



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 9, 2014

Sabres recall D Chad Ruhwedel from AHL Rochester

Associated Press

March 8, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- The Buffalo Sabres have recalled defenseman Chad Ruhwedel from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League.

The move on Saturday was made after defenseman Alexander Sulzer sustained a lower-body injury in Friday's 2-0 loss at Florida.

Ruhwedel, 23, has played in seven games for the Sabres this season. He hasn't recorded a point but has a team-best plus-3 rating.

The Sabres signed Ruhwedel out of UMass-Lowell in April 2013.

Blackhawks-Sabres Preview

Associated Press

March 8, 2014

After breaking out offensively to get back on track at the United Center, the Chicago Blackhawks hope to do the same on the road.

They can avoid a third straight road defeat Sunday night by continuing their success against the Buffalo Sabres, who return from a recent trip with a far different look as they try for a fourth consecutive home victory.

Prior to Thursday's 6-1 home rout of Columbus, Chicago (37-13-14) lost three of five while totaling 10 goals - half coming during a 5-1 victory over Pittsburgh at Soldier Field on March 1. The Blackhawks managed five non-shootout goals in their previous three at the United Center before rolling past the Blue Jackets.

New linemates Jonathan Toews and Andrew Shaw each scored twice as 13 Blackhawks recorded at least one point to rebound from a 4-2 home loss to Colorado two nights earlier.

"It's good for us to get back on track," Toews told the NHL's official website.

"We're motivated to build ourselves into the team we want to be come playoff time, but that adds to it to keep us honest, to make sure we're competing the right way every night."

With Marian Hossa expected to miss at least another week with an upper-body injury and the Blackhawks needing a jolt offensively, coach Joel Quenneville put Shaw with Toews and Brandon Saad.

The result was Shaw's first goals in 12 games and first points in six. Toews, meanwhile, has five goals in three games.

"I think all the lines had some chemistry," Shaw said. "It was a big win for us."

The Blackhawks hope to channel some of Thursday's offensive success on the road, where they've scored three goals, been shut out once and gone 0 for 7 on the power play in the last three contests.

Chicago has totaled 16 goals during a four-game winning streak over Buffalo (19-36-8), but hasn't played there since a 4-3 victory Oct. 11, 2010.

Buffalo native Patrick Kane has three goals with three assists in seven games against the Sabres. He had a goal in Chicago's 2-1 win over the Sabres on Oct. 12, and has two with an assist in three games at Buffalo.

Owner of the NHL's worst record, the Sabres concluded a 1-2-0 trip with a 2-0 loss at Florida on Friday, but return home where they scored 12 goals to sweep a three-game stay out of the Olympic break.

Prior to the last game of the homestand Feb. 28, the Sabres traded longtime goalie Ryan Miller and captain Steve Ott to St. Louis. Since, forward Matt Moulson was dealt to Minnesota, goaltender Michal Neuvirth was acquired from Washington and Pat LaFontaine resigned as the team's president of hockey operations a little more than three months after he took the job.

The Sabres also could be minus forwards Zengus Girgensons and Chris Stewart, both of whom are day to day with lower-body injuries.

Fellow forward Marcus Foligno hopes he doesn't face further disciplinary action from the NHL after he draw a game misconduct for hitting a falling Brandon Pirri into the Buffalo bench Friday.

"You never want to get suspended," said Foligno, who had a goal with an assist in Thursday's 3-1 win at Tampa Bay. "I want to be that player that's a clean player."

Teammate Cody Hodgson had two goals with two assists in four games prior to Friday, and has one with three assists in his last four versus Chicago.

Blackhawks' other star player Toews shining brightly

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 9, 2014

There aren't many places where Jonathan Toews gets overshadowed. He's a bona fide NHL star at age 25, a legend in the making with Stanley Cup rings and Olympic medals. People buy tickets just to see him play.

But not in Buffalo. He's just the other Chicago player around here.

Toews and the Blackhawks will be in First Niagara Center today for the first time since October 2010. As always, the focus will be Chicago winger and South Buffalo native Patrick Kane. It's an event every time he comes home.

