stamkos, who did not take long to loosen up, in his return to the lineup after missing 45 games with a broken leg.

"On the first shift with Teddy [Purcell] we had a good scoring chance," Stamkos said. "It was nice to get the confidence up. Obviously, we would have loved to generate some production, but we had a lot of chances, so not the start we wanted as a team, but a lot to build on."

"I thought he played outstanding," head coach Jon Cooper said. "If that's the worst game he plays for us, things are going to look really good because I thought he was the most dangerous player on the ice."

Stamkos said he experienced a little cramping and was out of breath by the end of the game, but overall felt good in his first contest since mid-November. He ended the game with 21:03 total time on the ice with five shots, two hits and 17 wins out of 24 attempts in the face-off circle.

It also spoiled Ryan Callahan's Lightning debut, who skated on a line with Valtteri Filppula and Nikita Kucherov, as Tampa Bay lost their third straight.

Despite creating some early chaos in front of Enroth's net, Buffalo was first to score with 4:04 remaining in the first period. Tyler Myers stole an errant puck and scored an unassisted tally top shelf on Anders Lindback for a 1-0 lead at the end of the opening frame.

The Sabres doubled their score midway through the game after Myers took the puck from behind the net and shot it into Lindback's left leg pad. The puck then was swatted across the crease, as Marcus Foligno came up from behind the net and batted in the loose puck for a 2-0 game at 9:25 of the second.

Late in the middle period Sami Salo stopped a puck from going out of the Lightning zone by blocking it with his body. The puck then made its way to Stamkos' stick, though not expecting it, the Bolts center attempted to take a point blank shot right in front of Enroth's crease, but it flew wide right.

Cody Hodgson gave the Sabres a 3-0 lead with less than seven minutes remaining in the contest when his initial breakaway shot bounced off Lindback's chest and through his legs at 13:44 of the third. Foligno picked up a helper on the tally and put him, as well as Myers, at one goal and one assist on the evening.

With two and a half minutes remaining in regulation Tyler Johnson broke Enroth's shutout bid with a shorthanded tally at 17:31 of the third for a 3-1 game. Though the score did create some momentum for the Lightning it was too little too late in its first loss of the season series to Buffalo.

UP NEXT – Tampa Bay will face the Boston Bruins for the fourth and final time this season Saturday night at the Times Forum. It is also the second of a six-game homestand, which also features the Phoenix Coyotes, Florida Panthers, New Jersey Devils and Vancouver Canucks.

OTHER NOTES FROM THURSDAY'S GAME

Steven Stamkos was named the 10th captain in franchise history just minutes before Thursday's puck drop in what Cooper called a "no brainer" decision.

Cooper was pleased with Callahan in his debut as a Bolt, saying he did everything expected of him. Callahan logged 16:33 of ice time with four shots, four hits and time on both the power play and penalty kill. Callahan also felt more comfortable with his linemates (Valtteri Filppula, Alex Killorn) as the game went on.

HarborCenter lays out first hockey tournaments

By James Fink

Business First

March 6, 2014

The first round of youth hockey tournaments have been scheduled for the HarborCenter, the \$172 million ice hockey complex under construction in downtown Buffalo.

The tournaments include 20 new events, that include both boys and girls teams from the mite through midget levels and at the AAA and AA levels.

“Our tournaments will create a unique and differentiating experience for hockey families from Western New York and beyond,” said Nik Fattey, HarborCenter vice president and director of hockey. “At the AAA level, we will host some of the best youth teams from around the country and provide a competitive level of hockey that places our events among the best tournaments currently available. For AA teams, we will similarly provide a special high-end opportunity. Our best-in-class facilities, geographic location, amenities and affiliation with the Buffalo Sabres are a major attraction for top teams. providing the region with tens of thousands of visitors each year.”

For the AAA boys’ events, the Buffalo Junior Sabres will be the host team.

In addition to many top local teams that are expected to join them, highly-ranked organizations outside the area have already expressed interest, including the Pittsburgh Penguins Elite, Syracuse Nationals, Compuware Ambassadors and London Junior Knights.

All participating teams will be guaranteed four games at the HarborCenter. There will be no gate fees for spectators, and all games will be streamed online in high definition at HarborCenter.com.

“Our tournaments are a key component of HarborCenter’s programming,” said John Koelmel, HarborCenter president.

The twin-rink complex is to open later this year.

The tournament schedule includes:

AAA

U9 (2005): December 19 – December 21

U10 (2004): January 23 – January 25

U11 (2003): December 27 – December 29

U12 (2002): December 5 – December 7

U13 (2001): January 16 – January 18

U14 (2000): February 13 – February 15

U16 (1998): October 31 – November 2

U18 (1996): October 31 – November 2

AA

U10 (2004): November 7 – November 9

U12 (2002): December 12 – December 14

U14 (2000): February 6 – February 8

Jamboree

U7 (2007): December 19 – December 21

U8 (2006): December 19 – December 21

AAA Girls

U12 (2002): January 30 – February 1

U14 (2000): November 14 – November 16

U16 (1998): November 28 – November 30

U19 (1995): November 28 – November 30

AA Girls

U12 (2002): February 20 – February 22

U14 (2000): February 27 – March 1

U16 (1998): November 21 – November 23