Toews, though, is the brighter star lately. The captain won his second Olympic gold with Canada last month. He has five goals in the last three games while Chicago fights with St. Louis and Colorado for first place in the Central Division.

"I'm getting chances, and I feel confident when I get the puck," Toews said in Chicago. "Whether I'm scoring or not, I feel like I'm generating a lot of chances, finding ways to stay patient with the puck and keep my feet moving with it, and eventually things open up. I'm just getting a lot of help from my linemates, and we've got to keep it going."

Toews, who is centering Brandon Saad and Andrew Shaw, ranks in the top 20 in goals (24), assists (37) and points (61). The reigning Selke Trophy winner as best defensive forward is plus-24, has a Corsi rating of plus-22 and ranks ninth in faceoffs at 56 percent.

Toews' only goal of the Olympics was the game-winner in the gold-medal game, and he finished with three points in six outings. He skated 17:18 per game, most among Canadian forwards.

"Johnny rises to the occasion," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "He's a special player. He's playing well. He was outstanding in the Olympics. I thought he was one of the best players in the tournament. The last few games it looks like he's on that same pace."

Toews' three-game hot streak includes a 5-1 victory over Pittsburgh and a 6-1 shellacking of Columbus on Thursday. The Blackhawks have been off since the blowout, a result Chicago aims to make a regular occurrence.

"We've got to remind ourselves even if we get up early in the game a couple goals, we can keep working on our game regardless of where the game's at," Toews said. "We know we don't have too many games left this year. Every point is important, but at the same time we want to keep improving."

“We’re motivated to build ourselves into the team we want to be come playoff time. That adds to it in a way to keep us honest, to make sure we’re competing the right way for these points.”

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Kane, who had a goal-less Olympics for the United States, has no goals and two assists in Chicago’s four games since the NHL resumed. He’s still dealing with the death of his grandfather, Donald, who was his neighbor and confidant.

Kane ranks sixth in the league in points (65), 11th in assists (38) and 13th in goals (27). He’s fifth in power-play goals (10) and seventh in game-winning tallies (six).

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The Sabres, who played back-to-back games Thursday and Friday in Florida, took Saturday off to recuperate.

The team made two roster moves, sending forward Luke Adam back to Rochester and recalling defenseman Chad Ruhwedel from the Amerks.

Adam, an emergency recall, had one shot and one penalty in 12:18 of ice time during Friday’s 2-0 loss to the Panthers.

Ruhwedel is the Amerks’ highest-scoring defenseman, with 25 points.

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Defenseman Rostislav Klesla, who Buffalo acquired in its trade with Washington last week, said on Saturday he will not report to the Sabres. The 31-year-old defenseman told TSN he will take some time off before resuming his career in Europe. The Capitals had picked up Klesla from Phoenix one day before trading him to the Sabres in a deal involving goaltenders Michal Neuvirth and Jaroslav Halak.

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Chicago will go with Corey Crawford in goal, and the netminder will go with new pads. His favorite pair was stolen last week when the Blackhawks played an outdoor game at Soldier Field.

“I was speechless,” Crawford said after learning of the theft. “I’ve never seen this before. I’ve never heard of this before. It’s crazy, man.”

He told the Chicago Tribune on Saturday he’s over it.

“These are my new ones, and that’s it,” he said. “I don’t really care.”

Blues have the horses to win Cup

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 9, 2014

While catching up with James Patrick the other day, the conversation turned to Ryan Miller joining the Blues. The disappointment was obvious.

The Dallas assistant coach and longtime member of the Sabres knows St. Louis is basically a team without flaws. Patrick praised the Blues' offense, saying its depth has exceeded Boston's acclaimed forwards. Their strong defensive unit is so tight that it even has the ideal mix of right- and left-handed shots. Now they have Miller in goal.

Listening to Patrick speak, it was clear why so many people have St. Louis as the favorite to win the Stanley Cup.

"But," Patrick said, life finally returning to his face, "that's why we play the games."

Indeed, anything can happen once the playoffs start. Injuries can crop up. Slumps can strike at the worst possible time. Plus, with the Western Conference being so competitive, there's no guarantee the Blues will even escape the first round.

They should win the opening series, though. They should win the next one, and the one after that. They should win them all.

St. Louis has never won the Cup. The Blues haven't appeared in the final since 1970. Those droughts should end this spring.

"I get a kick out of people saying, 'You guys are loading up and looking for a run,' " Blues coach Ken Hitchcock said. "We're loading up for the next five years, not the next five days, five weeks or the next five months.

"We're in the winning business right now, and we think our players that everybody has watched grow, mature and go through really tough times are in a position to have the combination of maturity and experience to win. It might happen. It might not. But we're going to stay in this window for a few years."

Led by forwards Alexander Steen, T.J. Oshie, Jaden Schwartz and David Backes, the Blues entered the weekend second in the NHL at 3.21 goals per game. The power play ranked tied for fifth at 20.9 percent.

St. Louis is equally adept at keeping pucks out, ranking third in the league at 2.24 goals allowed per outing. The Blues were giving up just 26.4 shots per game, second only to the 25.3 given up by New Jersey.

Miller's save percentage this season is .924. If he stays close to that and St. Louis maintains its pace for shots allowed, Miller should give up just two goals per appearance. The Blues' offense can overcome that low total nearly every night.

Miller's biggest obstacle will be ramping up his mind-set. The Blues have been dreaming of the Cup all season. Miller has been dodging pucks and ducking the low bar set in Buffalo.

"It takes a little getting used to, catching up to the mind-set these guys have," the goalie said. "It's a great attitude here. I'm just trying to fall in line and blend into this team. They have a good thing going.

"You're shifting gears completely here. ... In Buffalo, we were going the other direction the last two or three years, at least, but it's not going to be too hard to catch up here. They're pretty inspirational. You want to do your part."

The Blues assume he will. Plenty of people assume that means the Cup will find a new home in St. Louis.

"I've liked our team since training camp," General Manager Doug Armstrong said. "They've played well all year long, and now we just have to close these last five weeks out and put ourselves in a good frame of mind for the playoffs. The time for talking is soon going to be behind us, and the time for action upon us."

Murray earns praise

After his first trade deadline as GM, the Sabres' Tim Murray broke out of character with smiles and jokes. He had good reason to feel good, according to two of his trade partners.

"He was very decisive," Los Angeles GM Dean Lombardi said. "Sometimes you're not sure, but he has a tremendous amount of background in personnel and he recognized the same thing" regarding the needs for both teams.

"He was tough," said Chuck Fletcher, the Minnesota GM who has long been friends with Murray, "but fortunately I have some good background information on him that he doesn't want revealed. No, Timmy did a great job. He picked up some picks and some prospects, and that team will turn around quickly. He knew what he was doing."

Snow taken to cleaners

"Snow must go" can be said all across the country, but it's more than just a snappy phrase on Long Island. It's the truth.

Garth Snow took fans' minds off the Sabres' troubles with his horrible trade deadline. The Islanders' general manager got next to nothing for Thomas Vanek, which has New Yorkers once again chanting for his firing.

Snow took a calculated gamble back in October when he acquired Vanek from the Sabres for Matt Moulson and first- and second-round picks. Having watched Vanek and Moulson up close, there is a definite talent disparity. It made sense that if Moulson could score 30 times next to John Tavares, Vanek should be able to get 40 and help the Isles succeed.

Instead, everything fell apart. New York is fourth from the bottom in the NHL, so Snow had no choice but to move Vanek, a pending unrestricted free agent who turned down a \$50 million contract extension.

Snow's long wait essentially resulted in speedy, undersized prospect Sebastian Collberg, who is playing in Sweden. It's a terrible deal on its own. Compared to the packages Buffalo got for Vanek and Moulson, the deal is a fireable offense.

On the fly

- Lombardi on defenseman Brayden McNabb, acquired from the Sabres for forwards Hudson Fasching and Nicolas Deslauriers: "He's still green. His skating needs to improve. He's got to work some on his fundamentals and his reads, but he has a lot of the attributes that we value and has a chance to be a top-four guy. And with that, he's got some snarl, so this is a guy we had highlighted."
- The Canucks kept forward Ryan Kesler, but a summertime trade seems inevitable. "We'll talk about the summer when the season's over," GM Mike Gillis said.
- Goalie Roberto Luongo, 34, on his trade from Vancouver to Florida: "A lot of people think I want to come here and ride into the sunset. I'm here to win, to bring this team back to the playoffs."

Revamped Sabres host Blackhawks

By Mike Battaglino

NHL.com

March 8, 2014

BLACKHAWKS (37-13-14) at SABRES (19-36-8)

TV: NBCSN, TSN2

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

Season series: The Chicago Blackhawks defeated the Buffalo Sabres 2-1 on the second Saturday of the season. It made the Sabres 0-5-1 on the way to a 3-15-1 start. Chicago will play its first game in Buffalo since Oct. 11, 2010.

Big story: Since returning from the break for the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the Sabres are 4-2-0 and the Blackhawks are 2-2-0. Buffalo's post-Olympic success includes wins against the Boston Bruins, San Jose Sharks and Tampa Bay Lightning.

"We have to be respectful," Chicago coach Joel Quenneville told CSN on Saturday. "We approached the Columbus game (a 6-1 win Thursday) the right way and have to have the same type of attitude going into tomorrow's game."

Team Scope:

Blackhawks: This is the only game for Chicago in a five-day span. It does not play again until Wednesday at the Colorado Avalanche. The Blackhawks enter leading the Avalanche by one point and trailing the St. Louis Blues by four in the Central Division, and they are five back of the Anaheim Ducks for the top spot in the Western Conference.

"I think when you look at the standings and what's at stake, basically every game, as far as we can see right now, is going to have some meaning," Quenneville said. "Playing the right way, that's what you look for because you're going to have to play the right way to get points.

"It definitely will keep our attention in the right place. That's never really much of an issue with this group anyway, but we have to be sharp game in, game out. But let's get that consistency going because we want to finish first."

The Blackhawks altered their lines in the win against the Columbus Blue Jackets. Jonathan Toews played with Brandon Saad and Andrew Shaw, and Patrick Sharp and Patrick Kane were reunited to play with Michal Handzus.

Kane, a Buffalo native, has six points (three goals) in seven games against his hometown team. Defenseman David Rundblad, acquired Tuesday in a trade from the Phoenix Coyotes, will make his Blackhawks debut.

Sabres: The shakeup last week that revamped Buffalo's roster resulted in the NHL debut for forward Nicolas Deslauriers, who was acquired in a trade of prospects with the Los Angeles Kings.

With injuries to forwards Zemgus Girgensons, Torrey Mitchell and Chris Stewart in the game Thursday, Deslauriers played 15:08 in a 2-0 loss at the Florida Panthers on Friday.

"I never thought I was going to get traded," Deslauriers told The Buffalo News. "I had a good meeting with [Los Angeles general manager] Dean Lombardi a couple weeks ago. I was just sitting on my couch watching TSN and it popped up. I'm pretty happy about it though. A fresh start would be good for my situation playing forward this year. I'm happy."

The 23-year-old moved to forward from defenseman this season and was leading Manchester of the American Hockey League with 18 goals.

"Deslauriers came from a real good organization, and in L.A. they don't give you games until they make you good enough and you're ready to go," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "He was pretty close, I imagine, to getting the call. He's a big body (6-foot-1, 209 pounds). I've watched him play with my son (Jordan) in Manchester. I like the way he plays. He plays with a little spirit and jam, and that's exactly what this organization needs."

Who's hot: Toews has five goals and an assist in his past three games. Sharp has a goal and three assists. ... Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers has six points (three goals) in his past five games.

Injury report: Blackhawks forward Marian Hossa (upper body) is out at least two weeks. ... Sabres defenseman Alexander Sulzer (lower body) was injured in the game Friday and is out 1-2 weeks. Girgensons (lower body), Stewart (lower body) and Mitchell (foot) did not play Friday.

Klesla says he won't report to Sabres after trade

TSN.ca

March 8, 2014

Rostislav Klesla will not be joining the Buffalo Sabres.

The 31-year-old defencemen was traded from the Washington Capitals alongside goalie Michal Neuvirth to the Sabres for goalie Jaroslav Halak and a third-round selection on Trade Deadline day.

Klesla was traded the day before from Phoenix to Washington.

"With all due respect to the Sabres organization, I decided this week not to continue playing hockey this season. It has been a tough year for injury and moving several times to new teams," Klesla said in a statement.

"I will now take some time off and get ready to continue my career in Europe. I would like to thank my fans and all the people that have helped me. I am grateful for the career I have had in the NHL and all the people that I have met along the way who have supported me and my family."

In 25 games with the Coyotes this season, Klesla had one goal and three assists with a minus-3 rating.

If this is the end of Klesla's time in the NHL, he'll have finished with 48 goals and 111 assists in 659 career games.

Impressive rookie Mark Pysyk feels like he can keep developing with Amerks, could be back with Sabres soon

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 9, 2014

ROCHESTER – By most standards, Mark Pysyk is ready for regular NHL duty. His efficient, steady play during 42 appearances earlier this season earned the rookie praise as the Buffalo Sabres' best defenseman.

But the 22-year-old is back with the Americans, riding buses again in the AHL.

At first, it appeared his Jan. 24 assignment would only be temporary. The Sabres wanted Pysyk to keep playing during the Olympic break, they said. Six weeks later, he's still in the AHL.

"I wasn't banking on anything," Pysyk said Friday following the Amerks' 4-1 win against the Syracuse Crunch inside the Blue Cross War Memorial, his 21st AHL game this season.

So why is Pysyk in the minors with the Sabres, the league's worst team, playing some veterans who appear to have no future with them?

The Sabres want him to perfect his game in the AHL, something Pysyk understands.

"I definitely think I need to work on my consistency," he said. "I don't think I've outgrown this league at all. It's still a battle out there for me."

Amerks coach Chadd Cassidy wants Pysyk to start playing more aggressively.

"I don't think he needs to play as safe as he does sometimes," Cassidy said. "At this level, I think he can be more aggressive and take some more chances offensively and try to create a little bit more. There's a fine line because then your coach gets mad at you and yells at you when you turn it over in a bad spot."

Cassidy believes Pysyk, the 23rd overall pick in 2010, is "an elite talent." But he has only one goal and nine points with the Amerks this season. He has one goal and six points in the NHL.

"Let's see what's there offensively. ... I think he can do more," Cassidy said. "I think there's more power play that he can do and there's more in terms of making plays from the offensive blue line."

Pysyk must develop his offensive consistency in the AHL, Cassidy said.

"Nobody learns how to score, put up points in the National League," he said. "You got to learn to do that at the level before you get there and have confidence you can do it, and I think that's a big step for him."

Pysyk could be back with the Sabres soon. Defenseman Alexander Sulzer will miss a week or two after suffering a lower-body injury in Friday's 2-0 loss in Florida, interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said.

Update: The Sabres have recalled defenseman Chad Ruhwedel.

They host South Buffalo native Patrick Kane and Chicago Blackhawks tonight at the First Niagara Center after a day off.

Of course, the Sabres have other options for a recall. This might be the Amerks' deepest blue line in recent memory.

In addition to Pysyk, rookies Rasmus Ristolainen and Chad Ruhwedel have been impressing Cassidy. There's also 31-year-old Rostislav Klesla, although the NHL veteran hasn't reported to the Amerks following Wednesday's trade.

The 19-year-old Ristolainen, the eighth overall pick in June, played 19 NHL games before the Sabres sent him down shortly after Nolan took over in November.

"I would like to be there," Ristolainen said about the Sabres. "I played there. I started with that group. I get better after every game there. It just a little bit surprised me."

Cassidy said Ristolainen, a hero in his native Finland after his goal won January's world junior championship, needed to go down.

"It's such a tough thing just confidence-wise, I think the atmosphere, you're under the scrutiny a lot more," Cassidy said about the NHL. "Not to mention you're in your peer group here, at least closer to it."

He added: "I think he's grown leaps and bounds and learning here, not under the pressure of what can be happening up there."

Amerks captain Drew Bagnall, Ristolainen's partner recently, doesn't think "he's long for this league."

"It's very rare that you see a guy with the size and the skills that he has," Bagnall said about Ristolainen, who's 6-foot-4 and 219 pounds. "I'm just trying to do anything I can to make him learn from the mistakes I've made throughout my career and get him a little bit further ahead than he would be otherwise."

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The Sabres sent winger Luke Adam back to Rochester on Saturday after one game.

Blackhawks Buzz: March 9, 2014 at Buffalo Sabres

By Brad Boron
Blackhawks.com
March 8, 2014

The Blackhawks will play their first game in Buffalo since Oct. 11, 2010, on Sunday, a span of more than three seasons without an appearance at the First Niagara Center. Chicago enters the contest with a four-game winning streak against the Sabres, including a 2-1 victory at the United Center on Oct. 12, 2013. Buffalo native Patrick Kane has six points (3G, 3A) in seven matchups against his hometown team, while defensemen Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook have six career assists apiece in eight games.

With Marian Hossa on the shelf due to injury, the Blackhawks were forced to shuffle their lines, but it didn't seem to slow down Jonathan Toews' line in the slightest, despite having two new linemates. All the teaming of Toews, Brandon Saad and Andrew Shaw did in Thursday's 6-1 win over Columbus was combine for four goals and an assist, with Toews and Shaw netting two goals apiece. The moves also allowed Head Coach Joel Quenneville to spread out some of his other scoring: Patrick Sharp and Patrick Kane were reunited on the second line, and the team also got production from role players such as Bryan Bickell, Marcus Kruger and Kris Versteeg.

When the Blackhawks and Sabres last played on Oct. 12, Buffalo's roster still included the likes of All-Stars Ryan Miller and Thomas Vanek, as well as the pesky Steve Ott and penalty-killer Cody McCormick. All of them have since moved on, part of the full-blown rebuilding effort in Buffalo. The Sabres sit dead-last in the league at 19-36-8, but have some skilled young scorers, including Cody Hodgson and Zemgus Girgensons, and will have 11 first- or second-round draft picks over the next three drafts. The immediate future may be hazy in Buffalo, but an influx of young talent is coming over the next few seasons.

Now that all-world goaltender Ryan Miller is in St. Louis, 25-year-old Jhonas Enroth is now the Sabres' de-facto starter, and has held his own since Miller was traded on Feb. 28. Enroth has gone 2-1-0 in his three starts since the deal, allowing just six total goals while making 115 saves, good for a .950 save percentage. Enroth's most recent victory, a 3-1 win in Tampa Bay, saw the netminder make 43 of 44 stops; he is now 3-0-3 all-time in games where he's faced 40 or more shots.

Sunday will likely mark the Blackhawks debut of defenseman David Rundblad, who was acquired from Phoenix on March 4. VP/GM Stan Bowman spoke highly of the 23-year-old Swede's offensive playmaking ability, and added that Chicago had been interested in acquiring the young blueliner for some time. Scouting reports have noted Rundblad's improved defensive game as well, and at 6-foot-2, he now ranks among the team's bigger defensemen, and could use that body effectively at both ends of the ice.

On paper, Buffalo has traded away many of their best weapons, but their record belies that fact; the Sabres have won four of six decisions coming out of the Olympic break, beating top-flight teams including Boston and San Jose. It will be important for the Blackhawks to not look past Sunday's game, and having three days before their next game — a road contest in Denver against the Avalanche — should work to their advantage. If the Blackhawks play like they did the last time these two teams met — when they won 34 of 59 faceoffs, recorded 22 takeaways and took 40 shots on net — they should have a very good shot at taking two points back with them to Chicago.